

Pauline Edmondson

Interviewer: We are here today with Mrs. Pauline Edmondson. Mrs. Edmondson could you please tell me of your time during the great depression? How did your family manage during that time?

Edmondson: Well we raised our own food for one thing in the garden. And we had children that knew how to do for themselves and we handed down clothes from child to child you know that way we managed. And we had enough to eat had food stamps and everything so we managed to have enough to eat. Had a good time during that time.

Interviewer: What was your father's profession? What did he do for a living?

Edmondson: My husband?

Interviewer: Yes

Edmondson: He was a he worked at BF Goodrich Company during that time. And he retired from there 37 years later. He worked there 37 years.

Interviewer: He was able to keep his job?

Edmondson: Oh yeh

Interviewer: The entire time?

Edmondson: He went to Chicago and worked one month when they were on strike.

Interviewer: Did you feel the effects of any of the New Deal Programs or reforms such as TVA?

Edmondson: Well no not really. Of course the prices at TVA went up after that you know. And you don't know you're too young but anyway we felt that. It did go up the prices did go up of our light bills and things. So it didn't hurt us too bad.

Interviewer: What did you feel about FDR did you have any strong opinion about him?

Edmondson: No not really I thought he was a good President and he did the best he could with what he had to do with I think.

Interviewer: Did during that time did you pay much attention to what was going on overseas? Did you or anybody you know were they concerned about the Nazis?

Edmondson: No my brother was in the war and he served in Italy during that time. And he was really upset about the war but of course I had another brother in India at the time but they weren't too close to the Nazis or anything. My younger brother was in Germany for a while and I had friends in Germany.

Interviewer: Did you ever think that the United States would go to war with Germany or Japan before Pearl Harbor?

Edmondson: No I didn't I hadn't thought about it you know to that extent hadn't believed it would but it did, killed a lot of people.

Interviewer: When Pearl Harbor did occur were emotions high? Did it riel a lot of people up here?

Edmondson: Yes it did. It did a lot of people their emotions around here at that time.

Interviewer: A lot of young men in the community did that motivate them to sign up?

Edmondson: Yes I think so. Yes I had one friend that joined the Navy and some that joined the Army. And they felt the call to help the country.

Interviewer: Did now you worked for a factory

Edmondson: Yes

Interviewer: Here in town

Edmondson: Barnett Instrument Company

Interviewer: And what was your job there?

Edmondson: I wrapped wires with my fingers and I did several things I helped to pack instruments the home meters and when they were finished. They had several girls working there several people. And Mr. Barnett's family it was a family owned business he had a government inspector Mr. Bill Enwall who came in from Chicago and inspected the instruments. And we packed them and sent them to the different to New Jerky mainly to a place in New Jersey.

Interviewer: Did you work at that factory before the war broke out?

Edmondson: Yes

Interviewer: You did

Edmondson: Yeh I worked there 10 years.

Interviewer: When did you start?

Edmondson: About 65 and worked till 75.

Interviewer: And how much did you start off making?

Edmondson: Very little about a dollar and a quarter an hour. And we had to go to court to get a raise. Mr. Barnett was not a very giving person so he didn't want to give us a raise but we got one anyway.

Interviewer: Did there happen to be a union involved or

Edmondson: No we never had a union. They tried to get one there but we didn't vote for it.

Interviewer: How did you deal with your immediate supervisor and your coworkers did everybody get along very well?

Edmondson: Oh yes we got along beautifully all the girls and boys too men too. His son worked two of his sons worked there and Jim Brown a local boy man who was an inspector and Mr. Bill Enwall who was an inspector the inspector worked there. We all got along fine Mrs. Barnett and his sister Ruth Barnett were good friends and we all got along fine. Mrs. Ruth Barnett was a general his general advisor you know she was our the one who taught us what to do and everything. So we had a good time at Barnett's. A ten minute ever morning a fifteen minute break at a thirty minute lunch break and then fifteen in the afternoon. And then all during the day we had a good time.

Interviewer: Was there any mandatory overtime because of the war?

Edmondson: One night we worked until 11:00 packing home meters that had to be shipped out. That's the only night we worked really that late.

Interviewer: How was the community during the war with most of the young men gone? Did a lot of the women come out and join the workforce?

Edmondson: Yes most of them worked who had worked at Barnett's had people in the Army or Navy or something. Most of them farmed.

Interviewer: Did do you recall anybody loosing somebody close to them?

Edmondson: Yes Angie Bumpus lost a son and Sarah Carter lost somebody. Sarah oh I can't think of her last name anyway she lost a person. Then of course I lost my brother and there was several lost during that time. Sad time

Interviewer: How did you how did you hear about the war did you keep up with it in newspapers or the radio?

Edmondson: Both

Interviewer: Did you ever happen to go to the movie theatre

Edmondson: No

Interviewer: And see reels

Edmondson: I didn't have time I had children so I couldn't go to the movies much. I didn't like movies much.

Interviewer: Did you participate or did a lot of people in the community participate in the war bonds and scrap drives?

Edmondson: Yes we all participated in war bonds and my husband sold cans and scrap metal and everything. Yeh

Interviewer: Did you feel that you were actively making a difference by

Edmondson: Well yes I thought so we all did. We wouldn't have been there if we hadn't. The pay wasn't that good so we could have got better pay somewhere else but we felt like we were making a difference. And we got along so well with each other.

Interviewer: Did everyone seem to have a positive attitude towards the end of the war?

Edmondson: Yes

Interviewer: Did you think that the United States was going to achieve victory?

Edmondson: Yes we were sure of it.

Interviewer: Were you surprised at how long the war lasted?

Edmondson: Well yes kind of. Of course it affected so many people and we were surprised at the time that it lasted.

Interviewer: Did you feel that your quality of life before the war had changed during the war?

Edmondson: Well not really I don't think so. I think we all did the best we could with what we had to do with with what we had to do with and had just as good of a time as we could during that time. So I don't think it affected us in the least.

Interviewer: How did the rationing affect you?

Edmondson: Well we just had food stamps and went along with what we had and got enough to eat and everything. Of course we raised part of ours we had plenty. It did affect a lot of people though who had great big families you know and everything they didn't get enough they weren't allowed enough food stamps. But we had plenty to eat we were fortunate.

Interviewer: The people who seemed to not have a job or have income during the great depression when war broke out did they seem to be able to find a job. Were there many people

Edmondson: Some did of course they had conservation camps you know and they worked there some of them did so they worked some that wanted to work some didn't want to work.

Interviewer: I know some communities would put stars out in their front windows that had loved ones serving in the military did you see any type of that activity of individuals taking pride

Edmondson: Yes

Interviewer: Or individuals not being shy about knowing they had a loved one serving?

Edmondson: Yes right everybody that I knew that had loved ones in the service had stars in their windows. They were proud of it I was.

Interviewer: Compared to how you were before the war do you feel that you have become more involved in national or international affairs because of the war?

Edmondson: Well I usually read about it you know more and think about it more maybe because of the war. I didn't before read much about it before the war but I do now to see what's going on try to keep up with what's going on. It's hard to do.

Interviewer: What became of Barnett? Did it close down?

Edmondson: Well Mr. Barnett passed away and his sons couldn't run it and his wife couldn't run it they did for awhile but Mr. Barnett passed away and they just sold it I guess. It used to be on the corner of 5th and Commerce in Clarksville a warehouse type thing he had his business started there. And then he moved out on Guthrie Pike to a building out there a new building it was nice out there even had heat in it so it was nice. But we had good times at Barnett's always everybody got along real well.

Interviewer: How far way did you live from work?

Edmondson: Well now when I was on in town I didn't live very far I lived on Edmondson Ferry Road and that's off the bypass now. But I went Cumberland Drive and turned up through town and came out Guthrie Pike it wasn't very far either way.

Interviewer: How did you get to work did you walk?

Edmondson: In a car yeh I drove a car at that time. I had a good car the first new car I ever had I drove it to Barnett's. So I enjoyed that picked up some riders along the way.

Interviewer: Did you feel at anytime during the war that you had money but there didn't seem to be anything you could spend it on because of the rationing?

Edmondson: No we didn't have much money but of course the pay wasn't good and we just didn't save a lot you know at that time. But the rationing didn't really hurt us I'm thankful to say.

Interviewer: Did you or anybody you know did they participate in trading ration cards or trading stamps?

Edmondson: Yes some people did.

Interviewer: Looking back on that time now so you consider it to be a enjoyable period of your life?

Edmondson: Yes I do very enjoyable yes in deed.

Interviewer: Do you feel that there was a little bit more of a cohesion of a togetherness.

Edmondson: Yes

Interviewer: Than there was afterwards?

Edmondson: Yes I do we had good times we enjoyed each other had a real good relationship with each other family, community and all church and everything. Church meant a lot to us we went to First Baptist Church on 5th and Madison. And we had a good church life so we enjoyed everything.

Interviewer: How did the church participate in the war effort?

Edmondson: Well in different ways they made different things for the war and ladies would get together and make thing you know for the war everyone and just enjoyed working like that quilts and things.

Interviewer: Do you happen to remember any celebrities coming around during that time to do war bond drives?

Edmondson: Not really I don't remember any I don't remember any.

Interviewer: Did there happen to be anybody that you knew of or people that were members of the community whose loyalties were a little bit you maybe suspected they had some close German ties or Japanese ties? Anyone ever give the impression that maybe they weren't as patriotic as they should have been?

Edmondson: I didn't relay know anybody like that no I really didn't. Mr. Enwall who was the inspector was German but he didn't show any loyalty towards Germany.

Interviewer: Did you feel that the Nazis were the enemy and not the German people?

Edmondson: Yes defiantly there were good German people but it was done in Germany by the German people.

Interviewer: Was the did it seem like more people in the community were focused on the war in Europe as opposed to the war in the Pacific or did individuals have close ties to both?

Edmondson: They had close ties to both most did yeh.

Interviewer: How did you feel on VE-Day when victory was declared in Europe?

Edmondson: Happy boy everybody was shouting and happy yes we raise flags and everything put flags out in the front yard. Were just real happy the whole country was most people were.

Interviewer: And how did you feel on VJ-Day when the Japanese surrendered when the war came to an end?

Edmondson: Much better much better.

Interviewer: Was it after victory was declared did everybody seem to still have that positive feeling about themselves a sense of accomplishment?

Edmondson: Yes I think so I think they did most that I knew did.

Interviewer: And did anyone think that another war was on the horizon or?

Edmondson: No not at the time we didn't think about that.

Interviewer: When the war finally did come to an end and the rationing system eventually was taken away and war bonds and scrap metal drives stopped did you still hold on to that closeness that the community had? Were people still closely tied together?

Edmondson: Yes they were yes everybody was close nit they were close nit to each other.

Interviewer: Did the end of the war did it change anything at Barnett?

Edmondson: Well yes Mr. Barnett passed away and they sold the business.

Interviewer: I take it you feel a great sense of pride to have been a part of that time.

Edmondson: Yes I do I'm glad to have been a part of that time I'm getting older can't walk anymore but I was glad to do what I could. I was to be an American.

Interviewer: Do you feel that that your generation has a whole deserves all of the praise that we younger people are trying to research to give to

Edmondson: I think its good that you do that I don't know about the praise but I think you are doing a good thing doing it I really do appreciate it so much.

Interviewer: Well I thank you very much for this interview. Is there anything you would like to add or to say?

Edmondson: No not anything except I'm glad to be an American and a Christian.

Interviewer: Well thank you very much Mrs. Edmondson thank you.

Edmondson: You're welcome