

Interviewer: This is Rick Burr and we are interviewing Jeannette Uffelman. The date is November 3, 2006 Ms. Uffelman go ahead and state your name please and date of birth.

Uffelman: Jeannette Uffelman August 27, 1920.

Interviewer: Okay we will go ahead and get started. This is an interview for the home front during WWII. Where were you born at?

Uffelman: I was born in Erin, Tennessee.

Interviewer: Erin okay and that's north of here?

Uffelman: Yeah it's about 30 (someone begins talking to Ms. Uffelman in the background tell her that it is south).

Interviewer: Okay its south of here about an hour?

Uffelman: I believe that's what she said.

Interviewer: And let's see did you live there your whole life?

Uffelman: Until I was 18 years old then I went away to beauty school.

Interviewer: Okay and let's see it was a farm you mentioned?

Uffelman: Yes

Interviewer: Could you tell me a little but about farm life down in Erin?

Uffelman: Yeah we had cows I milked cows we fed pigs we raised chickens.

Interviewer: Okay you had chores and stuff you did growing up.

Uffelman: We were just you know farmers.

Interviewer: Really

Uffelman: And I helped keep house there was a family of six of us.

Interviewer: Six how many brothers and sisters?

Uffelman: Two brothers and June two brothers and one sister. Three was four of us and mother and daddy.

Interviewer: Okay and you said you were there until 18 until you went to beauty school?

Uffelman: Uh huh in 39.

Interviewer: Let's see where did you go to beauty school at?

Uffelman: Huntington West Virginia.

Interviewer: In West Virginia and that was your first time away from home?

Uffelman: Yeah it was.

Interviewer: Tell me a little bit about that experience.

Uffelman: Well I was a big girl I never got home sick. I was gone for a year before I came home or maybe I did come home at Christmas I don't know.

Interviewer: Who did you live with there in West Virginia or were you on your own?

Uffelman: I had two aunts that lived there Mont Core Drilling Company and I lived with them and went to school.

Interviewer: How long was your schooling there in West Virginia?

Uffelman: A year.

Interviewer: One year

Uffelman: And then you had to take a state board. And then since I was not going to live in West Virginia I had to come home and take a Tennessee state board. Then I had to wait it was about a year before I could get to the Tennessee state board so I guess I went to work about 1941. I was working when the war started when did it start?

Someone in the background: 41

Uffelman: Okay I had started to work at Goodrich at that time.

Interviewer: Really back to growing up in Erin did you go to school there locally?

Uffelman: Sure I went to country school there Houston County.

Interviewer: The elementary school or?

Uffelman: The elementary then I went to Yellow Creek High School which was also in Houston County.

Interviewer: How far away from the farm was that?

Uffelman: And Gosh I rode a bus for two hours before I got to school and then two hours to get home.

Interviewer: Really

Uffelman: Bus being bused was not a new thing when it started here. I was bused before people here were even born to even think about being bused.

Interviewer: Yeah was that the closest school to where you were?

Uffelman: No there was a high school in Erin but it did not have the facility for another I guess there was about 85 or 100 of us.

Interviewer: Really

Uffelman: And there was not room at that high school. So they built this little country school called Yellow Creek out on the edge of Dickson County Houston and Dickson County. It does not exist anymore.

Interviewer: Not there anymore huh. What grades was that through? Was that 9th through 12th or?

Uffelman: Twelve grades.

Minoa Uffelman: But she went to Camp Ground tell them about Camp Ground.

Uffelman: Oh I went to Camp Ground to grade school.

Minoa Uffelman: And they walked.

Uffelman: We walked.

Interviewer: About how far of a walk was that?

Uffelman: About a mile and half or two miles.

Interviewer: You did that every day?

Uffelman: Yeah there and back.

Interviewer: Along with your chores there on the farm also huh?

Uffelman: Well yeah we got home about 3:30 or 4:00 and our chores on the farm weren't something that was we had to do it right then, we did them as we got to them.

Interviewer: Right and let's see after you got back and took the state exam for your beauticians license what year was that that you graduated from beautician school do you remember?

Uffelman: In 40.

Interviewer: Okay were you aware 30, 40 of any of the stuff going on in Europe at that time? Any of the political stuff or war stuff?

Uffelman: I didn't even know Hitler existed.

Interviewer: Really was that you think among your friends and classmates and stuff or age group that was common that there wasn't whole lot of knowledge of what was going on in Europe.

Uffelman: No we didn't think about war.

Interviewer: That changed dramatically during the bombing of Pearl Harbor or shortly after that didn't it?

Uffelman: Well shortly after that I was trying to think where I was when Pearl Harbor was bombed. I was riding a bus from Erin to Clarksville when I heard about it.

Interviewer: Really

Minoa Uffelman: That would be because it was a Sunday and on Sunday she visited her parents.

Uffelman: I went to the country on Sunday. I was working in Clarksville at that time.

Interviewer: As a beautician?

Uffelman: Uh huh

Interviewer: What was your how did your parents like FDR at the end of the depression you know I mean the families experience during the depression and the kind of help that some of the New Deal Programs had to offer?

Uffelman: I guess we liked FDR because he was sort of like a father we never knew anybody else.

Interviewer: Do you remember being assisted by any of his programs or anything during the great depression or anybody in your family?

Uffelman: Well I have to tell you this, my daddy did not like FDR.

Interviewer: Why was that?

Uffelman: I have no idea.

Interviewer: Do you remember anything like that TVA or Social Security or Civil Works Administration?

Uffelman: Yeah I never worked for them but I knew about social security.

Interviewer: Did you have electricity on the farm before TVA?

Uffelman: No we did not have electricity. We didn't get electricity until in the 30s.

Minoa Uffelman: No in the 40s after the war.

Uffelman: Well

Minoa Uffelman: Tell them about Uncle Turner's job C.C.C.

Uffelman: Well I had a brother in C.C.C. yeah. We had that experience my oldest brother was in the C.C.C.

Interviewer: Where did he go?

Uffelman: Selmer Tennessee.

Interviewer: And you stated that you were working in 1940 as a beautician there. After Pearl Harbor did you go anywhere else or did you keep on doing hair at the beauty salon?

Uffelman: No I quite working at the beauty shop and went to work at Goodrich.

Interviewer: Do you remember what year that was? It was after Pearl Harbor.

Uffelman: Yeah it was after. Forty-one or forty-two I guess when I went to Goodrich.

Interviewer: What did you do there at B.F. Goodrich?

Uffelman: We made gas masks one end of the factory made tires and the blue room made gas masks.

Interviewer: Do you remember how much you made an hour there at B.F. Goodrich? Or a week even?

Uffelman: Heavens no I guess I just spent it too fast.

Interviewer: Do you remember if you made more as a beautician or working there at the factory?

Uffelman: No I wasn't working making much as a beautician I went to work for \$12 a week as a hair dresser.

Interviewer: And you did that job fulltime at B.F. Goodrich when you went to work at the factory?

Uffelman: Yeah

Interviewer: Was there any mandatory overtime or did you just work 40 hours?

Uffelman: Well if we had due orders of course we worked overtime. I don't remember the word mandatory being used. We had an order to get out and we knew we had to do it.

Interviewer: How did you get to the plant?

Uffelman: Well sometimes I walked I lived on College Street I lived right in front of Austin Peay.

Interviewer: In fact Minoa told me you lived in a house that's since been torn down.

Uffelman: It has right there on the corner and we had different people who everybody didn't have a car we had to find rides and somebody who had room in a car that could take you would stop and pick you up.

Interviewer: Was the street car still running in those days?

Uffelman: No we didn't have a street car then. No that was in 40 gee we didn't have street cars for several years.

Interviewer: Any of your other family members work to support the war effort?

Uffelman: Well yeah my brother my oldest brother went in the C.C.C.s of course and their father went to work out in Arizona for a Monte Core Drilling Company out there was a contractor.

Interviewer: Do you have any idea just roughly speaking about how many people worked at B.F. Goodrich?

Uffelman: Yes I would say about 300. Now that was probably at both ends of the building for tires and gas masks too.

Interviewer: And was the tire production started first didn't it?

Uffelman: Oh yeah Goodrich B.F. Goodrich came here in the late 30s they built that plant out there and Mr. Zelp as I say all the management came from Akron Ohio and Mr. Zelp was one of them. And what was the question?

Interviewer: Well if they started building tires first.

Uffelman: Yes they built tires for a couple of years before they went into gas masks we didn't go into gas masks until after the war started.

Interviewer: Did you belong to the United Rubber Workers?

Uffelman: No I did not.

Interviewer: Were other people there members of the United Rubber Workers?

Uffelman: Well everybody in the tire department had to belong to well they didn't have to but they belong to the Rubber Workers. But we never belonged to the Rubber Workers.

Interviewer: Did you ever have a dealings with a business agent from the union or?

Uffelman: No I never did. They might have been there but they didn't come see me.

Interviewer: Most of the people in the gas mask department were women?

Uffelman: Well most of the management were men.

Interviewer: But shop floor the people doing the actual work?

Uffelman: Well yeah all the boys were in the war all the men were in the war.

Interviewer: Did you know any of the other women there socially from school or home or church or something like that?

Uffelman: I had run a business for a couple of years and I knew a lot of people yes I knew lots of them.

Interviewer: Was it one shift or two?

Uffelman: Three

Interviewer: Three?

Uffelman: During the war years.

Interviewer: Right in those days that was sort of the eastern limit of Clarksville wasn't it?

Uffelman: What do you mean eastern women it was

Interviewer: Eastern limit I'm sorry.

Uffelman: Oh

Interviewer: In other words past the Goodrich plant Clarksville stopped didn't it?

Uffelman: No there was people at Goodrich from all surrounding counties Humphries, Dickson, Houston we were from everywhere.

Interviewer: Well I didn't phrase that well. What I meant by that is I've seen a map it's an aerial map of Clarksville taken in about 1940 or 1945 and it looks like the town stops at the Goodrich plant.

Minoa Uffelman: The city limits.

Interviewer: The city limits exactly.

Uffelman: Yeah the city limits.

Interviewer: And the area from College Street out Wilma Rudolph Boulevard to the mall there was just farms there.

Uffelman: There was nothing but farms your right. That has all grown up since.

Interviewer: And the railroad was important there wasn't it?

Uffelman: Well yeah they picked up all the gas mask and the tires and everything that went out of there.

Interviewer: And all of the supplies that went into to make them.

Uffelman: Well I still see that ole railroad well no that ole railroads not still there I'm sure. All the supplies came in on the railroad. The trucking companies business was beginning to get mighty big then.

Interviewer: Was Frosty-Morn there?

Uffelman: No

Interviewer: No? That's post WWI?

Uffelman: Yeah

Interviewer: What time did you work the day shift or the evening shift?

Uffelman: I worked all of them at different times whenever they needed a shift change.

Interviewer: What was your responsibility there at the factory what kind of basically just your day what did it consists of did you have a certain responsibility?

Uffelman: Well I got promoted to formal of the shift at one time. I did about everything from labor to paymaster and anything that came to hand.

Interviewer: How do you make a gas mask?

Uffelman: At night I was the liaison between the office and the plant. How do you make a gas mask? You had a million little machines and each one of the little machines did a little tack a little button on there. You of course they come to us as a form it was already formed we didn't make the form we just finished the gas mask the straps and the buckles and everything.

Interviewer: But so in other words the pieces arrived in Clarksville and you put the pieces together.

Uffelman: You're right that's exactly right.

Interviewer: Was it would you call the work stressful?

Uffelman: No it wasn't stressful it was fun we couldn't hardly wait to get there.

Interviewer: Did you have a quota were there bonuses?

Uffelman: We had a quota gosh I don't remember a bonus but I'm sure I must have gotten one.

Interviewer: Could you estimate after the start of the war estimate on a typical production day about how many gas masked went out?

Uffelman: Well we knew how many went out.

Interviewer: But how many a day do you think approximately did you guys finish or put together a pay?

Uffelman: A couple a hundred.

Interviewer: Really someone told me that this was the main gas mask factory in the United States.

Uffelman: I think it was.

Interviewer: And so the gas masks then would go to say all of the military branches and to civilian defense.

Uffelman: I'm sure when yeah they were distributed out among the plants who might come in need of them.

Interviewer: Did you like your job?

Uffelman: Oh yeah we had a big time.

Interviewer: Did you work there until the end of the war is that correct? How long would you say you were there?

Uffelman: I was there until the war was over which was 45.

Interviewer: Did that go back into just tires then at that time in 45?

Uffelman: well they didn't make gas mask anymore I guess tire.

Interviewer: Right the whole factory was tires. Were there any war bond rallies in Clarksville or war bond salesmen that came into the factory or a check off system?

Uffelman: Well we took out so much of our check every week for war bonds yeah sure. I had some war bonds when I quit work but I don't have them anymore. Somehow or other they got cashed.

Interviewer: How about rationing do you remember having to ration stuff during the war?

Uffelman: Well you know I guess we never did use much of the stuff that was rationed. I don't remember the rationing bothering us at all.

Interviewer: Well it was sugar, coffee, tires, gasoline, chocolate.

Uffelman: We didn't have cars we didn't need tire.

Minoa Uffelman: What about stockings.

Uffelman: I had one pair of stockings the whole war. The best

Minoa Uffelman: You've got to remember what they asked from women.

Uffelman: The best pair of hose I ever had.

Interviewer: One pair huh. Nylon or silk?

Uffelman: Nylon I had my first nylons. Well of course we had silk before nylon but that's when I got my first nylons.

Interviewer: You don't remember sugar or anything like that having to be rationed?

Uffelman: No we didn't have any trouble with well I guess I thought we knew we just didn't ask for stuff we didn't really need. And the best I remember we got plenty of the things that we needed.

Interviewer: Did you work when they assembled the gas masks were there lines like an assembly line?

Uffelman: Oh yeah.

Interviewer: And so you had sort of pieces at this end and a finished gas mask at the other end?

Uffelman: Right

Interviewer: How many stations

Uffelman: Were you there?

Interviewer: No this is my

Uffelman: That's right

Interviewer: This is something I know a little bit about. In fact I did some interviews of people who worked for Firestone in Demoin, Demoin Iowa and they worked on building tires during the war. But the production techniques of course would be very similar.

Uffelman: You would start here maybe with just a piece and a piece would be added all the way up the line then when it got to the end of the line it was finished your right.

Interviewer: And how fast did it move? I mean a comfortable speed or was it

Uffelman: Sure you had to keep it going but it was conformable.

Interviewer: Do you remember any testing of the masks or anything like that done there at the factory before they were shipped off from Clarksville?

Uffelman: They were tested I'm sure I didn't do any of that.

Interviewer: Did they hire African Americans to work in the plant too?

Uffelman: I don't remember any African Americans. I'm sure they do now they did later but I don't remember any African Americans even applying for a job.

Interviewer: Do you think most people counted themselves as lucky because they had jobs as good as this?

Uffelman: Well we just thought it was our duty we knew it was our duty. Our boys were all over there.

Interviewer: Is that why you left the beauty salon and went to work at B.F. Goodrich was a sense of duty to America?

Uffelman: Sure sure

Interviewer: There was a lot of that surely.

Uffelman: I don't know about a lot of it I just know that's why I did it. I had two brothers over there.

Interviewer: There weren't a lot of other employment opportunities there in Clarksville in those days were there?

Uffelman: Well I don't know I didn't look for it I always had my own business. I'm sure there was everybody seemed to be working.

Interviewer: Well what I meant was there was the cigar factory and there was the boot factory

Uffelman: There was the shoe factory.

Interviewer: The shoe factory and the flower mill.

Uffelman: Oh I think by that time the flower mill had already gone out of business but yeah there was three or four there was three factories the main source of income.

Interviewer: You mentioned you had two brothers that fought overseas during the war.

Uffelman: Uh huh

Interviewer: Were they sent over after the bombing of Pearl Harbor? Do you know if they went to Europe or served in the Pacific?

Uffelman: They both went to Europe. They were on the lines in France one was on the line one would go they passed each other going back and forth they never did get to see each other there.

Interviewer: Really what year was that when they went over do you remember?

Uffelman: Gee O.S. went in 42 I guess. My other brother went about the next year. He had a child one child he didn't go probabaly as early as my other or as their father did.

Interviewer: Right did you hear from them correspond with them on a regular basis?

Uffelman: Yeah we had well the correspondence was hard there to begin with them we got the email.

Interviewer: V-mail

Uffelman: Well we had email first I think didn't we June? What was email?

June: Email they have now.

Uffelman: Okay v-mail you all win. I'm not a hard fighter.

June: It was V for victory.

Uffelman: Yeah you're right. You know I have gotten letters that statements were cut out of it was all censored very closely especially right there during the heat of the war.

Interviewer: And most of what they would censor out was locations you know we're in France you know we're near Paris France and that would be cut out.

Uffelman: Or we're going or something like that. I'm sure it's been awhile it's been awhile since I saw those letters.

Interviewer: Did your brothers write to family members individually or did you have sort of a family letter that you would

Uffelman: Oh no they wrote we wrote everybody and he wrote everybody. I had one brother just he spent all of his time writing and he wrote some very beautiful letters interesting letters. I guess Minoa's got the most of them her daddy. Her father went first and he was over there five years mind you five years.

Minoa Uffelman: See he was unmarried no children so he went first and Uncle Turner married children went later.

Interviewer: And what was newspaper or radio how would you get most of your information of what was going on over there would you say?

Uffelman: Well the newspaper I guess. We didn't have a radio maybe we did have a radio at that time. No television

Interviewer: Right

Minoa Uffelman: What about news reels at the movies?

Uffelman: We didn't get to the movies that often but they were there.

Interviewer: There was a movie theatre here in Clarksville back in the 40s?

Uffelman: Yeah there was a movie theatre here in the 30s it burned and they built a new one.

Interviewer: This is the Roxy right.

Uffelman: Yeah it was the old Littleton and the Roxy was we had the Capital. Where is the Capital do we not have the Capital anymore?

Interviewer: Did you go to Franklin Street and do your shopping on weekends?

Uffelman: Well yeah unless I went to Nashville. Sometimes a bunch of us would go to Nashville but not very often I did everything McNeal and Edwards was the department store on Franklin and I'm still wearing the clothes I got out of there. Fortunately they carried a good quality.

Interviewer: I guess that's not where you got your nylons was it.

Uffelman: I can't remember where I got those nylons. No they didn't get nylons for a long time.

Interviewer: Were you ever did you ever receive any telegrams or anything like that?

Uffelman: Oh golly no we didn't want to receive any telegrams.

Interviewer: Right that's what I was going to ask if you were ever frightened having to receive one,

Uffelman: No we just prayed to not get one of those.

Interviewer: How often would you write back and forth would you say a week or was it weekly or daily letters to your brothers?

Uffelman: About weekly I didn't write daily no. But some of us heard from one of the boys nearly every day.

Interviewer: Did you shop at the A&P on Franklin?

Uffelman: Well sure was there any other.

Interviewer: When I first moved to Clarksville and I saw that building I thought immediately there's the A&P.

Uffelman: The A&P now are you talking about the big building downtown?

Interviewer: At Franklin and yeah not the one downtown it's at Franklin and 7th or 8th it's a tobacco warehouse now.

Uffelman: I don't know that one.

Minoa Uffelman: I think there was one before that one Gregg.

Someone in the background: There was one on the square a grocery wasn't it.

June Uffelman: I didn't know the A&P in those days.

Uffelman: We had an A&P well no Piggly Wiggly was up there where you're right Piggly Wiggly was about the only one I ever remember.

Interviewer: Did you was there any what did you do for entertainment?

Uffelman: Oh golly we made our own entertainment. We had boyfriends we had parties we'd go to the movie.

Interviewer: Did you go to Dunbar Cave?

Uffelman: You know I never did yeah of course everybody went to Dunbar Cave but I didn't go in the nightly entertainment like some people did. Yeah I went to Dunbar Cave.

Interviewer: And did you hear any big bands at Dunbar Cave?

Uffelman: I'll start with Roy Acuff and who was some of those other bands June?

June: Bands?

Uffelman: The bands at Dunbar Cave.

June: Oh we had a number of bands. Tommy Dorsey.

Interviewer: Glenn Miller?

June: Glenn Miller uh huh.

Uffelman: All of the famous ones as they were going from Chicago to Memphis they would stop and we saw a lot of them.

June: But this was mostly in the 50s.

Uffelman: Yeah that was not during the war times.

Interviewer: Was the hotel still there?

Uffelman: Idaho Springs?

Interviewer: Yeah that's the one.

Uffelman: Idaho Springs yes. June tell him the story of Idaho Springs.

Interviewer: The hotel at Dunbar Cave.

Uffelman: The hotel at Idaho Springs.

June: Well it was the Idaho Springs or I think we knew it as the Dunbar cave hotel.

Minoa Uffelman: What were you saying about it being a dormitory?

June: It was an old dorm like looking building that in the early days it had been used as a hotel. That was I wasn't familiar with those days by the time I got in on the scene it was pretty much obsolete. But there was a hotel there at one time and I guess they used it for well Idaho Springs there were springs there at one time and then of course Dunbar Cave tours I suspect I don't know.

Interviewer: Did it burn down is that correct?

June: I think she said she thinks it did.

Interviewer: I seem to remember reading that it burnt down.

June: I think it did as you say you it that was probably after you came here.

Interviewer: Well I've seen some old postcards that show Dunbar Cave and they show the Idaho Springs Hotel. And it's a wooden

June: Yeah big ole frame looking building.

Interviewer: Where did the bands when they would come to Dunbar Cave where did the performances take place was it out front?

Uffelman: In the cave.

Interviewer: Actually inside?

Uffelman: In the cave well not actually inside the cave the dance area out in front of the cave.

Interviewer: Okay right in front there where the stage is now okay.

Second Interviewer: And do you know why?

Interviewer: I don't know I'm not very familiar.

Second Interviewer: Because, I didn't know this until recently, it's because the cave is at a constant 58 degrees and we're talking about a time before air conditioning so people would go there during the summer to enjoy the cool air. Natural air conditioning.

Minoa Uffelman: And every now and then a snake would fall down.

June: That was at the Saturday night dances that was a big thing.

Interviewer: So they had dances down there every Saturday night it that right? Some people look back on WWII as sort of the best time of their lives and they do this perhaps because the country was unified because there was a moral purpose to the war. We were the good guys they were clearly the bad guys everyone had a job people had money to spend. Did you look at it in that light I mean looking back over time would you describe it that way or do you have another perspective on things?

Uffelman: Well I can't say the thought of the war was enjoyable by any means but I think we all lived well.

Interviewer: Were you happy to leave the factory and get back to your beauty salon afterwards?

Uffelman: Well of course that was my profession that I had prepared for. I didn't intend to go to Goodrich and work other than doing my duty during the war. I went back to my own business I bought my own business and went to work for myself.

Interviewer: Would you say the salon was a lot more successful after the war after the change that the war created?

Uffelman: You had to build your own business in the salon. You had to please people to the point that they would want to come back to you.

Interviewer: During WWII did you have anybody in the neighborhood that their loyalty might have been suspect or there were rumors floating about anything about that?

Uffelman: You know I was thinking about that some other time lately. I can't think of anybody that we had any doubts about. Everybody that was around us was thoroughly loyal.

Interviewer: Do you know anybody personal or through rumors around Clarksville that might have claimed a conscientious objector status to try and avoid going to the war?

Uffelman: I don't I didn't know anybody I didn't hear about conscientious objector until after the war. I didn't even know what they were talking about.

Interviewer: Do you recall the blue stars and the gold stars in the windows.

Uffelman: Thank heavens I didn't know any gold stars yes I do.

Interviewer: You said you didn't know anybody that was a gold star mother.

Uffelman: I can't think of anybody who was a gold star mother. Who

Someone in the background: Duran Edwards brother Dudley your cousin.

Uffelman: Dudley he was taken a prisoner in Japan. Well yeah we all Dudley's mother was dead and we all grieved for Dudley.

Minoa Uffelman: Wasn't that the Paten Death March?

Uffelman: Dudley was in the Paten. I don't even like to think of it.

Interviewer: Well shall we broaden our turn the tape off and (tape ended)