

Interviewer: I just want to start off with maybe where you were born start off your life I guess.

Rice: I didn't understand what you said.

Interviewer: Where were you born?

Rice: I was born in Nashville. I've lived in Nashville all my life. I have all of my education here I wanted to be a home economics major and Columbia was the outstanding school it was number one in home economics at that time. And when I came out of high school I graduated in 24 so I couldn't I didn't have the money to go to Columbia I had a paralyzed father so it wasn't convenient for me to go away from home so I stayed at home and went to Peabody which ranked number two school for home economics teachers. And I've been very satisfied with my education and what it afforded me to do. And I was living here in Nashville during World War II and of course it changed everybody's life in some respect. Not completely but in some respect it touched everyone's.

Interviewer: Did you experience like the rationing when you lived here in Nashville the rationing system did your family have to go through that?

Rice: Did we have to go through what?

Interviewer: Rationing

Rice: What

Archer: She said she's interested in rationing did y'all have to go through that?

Rice: Yes we did have to go through that. We had a rationing card or book that was given to us it was a little paperback book just about well I found it when I moved here and I thought awhile ago can I find it but I couldn't put my hand on it because I was gonna bring it and let you see the covers and all the coupons. And I had coupons in there sugar was rationed also coffee and I told Sarah I have to tell you the coffee tale. You were allowed I think it was two pounds of coffee a month per person because everybody had a card no matter how many people in the family you got that much. And some people drank more coffee than the rationing cards gave them and some didn't use as much. And in that day you had little neighborhood stores grocery stores and the people who didn't use their coffee coupons would give them to the grocer to let somebody who was his customer and used more coffee have them. So this lady went to him and she said I need more coupons he said that's alright whenever you need more coffee he said you come in and when you come to check out at the cash register you just tell me you would like to have a pound of birdseed. And so said I'll go back in the little back room and I'll grind you a pound of coffee bring it out wrapped up put it in your groceries and you pay me and nobody knows that you're getting an extra pound of coffee. So one day she went in the grocery and he was not there but the teenage boy that worked for him was there. Well of course he knew everything that the grocery knew about the customers they thought and when she got ready to check out she asked for a pound of birdseed. So Bobby said okay Mrs. Smith I'll get it for you. He ran back in the store room you know and he wasn't back there just a minute and he stuck his head out and he said Mrs. Smith does your bird perk or drip? How should he grind that coffee you know perk or drip. So that is a coffee joke that I knew all during World War II. You got your you had to pair of shoes a year so you had two coupons in that book for shoes. I know a friend of mine visited me from Memphis and she had a hole in the bottom of her shoe and she said here it is a certain month and I can't get any more shoes until a certain month. And

my mother didn't staying at home she didn't need to pairs of new shoes a year but I went every year because I was teaching school. And I loved shoes and she always gave me her extra coupon for shoes if she didn't use them. So she said to me what do you think about giving Thelma this coupon said she's got a hole in the bottom of her shoes. I said give them to her it's alright with me so we gave Thelma our coupon one coupon and she went back to Memphis with a new pair of shoes. But what else was rationed Sarah?

Archer: Butter

Rice: Butter yes butter was rationed. And I think flour was rationed.

Interviewer: Did you have a car at the time I mean I know gasoline was rationed as well?

Rice: Well yeah that was rationed too yes you are right on that. But it was an interesting thing.

Archer: Tell them about your student's reaction to

Rice: Well the government bought up all this butter. And of course you in the homes after you used your two pounds of butter you got for the month probably you used the margarine. And so in home economics the home economics department working with the cafeteria not the government furnished certain things for the home economics departments and one thing they gave them was butter. And they were told to divide or to share with the home economics department. So my cafeteria manager was nice and she said now Frances you just come in and get all the butter you want. Every time she got a shipment of butter she'd let me know. So when we made in the classes if we made biscuits or pancakes or waffles or anything that you really put butter on you know. Well my girls had not had butter they'd been using only margarine at home. So it was butter and they'd say to me can we bring some margarine tomorrow we don't like that old butter old butter.

Archer: And it was white in the beginning.

Rice: Margarine was white margarine was white just like lard and it had a little sometimes had a little capsule of coloring sometimes it was a little envelope with coloring in it. And you opened it put that coloring in it and you had to work it in. And my mother hated to do it that was my job always and my mother would say you wash your hands and do the butter and I'd go in there with my hands and do that butter. But you there was something else I was going to tell you about being rationed. But it was interesting and you made the house wives were asked to use as much cornmeal as they could and less flour because flour could be shipped abroad and cornmeal could not. And you'd print out recipes for food and being in the food line we worked on that and we had a wonderful biscuit recipe that was half meal half flour. And it was a good biscuit a lot of people didn't like it but nevertheless it was a good biscuit.

Interviewer: Now you talk about food lines did you have a lot of lines when you picked up your items from the grocery store?

Rice: No I didn't stand in food lines no.

Interviewer: Another thing since you were a school teacher did you have the kids collecting a lot of items for scraps did you do stuff like that at school?

Rice: Yeah we had a scrap metal day at school I was teaching in high school. And a certain poundage of iron they would get a holiday or half a holiday. And you would be surprised at the children would go upstairs in their home some of them were not upstairs they were on the floor with them and they stole the weights out of the windows because in that day in time windows raised and lowered by the weights that were in the window. And they got the weights out of the windows and brought them in and when their parents got ready to open up the house, we had that usually in the fall, so of course they didn't open up those windows till summer. And they would start to open them and nothing to hold them up no weights in them. And I remember so well the room in our school that got the prize for having the most metal that day. One of the boy's fathers was a used car dealer and he gave him an old used car and they had that. So of course their weight went over everybody else's that day. Yeah we did that too.

Interviewer: I was going to mention nylon stockings.

Rice: Oh yeah nylon stockings. And the funny thing was we didn't know now we had close to Nashville is what they call the power plant and they made nylon there. And we did not know how to take care of nylon hose really and the girls that worked downtown would go out for lunch some days and when they went back after lunch they didn't have on any hose. They had holes in them and it was the fumes from where they were making nylon flew into Nashville if the wind was blowing this way. Well that destroyed your nylon. And they wouldn't have any hose on at all or they had holes in them.

Interviewer: Did you notice any women I know this is a story my teacher told me about women drawing lines on the back of their legs to make it look like they had on nylons?

Rice: We didn't wear hose they got a dye like that you could spread on your legs to make them look like you had on hose. And you took a crayon or something and drew a line up the back of your leg and that was the seam in your hose. Oh I know this friend that we gave the shoe coupon to lost her mother during that time and they brought her back her to bury her because Nashville was home. And I said Thelma I am so embarrassed I don't have a pair of hose I'm gonna have to go bare legged to your mother's funeral. She said you know my mother that would just be satisfactory with her don't worry about it. And so of course there wasn't anything to do but go barelegged. Yes you that.

Interviewer: You did a lot of hand work too.

Rice: Oh yes you did a lot of work for the Red Cross particularly. And personally I headed up a knit group and I had ten well nine women in my team and they told you to get ten or twelve women in your team. And they would send me out scales of wool thread by the great big boxes. And I'd have these women all meet at a certain time and a certain day and then I'd turn them out so many scales of that wool and they would knit a sweater. We had instructions for the sweaters and they would knit the sweaters and then at a certain time they were supposed to have them back in we met at intervals so if anybody was having any trouble with their knitting why somebody in the group would straighten then out. And I laugh about that because I have a relative a lady relative that lived on a farm out from town close and I'd go out there during my vacation well anytime I'd go out there on the weekend during my vacation sometime I'd spend a week with them. You didn't pick up a needle you didn't do any kind of work on Sunday. But I went out one time during the war my mother and I drove out I called and I said Aunt Lilly we're gonna come out don't fix any lunch we'll bring our dinner along with us but we're coming to see you. She said good I'm so glad you're coming the first thing when we walked in and sat down she said I'm so glad you decided to come and I said well I'm glad you're glad. She said I'm having trouble with this knitting she said I'm knitting this sweater and I'm balled up on it and it's so long before I can meet

someone to get any help and I want you to help me with this sweater and I said okay. And of course it was Sunday and I helped her with the sweater and I said now Aunt Lilly this is Sunday and she said I know it but this is Red Cross. Well after that I took my knitting if I wanted to and I said I'm knitting for the Red Cross. She never said anything else about it but she never did anymore knitting except for the Red Cross. And we had a man on our staff out faculty who was to go in the army and he was to leave on a certain day. He came to school and told us he was to leave just in two or three days when he told us. And we as a faculty wanted to do something for him do something different and we didn't want to do anything big because he wouldn't take anything big with him. And they said oh Frances why don't you knit him a sweater and I said okay. So we went to the principal and told him I was gonna knit him a sweater and I think I had about three or four days to knit that sweater that went over his head you know a turtle neck. And long sleeves and I said now my girls will be all struggling by themselves sewing them long sleeves but why because I'll be in there with them but don't you say anything. He said oh I won't tell him just get the sweater knitted. So I did I got the sweater knitted and we gave it to him the last evening he was at school. And when his first leave he came back to see us and he said I want to tell y'all that sweater did me more good than any one thing I had. And he told us he was in the navy and he told us about being on duty one night and being out on the deck of this ship and cold it was and he said that sweater was so good and warm. And he said and while I was wearing that sweater out there all by myself I couldn't help but think about the love and affection and concern that this group had for me that you would have somebody get me a sweater. So he was he didn't come back. And we had big service flags the big service flag would have a wide board of red outside and white inside and you put gold stars on them for the men that were lost no matter what they were whether they were navy or army what they were. And each school and I think most of the churches too but each school had a service flag and a few years ago well I say a few years ago back in 71 they closed the school where I taught the high school. And we had this great big service flag in the hall and had it in a case. And just well I guess within the last six months I went to a reunion of one of the classes and they have destroyed the building that school building but they have kept the gym building and making out of it recreation study recreation center for the community. And the alumni is having big hand in staffing it working on it building it and everything and they announced that the service flag had been saved and we would have the service flag to go in the room out there.

Archer: You were the ones that if you had somebody in the service that you pasted on the window.

Rice: Oh yeah

Interviewer: Gold stars

Rice: Gold stars if they were deceased and blue stars if they were alive. And so that was if you had a man in the service you also had a service flag in your window.

Interviewer: What about war bonds did you buy any?

Rice: Yes you bought war bonds and children were encouraged to buy the war bonds a quarter a week the elementary children did this more than the high school children. And they'd bring a quarter to school every Monday morning and that went towards their bond if they wanted to bring two quarters that was alright. But they liked for them to pledge 100% everybody to bring a quarter on Monday morning. And oh I know of one case where one child just absolutely couldn't bring that quarter and the teacher saw to it that that child has a quarter every Monday morning. So their room went over 100% and they bought their bonds that way.

Interviewer: You see a lot during this time period that the community and the nation as a whole we just really came together.

Rice: Everybody pulled together and did yeah that's right. And I was with the Red Cross during that time and on Saturday I headed a recreation center at the Y down here in Nashville. And the servicemen would come in for a cup of coffee and donuts sit around and talk because it was nice and warm in there of course and we had hostess for the day. And I had of course you always invited your friends to come in and help you on it and I had one girl on my staff and she and I had graduated from high school at the same time. And she couldn't do anything as far as sewing or anything like that she was just a charming person to start out with managed the finance office she was the office manager for this big finance company. And a soldier came in and I was up at the front of the room and he said Ms. Rice I need a button sewed on my coat you know it was a big army coat. And one of the buttons near the top had fell off he had the button and he said here's the button I need it sewed on. And I said why don't you go back here to this desk back in the back tell the lady back there what you need. Well it happened to be Overton sitting on the desk that day, I didn't know who was back there. And when he told her she looked all around and said well all the girls are gone and I don't know how to do this but I've seen other people do it so I guess I can do it. And I'll sew it on for him and so she sewed the button on and he came out there and he had his coat on but not buttoned and he said I said did you get it fixed? Yeah I got it fixed thank you very much so in about fifteen or twenty minutes he walked in there his face was just as red and he said I hate to come back but he said I can't button it.

Archer: He can't what?

Rice: I can't button it. He said I can't get that button through that hole through the button hole it's down too tight to the coat. And I said oh I know what's wrong. That's alright you just go back there don't say a thing to anybody just go on back there and I'll come back there and fix it for you so I went back there Overton was on the desk and I said Overton what about swapping desk with me for a while how would you like to take the front desk? She said suits me so away she went to the front so I got out the sewing box then but the button off and gave him I don't know about how much you know about it but you have to have a shank when you sew on a button. You have to have a space between the button and the material so it can fit down in there and so after I sewed it on and I turned around to him I said okay now you come here let me have a match. And he said what are going to do with a match? I said I'm gonna burn your coat up. But I used a match across the button there to give me a shank on it. But funny things happened along the way. And on Sunday then I was with the Canteen that went to the airport well see we had a veteran's hospital here in Nashville and the hospital units they flew the hospital plans in and unloaded them brought a lot of them right out here at our veteran's hospital. And we also relayed them on to other places just a stop over here and they'd get off maybe and walk around. And sometimes the plane was loaded with non-ambulatory patients. We had to go with trays and give them their food on the plane it was just a rest stop for them. And then we were out there one night one night just closing up I believe Sunday afternoon it was in the fall of the year. And I knew what I had to do I was hitching a ride home and said to somebody who worked out there at the airborne and I had called them and I said don't go off and leave me I've got to catch a ride home with you. And we got a call came in said this hospital plane was coming in it had 14 ambulatory patients on it and so of course they made us stay late. And we setup to stay late got the trays ready to go on the plane. Just about the time we were expecting that plane to come into sight we got another message that General Patton was coming. And so we told him we said get in touch with us because we said this plane is in the air and he is ahead of you somewhere. But get ahold of him and tell him to circle the field and then you can come on in. And he said no I'll circle the plane field he said I'll wait you take them and then I'll come in. And so he came

in then he got off of course and spoke to all of us. And I said I turned to somebody and said I'm gonna leave because I'm gonna have to find me a ride home then and he said where are you going? And I said I'm going to Nashville and he said well I am too I'm going out to inspect the veteran's hospital and he said there's a car over there waiting for me right now so I'll just take you home.

Interviewer: General Patton?

Rice: General Patton

Interviewer: Wow

Rice: So I rode home with General Patton. But it was it was sad things like that are always sad. But there's also a lot of fun in it there was a lot of I don't know a closeness that you get in a time of tragedy. And the grater the tragedy the better it comes forth and it certainly came out.

Interviewer: Let's talk about Rosie the Riveter Rosie the Riveter.

Rice: Yes women went into the factories particularly where they were making airplanes. And they adopted the name Rosie the Riveter for the women who went in. And I know one of our jewelry stores here always had a beautiful display in there window. And they said this woman walked up and looked in the window came on in she had on overalls overall jacket she was one of Rosie the Riveters. And she bought a very expensive pin and pinned it up on that uniform and out she went. And one of the men in there said I sure hate to see that beautiful pin put on a jacket like that. They said yeah but think of who that is that is Rosie the Riveter.

Interviewer: Did you feel like the women in the past well during this time had gained a lot more freedom?

Rice: Oh yes because they had to take the men's places don't you see. Yes they had to do that. I date back to World War I and during World War I my father had a stroke and my mother had to go to work because we did not have any money laid back to live on. And that was one of the my mother went into a place this man it was a one person office and it was in a part of the city where a man was needed in the office. But this woman that my mother had taken a business course from knew my mother needed a better job than the one she had and she called her. And she said now I'm recommending you because you can go into that part of the city and be safe. A young woman I can't recommend a young woman they've called me to get somebody to take this man's place. So my mother took a man's place because he had to go into the army. And so yes women went in and took men's places in World War I and then more so in World War II. But I remember as a child one of my favorite men in the community young men you know that made all over children and everything had to go in the army. And they had a farewell party for him and my mother often said she didn't know who shed the most tears that night me or his mother. Because I just cried because he had to go in the army and leave is. He came back though so.

Interviewer: Well you were alive during the great depression you experienced that. Did your I guess your mother kept her job or did she lose her job?

Rice: No well she gave up her job later after the war was over she gave up her job and stayed at home.

Interviewer: So you didn't really experience anything different during the great depression?

Rice: No

Interviewer: No what about did you experience anything when Roosevelt passed away and the war was still going on and Truman stepped up and took his place?

Rice: Yes of course we felt well as a little boy says I don't know anybody for president he's always been the president. And it was quite a trial and before he died I remember him visiting Nashville and he would drive in open cars cars that you could let the top back you know and he could drive in those. And had parades touring Nashville he visited Nashville several times. Some of the men died that were in the cabinet that were in the legislature one or two. He came here for their funerals so he visited Nashville several times and was his death just shocked us like everybody else. And they just it was a tragedy but.

Archer: You know he never allowed his physical problems to slow him up in any way. As a matter of fact

Rice: That was real plain when he was here. I don't know how much you know about Nashville but George Peabody College has a driveway where you can go around and come in come in front of the social \_\_\_\_ building which is this big building that has this white building with columns out front stairs going up. And he drove through there and I was a student at Peabody at that time and my mother and I went out and got my aunt and we were all on those steps when he came through. And we were up so high that we could see in the car and his dog was in the car. Sitting down between he and Mrs. Roosevelt was with him that day and the two of them on the seat of the car and the dog was down on the floor. I said why don't they let him up between them. But the dog made the parade too.

Archer: I used to know that dogs name and I can't think of it right now.

Rice: It wasn't Fido was it? No that was the other man's dog.

Archer: I don't think that was it but I can't think of it.

Rice: That was Nixon's dog. But yeah I've forgotten that dog's name too. You know there was a time or two when Roosevelt was on secret missions and one time particularly. And they found out where he was going or where he was because he got out of the plane and the dog did too and the reporters recognized the dog. So they knew where he was.

Interviewer: Let's talk about the victory gardens. Did you experience the victory gardens did you plant your own?

Rice: Oh yes we planted victory gardens.

Interviewer: the school children?

Rice: People had little gardens you know in their yard and the women came from the also home economics teachers went out into the different schools and we taught women how to make skirts out of men's pants. And different things like that to economize materials and everything. And yes nearly everybody had a little garden in their yard somewhere where they never thought about having a garden



before. And then of course we went around and taught all the women in the community how to can preserve their food how to dry it how to take care of it to feed the family during the winter.

Interviewer: You taught in high school?

Rice: Yes

Interviewer: Did you notice a trend were there a lot of male seniors graduating or was it mostly an all-female class?

Rice: High school was not affected by the war as far as the draft was concerned colleges were. But the high schools were not but the boys were taken immediately on graduation. Now I had twin cousins who they graduated and they were immediately sent to went to Tullahoma which is a little town here. Where they had to be classified so they were given all kinds of tests and they were put into to the army. And they were sent home then given two weeks to get any kind of materials married men and business men of course had to get their business all straightened out. These two boys didn't have anything to do but come back home and play ball until time to go in two weeks to report to the army. And so I have told Sarah about they were playing ball one night one of the ball players on the team slung their bat and it hit one of these boys in the head and it knocked him out he was unconscious for a few minutes. But they took him to the doctor the doctor said he was bad but take him home and watch him and I feel like had they sent him to the hospital he'd be alive today but you don't know. They let him go home and about four o'clock the next morning he and his twin brother shared the same room and his brother heard him struggling for breath and he hollered for his mother. But by the time they got him to the hospital he was dead. And this that brother visits me when he came back then he just had two or three days then before he had to report for the army. But it was god sent in that they had been so close that I don't know how he would have adjusted to private life. But as he went in the army he was told everything to do don't you see. And that gave him he was two years that he was in the army he never went over \_\_ but he was in the service for two years and that helped him to adjust to his twin brothers death. And then when he came back all those people that came back were taken at 18 and 19 that was were given scholarships to college. And he got his college education on his military service. And I asked him one day something about and I said do you think about your brother and he said I think about him every day. And he said all of my success everything I have money wise and things like that I think I owe to my brother because I got it on my privilege to go to college because I had been in service. And said he would have been there too.

Interviewer: What about after Pearl Harbor when Japan attacked did being all the way out here in Nashville did you experience any feel like we were going to be attacked?

Rice: Well we were always put on alert it was like it is after they bombed the building in New York. We were more afraid that they would come in because you see we had this power plant where the ammunition was made right here within about 15 miles away. And we knew we were a good target so yes we were very much put on alert.

Interviewer: What about entertainment during this time period? Did you see the USO Parties?

Rice: Oh yes and when I said I worked with the Red Cross we had this USO lounge in the Y and they'd have parties have dances there for them. And they were given principally for the servicemen. Oh you had some girls please girls.



Interviewer: Did you see a lot of women getting married early during this time?

Rice: Yes a lot of people married they married two or three days before the man left to go into the army. And a lot of postponed well they moved their weddings up because the man was going to the army. I had a friend whose husband they were engaged to be married and he was going and she did that she moved they went and moved their wedding up. And but he went they were married I think they were married on Thursday night and he left on Sunday Saturday at noon for camp. And he was gone about I guess he was gone about a year and then they sent him home because he was in his he was in late years for age so they sent him home.

Woman in the background: We're gonna have to let you guys go because its three minutes till five.

Rice: Three minutes till five I expect it.

Archer: At the time the war started let me think I went through a three year nursing program because that's the only kind they had at that time. Then probably won't get the years right but that doesn't matter. I did the three year program and then I nursed in the hospital for six months. Then I was in an accident and got by back broken and I have had it repaired three times. And now it is gone again because so many people when they get this age get osteoporosis which is a weakening of the bones. And I so I'm dependent on them for that too. But anyway an experience that I had that was fascinating but pretty horrible too well first let me give you the background. After I got hurt I couldn't go back and do bedside nursing because I couldn't not lift and do that sort of thing. And so I started working in a dental office which was somewhat rewarding because I still don't like to go in the dentist office. And you know you could help the patients and all of that but then I got married in 1945 and he was pre-med student. And we were married in 46 in the meantime I had already had one spinal fusion and I remember that when we talked about getting married I wasn't sure that I should do that because it wouldn't I didn't know how much of an invalid I might be and so forth. And so I said well I'll go I want to go talk to this psychologist that I know well I'll go with you he said. Well I must say the psychologist I don't think he knew much about bone surgery. But he said no that should be alright and he almost iterated that he thought I had gotten too closed in on this injury I had. And if I did get married my life would be better and all of that and that's true I've had a good life. But anyway so we did get married and then I had to have another fusion and by then Lester my husband had graduated was doing his residency at Walter Reed Hospital. And so I had my surgery there that go-round and that was an interesting experience because so many of the men who were being hurt and badly hurt were sent back to Walter Reed. You know they were treated in other hospitals but the ones that came back to Walter Reed were the ones that were having a hard time getting back normal and being able to have a life. Well surgery back then was completely different and Lester was in his second year of the residency he was in internal medicine and he was in his second year. I was a nurse and so we would talk about how we noticed these men. I was in the hospital for eight months if you can believe it and I was on a striker frame which I don't think they even use anymore. But you could lie on your back and they put it's like a it's like a casket almost so they keep you you know like this. Then they turn you every two hours and the frame they didn't undo you they just flipped you over. And then you could stare at the ground for a while. In the meantime I didn't have this second surgery for about let's see we were married in 45 we had a baby in 46 and it was 48 when I was in the hospital then. And so this woman came around and she said you know I think it would help you if you would learn something that you could do in the two hours that you're just there looking down at the ground. Well I figured that's pretty smart that's okay. And so she taught me to knit. Now Frances sits and tells you how she knitted and she didn't tell you all of it I mean she just knitted she had so many she had to do a month and so forth. Well it took me a year and

half to knit some mittens. I didn't know it but people tell me later that that is the worst thing they could have started me on you know. But anyway I was doing this knitting to get them off my back so they felt they were helping me and also I was thinking when I got my baby back because my mother was living in North Carolina and he was with her she took care of him. And I would have these pretty mittens for him and it's crazy things you remember like this you know. Anyway let me finish that then I'll go back before I got married because an interesting thing happened. I lived in Goldberg North Carolina and about 50 miles from there was Fort Bragg which was a very large and very active base. And then I can't remember there was a marine base too oh Cherry Point that was a marine base. And as you mentioned gas was badly rationed and so if you had a car you really thought a long time about using it because you couldn't get more. Lester could get it he was a doctor and he got a little extra because he often was called back to the hospital and stuff like that. But anyway you depended on the trains and I had some interesting experiences on those trains because I wanted to go from Washington D.C. which is where we were living down to Goldberg which was North Carolina then the train went down past Cherry Point then it went to Fort Bragg. So there actually they didn't have room for anybody except the marines and the soldiers. So it was interesting often you stood in line with your ticket but they had sold every seat. And you couldn't get angry about it because these men were going off to save their nation and all that. But anyhow one time I got on and this time I was alone and I did get in I think the conductor oh I know why the conductor was the father of my best friend and we'd gone to school together and he knew me so he let me get on. Well I was the only woman in a railroad car complete full of all of these young men. And I guess I was about 16 something like that and it was I just can't tell you what an experience it was. Some of them were drinking they weren't supposed to of course but they were. Some of them were very very depressed others were making a joke out of the whole thing because they knew they had to go and so. I just sat there and I had a brother who was in the army but he was out west and anyway this one young man was so sad looking and he didn't seem to have friends. And so he came over and oh they went through the cars selling sandwiches and stuff like that and so he bought a sandwich and a drink he bought two sandwiches and two drinks and brought me one of them which I thought was really sweet of him. And he asked this guy that was sitting down would you change seats with me so he could sit by me. Well he started telling me he really was the saddest soul I think I have ever talked to he had lost his mother about three years before his father had been killed three months before he was he hadn't gone out and volunteered he was what's the term?

Interviewer: Drafted

Archer: Huh

Interviewer: Drafted

Archer: Drafted thank you he was drafted. And he had no family that he was close to he said he had some cousins and all of that. Well we were together about five hours on that train and just as we were almost to route to pull into to my home and he was going on down he said I need to ask you something I hope you won't laugh. And I said no I won't laugh he said would you marry me. Well I just about fell in the isle I'm 16 years old I don't think I'd even been dating very much. And I said oh no I couldn't do that and he said well I don't think I'm coming back and he said you could get you know you'd get my insurance I'll put it all in your name. And he was serious he wanted to do that he said I want to think that I'm leaving somebody who loves me and I said I don't love you I don't know you. I like you I think you are fun and I think you'll come back what else could I say. He said would you write to me and I thought oh yes I can do that so he gave me his military address and I wrote to him I wrote to him for three years and he wrote back. But he didn't come back so you know that was sad but it was an

experience that almost didn't end because I just wasn't I still can feel sorry when I think about it. As a matter of fact I still have a picture of him he sent me a picture somebody took after he was he was killed in France and so. And she told you the funny stuff about we didn't have hose and we used that funny stuff on our legs and I went to party one night a friends of mine gave this party. And I was sitting there with my legs crossed like this and they got started on the fact that we didn't have hose and it was winter you know. And you didn't wear pants like we wear now you just did not do that. And so the men got real interested and asking us if we weren't cold and this one guy was sitting there and he said you have on hose don't you and I said no. And he said could I feel and see sure so he said that's skin that's not hose. I said no we don't have them you know. I remember funny things she remembers well anyway so my husband part of his education was paid for through the army and so he had to repay it. And so we didn't know where he was going and by that time we were married and we had the baby I'm telling you this and it's mixed up. But I get back in it and the baby had come back I had him back from my mother and that was quiet and experience to go through because he was only about three years old and I had not seen him for 16 months. I mean it was like you know I was so thrilled to see him well he didn't know me from anyone. So that was quiet and experience so we knew Lester's residency was over so we knew he was gonna be sent somewhere and we didn't know where. And we had this little apartment and I was fixing dinner and everybody all the guys he had gone through med school with and gone through the residency they were all waiting not knowing where they were going whether they were going overseas where they were going. He came walking in and I said where are we going? He said you better sit down. And so I sat down he said New York City. And I could not believe it but that's where we went because they badly needed physicians and he was stationed in \_\_\_\_\_ Fifth Avenue Hospital in New York. And we were there for three years now I have to go back and tell you about the mittens. He was too little when I got him back because they got longer and longer and they wouldn't fit him. So when he was about we were in New York and we were living in a big apartment and out back they had a playground for all the children that were in the apartment and I would take him out there and he would play. And so one day I was out playing with him and he said his hands were cold and I thought where are my mittens I did for him. And so I went back in I said I'm gonna go in and fix your lunch and so when he came in took his nap I said look I knitted these mittens for you. Well he thought they were funny looking because they didn't have fingers on them they had a thumb and then but I told him how I had knitted them for him and I was thinking about him while I was knitting and so off he went. He was in the playground about an hour he came back crying he didn't have the mittens. I said where are the mittens? This boy beat him up and took them because his hands were cold. I have never knitted another thing nor have I wanted to. That was my experience with knitting.

Interviewer: So I guess you weren't involved in the Red Cross.

Archer: No well I was but a little bit later but I wasn't in the knitting group. Then one night Lester came home and he was being sent to Germany because again they needed physicians. They were sending so many back and they sent the ones that were badly injured into Germany into a hospital there and go them so that then they could be sent back home. And so the baby and I stayed well I stayed in New York because I really liked New York and by then I could put him in nursery school and I went back nursing. And I enjoyed it but I had to tell them that I could not lift patients and stuff because of my back. So I did pediatric nursing which I did like I was in the nursery and I liked that very much. And then when Lester came back he was year in Germany oh that was so exciting when he came back. And I went down to meet him he was coming in the he'd come into New York by then I had moved to Washington to be nearer to my folks. And so he was coming from New York on a train and I went down to meet him and I was so excited I could not find a parking place. I mean that airport that station was completely and absolutely booked and finally there was a policeman out there and I said I don't see my husband for

over a year and he is coming in on a train and I can't find anywhere to put this car. He said go ahead lady I'll watch your car so I just left the car in the middle of the street and went over. Then he liked the service and I did too really I tell you I enjoyed the social part of it. And so he decided to stay in and the next place that we were sent was to Porto Rico and I was there three years and that was a wonderful time. I really got to become an army wife and I had a couple of miscarriages and they just finally said that I shouldn't get pregnant again and that was the time that a lot of the men in Porto Rico because Porto Rico then was a very poor country. And they were coming to New York to work and unfortunately many of them did not come back and or they would come and stay long enough to get the wife pregnant and go away again. Some of them worked very hard and sent money and saw their children were educated but not the majority did. And so there were children to be adopted and so we adopted out little girl there and she was the most beautiful little thing. And then we went were at the officers club the night dancing and I liked to dance and it was fun. They worked hard they marched they went on maneuvers and everything but they knew how to enjoy life when they were back home with their family. And we were actually out on the floor dancing and his buzzer sounded and he was we were on the middle of the island there and I said don't go you don't have to go. I do have to go anyway he came back walking back in and he said we have to leave. And he said I've arranged for a car for us I have to go back again I'm mixed up on this but I'm just trying to tell you the kind of life we lived. And I said why do we have to go and he said because we have a baby and that's when the a good friends that her husband her father was the chief physician on the island and she had gotten this baby she knew how much we wanted a baby. And she had gotten it because the mother of this child knew that she was going to die if she couldn't because her husband wasn't sending money and wasn't coming home anymore and she was sleeping on the floor a dirt floor. And a chicken had pecked her in the eye so she brought her into the church to give her to the nuns because she said if I don't give her to the church she's not going to live. Well my friend and her father were there at the service and the nuns told them about it and she said I'll take the baby. I know a doctor and his wife who would love to have that baby so that's how we got her. And that was just a really wonderful thing that had happened. And so we had the baby and my son was about 8 years old then and he thought to have the baby was okay but on the other hand he wasn't tickled like we were. And then you won't believe it but we were stationed at another place still in Porto Rico because they had three huge bases there during the war and again we were dancing his buzzer went off I said we don't need another baby don't answer it. He said I have to because he was in charge of the thing this time he came back and he said come outside with me. And he said there had been this terrible accident in my family and that my maiden name was Leiden and he said all the Leiden's were killed in this accident. And I said you mean my whole family and he said yes. Well what had happened it wasn't that it was bad enough but it was my brother and his wife and my other brother and they were going to a town about 50 miles away to visit my aunt who was dying of cancer. And they had a three month old child and a four year old child and they left them with my mother. And they were half way to the hospital and this drunk driver came along he wasn't supposed he didn't have a driver's license somebody lent him a car he was drunk. He completely crossed over and slammed into and he killed my brother instantly killed the mother instantly and badly hurt my other brother and we didn't think he would live but he did. And the people that were killed were h mother and father of well they would be the grandparents' of Erin because Erin's father we adopted him and of course the other Erin's father was three months old when we adopted him and the four year old. So many things happened to me while we were in service. We went back and we took the bay took the two children and went back to Porto Rico and oh those people were so nice to us. I mean because actually I thought there was a time that I would never see the light of day without doing diapers because I had two babies in diapers. And you know and this little four year old boy he really suffered. The three month old child didn't know I mean but anyway they were just wonderful to us. But it was coming time that Lester was gonna be transferred again and he pretty much knew that we were gonna go overseas. And we just the sky

opened up we had to get out of the service and so we go out of service because of the four children. The little four year old boy still he didn't dislike me but in essence he didn't allow me to take the mother's place. He did after about a year so anyhow we did get out of the service then we went to Florida and went in the that's where my husband was from and so he opened his office there. And the people that we were in service with when we were stationed where we got the baby we meet every year we are still doing it. And let's see how many years would that be we've been doing that for 50 years. And we meet in a different city every year for three days and four nights and we started out we had real big group and we'd rent a couple floors and some of the people were still in service and some were not. And this last year the group come and met here in Nashville and I had them all here for a real nice lunch in our dining room and it made me sad in a way because there was only 21 in the group. But when I think that that groups gone on for 50 years I mean it made a big difference in all our lives. And so anyway when we were in Miami this happened we got a divorce which I didn't want but that happens. So I went to school University of Miami and got my bachelor's degree and then my mother came and she stayed with me and she looked after the children. And I got a scholarship to Boston University so I went there and I got my master's and then I got my doctorate in education and my minor was in gerontology. And never did I know that I was going to end up living in a gerontology heaven which is where I am. And it is nice here it's very very nice. So anyway I kind of hit the high spots with you. But I didn't I really didn't do as much for my community as Frances did. And she never married and what she did not tell you was that her father had a stroke and she he had been in the sheriff's department I'm not quite sure what he did. But she had a part-time job and she went around with him when he'd go out he would serve summons on people to go to court and stuff like that. And she knows some funny stories about that and then he died. Her father was very poor for a long time and she took care of him so she never married. And I'm sure she was very pretty when she was young and she enjoys life so much you know.

Interviewer: So you were in high school during World War II right?

Archer: Uh huh

Interviewer: A sophomore, junior, senior in high school.

Archer: Uh huh

Interviewer: As a child what was that like?

Archer: Well to tell you the truth it wasn't I knew there was a war but during the school they were too young to be drafted. I mean when we got to college that was different. Now so it wasn't sad for me you know the war was there and I would go we could go over to if we went in a group and we had grown people to chaperone us we could go down on Saturday night to the what did they call it where the servicemen went. They came in from the bases and you went there and they had music and you danced with them and they had refreshments.

Interviewer: An officer's club?

Archer: Yeah it was an NCO club yeah NCO club. And I enjoyed that and I didn't know anybody at that time that was going in so nothing bad happened. And well that made me think of something I was going to tell you what was that.

Interviewer: So you didn't really feel the effects of the war like the shortages you still got what you wanted.

Archer: Well I did after I went back to work and I have to say that I didn't well one thing that was hard the reason I went in nurses training was that the banks closed. And my parents had put money in I was the oldest of the I had two brothers but I was the oldest. And they closed and they never got any money back out of it that was my college money. So I went in hospital training because you know you could do that.

Interviewer: Did your parents did they have to use any relief during any of FDR's.

Archer: My daddy had a job and he and we didn't suffer I mean we had an old car you couldn't go out and buy a new car. And you didn't use the car that much because you didn't have that much gas. And there were a lot of things she talked with you about food you didn't always have the kind of food you wanted I mean

Interviewer: Chocolate

Archer: Yeah right and it didn't matter that you had the money you just couldn't go get it you know. But my mother was an excellent cook and I've always like to cook I don't now but I used to. So I really never suffered from that. I had a cousin that I was extremely fond of and he was going to be drafted in the army and he went on a Saturday afternoon with a friend of his had gotten a new motorcycle and they were going over about 20 miles away to some friends of theirs. And this woman who was learning to drive a car ran into them and killed them and I was at my music teachers playing the piano she was teaching me, never was too much good at it, but dad was a wonderful musician and he wanted me to take it. And she came and she told me to go home and I said oh goodie and she said go straight home and so I did. That was the saddest thing that ever happened to me up until that time. And then after our divorce my oldest son took it very hard and we were living in Miami at the time and he came in one day and he said I want to join the navy. And I said no you know I just couldn't do it. He was not quite 18 it was almost his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. And they had I don't remember what they called it but if you went in that young you went in under a special category and then you stayed until you were 21. And he finally he said Momma if I don't go I'm gonna get in trouble here. And he said you don't know it but I've gotten in with some really rough friends and they had it in Miami I mean they really did. I loved the place I always liked southern Florida but they had some rough kids there. And so I talked to his dad about it and he said well if he wants to go I'd rather him be in the navy than in jail. I said well put that way I guess I would too. So I said well I'll go down to the recruiting office with you and I'll see because he wasn't 18 so I had to sign for it. And so I went down and the man was so nice the recruiting officer. He said he had him fill out stuff and talk to me about him and his schooling and this and that and the other. And he had not finished high school and that was just beyond my belief I couldn't you know and so then he sent him down the hall for something I don't remember what it was he wanted to talk to me. And he said do you know this is the third time your son has been in here and I finally told him that you would have to sign for him. And he said I know how bad you feel about it and he said but I think that you should he will be better off with the navy than he will with the crowd he's gotten in. And so I signed him in and then he was in the navy and he enjoyed the navy he really did. But then I was living through some of the naval battles' and I never knew I was so afraid every time I saw a car park in front of the house I was afraid it was somebody coming in you know to tell me that because that happened to a lot of my friends. But he got through it okay and he got out and went to high school and by then I had moved here and he came here and he went to Peabody and he's turned out to be a great fellow so. I guess it turned out alright.

Oh I know the funniest thing I had a wooden Buda you know the where did I get that? I got it when we were in Porto Rico and I loved it it was so well done it didn't cost me much I got it in a souvenir shop. But for somehow I thought that was my good luck piece and by then I was working in because my minor was in gerontology and so I started working in a senior citizens home. And I actually planned and started the first program for seniors in these homes and wrote it up and thoroughly enjoyed my job. But anyway after I took Jeff home after I signed him into the navy and he was happy happy happy he was going off to tell his friends he was going in the navy. I was so nervous I parked that car and I sat down at that desk and turned around to put my pocketbook down in the desk drawer and I knocked that Buda off and broke his foot off and I was certain that was a bad sign something was gonna happen to my son in the navy. Well luckily it didn't I glued his foot back on. But you know it's those funny little things you think about. So I ended up with four wonderful children and I have five grandchildren and life has been nice.

Interviewer: Well thank you Ms. Archer.