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Oral History

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HIST 155, Fall 2015 / Professor Erskine

Student Interviewers Name: Lauren Brackbill

Interviewee Name: Dorothy (Dot) Hurlbert

Time and Location of Interview:

The Interview was conducted in two sessions on October 23, 2015 and November 3, 2015 at Greenbrier Morning Pointe Assisted Living in Ooltewah, TN. Only the Interviewer and Interviewee were present.

About Dorothy Hurlbert:

She was originally Dorothy Nowell, and was born on May 11, 1923 in Philadelphia, Mississippi. Later in her life she moved to Atlanta, Georgia and Mobile, Alabama before her current residence in Tennessee. She was alive during the Great Depression and World War II. She was married twice, first to Jim Finley who was not part of the war fighting, but is deceased. Then she married Meldon Hurlbert who went Germany, invaded Germany and Belgium Battle of the Bulge. Her and her sister were the first twin sister Doris stewardess's for Delta. She had an older brother named Victor, older sister name Moezzelle twin brothers named Willis and Wallace, and her own twin sister named Doris.

Interviewer: Lauren Brackbill (LB)

Interviewee: Dorothy Hurlbert (DH)

LB: How was life growing up during the Great Depression?

DH: Oh yes I remember the depression. We would go to but groceries. We couldn't buy a lot of stuff. If you needed a lot of sugar you couldn't buy lot of sugar. You could only buy one bag sugar. You only had so much you could buy. Its just everything was rationed and if you ran out of it that's it because that's it. You just had to adjust to things like that.

LB: Did you expect that America would enter World War 2?

DH: Oh yeah! I Knew that they were planning it cause if it kept on they'd have to do something. I was young then I didn't really know what to think about it. I knew though that it was going to happen. I honestly don't remember much about it though it was so long ago I hardly remember.

LB: Where were you when Pearl Harbor happened on December 7, 1941? What was your reaction?

DH: Well I think I was in my teens and I don't think it really upset me or impress me because I was off living my little teenage life. I knew it was bad but I had my life and I just knew it was happening. I don't remember where I was, it was such a long time ago I don't remember when it was.

People were saying it was rougher war in the pacific than it was in Europe. Europe has more stuff to use than the islands like supplies for the troops. It was much harder for the soldiers that weren't in Europe.

My brothers all went off to war, and all of them came back.

LB: Can you describe the home life of American during WWII?

DH: The main thing about it is everything was rationed. You could only get so much flour, and sugar, and groceries and stuff like that. You had to ration your food. My mother died when I was little so it was just my siblings and my my father. My sister worked in Washington during the war. She liked it because she knew what was going on, my older sister. She would talk about, but I don't remember anything important it was so long ago. She would talk about different people she liked or didn't like in the government up there, that's always the way to like some people and to not.

LB: A lot of women had to work while the men where away at war. Was this the case for you?

DH: Yes, I was working at bank in Jackson, Mississippi. But my father worked at an army base, for the Air Force. They worked on planes and things like that. Tried to get them ready to fly and stuff for the war.

Men used to have all the jobs and women used to stay at home raising the children. During the war that's what got women out and some of them even joined the service. Most of the women did not work out of the home until the war. Since boys left we had to get out and work to make some money. It was a rough time but it wasn't to bad because everybody was in the same boat, it didn't hurt me more than it anyone else because we were all in the same situation. You just kept the home going.

Women didn't have much to do during the war, we weren't called to the war in other words.

LB: What was your view of Japanese during the War?

DH: I was to young to really remember. There weren't a lot of Japanese around where I lived so I didn't really think about it. I'm sure there were people who didn't like them but I just don't know because I didn't know of them.

LB: Do you know of any soldiers who died protecting our country during World War 2?

DH: My cousin died in the Pacific fighting in an airplane. He was in the air force and he was in his early twenties. It had an affect on my family, but all my brothers came back. He was my uncle's son, and he was the only one I knew that got killed. He was fine young man, we all talked about how they killed the best one of us because he really was a good young man.

LB: How was life after the war ended? Relatively the same or quite different?

DH: Well after the war I worked for Delta. I had an identical twin sister and they hired us for publicity purposes. We flew about two or three year, but when you got married you had to quit. So we got married, because we were in our twenties. I was 24 or something like that, and I had two husbands.

When people got back from the war they didn't want to talk about it. They said that's behind us we don't want to talk about it anymore. We would try to ask them things and they just said they didn't want to talk about and didn't talk about it. One of my brothers said he saw too many killed and he just didn't want to talk about it. The brother that went to the beach in Italy saw several thousand killed as they went on the beach when he went to Anzio. All the troops went into Europe up through this beach. His name was Wallace. He also had a twin who went to Germany named Willis.

I married my first husband because his wife died and he had to go to work so he didn't go in the service. But all my three brothers did. My second husband was involved and went to Germany. He was part the soldiers that invaded Belgium or something. What was that called, Battle of the Bulge? He was one of the first ones off the beach. He said that when they got out there they never thought they would get as far in as they did. But he said when they got in the beach at Italy they lost 8,000 boys.

LB: From soldiers who came home, did anyone talk about how hard it was to fight or possible have to take a life of someone else?

DH: They just didn't want to talk about it. They could but they didn't want to. They just had to put all that in the past. The boys wanted to get along with their life, like my brothers. I would say to them tell me what it was like and they said no we don't want to talk about it.

LB: Do you remember hearing about the Atomic Bomb being dropped on Japan?

DH: Yes, I thought it was going to end the war, which it did. You see back then the army kept a lot of that stuff a secret till it happened, nobody knew expect army people that they were going to drop a bomb over there, but that ended the war it really ended the war. So that stopped the war, it really helped end, and killed a lot of the people.

LB: What was the mentality of Americans following the war?

DH: People were gung-ho ready to get going. They wanted to get on with their lives and build a family. I can remember that because all the men were at war and all of us were here and that's the year a lot of children came about cause people wanted to have a family. Baby Boomers, that's what they called them. It was a tough time because didn't have all the stuff you wanted. You don't have all the Coca-Cola's you wanted, the country was busy furnishing the soldiers stuff. After the war people began to scatter. There was a lot better transportation because of the cars, there were a lot more after the war.

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Oral Interview Questions:

How was life growing up during the Great Depression?

Did you expect that America would enter World War 2?

Where were you when Pearl Harbor happened on December 7, 1941? What was your reaction?

Can you describe the home life of American during WWII?

A lot of women had to work while the men where away at war. Was this the case for you?

What was your view of Japanese during the War?

Do you know of any soldiers who died protecting our country during World War 2?

How was life after the war ended? Relatively the same or quite different?

From soldiers who came home, did anyone talk about how hard it was to fight or possible have to take a life of someone else?

Do you remember hearing about the Atomic Bomb being dropped on Japan?

What was the mentality of Americans following the war?