

Riggins: Did you see his interview with me?

Interviewer: No I tried to get a copy of it but he couldn't find it at the time so. But this tape is going to be a part of the Kiwanis. Well your name is Marie Riggins is that correct?

Riggins: Uh huh

Interviewer: And you were a school teacher in Clarksville?

Riggins: This is my home I am a native of Montgomery County.

Interviewer: So you've lived her all of your life?

Riggins: Except when I was in grade school.

Interviewer: Okay

Riggins: I was going to school and I was going to school when World War I began.

Interviewer: Wow I was curious about now you were a school teacher here in Clarksville during World War II.

Riggins: Well first my first teaching I taught a semester at Western in Bowling Green because I finished my undergraduate work at Peabody in December. And they needed a teacher in Bowling Green and I had had a professor who had a good friend in Bowling Green too and he was from Peabody. So he interested me in that job and I went knowing that it might only be for one semester. Because that teacher was on leave of absence for business. And then I didn't work fulltime the next school year I worked some in Nashville in the Department of Education grading teachers _____. Back in those days we had many teachers who did not have degrees.

Interviewer: So you were at the normal school in Bowling Green?

Riggins: Well I was sort of mixed in between . I had some students who had a class or two in regular college then I had one girl who had something in ____ School. Also in normal school so what I had was sort of a mixture. I had I had my classes were not typically large. As age groups I had average high school kids and I remember well one lady I had and one day she came, I knew she was older than the others in the class, and one day she came to me and apologized because she did not study the night before because her little grandson had been very sick so ____ and various other things but very pleasant. Then I came back here and taught eight years in the only four year strictly county high school at that time that was in the community we know as Southside. It was the forerunner of Montgomery Central High School.

Interviewer: Oh wow

Riggins: But it was right in the center of Southside.

Interviewer: What year was that ma'am?

Riggins: That was 1932 I believe. Then I came to Clarksville High where I had graduated and taught there for 30 years. Then they built what I call the monstrosity on Richview Road. I didn't think I could take that for another 30 years so I went up to Greenwood Junior High and taught 7th grade Social Studies. But it was very much it was history very much like World History which I really enjoyed teaching.

Interviewer: Well you and I have something in common ma'am. I am going to be a history teacher and I would love to teach World History. So we have a little bit in common.

Riggins: Well now there are a number of things about World History that makes it kind of unique. I don't know I didn't know when I was teaching and I don't know now of anything in high school where you get a view of various facets of life. When I taught World History we studied the great artists the great musicians I don't mean entertainer but I saw to it that students knew the names of Russian diplomats and French artist. And I even had some little pictures of _____ that I was able to collect and show them some of the great architecture.

Interviewer: What was it like during World War II as far as first of all what was the opinion of Franklin Delano Roosevelt when he first came into office? Were people very confident in his leadership?

Riggins: Everybody was very weak the depression had hit October 29 I mean it hit hard in 1929. And Herbert Hoover I suppose as an engineer he was a brilliant man _____. But he didn't seem to have the view or something that was necessary for being president at that time. Roosevelt had been _____ in New York. The average person before Roosevelt ran for the presidency knew his name. Because many people at that time until _____ Roosevelt was president. So they were acquainted with the Roosevelt name. Franklin Roosevelt's wife was the niece maybe of Theodore Roosevelt. So it was the family and

Interviewer: Were the average people confident in Roosevelt's leadership?

Riggins: They did after a while because about the second or third day after he went in office he and his I suppose his secretary and treasurer and people who advised him to declare a bank _____. Every bank in the United States was closed. And they would not open until there could be a rather brief examination before there was any money going to solve the _____. And we had at that time we had state established state banks they opened the national banks and they all worked very hard to get an overall view of how that bank was financially. And for better than a year Roosevelt went into office you picked up the paper particularly in Nashville and it was not unusual to see where the president or vice-president of a bank that had committed suicide.

Interviewer: Wow

Riggins: Just more than they could handle. And we had four banks in Clarksville. We had Federal they were like this on the corner very close together here was First National here was Northern Bank no this was Clarksville National this was Northern and then here was First National.

Interviewer: First National

Riggins: Clarksville National and First National were our two national banks. And we had two state banks First Trust and Savings Bank and Northern Bank were state banks. And I don't how many _____ we haven't I never counted.

Interviewer: Had a number of them.

Riggins: Yeah they were just everywhere. And then I guess all four would be considered reasonably conservative. Clarksville National Bank was quit conservative. The president was a very conservative bank official. People I guess didn't worry too much about his investing money carelessly. He was a very fine person. We didn't really get very brave in our bank investments and all until a number of years later. The bank which is right across from over here I have grown up in that bank. I've been going to that bank 70 something years. It started out as First Trust and Savings then it became it's never been national I don't think. Then it became Commerce Union.

Interviewer: Commerce Union?

Riggins: Uh huh

Interviewer: Interesting

Riggins: And then you know affiliated with different banks. Then it became Sovereign then C & S Sovereign then Nations Bank then the last time looked it was called Bank of America.

Interviewer: Yeah they have I've heard the banks here have switched names many times.

Riggins: And then all four of our banks opened just as quickly as the bank examiners could check them. And that was very unusual.

Interviewer: So Clarksville was ahead of the game?

Riggins: Yeah and the bank officials were being easy my father was real active in just you know every day affairs in the county. And I've heard him say many times that one of the bank presidents said right after Roosevelt was elected said he would think he would help us. It was implied that he would help us and there was a feeling of confidence began to be you could just kind of feel it _____. And then but they didn't they didn't get rid of ____ for a long time. And then one thing Roosevelt had with him in his cabinet maybe not all of them were very solid Cordell Hull _____. And then there was a Wallace that was Secretary of Agriculture _____ and they began to build up training to go to countries. We have a lot of this and you have a lot of this now let's swop some of it. It was getting rid of some surplus commodities. We came up with some rather odd swops but farmers and business people began to feel real secure.

Interviewer: Did that continue all the way up to World War II? Was that a growing?

Riggins: We didn't really come out of the depression until after. We made a lot of strides but the United States being out of the war as long as it was we played with those countries at war.

Interviewer: How did the people at the time here in Clarksville view the war that was going on in the late 30s between Germany? How did they view Germany's actions against Poland? How did people around this area think about the war and involvement in it?

Riggins: Well I guess they felt that see there had been World War I and we had a lot of people who had been soldiers in World War I. And Montgomery County was largely a farming area beautiful farms in

Montgomery County, Christian County Kentucky all up in there. And selling wheat, corn, and ___ we began to build a pretty good life before we actually became involved in the war. We had some _____ which we _____. And there were some we were involved in and actually had some planes. I remember going to Smyrna Air Force base in Nashville the area of Smyrna and seeing I don't remember how many planes but they were camouflaged. If it hadn't been a very ___ Sunday afternoon I was going to _____.

Interviewer: What about the attitude toward of the people toward the involvement in the war? I know in the late 30s we started to move toward that direction.

Riggins: It wasn't

Interviewer: How did people perceive the conflict in Germany were they upset about it were they wanting to be involved in it or were they?

Riggins: I guess some people did but as I say there were many people still living around here had been to fight Germany once.

Interviewer: Were those people the veterans were they hostile towards going back again?

Riggins: Well you see that Sunday afternoon that Japan bombed Pearl Harbor they didn't leave much choice.

Interviewer: Before that time was there any attitude of I know that we had taken a position of mutuality in World War I before World War I had taken place.

Riggins: Well we were maintaining to some degree a position of ___ before World War II. I suspect that many people from the United States _____ serving here because late that afternoon after word got around that Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. I heard people say we are going to whip Japan _____. _____ myself and he looked at me kind of like where'd you come from.

Interviewer: So you actually taught high school during that time?

Riggins: Yeah

Interviewer: What were your experiences or your impression of the beginning of the conflict? I know that

Riggins: It was kind of numbness I couldn't really read to my history class Monday morning. And we listened to Roosevelt's speech and I think for a good while probably we just I don't know how to say it except it was sort of ___ they attacked us. Now we had followed particularly teaching history and all and people who knew quite a bit we followed the reaction and news. I guess some of us kind of thought _____.

Interviewer: Do what now?

Riggins: Got to help Brittan again. They were something else. But on the other hand Great Brittan was there as a protector between us and _____. They really were. And I suppose the average person

certainly didn't _____. We knew quite a bit about the Germans and the Dutch because we were the _____.

Interviewer: Clarksville?

Riggins: Clarksville and Springfield and Hopkinsville we had Mr. _____ on the farm his family I don't know all that German party in from Germany. But he was very active and in World War I I think Mr. _____ here and went back _____. The children were born here because he married sometime after World War I. Mr. _____ . And some of the children were pretty good _____ at least one of them was real physical like his father. But Mr. _____ stayed here and when I see that working _____ who would make us _____ you know these Germans. But he was popular enough that he people who see things like that run from probably. As I knew it because he was the only boy with an education. And then we had one man from I guess he was from _____ lived here Harvey lived over by Mr. Arnold's son and his wife.

Interviewer: Arnold?

Riggins: Uh huh it's the name Arnold. But when Mr. Harper lived and his family you know where the old high school is that's now apartments on Greenwood?

Interviewer: I don't recall that no.

Riggins: Well that opened about 1920 early 1920s. You can see it from Madison Street.

Interviewer: I believe I think I know where you're talking about.

Riggins: Now so diagonally across is a two story good size with red brick that is the Harper place. The Harper place that's it everybody knows that's where Mr. Harper lived. And then on Madison there's a two story brick on the right as you go out the Dooserman's built that.

Interviewer: Dooserman

Riggins: Dooserman they had two other two daughters. One of them is still living but she was Mrs. Harry _____. And they had two daughters and one of them married a Russell. A lot of these families that name is no longer there because they had daughters.

Interviewer: Were you on the rationing committee during the war?

Riggins: Yes

Interviewer: What were the items that were rationed during the war?

Riggins: Well it was sugar and I can't really recall exactly how it worked but we had sugar and gasoline and meat and coffee and tires. If you didn't have pretty good tires on your car you were out of luck. You were kind of what did they call it _____ well it was just you know. And when we first went to get new tires we had been accustom to rubber tires with a certain amount of give to them and those things were just hard. And oh lots of things were rationed.

Interviewer: How did this rationing committee work here in Clarksville? Was there a station it was brought to or?

Riggins: See that's been over 50 years ago and I'm not sure I remember it too accurately. I know there was no question when I was asked to be on the rationing committee that I would be permitted. Just _____ last week of class.

Interviewer: Were the people resentful at the time to contributing to the war effort through there rationing?

Riggins: Very little

Interviewer: Very little?

Riggins: Uh huh it was something that you might hear something like I wish I could get more of this ____ but then my son _____ or my son is too young to _____. It was a lot of it that you heard of people that didn't have it tough but some people had it tough. I remember at the time that I grew up what is known as Dover Dotsonville and we had my father had a farm there let's see three miles off Dotsonville Road I guess. _____ that was something that's where I can recall it then up from the river bottom that's where he had wheat that kind of thing. Then my grandparents on my momma's side lived on the old farm and they had a pretty good farm there. But their corn crops would not be equal to what papa would have my father would have. And it was just my mother died when I was quite young and my father did not remarry until I was in college. So I have three half-brothers and a half-sister. And _____ difference and

Interviewer: So were you the oldest of the

Riggins: What

Interviewer: Were you the oldest child?

Riggins: Yes and I was the only grandchild on papa's side for 25 years.

Interviewer: What happened in your public school during the war did the classes run in normal order?

Riggins: Yeah we kept our schedule there would be some of the boys who would drop out of high school and volunteer. If they wanted to be sure they got into a certain part of the service they might volunteer. But many boys went through twelfth grade in high school and then they were drafted.

Interviewer: Was the general opinion of the time that people should enlist that young boys should enlist or was that really an option?

Riggins: What?

Interviewer: The attitude at the time if someone had not enlisted into the military how were they loved upon? If they were an 18 year old teenager who had graduated high school and was staying around the community?

Riggins: Well I guess it was a general feeling I wasn't I was close enough to high school boys who were approaching into and I'm sure they were _____.

Interviewer: How did the public view that at the time?

Riggins: Well if you went to a market and talked to anybody they probably were ____ of those who had boys in the service. Actually I suspect they were _____. But you didn't hear they might have talked about it around the fire but outside. Now in my father's case when I was in high school and his only sister who had been _____ - married kind of late in life then he sold that farm down on Dotsonville where __ River bottom is you see. Then when he remarried he had a small farm out in _____ area. And it was tobacco, wheat, corn and I remember now let me see Camp Campbell there's some creeks. There's Westfork Creek but they wanted an auxiliary supply of water. And like it went straight out this way you would come to Fort Campbell area _____. And it was _____. And they wanted them coming from Camp Campbell straight on because they wanted it to look _____. They _____ somewhere out here where you cross into Fort Campbell. But then when you go to St. B when you go out to Rossvie Road right here is _____ -- and right over here is Red River again there's a little loop there. And they wanted to have an auxiliary water station Are you acquainted with what they call Old Russellville Road?

Interviewer: Old Russellville Road

Riggins: Alright papa's farm right here's the Co-op there's a road goes over here Old Russellville Road and our farm was right here.

Interviewer: Oh wow okay

Riggins: And Red River was right over here.

Interviewer: I have some friends who live in that area.

Riggins: And when they were ____ out ____ Old Russellville papa did not own any of that because what he had was between Russellville Road mostly and the railroad a little bit across the railroad _____. So when they were wanting to get land to have an extra pumping station auxiliary ____ I don't think it was ever truly used but they did pump it to be sure it could be used.

Interviewer: During the war back here in Clarksville what were the biggest concerns on the mind of people as the war was waging on in Germany? Back here in the home front what were the big concerns that people had on their minds?

Riggins: Well I'm sure the rations would be a big concern. No question about it. And papa gave the government the right to come across his land _____. Because he said he did not have sons going into the service and that would be his contribution.

Interviewer: Interesting wow. Was that a general attitude most people had?

Riggins: I really don't know I don't know of anyone else. But now _____ but you had to use a strip on each side of that ditch and that pipe so we would get in there and see if he could see and water would go through and all that. You didn't give them a great big field you gave them what they said they

needed. And they would have ever so often they would come in the field and open up that cap and water would come shooting up. To know the pipes were clear.

Interviewer: And you taught high school during that time you taught high school.

Riggins: I never taught the few times I had some ____ in some of the school. But my regular teaching was always in high school.

Interviewer: What was just what was your opinion of the war in Germany at the time?

Riggins: Well you'll have to remember that that was the second war I could remember with Germany. And _____ having fooled with Germans. World War I had _____ naked with the murder or _____. And we had been one of the strong _____. I guess the average American now there were businessmen who _____ do quite well. But as a whole down to the average American some of the _____ World War I. Now in World War II well communication was so much better. And more people took newspapers that I'm sure the ____ felt they knew a lot more about the war World War II than they did World War I.

Interviewer: Interesting

Riggins: And it involved I some regrets for some of the people who had to fill out the questionnaire that little pamphlet that was in World War I. And many of them who worked for my father kindly helping. Because it was quite expensive _____. And I can remember some things _____. And one of the things that as a little kid I knew is _____. One of them would go to work for my grandfather sometimes. I don't recall any of them ever working for my father _____. But you would have to know kind of how funny this was though it was a serious thing. They had _____ and probably some of them had never been in a doctor's office much less having a physical. I'm talking about your body was being judged whether or not it was strong and fit to go to war. And some of them didn't want to go to war and I wouldn't have either. And they told this doctor I knew him well _____. I suppose this black man was about in his 20s married and had maybe a couple of children and all the time this doctor was checking him this man was telling him what was wrong with him. So finally and some of these things were really true. So finally he said doctor I ain't got no teeth so the doctor looked at him and said they want you to shoot them they I don't want you to bit them.

Interviewer: That's funny

Riggins: Every now and then something crazy like that would go on and no question it happened.

Interviewer: Ma'am our time is being short but let me ask you this. Toward the end of the conflict what was your attitude when you heard that we had defeated the Germans and that they had surrendered. What was your attitude toward the Germans at that time?

Riggins: I suspect basically I probably thought I hope we did a good job this time so we won't have to do it anymore. But what we knew about the Germans was so much more than what the average person knew about the Germans. And some of the things that the Germans did it's very hard to sort of _____ they were we say a Christian nation. And we didn't consider this _____ not as many of them were Christians as the European people that church was very strong in Europe. And I seen some of the places I remember one place _____ Germans had that's what they said _____. They had captured a lot of

the ____ and they lined them up this sort of ____ and shot them and they fell in and they were buried right there. I had a girl one time ____ if it was anything going on ____ was going to know it. And the class loved Beth to share with them what she saw, her father may have been the Chaplin. I'm not positive about that but I believe he was and so as soon as the fighting actually started the Chaplin was in high offices _____. And people were living there and you went in this ____ and you got whipped you go out and find you another place you don't live here. And Beth _____ Beth would be talking about how when she was just out on the street somewhere and went up to these German children and they said _____ was a lot better than she was. But if she went with her father to a house they would be so _____. Now whether Beth exaggerated I don't know. But ____ when that was going on Beth was _____ and a parent as much as I could sort of check on here she was living _____. And some of the others I had would tell about knowing somebody who lived in these place _____. And they'd go out in the garden somewhere and find and dig up these boxes that they had buried and there is these things connected with Hitler. I tell you you turn loose a group of high school boys and girls and it's going to get around some of them are going to find it. And I we had a number of people who came over here and I never really decided _____ - nut they didn't ask me. We'd get some from keratin communities in Germany ____ - who wanted to go over to some other farm. _____ that we would get to know them and if they were not very bad _____ well we had some who were very discreet about how they said things and all. But I got _____ young man and he began to _____ how the German had been mistreated and it didn't go over well.

Interviewer: I bet not.

Riggins: It didn't go over well at all and I talked with the boys and girls _____.

Interviewer: What year was this?

Riggins: Huh

Interviewer: What year was this?

Riggins: Well it was along about 46 or 7 sometime after the war was over. I had one who just well even if you had a ____ or a friend _____ the allies _____. I had some in the class who thought they were pretty bad boys and I would see some _____ wanted to say something but the teacher said be nice so they didn't say anything. And then one time very soon after he left there I went out and I _____ and I said _____. My students _____ and they are just about going to tare you apart and they had ____ brothers, fathers and all. We had some conversations ____ talked about how scarce food was.

Interviewer: How what?

Riggins: How scarce food was. And how they didn't get much in the way of clothing and you would know that was true. But this presented the idea that it was our fault too we were over there and we did this and we did that and they didn't have this and that because we destroyed it. And of course TV didn't tell us much about the war _____. I love Egypt but they don't know how to build that pyramid so why _____ they did this and they did that. But I couldn't I saw quickly ____ the churches ____ that was bad.

Interviewer: In England?

Riggins: Yes in England and down in ___ there was a beautiful church there.

Interviewer: Now I'm really curious this is the last question I have for you. I was just wondering with all you've seen everything you've seen with World War I and all the time you've spent with people in your career and teaching what have you seen to be really important? I mean what satisfies you looking back over your life now that you've done? What are you really glad you did and what would you tell someone my age that is really important to give their time to at my age that will be valuable when I'm old?

Riggins: I guess I know kind of what you are asking me. _____ I tell you there has to be times when you feel that you have really helped at least a few other people. There are _____ I was a very strict teacher when I said _____ I meant _____. Now if had been me and something funny happened I wouldn't laugh I would tell them a tall tell or something. But you never quite know when you have a person in class and they seem to just be goofing on some of them are just goofing off but _____ maybe some _____. And you never know quite what makes us sometimes _____ I think of once person in Clarksville now I had in class that might have been _____. And they didn't seem to pay much attention was a good student now just not particularly interested and low and behold _____. He perked up _____. And I'm sure very strict as I was I missed a lot of opportunity that maybe I should have reached with students. But somehow a lot of students seemed to know that when they really needed something they could come to me. But to make a difference in a life and help them to lead a good life a full life. Now I'm not talking about _____ teacher makes it easy _____. But when I think about it as a whole it's very important that you use what you learn. And it's very important to realize that though I may not like _____ boys and girls _____.

Interviewer: Well ma'am I appreciate your time I appreciate it very much thank you. We'll go ahead and stop the tape.

Riggins: What's that's going to look like is beyond me.

Interviewer: I don't know if it will pick it up because of the heater going on. But I do appreciated talking to you I'm going to hopefully I'll be teaching here in the community too sometime soon here in the next couple of semesters so I'll have to let you know how it goes with that.

Riggins: I taught 41 years _____ it's very hard. I doubt if now as a whole this _____ support that we _____.

Interviewer: My wife talked about that she is a teacher and she says that same thing.

Riggins: And I know I'm _____ - but there is no substitute for the basic reading, writing, and arithmetic and not just absolute reading, writing, and arithmetic but having rather broad _____. And fitting thins together I guess in _____ the Japanese _____ -- now I'm talking about individuals they have to be super _____. To really like them I had met some of _____ people individuals that I really appreciated _____. I tell you _____ can be so hard sometimes it's hard to really and truly know and like some English people. _____. I could have rung her neck many of times when I think about how she _____ with her younger sister _____. Elizabeth supposedly loved Phillip _____ - they had a _____. Because I know something could happen _____. There are times I believe _____ but I don't know. I

admire those people _____ because I'm older and as soon as she got old enough _____ . Her grandfather took the starch out of her every now and then it's really interesting to me _____ her grandmother ____ . One time when he married Elizabeth _____ . And _____ Elizabeth said ____ who is this _____ . Her grandmother took her outside of there _____ they were leaving the service was over but she had wanted _____ . That Charles is a pill and one of those children _____ make a more decent _____ than Phillips.

Interviewer: I don't know too much about the monarchy of the time.

Riggins: The first time I ever ____ I was determined to see _____ I'd never seen that much ____ . And so _____ one story _____ . So late one afternoon I called _____ with those tall hats you know. And I looked into _____ I mean that was my background and I walked up to this one man trying to ask him for a time maybe for a chance maybe to get in to see the crown jewels. He was very sweet but he looked at me and said _____ can't you see how long this cue is? Why they call a line a cue I don't know I grew up thinking a cue was a Chinese ____ . So I looked at him and I said I would like to see the crown jewels ____ . I looked at him and said sir if it weren't for the United States you wouldn't have them and walked away. As I was going on down this little path I head these little hills click click click after me and this voice said ____ anything to get in to see that. I don't know if she was American or what she was she was slight build but I heard clicking so ____ . Now I always tried to _____ for me to come over there. If I want you to be courteous to me I should be curious to you it was their country if I didn't like that way _____ - I didn't have to go over there.

Interviewer: When did you go to England what year?

Riggins: That was 1967 I guess. But that's one of very few cases ____ . But in was so beautiful we _____ - we saw a better picture of the culture and we wanted to ask them about the school ____ . They wanted to talk about ____ this that and the other we would say I suppose _____ teachers who spoke English _____ and she explained it to us ____ . I said well I have met some people who were wonderful just and I met ____ and they asked me about ____ . Some ____ years ago after we went back I told the man I said ____ . And they took me _____ and she knew she had _____ and she became _____ .

Interviewer: Interesting

Riggins: And she died and I ____ letter _____ but didn't have much to spend and I wanted to see as much as I could.

Interviewer: Well ma'am this has been great you have given me a lot to think about and a lot to go back and show my class so like I said the only people who are going to see this are my classmates. Other than that there really is going to be no one who is going to see this.

Riggins: _____ the is _____ .

Interviewer: Yes Dr. Zieren he's actually going to watch this if you'd like to tell him anything.

Riggins: Watching now?

Interviewer: My professor is going to watch the video tape so he's part of the class.

Riggins: My favorite _____ all during the _____ was H.V. Cantenbrough. He interviewed he spoke German I heard him _____ not on TV but radio. And he stood and listened to all of that stuff and would understand it and it was being spoken in German. He was to be he was the best _____ he knew what he was hearing.

Interviewer: Interesting.

Riggins: He said that when _____ and someone walked around and looked _____.

Interviewer: Interesting very observant guy well let me stop this I think it has been going on.