

Mark Griggs

Interviewer: Let me get you to state your name for the record on tape here.

Mr. Griggs: Mark Griggs

Interviewer: Let me starts asking you how old were you at the outbreak of WWII?

Mr. Griggs: 11 year s old

Interviewer: So in 1939 you were about 8 or 9?

Mr. Griggs: 8 yeh born in 31.

Interviewer: Okay I'm just going to ask you a couple of simple questions and if there is anything you don't want to talk about that's fine just tell me so. What so you remember about the great depression?

Mr. Griggs: The depression was ruff on everybody people lost their homes and everything else. We had two houses we had property out in the country and my dad had a house in town and we had to build out there because we just couldn't carry up both of them you know. So moved out there because we put our business out there my father was an excavator.

Interviewer: Where did you live?

Mr. Griggs: Outside of Chicago a little town called Addison.

Interviewer: Bet it was cold up there.

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: I bet it was very cold up there.

Mr. Griggs: Cold and hot in the summer.

Interviewer: Oh yeh, I'm sorry what did your father do?

Mr. Griggs: He was an excavator he dug basements for homes.

Interviewer: How many people were in your family?

Mr. Griggs: I had two brothers.

Interviewer: Two brothers.

Mr. Griggs: That was it five all together though.

Interviewer: How old were your brothers?

Mr. Griggs: My older brother was born in 26 and my younger brother was born in 38.

Interviewer: Wow

Mr. Griggs: Five years older my older brother is and six years or seven years younger than my younger brother.

Interviewer: During the depression do you if anyone in your family was your father ever unemployed for a long time because of the great depression?

Mr. Griggs: No he was self employed so he had his own equipment and everything.

Interviewer: So he was pretty busy then?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Well that's good. So there was never you never had any problems about food on the table.

Mr. Griggs: No, we always did.

Interviewer: What about some of your neighbors?

Mr. Griggs: I don't remember.

Interviewer: Or extended family.

Mr. Griggs: I don't remember too many about the neighbors back then because we always had a big large garden we always had about ten acres of garden.

Interviewer: Wow

Mr. Griggs: We had plenty to eat all the time.

Interviewer: That's good.

Mr. Griggs: Yeh chickens, eggs, cow for milk and all that.

Interviewer: So you were pretty self supporting then you didn't have to have

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Okay before the war do you recall any thoughts from your family about any kind of threat of Germany or Japan acting before the war were they seen as a threat?

Mr. Griggs: No they were not though until Pearl Harbor.

Interviewer: Until Pearl Harbor right.

Mr. Griggs: The town we lived in was the German settlement so they kept close eye on it you know like they did we had House Mitchell for the big farm producer of orchids and had Japanese employees well so we had top security on that. But it was like in California they put the Japanese in camps of some sort.

Interviewer: Was it anyone that you knew or your family knew personally that was taken away from there?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: They just kept a close watch on them?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh they used to teach German in grade school for a year or two but then they quit that.

Interviewer: Wow

Mr. Griggs: During the war, that's about all I can remember about that.

Interviewer: Was there any talk in your classes or with your teachers about the war itself while it was occurring?

Mr. Griggs: No it well we had an indoctrination that was telling about what caused it and how Hitler got power you know. Because of after WWI we just quit and left it desolated over there and there was nothing for the German people to eat or anything else there was just poverty. So if somebody come along and told them anything that was a promise they would believe them so that's how Hitler got control from the common people said we'll give you land and you'll do this all the promises but if you don't have anything anything sounds good. That's what the inductor was telling us in this German town about. Why Hitler took over.

Interviewer: Not anything about Japan?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: They didn't see them as much of a treat at the time did they?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: What do you remember about FDR and how he handled domestic and foreign affairs?

Mr. Griggs: Well we figured he was the greatest President that ever lived.

Interviewer: There was a lot of support for him huh?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh well he did you know he had those little camps that they had to get us out of the depression. What was it I can't remember the initials for it the work camp.

Interviewer: The CCC

Mr. Griggs: Yeh all that and they built these trail for horseback riding and it would just give people work so when they got some sort of pay out of it anyway they were getting better use of it.

Interviewer: Did your father ever contribute to any of that?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: No so your family wasn't really affected by the New Deal Programs?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: No wow, do you know anyone that was?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: Do you remember the day of Pearl Harbor when it was attacked what was the overall feeling in your family?

Mr. Griggs: Just couldn't believe it you know it was just something from out of nowhere and then everybody figured everything was safe just a shock a shock to the whole world you know.

Interviewer: How did you find out about it?

Mr. Griggs: Just by the news radio.

Interviewer: The radio?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Was that was that how you found out about most of the advances going on

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Was the radio. Did you have telephone service?

Mr. Griggs: Oh yeh

Interviewer: You did. Did your family members play any part in the war effort?

Mr. Griggs: My older brother was drafted in. He had well he was supposed to be drafted so to avoid a draft he joined the Navy and minority crews if you joined before you were 18 you'd go into the Navy. And he wanted to go into the Navy instead of the Army so he just went ahead he was only a junior in high school. That's what a lot of people were doing a lot of them leaving high school doing that because they were drafting them right out of high school.

Interviewer: What did your father think about that him joining the Navy?

Mr. Griggs: Well my father was in WWI.

Interviewer: Oh was he?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh he was in the Navy. Navy family.

Interviewer: Yeh apparently you were in the Navy too later weren't you.

Mr. Griggs: In the Navy in the Korean War.

Interviewer: Right that's right. How when you were going to school how did your fellow students feel about the war?

Mr. Griggs: Well we in grade school there we kept up with current events of course everybody was concerned because they all had some relation that was involved in the war. And the teacher had a brother in there and I had a brother in there so we kept in close contact that way and current events and everything we heard.

Interviewer: How often did you how often get contact from your brother when he was in the military?

Mr. Griggs: He just wrote my folks was all.

Interviewer: Really

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: How did you what do you recall about the rationing systems when they were put in effect because of the war.

Mr. Griggs: Yeh well see we was my father was in construction so we had our own gas pumped and everything so we had plenty ourselves

Interviewer: You were set pretty good?

Mr. Griggs: We were set pretty good. We didn't hurt that bad.

Interviewer: What about some of your neighbors?

Mr. Griggs: A lot of them would have to not drive very much or anything but we had a bunch of equipment that we had so have gas for so to keep our tractors going and everything.

Interviewer: So was that allotted for you? You were allotted a certain amount?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: So were you an extra amount because of the business?

Mr. Griggs: Well yeh we had business ratings.

Interviewer: Okay I understand.

Mr. Griggs: So everybody else was rated A, B and C different ratings on gas for how much get. And then we just had a contractor had a different one so we could buy in bulk and everything.

Interviewer: Do you, here's something I didn't ever think of before, did you ever hear anything about a black market for items that were real scarce like eggs or anything like that?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh I've heard tale about it I don't know anything about it.

Interviewer: Yeh what have you heard?

Mr. Griggs: Well there was a lot of tales about when the gas was so much on ration that sometimes they would stop a tanker on the road and buy five gallons off him or something. I've heard tales I don't know exactly.

Interviewer: Did you or your family ever participate in any of the scrap drives collect aluminum or iron?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh we collected scraps sometimes.

Interviewer: Did your family ever buy war bonds?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh we all bought war bonds.

Interviewer: Really what do you remember about those?

Mr. Griggs: I just remember saving up and buying them.

Interviewer: Did you feel like you were doing the right thing?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh yeh put money where it was supposed to be where you could help some others.

Interviewer: Did you ever go to any of the war rallies the entertainment they would show for those?

Mr. Griggs: No we were out in the country so we didn't get involved in too much going on.

Interviewer: Did you feel kind of isolated from all of the nationalism that was going on because of the war?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh because you didn't have the coverage back there like you do now. Now if they drop something over there you know it right away but back then it would take awhile to get back to you.

Interviewer: So did it seem like news was getting to you later than

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Was any of your family service members anyone else outside of your family in the service?

Mr. Griggs: I didn't I was so young at that time. I had a neighbor that went into the service but our next closest neighbor was probably about four or five miles away.

Interviewer: Right tell me about your brother what was he doing in the Navy?

Mr. Griggs: He was in the what do they call it aphid he drove the coxing on a LCI a landing craft for infantry he was the first one to hit the beaches.

Interviewer: Was he serving in Europe?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: In the Pacific?

Mr. Griggs: The Pacific yeh he was in the Philippines invasions and Luzon and all that. And he just told us tales about the infantry didn't have nothing but k-rations and they had food aboard that ship and he would give them meals so they would have something good before they hit the beach and everything.

Interviewer: Right

Mr. Griggs: And that's about it I guess.

Interviewer: Was there any correspondence between anyone overseas between your family besides your brother?

Mr. Griggs: No just my brother.

Interviewer: What about your other brother what was he doing?

Mr. Griggs: Well he wasn't he was a baby then he was born in 38.

Interviewer: Oh okay I thought you said he was five years older than you I'm sorry.

Mr. Griggs: No he was five years my older brother was five years older but my younger brother is seven years younger than I am.

Interviewer: Got cha. When D-Day began how did you find out about it?

Mr. Griggs: Just by the papers and radio.

Interviewer: Was there a lot of excitement about it?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh it was pretty amazing nobody could believe it.

Interviewer: Was it kind of seen was there a lot of optimism about it like oh we're going to beat them now?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Or did it seem like

Mr. Griggs: We didn't figure anybody could take us.

Interviewer: Were there certain events that stick out in your mind that you heard from overseas like anything that your brother might have told you or news that came through?

Mr. Griggs: Just the dropping of the bomb.

Interviewer: On Hiroshima?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: How did you feel about that?

Mr. Griggs: Couldn't believe that such a small bomb could do such a huge thing like that you know. Don't remember the word atom being introduced before it was like atom was on everybody's mind then. Splitting the atom was something you never heard of.

Interviewer: Does that seem kind of I know since the dropping of the bomb there's been a lot of argument of that was the wrong thing to do we should have fought them in more conventional means. How was the

Mr. Griggs: Well I still believe what they said by killing by killing little bear saves lots of lives on both sides. As just fighting back and forth so it ended it quicker there was going to be so many lives lost anyways that was just the way they would eliminate killing so many people and destroying so much.

Interviewer: Here's an interesting one, did you ever hear any propaganda against Germany or Japan such as some of the some of the films or maybe newspaper ads about atrocities committed by the Germans or the Japanese?

Mr. Griggs: I head about their prison camps how they treated them how they killed the Jews off and everything like that.

Interviewer: How did your family react to that?

Mr. Griggs: Not pretty friendly about that. Then of course all the tales about that one woman in the concentration camp that used to take peoples bodies that had tattoos and she would cut the skins off and use them as lamp shades did you ever here that?

Interviewer: No I never heard that.

Mr. Griggs: It was gruesome.

Interviewer: Where did you here that one?

Mr. Griggs: Well it was just a story that went around back then.

Interviewer: Oh yeh. How was the reaction to FDRs death when that happened?

Mr. Griggs: It was really bad just like Kennedy's death you know just he was a great person and then to see him die it was too much you know for what he did for the country. Took us out of the depression took us through the war and everything he did quite a bit.

Interviewer: How were is that basically overall for your family?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh



Interviewer: Now I have more questions than this. How do you look at the warriors more than 50 years later when you look back at it how do you see it?

Mr. Griggs: Well it brought our nation together when we all chipped in buying war bonds the women went into factories and every manufacturer turned it over to military making you know like International Harvester made tanks and they used Cadillac engines in tanks and Jimmy Motors in ship and everything so just the whole country just worked together it was one being.

Interviewer: DO you see it as a really great how did you see coming out of the depression going into the war did you see that as well the war pulled us out of the depression?

Mr. Griggs: Well it helped a lot.

Interviewer: The industry?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh made everybody pulled together and change and everything.

Interviewer: Now you were telling me earlier the community was German mostly.

Mr. Griggs: They were all German.

Interviewer: And you said a lot of them were getting watched how did people react to that like people watching like your neighbors?

Mr. Griggs: It was just like the communist country feels like you know big brothers watching you. But there was no incidents or anything just actually the city was called Addison which is an old Indian trading center it's older than Chicago is and it was only about 920 and it was all Germans and they had all farms in there. Of course since they have sold out and its all industry and everything else back then it was just farm. So they watched them but they didn't leave and go in there.

Interviewer: Was there anyone in the neighbor hood or accountancies that were a suspect would you ever look at one of your neighbors and think hum?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: Pretty one everyone was alright just tried to stay that way.

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: Was there a strong feeling of patriotism in your area did they believe they were chipping in to help out?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh everybody was doing their best to take end the war you know like I say there was a whole nation like that everybody just chipped in and did everything they could.

Interviewer: How long was your brother in service for?

Mr. Griggs: He was in just a little over three years he had to come out before he was 21. So he got out right after the war was over then it just worked out that he got out then.

Interviewer: Good timing

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: He didn't suffer any wounds or?

Mr. Griggs: No

Interviewer: He was alright then that's good.

Mr. Griggs: His ship was so small it was the smallest ship that was allowed to go across the ocean. It was so light that when the enemy shot torpedoes at them they would go underneath the boat didn't even sink down after they did it.

Interviewer: That's lucky for him.

Mr. Griggs: Yeh could you imagine seeing torpedoes flying underneath you.

Interviewer: I'd be holding my breath. After the war was when soldiers started coming home was there fear of another depression?

Mr. Griggs: No it didn't seem to be everything was changing back over to civilians. All the factories stopped making planes and tanks and armored cars and all that but they had to convert everything over and then there was a big move for nobody had a car since 1941 so everybody wanted cars so there was mass production to get enough cars out. Cars were a premium then you had to take what you had during the war. So that's what they were doing then.

Interviewer: During the time when people started coming back was there a was there a desperateness for jobs when the veterans started coming home?

Mr. Griggs: Didn't seem to be seemed like they all came back in pretty good.

Interviewer: What about do you remember anything from the Cold War how did that effect your lives? Was it really a scary time? Like between 1945 and 1950.

Mr. Griggs: Oh no those were my good years in there.

Interviewer: What were you doing during those times?

Mr. Griggs: High school I graduated in 1950.

Interviewer: Where did you move on to then?

Mr. Griggs: You know I had a scholarship for teachers college and Uncle Sam said he had one for me that's when the Korean deal got to the heights then I had to go into the Navy.

Interviewer: Oh were you drafted?

Mr. Griggs: Well I was drafted in the Army but I joined the Navy before they got me. Yeh I was out in South Dakota ranching for awhile see what was going to happen then I just went and joined the Navy out there. And I spent two years in school in the Navy just one school to another.

Interviewer: What was your family doing then?

Mr. Griggs: They were still, I wasn't with my family towards the end, they was by that time my father was selling out and moving to Florida and he started to be a land developer down there.

Interviewer: Staying busy

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: What about your mother?

Mr. Griggs: Well she just stayed she did all the bookkeeping and everything for my father's business. Yeh he was the first land developer down there they used to laugh at him when he first started developing that land.

Interviewer: Really

Mr. Griggs: Then all of a sudden everybody's doing it you know just he was in the threshold.

Interviewer: How did your mother react to the war how did she take it watching her son go off to war?

Mr. Griggs: She didn't like that of course then she kept waiting for letter you know make sure he was alright. Then he was right in there in front of the invasions every time.

Interviewer: Was there a fear there was a definite fear of getting a letter?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh and of course a lot of the time there was a long delay before you got letters so.

Interviewer: Yeh so you wouldn't know. Did she ever have like a premonition that something was going to happen?

Mr. Griggs: No no she had faith that he would return and he did.

Interviewer: What was your most favorite and most enjoyable thing you can remember about during those times during the war or the great depression what stands out in your mind the most?

Mr. Griggs: During the war?

Interviewer: Or during the great depression right before the war.

Mr. Griggs: Well I don't recall much about that we had so much property and yard and everything I kept busy all the time. My father worked us 7 days a week sun up till sundown.

Interviewer: What were you doing?

Mr. Griggs: Well I ran a machine shop for him when I got to be 13 and we always had that gardens that we had to keep up all the time digging the hole and then the planting and all of that so you don't get a chance to worry about anything or think about anything when your working all the time.

Interviewer: And you were in school at the time too?

Mr. Griggs: Yeh

Interviewer: So you did stay busy.

Well I want to thank you for your time and I think that's about it.