

Department of History and American Studies
University of Mary Washington
Fredericksburg, Virginia

Narrator
Rosie the Riveter and the World War II American Home Front Oral History Project

Interview conducted by Lindsay Hansome
Marianne Rollins
in 2012

Copyright © 2012 by The University of Mary Washington

This interview was conducted by a student in an oral history seminar in the Department of History and American Studies at the University of Mary Washington. Oral History is a method of collecting historical information through recorded interviews between a narrator with firsthand knowledge of historically significant events and a well-informed interviewer, with the goal of preserving substantive additions to the historical record. The recording is transcribed, lightly edited for continuity and clarity, and reviewed by the interviewee. Because it is primary material, oral history is not intended to present the final, verified, or complete narrative of events. It is a spoken account, offered by the interviewee in response to questioning, and as such it is reflective, partisan, deeply involved, and irreplaceable.

All uses of this interview transcript are covered by a legal agreement between the interviewee and the University of Mary Washington. The interview transcript is thereby made available for research purposes. All literary rights in the manuscript, including the right to publish, are reserved to the University of Mary Washington. No part of the interview transcript may be quoted for publication without the written permission of the Department of History and American Studies, University of Mary Washington, 1301 College Avenue, Fredericksburg, Virginia, 22401, and should include identification of the specific passages to be quoted, anticipated use of the passages, and identification of the user. Excerpts up to 1000 words from this interview may be quoted for publication without seeking permission as long as the use is non-commercial and properly cited.

It is recommended that this oral history be cited as follows:

Rosie the Riveter and the World War II American Home Front Oral History Project: An Oral History with Marianne Rollins conducted by Lindsay Hansome, October 22, 2012, Department of History and American Studies, University of Mary Washington, 2012.

[0:01]

Hansome:

Okay, so can you go ahead and just state your name.

[0:05]

Rollins:

Yes, I'm Marianne Rollins.

[0:10]

Hansome:

And your date of birth, and where you were born?

[0:11]

Rollins:

July 4, 1932, I was born in Little Rock, Arkansas.

[0:17]

Hansome:

And could you describe how growing up in Arkansas was, (give us just a little background)

[0:20]

Rollins:

Yes. Uh, my mother and father owned a little mom and pop store on the corner. We lived in somewhat of an underprivileged neighborhood...much of the time as a little girl I spent running in and out of that grocery store, close by so they could see me, because both my mother and father lived there. I had a very close family, My mother had four sisters and they all lived in the Little Rock area... the store was in North Little Rock but I was born in Little Rock at the hospital that was right across the river from north little rock. And we got together for lots of things. But when WWII came along when I was 9yrs old, our lives changed drastically.

[1:11]

Hansome:

Okay. We'll definitely touch on that. Uhm, but could you tell me a little bit more about your extended family? Did all of your family live in Little Rock or was it kinda...? [interrupts]

[1:23]

Rollins:

My mothers family all lived in little rock. My father's family lived in different places in Arkansas.. An'uh I had one brother who was six years younger than I and so uh, I helped take care of him a little bit while my mother worked at the store.

[1:42]

Hansome:

And what about your experiences in school?

[1:47]

Rollins:

I went to a school that I found out later when I had to transfer was not a very good school. I was not prepared for 6th grade when I had to change schools. The teachers were sweet and easy going; there was no lunch program. We took our lunch or did without. Most of us had lunch to take. Outside I can't remember any playground equipment. We girls drew playhouses in the dirt and made different rooms and boys would get help us get rocks to line that part, ya know, we played jump rope and tag and things like that. Then uh. I had some teachers that I know did the best they could I cant remember a single teacher that was harsh or unkind. But uh... I don't know why I was so unprepared to go on because I made good grades. But in the 6th grade we moved to little rock and I was in a very good school district then and I had to catch up and my folks help me catch up and I was able to.

[3:02]

Hansome:

And did you have any jobs while growing up?

[3:06]

Rollins:

Oh yes, I helped my dad in the grocery store until I needed to earn a little more money than he could pay me. So I babysat a lot, and then as an older teenager I got a job at JC Penny company and worked there to help me get my money for college.

[3:30]

Hansome:

And where did you go to school?

[3:33]

Rollins:

I went to: one school was called Riverside school(that was my elementary school) , I went to West-Side junior high, and then I went to the very infamous Little Rock Central high school, but it was just little rock high school then... None of the problems that were shown existed when I went, but it was very sad that things weren't taken care of many years earlier. And I knew this and I didn't feel comfortable about the whole thing. I can remember. But uh, because we had customers in our little neighborhood of every race, creed, background you can imagine. And so I was just accustomed to everybody of many nationalities and backgrounds and skin color, but then uh, WWII changed a lot of that. But after little rock high school I graduated from there and went to college at Blue Mountain College in Mississippi. It was a girls' school then; its co-ed now. It was a Baptist school, and I got my degree in elementary education there.

[4:47]

Hansome:

You mentioned that WWII changed the race relations... could you... [interrupts]

[4:55]

Rollins:

Everything, yes. Because, then, men of all races went into service and it affected my own family in that two uncles were called into service. One cause he had been in the reserve and he was a hospital administrator, so he did his service at Scottfield, Illinois— yes it was Illinois. And then the other, even

though he was married with two children – in WWII that didn't exempt you from the draft. So he left and was sent overseas and was gone. It's bad enough now in the Iraq war when the men only get to come back like once a year or something, but they stayed over the duration of the war unless they had a medical disability; but, so he stayed the whole time. One of my vivid memories was when the war was over (I hope we get to it later because I remember those days so well, because by that time I was 13) We had heard he was going to be discharged, he was coming on a bus from Fortsmith, Arkansas. And our whole family went down to the bus depot and waited, and waited, and waited, and I shall never forget his taking my aunt into his arms and holding her because they hadn't seen each other for about three years, And the little boys were three years old and she had had to take care of them herself. As many parents are doing these days. But uh, very very vivid memories.

[6:33]

Hansome:

Going back to WWII, how did you first hear about the war?

[6:39]

Rollins:

We had come home from church, and we often ate with my grandparents who were still living in Little Rock. I was still living in North Little Rock. But we would come from church and, uh go home and eat at my grandfather's house. The whole family would come in and some of the family got there before we did, and we walked in the door and they said: "Listen to the radio." President Roosevelt was on the radio saying we had been bombed. And it was just unbelievable. We thought we were just invulnerable you know, that nobody could bother us. And uh, the Japanese Ambassador was here at the time talking to us about peace and everything – and then they bombed Pearl Harbor. It was just so scary and unreal. I was nine and uhm, that's all anybody talked about– we hardly ate talking about that– and then very quickly my uncles were called up for service. So, then my one Aunt went to her job took her to St. Louis. Another Aunt moved to Hot Springs, Arkansas. So all of a sudden our family was – we had all lived together in the same area– and all of a sudden everything changed for our family.

[8:00]

Hansome:

And you're basically speaking on how that affected your life, I know we spoke about rations and things like that, could you go more into that?

[8:09]

Rollins:

Yes, since my father was the owner of this little grocery store, he was responsible for what we call rationing. Customers, everybody in the United States had a ration book, and it had little stamps in it and you had so many stamps for sugar, so much for coffee, so much for canned goods. I think there was a separate book for gas 'cause gas was rationed. But I'm not too sure about that because I wasn't buying gas myself, and I never paid attention if my folks pulled out a separate ration books or not. But if you used up your ration points, no matter how much money you had, you could not buy those products. So he had to handle that; not only take the money from the customers but be sure they had enough stamps, Then he had to keep those and turn those into the government ever so often- I'm not sure how that was handled, I wasn't old enough to pay attention to it. But...things changed a lot. My father became one of the- I don't know if you call them wardens or what. But

We put blackout shades on our windows and he had to – at certain times they would test everybody with sirens, to make sure everyone had their blackout shades down – so he would go around to make sure no lights shown. We were never threatened inland in my city.

[9:36]

Hansome:

So, you had [to use] the blackout shades frequently?

[9:39]

Rollins:

Yes, yes uh huh right– all through the war. Some people who couldn't afford the shades just put up black tarp or something to block the light. Incase the planes came that close and were looking for lighted areas– because we were very near a military base, and they didn't know what might happen next.

[10:04]

Hansome:

Do you know what military base it was?

[10:08]

Rollins:

Uh, it was at Camp Robinson out of North Little Rock.

[10:11]

Hansome:

You said everyone was speaking about the war, did you have a radio or a TV?

[10:17]

Rollins:

Yes. Well, no TV it hadn't been developed yet. I'm sure it was being developed but nobody had them in their homes; I mean I never even heard the word TV until after the war in 1945. We drove [pause] Oh I forgot how many miles when my uncle got one in another town to see it and it was all snowy and everything [laughs] and I thought what is this? But we listened to the radio all the time for the news, because at first the news did not go well. We were losing islands, we were losing so many men, we were retreating, and then at one point it changed and we saw the difference. But I can remember, when I was, it must have been the 1st year of the war, I was skipping rope out on the concrete sidewalk that my father had outside the grocery store, and all of a sudden I thought “what if they win?” ‘Cause by that time we had declared war on Germany too, so we were fighting on two fronts. To think “what if somebody should come that we don't know and take over our towns and my dad's business...it was very frightening. I wish I had talked to my folks about it, because they could have made me feel secure and safe and say they'd be there to take care of me. But I never thought to mention that to them. But I could remember that day vividly as if it were yesterday; how afraid I felt.

[11:47]

Hansome:

So you were afraid, but do you feel like your parents...kind of, you know.. [pauses] sheltered you from, since you were younger, from not making it seem as though things were okay?

[12:00]

Hansome:

Or, could you tell that they were just as frightened?

[12:03]

Rollins:

I think I saw their concern. But they didn't act scared; not the kind of feeling I had— and I don't know where that came from— maybe from hearing things on the radio, I'm not really sure where it came from. 'Cause I just assumed when the war started that we would win. But then one day when I knew from hearing the radio that things were not going well, that's when I thought, you know, "could it be possible?" But of course then the tide turned and we began to have more hope.

[12:31]

Hansome:

And did you notice a change in where you lived, in terms of people moving in? I know a lot of places saw an influx in the population.

[12:42]

Rollins:

Oh, yes. Lots of military people. My father worked closely with the Salvation Army and the USO. Young fiance's would come there to get married and there was no place for them to stay. Hotels were full; military people were coming in. So my mother and dad would fix up a little room — I think they would put me in their room, I can't even remember how we did it because we lived in our apartment above the store. Most of them were married and then came to store and we showed them their room and they got to stay that honeymoon night at our house. There was one time they came and said "we want to get married but we're not married yet." So dad got the Chaplain from the base and he came down and married them in our front room. I remember my mother taking her apron off in case they took a picture. Oh yes, and I went to see this aunt and uncle that were in Illinois during WWII. The trains were packed with servicemen. You would have to wait a very long time and often you couldn't get a seat because it would be so packed because of the war and troops going back and forth.

[14:09]

Hansome:

And do you remember hear about or leaning about the Japanese Internment?

[14:17]

Rollins:

Yes yes, there was one in Arkansas. And I just didn't understand that, because the German people were not interned, you know. And I went to a girls' camp in the summer time and they let the girls from that Japanese internment camp come down, and they looked well nourished and fine. So I felt that they were being well treated. They entered in with us [pauses] and all of them to my knowledge spoke English because you see they were citizens. It was a tragic thing and not handled as it could have been, but I guess I was too young to understand all of that.

[15:05]

Hansome:

So if we could just go back. And kind of describe just a typical day during that time.

[15:14]

Rollins:

Alright. We'd get up and go to school. It was always one of the teachers or volunteers at the opening of the school selling war stamps. See most of us didn't have enough money to buy a war bond all at one time. But you could buy the stamps for much less, and I don't even remember how much they were. But you had a little book that you bought this stamp, and when you put it in there and then when you had enough you could turn it in for an \$18.75 war bond. My family bought bonds – but that was my school experience. Going to school, of course our teachers didn't do anything to frighten us, you know, about the war– but they would mention it We wrote letters to servicemen. And I remember a friend who didn't have anybody in the service... so she wrote my uncle and I wrote the other. They became good friends and remained [kept] a good friendship until he passed away not too many years ago. Then coming home, often we took a little red wagon and we went out and collected hangers, little metal hangers and I think newspapers because they wanted to turn them in for the war effort. I don't know if they melted the hangers down and used them for munitions, I don't know maybe there was a shortage of paper like there was everything. I don't know about recycling, and I don't know how they were used. So we did newspapers as well as hangers, so we'd turn those in and [pauses] I can't think of what else my family saved but I know that that was an effort – where you saved a lot of things and turned them in because there were so many shortages.

[17:15]

Hansome:

And uh, you were mentioning I guess doing those things for the war effort, do you remember anything else that maybe your family did or that you noticed others doing contributing toward the war effort?

[17:28]

Rollins:

Well my dad as I said worked for the Salvation Army and the USO. Every sunday night he went down to the USO building– he had an hour to entertain the troops. He did guessing games, he had a sense of humor; he told jokes. I often went with him, you know. The salvation army was helping people that did not have enough or needed to contact members of the armed services and they didn't know how. Because many of the people that came to my dad store, many of them didn't read or write, so he would help them with these things. I remember that very vividly as a part of my growing up. Another thing – I don't know if this will fit in– but one thing that people did when they lost people they would put a little gold star in their window so you knew that that family had lost somebody in the war. It was so heartbreaking to see two or even three stars sometimes. Usually the service did not take than three young men of that age, but I I know there was a story about the Sullivan boys, where I think four or five of them went down on a ship. So they insisted and volunteer– I don't know how, but they lost all of those boys. That was very... [interviewer interrupts with next question]

[18:58]

Hansome:

Was that like a story told frequently?

[19:00]

Rollins:

Oh yes, yes.

[19:02]

Hansome:

Could you elaborate a little more on the story?

[19:05]

Rollins:

The way I saw about it, to give me something to do when I was old enough, my mother and daddy would drop me off and take my little brother and we'd go to the movies on Saturday afternoon. They always showed a news clip— like we would see on television today. They showed the mother and father of these boys and the ship they had been on. I don't even remember what sea it was in the Atlantic or the Pacific [pauses] but you know, you could just not imagine the depth of their sorrow.

[19:47]

Hansome:

And I know you mentioned your dad and his efforts toward the war, [rambles] what about your mother?

[20:00]

Rollins:

Uh, well mother, she was helping those young couples that came to our church. I know she belonged to the auxiliary of a church— I'm not sure what it was she was doing, unfortunately I didn't pay that much attention to that sorta thing. But, I know that she helped a lot of those young service couples during those years, and supported my dad in all that he did; with the USO and Salvation Army and being the warden and everything.

[20:33]

Hansome:

And while you were at school do you remember if the war was talked about, just among your peers or your teachers?

[20:46]

Rollins:

Yes, mhm. Our teachers didn't talk about it a lot, but it was certainly was mentioned. As I mentioned that effort of writing a serviceman in our English class, But you know, we did on the playground. Two of my closest friends their fathers were in the Navy. My dad was too old to serve, I was— my mother and dad married late so— I was a late in life child, so my dad was not called into service. But I can remember their feelings about their dads being overseas and how concerned they were about them and missed them so much. One of them lived right across the street from me and I saw the struggles that her mom went through with his being overseas. They didn't get a whole lot of what they called allotment— they wife back home got some, but it was hard for them. Now my aunt who was a single lady, she worked as a volunteer — and I mention that move to Little Rock

because at one point, my grandfather died– that home where we would all get together in as family. But during the second world war, my grandfather died and there were two single sisters of my mother and they didn't feel that they could keep up the utilities in that house. We were living in that tiny apartment, the four of us over the grocery store. And so they asked if we would move in. My mother would run the house and cook in the evening, and they could continue to work because they both had jobs. But at one point they each had to move during the war because of their jobs. But that made a big difference in my life, and [pauses] I forgot my train of thought and about how the changes came...

[22:56]

Hansome:

Okay, Well do you think you could elaborate just a little more on your Aunt?

[23:02]

Rollins:

Oh yes, that's what I was getting to! So this Aunt, she was living there, and so she was very active at the Y–M–C well first it was the YMCA before they built us a YWCA. At that time they had dances for the serviceman. She went down and helped serve coffee, donuts, and goodies. She brought a lot of them home and we met them. And we'd always think, "is this finally going to be the one? You know, her real boyfriend?" But then they would move on and she'd meet somebody else. By this time I had an older cousin who would come over and stay with us sometimes. We had the doors at the top that had a clear window on them – so when they were closed you could see into the other room. So we would shoot airplanes into there when she had those dates and of course she was so mad at us! But we met some nice young men that way, but they moved on and she didn't marry one– she married much later. She did work a lot in the war effort in the evenings; entertaining the troops.

[24:17]

Hansome:

And did you, besides working in the store, did you get another job during this time?

[24:22]

Rollins:

No, no I was too young. See, I was 13 when the war ended. Now, I babysat a lot during that time with neighbors children right next door.

[24:24]

Hansome:

And those families that you babysat for, did they have men that were in the service or women that were working?

[24:40]

Rollins:

I don't think – well yes, I think they woman was working, she definitely was. I don't know why her husband was not in service, I really don't. That was never mentioned. I took care of the children at times. But [pauses] I'm trying to think about any of the other neighborhood children. I would go over to the house of one place, but he was maybe not of the age for military.

[25:20]

Hansome:

Did you notice any changes in the working conditions? I know you said your father worked in the grocery store; he owned that. [Maryann agrees] Did you ever notice any change, when the war began to pickup— any changes or struggles with that?

[25:37]

Rollins:

Well of course it was a chore to, uh, try to keep supplies on hand. The ordering became more difficult because there was a scarcity of a lot of things. You wanted to give your best customers what came in but that wasn't fair particularly if somebody came in the store before another customer got here, and I remember dad strugglin' with that. And there were shortages of men to do these jobs, and so women took over many of those. And one of my best friends mother she went to work I think in a factory, but I don't know what she did but I spent a lot of time with her— and I never knew what it was she did. But her mother, I don't think, had worked outside the home at that times, So those were changes— because the moms then nearly all stayed at home.

[26:40]

Hansome:

And did you notice where you lived, was there a more positive reaction to a lot of the women going to work... or do you feel like it.. [interrupts]

[26:50]

Rollins:

I guess I wasn't involved enough, 'cause my mother worked in the store from the time they bought it, since I was a baby. My dad had actually lost his job in the depression prior to the war. He and my grandfather took the little savings they had— because int hose days most people saved a little money— and they bought a few groceries and rented a storefront. They didn't own the building, but they owned the store so-to-speak. The thing I remember the most was the difficulty in getting supplies, but we had two other women who came to work when my mother couldn't work. We had a lot of customers but they were older people, or women with children whose families were affected by the call-up and the draft. So we had a lot of customers in that store. Saturdays were very, very busy. I worked in there when I got old enough to run the cash register and that sort of thing.

[28:01]

Hansome:

Did you notice anything that was bought frequently at that time? (you said you got a lot of customers)

[28:09]

Rollins:

Well of course people wanted sugar and that was hard to get, people wanted coffee and that was hard to get, people wanted canned things, so much of farms their produce was going toward service men which was right and so that was hard to get.

[28:32]

Hansome:

Okay, so going back to the beginning of the war – Could you just kind of, you know, speak on uhm, maybe [short frequent pauses] how you felt as it continued to progress. I know you said there was a time when you really felt “ what if we lose” could you go on from that point when you noticed things started changing.

[29:00]

Rollins:

Yes well– I don’t think people generally ever gave up hope. I didn’t hear anybody else ever express that phrase, “what if we lose” that was what I got. But uh, people maintained hope, they were positive, they were so patriotic. We really were one nation striving for this awful thing that had happened, not only to us but particularly the people in Germany that were being annihilated. But that didn’t come out until close to the end of the war; that we knew anything about that horrible thing going on. But there was real patriotism and we didn’t talk politics much in those days; we really just wanted to win the war and bring our boys back and have some peace in the world.

I don’t know if you’re going to get to it later, but I remember very, very vividly V and D day.

[30:04]

Hansome:

Yes, sure. Go ahead with both of those.

[30:05]

Rollins:

My aunt– this ant I told you that worked so much at the USO and was very involved with that– she was even more– or she talked about current events even more than my folks did. Maybe they didn’t want to scare me, maybe they saw that time I got scared, I don’t know. Of course we discussed that– at our table there was discussion every night, but she was the one that had such an intense interest in it. One night she woke me up and said: “Maryann, D-day has come.” That’s the day we were invading Europe. She said, “come in on my bed and we’ll listen to the radio.” When I went in her room the lights from the airport were swishing all over the town to announce this. Because this really meant, you know, maybe the beginning of the end of the war. And ooh, we listened, I don’t know how long we were awake. That meant so much to me that she knew, and I think that she created in me, a real interest. My folks they always voted and we always talked current affairs and everything but I guess she was closer to my age, because she was younger than my mother. We both lived upstairs; she was in one bedroom and I was in the other and my little brother in another. But uh, that was so so vivid to me. Of course we followed, we did lose many men., and we advanced, and then on into Germany. I think it was a day in May, I was at home cleaning house– my mother was working in the store– and I had the radio on, and they said this may be the day that Europe is freed, and that there would no longer be a war in Europe. I don’t– I remember so vividly when the Japanese Ambassador, or Emperor, or whoever came aboard that ship and signed their declaration that there would be no more war– and I don’t know. Maybe that’s something I should look up about what papers were signed. You know, because Hitler disappeared... But I do remember cleaning house and listening to the radio...and finally they said it’s over. The war in Europe is over. And oh my, the celebration was so great. But of course we were still fighting the war with the Japanese. Then of course I remember the day they announced setting off the atom bomb.

[32:09]

Hansome:

How did that affect you?

Rollins:

Oh.. I didn't know what it meant. But that was a great discussion in my family.

[33:17]

Hansome:

How old were you when..?

Rollins:

Let's see 13, when the war ended at that time. But I remember my aunt saying, "if that saved the life of my son, then I say why don't we try it because look how many years we've been at war." Because we're losing hundreds, and hundreds, and thousands of men. Then somebody else said, "but is that right to do that?" But they had been warned. Leaflets had gone out all over, begging the people to put pressure on their Emperor and leaders to stop it, because we didn't want to have to do that. But there was no effort made to establish peace after that until they dropped the bombs. I remember the day very vividly— a cousin had come from out of town and my mother had taken us to the swimming pool, and over the announcement from the place we showered and changed came the news: "The war with Japan is over" and just, the swimming pool exploded with water and everything. I just couldn't believe that after all these years, this war, this terrible terrible war was over.

[34:40]

Hansome:

So how did the city or, I guess your neighborhood or the environment change... [nonsensical rambling] how did that change?

[34:52]

Rollins:

Well that night my Aunt— whose husband was still overseas— we picked her up and those little boys and people went downtown and just drove up and down the streets and the town honking horns and cheering and waving. She was crying because we knew that he would be coming home and was safe, and that was great.. And then you know the men began to come back from the war and for a while we had a higher rate of unemployment because women had taken those jobs and factories closed down that were making munitions. My uncle who had been an administrator at the hospital, he came home one day and said, "I put in a lightbulb, that's the only thing they could find for me to do." He was very discouraged. I remember thinking, oh, that's not fair he served his country all these years. But he got an offer to administer at a hospital some place else, so they moved. And as I told you, my aunts by this time had moved. Our lives were just very different after the second world war, then, instead of getting families together we had to drive or take a train to see them. So families spread out. Some of the women quit their jobs, some of them continued on. It was just very different. One of the things I didn't mention that was so sweet to me during the war (I should have put this in; I made some notes before you came)— but our family were regular church attenders. A lot of servicemen that came from the base or were without their families. On Sunday night, the older teenagers (and I'm sure some of the younger women that were twenty or twenty-one) would have a fellowship light for the servicemen. They would eat, and play games and sing songs. At the end we'd all join hands with them— because some of them didn't know if they'd be there the next day; they could be shipped out— and we'd sing this song "Oh Don't Go Away Without Jesus." Whatever

anybody's religious background is, the meaning would be: have some hope, some security; we may not see you again here. See, I wasn't quite 13 then— and those older girls really resented our coming and finally told our parents not to bring us [laughs] that this was their time— but that really impressed me. I remember standing there holding the hands of those young men, thinking... [pauses] “they could be shipped out and this could be the last of their life.” it was an awful feeling. But things did change after the war, very, very much. For my dad's situation, the big stores began to come in then; in my town, I think it was Safeway. He could not make a living doing that.

[38:13]

Hansome:

How soon did that happen after the war?

[38:15]

Rollins:

It was quite a while. He struggled on for a long time, but he was losing money. My mother told me that she was worried about him because he was depressed that people were going to the bigger stores. There was so little income. In the meantime, she had gone to work. My brother and I were both out of the home. He was in college and I had married so.. [pauses] she was working as financial secretary in the church, which was a paid position. So their lives changed as a result of the end of the war, because the grocery store wasn't making enough. Neighborhoods became settled; people and families that had been crowded together now families moved away and then they began to go the bigger stores. I remember a little boy came down to ask to borrow our delivery bicycle (‘cause we had a bicycle that a little boy, after school, would use to deliver groceries to the people— ever since dad had opened the store) And he said, “my mother says Safeway has potatoes on sale, and she wanted to borrow your bicycle to go down [laughs while speaking] and get the potatoes that are cheaper.” We all laughed about that. But eventually he did have to give up the store, and it broke his heart. He went to work for one of the Quickstops like Magic-mart, or 7-Eleven.

[39:50]

Hansome:

So do you think he had any resentment towards that since all those big stores started coming in after the war? I mean it was a positive thing for

[40:02]

Rollins:

Yes, (finishes statement)...for the population in general. I think personally my dad took everything very personally. He felt a failure. He felt that if he could have worked harder, if he could have done better at something, you know. My dad was the hardest working man I knew. During the war years some of the people even at that time in the neighborhood did not have, uh, refrigeration... and so dad would open the store Sunday mornings so they could come get their milk and meat; things that wouldn't spoil, you know. He had a good heart so he was working 6 and half days a week and then we'd get to church. But uhm, no he didn't [referencing resentment toward the bigger stores]. We often would think, you know, why didn't dad go down and apply at Safeway or whatever — he could have managed one of those store, he could have had a pension, he could've worked shorter hours, he wouldn't have been responsible for the profit and loss... but dad loved the contact with people. He loved those people so much. There was one man that was in the county hospital; not the same race as my dad, but dad loved him. He had had both legs amputated. Sunday afternoons, the only free time my dad had, he would fix up a little box of goodies of cookies and crackers and things take

it to the county home and visit him. He loved the interaction with people. And he always thought that if he got in a big situation he wouldn't have that, you know.

[41:31]

Hansome:

And going back to how things changed after the war, do you feel like the men who couldn't get placed into jobs –because now women had taken over a lot of those jobs– do you think that they held any resentment towards that? Did you notice any of that?

Rollins:

I really didn't know. I just would imagine that they did, because they wanted to work. I don't know that they blamed the women. I think they just couldn't understand maybe the country's situation. Here we've sacrificed. But then the economy turned and the 50s were not a bad time. I married in '55 and my husband was a freshman in college. I'd finished my degree and was teaching school. He could find a part-time job anywhere, you know. So that, just in my own experience, by that time the economy had changed so that I think– I don't remember talking about unemployment. I was just mainly concerned with my husband getting through school [laughs jokingly].

[42:35]

Hansome:

Did your husband at the time, did he serve or did he have family that...?

[42:40]

Rollins:

He was in the Korean war. See that came next. And my generation was the Korean War generation, and he had served. In fact, I went to Alaska to teach school when I finished college and he was in the Air Force. He was the crew chief on the F89 D Fighter Jet. And uh, we met at church and we both had the same goals; we were both going into missionary work, and so we fell in love and married. I taught school while he went through his college in seminary. But, you know, the Korean War... it wasn't the same feeling. Before (in the second world war), any man that wasn't in service – when you saw him walk down the street you wondered “what's wrong with them?” I can remember there was a CIA man who could not – they probably called it something different, but that's all I can identify it with– and so he had on civilian clothes so you couldn't tell people that he was working hard for our country. And so there was resentment against him, and that wasn't fair. There were others that probably had physical or mental handicaps, we didn't know, but we always thought “why aren't they in the service?” because you knew they were the age. But in the Korean War there was kind of a joke, if they can get out of it -get out of it, you know. And yet, most like my husband and others felt like we have to help stop communism and North Korea's gonna go into South Korea if we don't get over there, so you know it was a mixed feeling.

[44:20]

Hansome:

So it seems you experienced two different wars, so would you say that WWII had more of that emotional impact? (since you seemed much more frightened and everything)

[44:36]

Rollins:

Mhm, yes that's right. Before I met Don, I had a boyfriend who was in Korea and we wrote

regularly and he was in the war so that impacted me in a way. But it was different. It was different because this [WWII] threatened our world. And that's what I think we're afraid of now, you know with the nuclear situation.

[45:03]

Hansome:

Going back to the – since you mentioned nuclear situation– dropping of the bomb, Do you remember when you heard that [news]? How you felt? Were you aware of what that really meant?

[45:17]

Rollins:

Well, as I said, in my own family there were two different opinions. And I didn't know who was right, you know. I didn't want innocent people to ever get killed. But I knew thousands of our people were still getting killed and would continue to get killed because they [the Japanese] were determined not to give up. And an invasion would have probably caused the loss of many more lives. It's hard to know. But then on the other hand, I know I had a relative that said that's something we should not do. I just thought whatever brings this war to an end; that was my feeling.

[45:55]

Hansome:

And uh, also I know this going way back, but I wanted to bring up again if you remember hearing about the Holocaust?

[46:06]

Rollins:

Not until the very end of the war. We just had no idea that was going on. There evidently were reports going on toward the end of the war and I've read so much about that. I'm just fascinated in an awful way, you know, about reading about that. It's hard to believe that whole generations of people were wiped out. Of course I've read The Diary of Anne Frank and many books [beings referencing another book about the Polish being invaded]. It was, you know, when we began to hear about it, we just couldn't believe it. During those early years I knew nothing about that, except that Germany had attacked out allies and that since we were at war with Japan, we should go in and help England and France and those.

[47:17]

Hansome:

So it wasn't in the newspapers or anything like that?

[47:23]

Rollins:

No, it want until after the war. Not that I knew of it, but I wasn't much of one to read the newspaper. My dad read it from cover to cover every night – I don't know why... but I listened to the radio and they might have talked about it. But certainly right after the war we began to hear these reports as our men went through Germany as they went to these camps. It was inconceivable that this had gone on. War is a terrible thing, but that stopped that. You know, there's not ever a good war, but there's a time when you have to – just like in our Civil War– where you have to fight for what is right.

[48:10]

Hansome:

So after you found out about that, was it ever brought up in school? Did you talk about it with your family?

[48:22]

Rollins:

Oh yes, yes. All of my family was just horrified. We really were, We just couldn't imagine that having happened, in what we thought, even then, was a civilized world... we didn't know this was going to happen. Oh yes we discussed it in school and how terrible it was and you know we read books about it. [Pauses] It's a horrible, horrible part of the history of our world.

[49:12]

Hansome:

And were there any of your friends at this time that were affected by that aspect of the war?

[49:12]

Rollins:

No, no. I remember my aunt's family were Jewish and, uh, she said to my aunt one day – we didn't think anything about that then; it'd be like, okay they're Lutheran, or they're Jewish, okay. But she said that their daughter had been taunted at school – and this was after the war. And I couldn't believe it. I thought, "Haven't we learned about living with everybody" you know, I just couldn't believe it.

[49:56]

Hansome:

Was there anything else you feel that you've left out, or that you would like to add?

[50:03]

Rollins:

Let me look over my notes. I think you have asked nearly everything I wanted to share and had written down here. [reads off various discussed topics]

Oh, we had a victory garden. During the second world war. Everybody was encouraged to do that even if you'd never had a garden. Because fresh produce on the farms needed to go to the men in the service; and you needed to provide your own fresh fruit and vegetables if you could and share them with others. There was no yard where my dad's little store was, but there was a tiny plot of at the gas station across from the store, and my dad asked, "can we grow a victory garden?" And they said, "oh yes!" It was very small, about the size of this room. So they did, they planted vegetables in that. So I remember victory gardens very well.

[continues reviewing previous points of discussion]

[51:27]

Rollins:

Yes, okay. I think you've covered most of the things that I remember.

[51:33]

Hansome:

Well thank you very much

[51:34]

Rollins:

It's a privilege. I'm just glad. I like to write, evidently I am not that good because nothing I have written has ever been accepted. So one day, I thought I should just quit— you've gotten so many rejections, just quit. But then I thought my children and grand-children need to know these stories. My husband and I raised them in Alaska; we lived there thirty-five years. But they were young, and they all grew up there until they went off to college. But I thought, they need to learn these early stories about our life in Alaska, you know, something that they don't remember. So I've made myself get back to the computer and write those down. When I was doing this review for you, I thought of things that they don't know about. I have shown them the ration books, you know, and talked about family situations. But this sparked my memories. There are other things that they need to know about. So you've inspired me to get back to the computer and do some of these for them!

[52: 42]

Hansome:

That's absolutely wonderful!

[52:49]

Rollins:

It's been my pleasure.

[52:50]

Hansome:

Mine as well, thank you very much.

[52:51]

Rollins:

You're welcome.