

Virginia Harmon

Ms. Harmon: And I was born September the 8<sup>th</sup> in 1930.

Interviewer: Okay and where were you born?

Ms. Harmon: I was born in Defiance, Ohio at the Red Hospital it's a red brick building it's still standing here in town one of the early hospitals here.

Interviewer: Is this where you grew up in Defiance?

Ms. Harmon: I grew up in Defiance County I grew up in Delaware Bend actually where my home where my mother's home they had for 60 years there and I was born when they had bought that in 29 in the heart of the depression and I was born in 30.

Interviewer: The area that you lived in in say the 30s and 40s was it rural was it small town?

Ms. Harmon: Delaware Bend was a small village it was rural and in the 1940 in 35 my father my biological father was killed in a foundry and my mother remarried in 1940 and in 1941 we moved to Willard, Ohio. Willard, Ohio and my father my step-father which is a very wonderful man his name was G.R. Nutter and he was a carpenter and bridge foreman for the Chicago division of Broad born Hall Railroad. That's the reason we were at Willard which was a terminal tower as they called them back then.

Interviewer: So Willard Ohio. So what was school like where did you go to school at?

Ms. Harmon: Well I went to the Willard public schools I was 11 years old now we moved here in 41 and of course that was right at the time Pearl Harbor was bombed you know when they bombed Pearl Harbor. And we heard that on a little Zenith radio we had at home we had this little Zenith radio. And then of course the school told use explained things to us. And being a railroad town that's what Willard was they moved the troops through there on troop trains and as of today things were kept a secret. They might have maybe they were supposed to have been secret but they word came through the neighborhood troop trains coming and we'd jump in this 38 Chevrolet the lady that had it behind us her kids were my age and a whole bunch of us we got on that car and head for the depot down in Willard. And the troop trains would be coming in and we had what they called a mothers club to meet all of the troop trains they'd always have us bake ahead all of these cookies and things we made to give to the troops. And it was sad because of course they liked to flirt with the young girls but I was only 13 looked a little older. Those other people not just the young people but ought to meet the troop give them support it was sad because they were hanging out the windows waving and you knew that perhaps and lot of them would never be coming home. And they were such long trains they were made up of so many cars and they would just pass through and that's one of my memories as a young person.

Interviewer: Did you like school?

Ms. Harmon: I loved school, loved school I played in the drum core in the band and I was in Willard High School band and we moved back okay I'm getting ahead of myself. During those years between 41 and 45 when we moved back here we had rationing stamps shoes, sugar, gasoline just to name a few meat was rationed and that was but my mother would take care of that see again I was only 13 or 14 years old. But it's very vivid memories going to the store you would have to have your ration books in order to purchase anything.

Interviewer: Now you would have been pretty young during the depression but do you have any memories of that?

Ms. Harmon: You know Bob I really don't. I let me put it to you this way if I have memories there all good ones because I don't remember anything different from what the other people around us had see we were all in the same boat. Like I said at Delaware Bend it was a river river was the main source of our livelihood. My father was out of work for nine years but so was the neighbors Johnny Ventura and them they were all and so they clammed in the rivers out there we did a lot of fishing out of the river the fish were good then and hunting and that's how we made our living. But it was no different than the rest of the people around us and never going away anyplace to get out you don't know any different. And being a young child no I don't have any bad memories of it I found the difference when we moved to Willard though. I realized then as I look back you know my step father had this good job and he bought me a brand new drum and bicycles and I got we had all new furniture in the house and it was just different we had this new car which would have been a 38 but basically a new car. So I thought well gee this is different but as a child living down home here no I didn't really realize that.

Interviewer: Now your home in Willard did you have electricity?

Ms. Harmon: Oh yes

Interviewer: Did you have telephone radio?

Ms. Harmon: And two bathrooms and that was unusual you know. Yes everything was very very nice at that time and we I don't know we went to the movies twice a week we had season passes for the swimming pool we just lived a really good life in our you know how we figured we weren't rich by any means but we were well adjusted and had everything that we could have wanted then.

Interviewers: Okay you spoke with us earlier but what about Pearl Harbor how did you learn about that?

Ms. Harmon: On that little Zenith radio my mother had a little Zenith radio and it always stayed in our front room and that front was almost I would say like a Norma Rockwell as I look back and see pictures had the lace curtains you know this new furniture that we had a big piano with doilies around and then overtop of the these lace curtains were these ropes like that fit for the style that was decorative. But on here was atilt back chair and this little Zenith radio and that's where we listened to Art Linker's house parties way back in the 40s when he first started. But that's where we heard the news for the bombing of Pearl Harbor. But when VE-Day came I was in the study hall at Willard High School and they announced over the loud speaker that we now had victory in Europe the VE-Day as they call it.

Interviewer: So in school during the war did you discuss the war at all did your teachers talk about it or did you just have normal school?

Ms. Harmon: You know I really don't remember talking that much about it or hearing about it I really don't believe we did we just experienced due to the we had our football games things went on they weren't curtailed into that degree or anything. So the sad part there was some sad times I can recall there was a girl that I knew they lived in our neighborhood she lost her brother and when those Army cars pull up they knew what was happening and they had lost he was killed in action and about a month later or so that same car pulled up again and they lost the second brother in the war. So that was a very sad part there.

Interviewer: What do you recall about the rationing during the war?

Ms. Harmon: Just the fact that my mother used to do a lot of canning and the fact that the sugar was rationed because you made jellies and jams. But we had enough she made it with whatever we got and that's how we got by. I never I know the shoes were rationed but I had shoes so I don't recall you didn't go barefooted but you maybe you wanted more shoes than what your book you couldn't have gotten them but I never suffered anything from the rationing. Gasoline we would make trips from Willard back to Delaware Bend here on weekends sometimes once a month. And then when the gas was rationed out we curtailed a bit we'd go maybe every two months or so but other than that it wasn't

Interviewer: So you didn't travel much during the war.

Ms. Harmon: I traveled by train. Having had we traveled for free because we had passes that my father was able to get for us and we would come down here on the train. And coming from Willard to Defiance but so many times the trains were so crowded then and many times I sat on my suitcase in the middle of the aisle because service men many service people you know traveling back and forth so that was my biggest memories of that of the travel. But we didn't go far then we never went very far. My grandpa ran his story you know Fort Wayne was going to Fort Wayne was kind of like the Walton's going over to Richland Town Sheppard Richland in their when they refer to it on their television their going over to visit you know the relatives over there. But Fort Wayne was about the furthest and Toledo I got to Toledo and Willard we went by train from Toledo.

Interviewer: Were there any war production factories anywhere near by Willard?

Ms. Harmon: There were Bob but I don't recall because my father my mother didn't work outside the home and John was with the B&O Railroad there so I don't know but there were many of them.

Interviewer: Did you have any friends or relatives in service during the war?

Ms. Harmon: Wayne Vogasol is a cousin of mine there again he was in the Navy they took him in the Navy. I think Wayne was the only one the only one I recall right at that time there were neighbors but as a relative Wayne was the oldest one of our cousins so he was eligible to go into service at that time. Yeh he was in the Navy he was a radio man I do remember that.

Interviewer: What was the feeling in Willard was there a lot of support for the war and were there anyone

Ms. Harmon: Absolutely there was a lot of support people were very not like today with negative feelings about things. Everyone was behind them to support the troops like I said to support the troop trains when they come through we had war bond drives each neighborhood had its bond captain you know maybe she took in two blocks. I remember Willard had ran out of water and my father had to was in charge of getting water to take care of Willard. Hauling big trains of water and he made quite a lot of money that time so when she came through my mother took out quit a number of war bonds and out our neighborhood over the top you know which we were proud of. I remember the black outs our air raid warden was next door to us his name was John Russell civil defense they were the air raid wardens. But when that siren went off everything blacked out and you better be blacked out and the only time you'd see a little light might be his flashlight you know coming you know checking on things right. Everybody cooperated they really did I don't recall having somebody say oh why are we in this war like the Vietnam War that was such a tragedy for some people you know. But no we were all

Interviewer: What did you do for entertainment during that war did you go to the movies?

Ms. Harmon: We went to the movies a lot and there again when you were speaking about how did we find out things we'd go Friday and Sunday afternoon my brother and I. But they always had what they called a newsreel and that was you know the biggest thing since we did not have television we did not there wasn't very many there might have been television at that time but not with it wasn't a general thing. And you watched the newsreel and now that there you would see the bombings and different things that were going on the ships as they were imparking from the ports. It was always interesting they always made it interesting. That was the only other things and swimming and roller skating just things that we did there in the neighborhood with our friends.

Interviewer: Do you remember hearing about President Roosevelt when he died do you remember hearing about that?

Ms. Harmon: You know I can I remember Bob but I don't remember vividly right now if I did I don't have the memory right now. But I remember I remember President Roosevelt speaking and things like that hearing his voice and admiring him of course I was a Democrat and so was he always from a young kid being a Democrat. But yes he I admired President Roosevelt a lot he was

Interviewer: What about when the war ended how did you find out like what?

Ms. Harmon: I was sitting like I said in the study hall at the Willard High School and they brought the load speaker they had a loud speaker system and they brought it over there that we had victory in Europe. And of course everybody was elated and hands went up people was yelling and jumping you know and very happy I remember that.

Interviewer: So how do you think WWII affected you as growing up through it?

Ms. Harmon: I guess not having any body in service during WWII except Wayne and Wayne made it home we had one neighbor I'll have to back track a little bit. His name was Fahy from the Bend out there and he was killed at Pearl Harbor. When the Pearl Harbor happened he was killed. And that was the only thing we used to talk about you know you remember he was killed and you'd hear parents talking you know and it was sad but I wasn't that well acquainted with him I knew his sister well but they were large family he was the older one we were the younger ones so that was the. But it didn't really I can't say it affected me except just traveling you know on the trains and once that was over the trains had more room but other than that there wasn't. I guess I was just at that age period you know when your if I had been like Timmy ten years older like Grandpa was he just spoke to you here it would have made probably more of a difference impression but no I thought I had a pretty good life at that point in time.

Interviewer: Did you talk about the war with your family and all was it something that you guys talked about a lot?

Ms. Harmon: No I think we had a television like today when you sit down and see it and talk about it but whatever you heard was over that little radio or The Toledo Blade being the newspaper you know. And the newsreel we'd watch it and think boy that's terrible but we really didn't I don't think comprehend a lot of what was going on you know. We were knew our country was at war and we knew in times and what you had to do and buy these saving stamps at school once a week you'd buy a dime stamp and in fact my brother's still got this savings stamp form back in the 40s with some stamps in it. But no I don't have any other

Interviewer: Did you think was your family better off after the war than before it or was it pretty much just the same?

Ms. Harmon: Well in my particulars case my father step father Danny Tershnetter got cancer and we moved back to Delaware then and it was very difficult for my mother then. I think it was almost as hard as the depression on her for awhile. Then when he passed away then she worked outside the home she worked with some of the wealthy families out at Fort Wayne she went to Florida with them so that helped her a lot. But she as far as the war affecting that I don't think so. No I don't think so.

Interviewer: Well is there anything you'd like to add?

Ms. Harmon: I think I've told you all Grandma knows. Like I said if I was ten years older or even five years older it would probably would have had more but that's all I can tell you.