

Interviewer: What is your name and your maiden name as well?

Watts: My maiden name was Daisy Simpson.

Interviewer: And when and where were you born?

Watts: I was born in Ashland City, Tennessee February 9, 1930.

Interviewer: So do you have any memories of during the depression?

Watts: Yea it was still going on when I started school and I started school when I was five. I started to school in September when I was five and then I turned six in February. They didn't care about what age you were then if you wanted to go to school you just went.

Interviewer: Okay let's pause this real fast. Okay so we were right at you were talking about when you started school.

Watts: Yea I started school in 1935 and February of 36 I turned six so I was like a year ahead of some who didn't want to go. If they didn't want to go they didn't make them they just stayed at home.

Interviewer: Okay was there anything during the depression that really stuck out during that time period that kind of defined it for you?

Watts: Well honestly we didn't realize because everybody was in the same shape. We lived on a farm my daddy farmed, raised tobacco, we raised everything we ate.

Interviewer: Do you want to go downstairs we can do this downstairs. So you were saying?

Watts: Dad raised tobacco, corn, wheat they took the wheat and the corn to the mill and had it made into flour and meal. And about the only thing we ever had to buy was sugar and coffee. We raised hogs, all kinds of meat all winter long. Momma raised chickens we had our own eggs we had cows that we milked and had our milk and butter. And we traded at this one little general store in the community and he carried everything that you need. And they bought material and made our clothes, they bought overalls for my brother and shoes and they bought kerosene for the lamps we didn't have electricity until I was twelve years old. And we had no running water and we were just self-sufficient. And Momma also canned everything you know that we grew in the garden and everything. We never did go hungry that's for sure.

Interviewer: So what were you doing right before the war?

Watts: Just going to school. I was eleven we were still living on the farm we were going to school. There was eight of us and let's see I think five of us were in school.

Interviewer: Do you remember what you were doing when Pearl Harbor got attacked?

Watts: Yes we were visiting relatives in Nashville over on North First Street. And some kind of alarm went off up town and everybody was trying to figure out what was happening. And I it was my uncle went down to the little restaurant right below that house and they had a radio on and they said Pearl

Harbor's been bombed. And there was people crying and going on and all the young men around there were going down the street to enlist in the army. I remember that so well. Anyone that was 18 had to register for the draft and then they drafted them as they pulled up their number. And we were over there playing at my aunt's house I remember just like it was yesterday.

Interviewer: So when the war started how did your life change within the first few years?

Watts: Well the first thing that really changed was the rationing. You got stamps to buy gas you got stamps to buy your shoes you got stamps to buy your sugar. And the way they did that they allotted you so much for each person in your family. You could not trade stamps you could not sell them. Of course they did a lot of people did. But you got one pair of shoes a year and if you were farming they had A, B, C, and D stamps for gas and the ones that were farming got the most that was an A, A stamp. And then like if you had to go to Nashville to work you got a B stamp. People just had their car or truck for recreation they had Cs or Ds they didn't get much. But just about everything was rationed.

Interviewer: Did you participate in any scrap drives?

Watts: Yes we had a flagpole in front of the school and we had a scrap iron drive. And I never will forget people came down the highway rolling big ole metal wheels and plows and everything. And we had it all around the flag pole in the front of the school. There's no telling how much we had there.

Interviewer: Where did you guys send it off to?

Watts: There was somebody came and picked it up I don't know who it was. Someplace picked it up.

Interviewer: Were there any war bond rallies?

Watts: Yes and we had for children they had little books, I'm trying to think of what they were called. But you put dimes in little slots and when you got \$18.75 you could buy a \$25 war bond and in ten years you could get \$25 for it. But I never did get a book full, we didn't have any extra dimes.

Interviewer: Did you or did you know anybody else that planted a victory garden?

Watts: Everybody did everybody had to.

Interviewer: What is a victory garden?

Watts: Well you raised what you ate and they had places in the county it was in a building some empty building and they brought these big commercial canners in and you could pick your corn, tomatoes, beans, whatever you had to can and you could go there and the people in the community all pitched in. Like we took some everybody would come help us and they canned them in tin cans in this big like a cylinder you know rounds. And you could put a hundred cans in there at one time. And everybody did it and they had all the canned stuff and ate it. And if our family went eight or ten more family come and you know shucked corn whatever we were doing.

Interviewer: So what are some of the most profound memories you have during this time period during the war?

Watts: During the war? My brother had to go. See my daddy was in World War I. My brother went in 43 and he was sent to Italy. And everybody around there had somebody nearly who was in the army and if they were just in the army you got a blue flag about this big a square with a white star to hang in your window. Okay if they went overseas they got a red star now wait a minute. If they got killed it was a gold star there's a song about the gold stars in the window. And there was several young boys' right there within walking distance of our house that got killed. But my brother made it back home and his cousin was over there and about everybody around there. We had some cousins who were twin boys their names were Otto and Hugo Perry and they had to go and both of them got killed. They were second cousins to us. We didn't know them very we wasn't very close but we knew who they were and visited sometimes. But both of them got killed and they were just 18 years old.

Interviewer: Do you have any other memories during that time period?

Watts: Any what?

Interviewer: Any other memories during that time period?

Watts: I remember we went barefoot a lot. And I remember they came out with artificial sweeteners for the first time and they thought it was great. You had to go to the store and buy saccharin and sweeten our tea and coffee really because you run out of sugar. And I remember that my cousin was in the air force and he came home and he had something about the size of a pencil. Of course we were a lot younger than him I was probably about 13. And he said look what I've got and he gave it to us we passed it around and twisted it and everything and it was plastic. That was the first plastic that we ever saw and he had brought it from the army with him. And he said one day they are going to be making everything out of plastic. But he brought that in that was just a curiosity we even took it down next door and showed it to them.

Interviewer: During the war did you have to how did you cope with not having elastics?

Watts: You used a safety pen.

Interviewer: Safety pen.

Watts: Yea you couldn't get tires or inter tubes and Daddy would patch them and patch them and patch them. And when you started out on a trip you knew you better take the patching kit with you because well they had cards to get tires too I had forgotten that. But Daddy just had a farm truck so he got a good he could get more than a lot of people than you could just for a pleasure car or something.

Interviewer: So what were you doing and where were you when you heard the war was over?

Watts: I was in my front yard right down here where the Southern Baptist Church is in Pleasant View and a Methodist Church is on the other side of the street. And they began ringing the bells up there and we were all out in the yard and everybody was running out in the yard and they were yelling the war is over the war is over. And that's all I remember about that, I remember everybody was very happy. And my brother came home now that final he got out, he got home and saw his baby for the first time. His wife was expecting a baby when he had to go overseas. And when he come home the little boy was scared of him and he cried and we told him to go shave his beard off then the little boy he was just happy to be with him.

Interviewer: So what did you do after the war?

Watts: After the war I was still in high school. And I started I started the 12th grade I entered met him, and we got married and he said I could go back to school and the rules then was that a married person couldn't go to school. So I finally got my GED after I had children. I'd like to have gone back and graduated I still keep in touch with some of them there's not too many left. There was only 38 graduated that year since we were in a small school over at Ashland City. And I remember my grandmother Roosevelt started something called WPA.

Interviewer: Work Progress Administration.

Watts: Okay they leased a big field right across the street road just a gravel roads then. From my grandmother's house and they planted it all in beans and these people would come out there and work all day long in those bean fields chopping out and then they'd come back and pick the beans. And my grandmother was a very very generous lady I mean she wouldn't let anybody go without. And she'd get in there and make a bunch of bread and stuff and up in the evening she'd call them and tell them to come over to her yard and sit down under the tree. And she'd get them a glass of ice water and this homemade bread she made it with whole wheat flour. That's another thing you couldn't get white flour they didn't you know refine it. And it was just luck if you got a sack of sugar. We made it fine though we didn't have nothing before and we didn't have nothing after so. We just everybody was in the same boat back then. And I know we went to church at a place about a mile and a half from home and we walked. Daddy never would go Momma did and she'd take us kids. And we'd walk a gravel road out to New Hope Church and we took our shoes off well we didn't even put them on and we walked until we got inside of the church then we'd sit down on a rug or something and put our shoes and socks on. We had to save our shoes because you wouldn't get any more you just got one pair a year. And that's why you had to save just everything that you could you know. And daddy said we haven't got it too bad said you should have been around during World War I. See he was in that he was in France he said that was really bad.

Interviewer: Is there anything in particular that you learned during this time period that you've kept with you for the rest of your life.

Watts: Well I kept one thing with me you're not going to be here forever, you never know when something like that's going to happen again. And I know that there was a lot of politic-in my daddy was caught up in that you know working for this one and that one and that Roosevelt got elected the forth term he was the only one that ever did. And my daddy got out and worked to get people to vote for him. And you had to pay poll tax you had to pay \$2 to vote. And the campaign manager would give daddy a bunch of money and he'd go around to these people most of them illiterate and the black people and he'd give them \$2 to go vote for Roosevelt he'd pay their poll taxes then he'd give them an extra dollar. So they bought votes back then just like they do now. And he'd take us and we'd nail signs on trees Roosevelt and I forgot who was his vice-president but I remember working for them. And I think I believe I was still in school high school when he died because they rung the bell you know and that meant everybody come to the auditorium. And they made the announcement and one girl jumped up she said yay, she was a republican. She said now my daddy will get to come home and the teachers they jumped all over here for doing that. They said it don't matter who it was that died you never rejoice but she did she jumped up and slapped them hands like that and said yay daddy will be home. And after school everybody you know nearly had all the teenagers nearly had them some kind of job that we went to. I worked at a restaurant up here at Pleasant View from six at night until six in the morning for \$2.

And just taking anything you could get to help out at home. And my sister went to work at Alco where they made the airplanes. But she didn't work because it was Val T back then she didn't work where they made the planes she worked where they made WAC uniforms that was women's service. And their soldier bags and she's probably still got one of those shoulder bags. But that's where she worked and went to school too. Because they run it like 24 hours a day. She'd leave school and go out there and work until 10 o'clock and come home.

Interviewer: Okay so you weren't necessarily friends with them at that time?

Watts: I knew who they were but I mean we wasn't you know friends. But they had 15 children and Cecil, Otto, and Hugo all had the same birthday. And they were just like triplets you know and their daddy made him work like just pitiful how he worked those boys. And they all got mad one day Cecil, Otto, and Hugo went to Springfield and joined the army. Well they sent them to Nashville for their physical and Cecil was just barely 17 and he passed and the two old boys didn't. And he got he had to go to the army and they didn't. But he stayed almost three years most of the time in Germany and he tried to re-enlist after we married but they wouldn't take him because of his hearing. And they took him the first time you know and his hearing was perfect. But he said he would have made a career out of it if they would have took him. And his brother did the younger brother he stayed 28 years. But he's the only boy left now out of eleven.