

## CONNIE BURNS ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT

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### ABSTRACT

#### *Biography*

Connie Burns was born in 1939, and grew up in Ohio and Kentucky. Since her younger brother experienced many health problems as an infant, her family had to mortgage their home three times in order to afford medical care for him. While her uncle served in World War II, her father was exempt from military service due to number of children he had and instead volunteered with the local fire department. Connie initially turned down multiple scholarship offers, so that she could attend college with her high school sweetheart, who would later become her husband.

#### *Summary*

In this interview, Connie recounts her childhood memories of the war in Cincinnati, Ohio, and northern Kentucky. Although she was very young during World War II, Connie recalls the war's impact on daily life, including rationing and her father's work as a volunteer firefighter. The interview concludes with a discussion of how Americans' views of the country have changed since the war.

#### *Keywords*

*volunteer, firefighter, patriotism, Ohio, Kentucky, school, rationing, black outs, atomic bomb, government*

### INDEX

00:01 – Introduction  
00:27 – Family background; parents' and siblings' lives; living in Ohio and Kentucky  
03:27 – Parents' night school education in Cincinnati and struggle affording school  
05:08 – Mother's jobs after not being able to finish school, including a department store and

insurance company cafeteria; mother quitting when she had children and later returning

06:01 – Recalls family wasn't very affectionate, but had good relationships and were happy

06:37 – Father getting job at the *Cincinnati Enquirer* during the Depression making \$12/week

07:00 – Financial struggles with brother's spina bifida; mortgaging their home three times to pay for in-home medical care; family's relative financial prosperity

08:00 – Good relationships with extended family members, except for paternal grandfather; deaths of grandparents

11:30 – Childhood friends and success in school; dad missing her graduation because he had to work

13:49 – Turning down scholarship offers and attending school in Dayton, Ohio, with high school boyfriend and future husband

15:16 – Lack of awareness of war as a child; remembers people discussing rationing; mother safeguarding special grocery coins; people waiting to get groceries and rationing gas

17:28 – Not noticing the strange realities about growing up during World War II until she was older; responding to sirens, blackouts, and rationing

18:17 – Father not in the war because he had so many kids; uncle serves; Father volunteers with fire station short staffed due to the war; not hearing stories until after the war was over

20:36 – Bus ride with family as small child; moving from Ohio to Kentucky

22:38 – Learning World War II from history class instead of people; unsure of impact on her upbringing

23:34 – Going over photos from her childhood; describing the houses she grew up in

25:32 – Lack of controversy about atomic bomb; popular happiness with government; lack of critical media; patriotism in childhood

27:57 – How patriotism and politics have changed over the years

29:36 – Conclusion

## **STORY TRANSCRIPTS**

### **Story 1: Post-War Patriotism and the Beginnings of a More Divided America**

**[27:34 – 29:34]**

There was a lot of patriotism [after World War II]. Everybody was happy, I think, with what was going on. And it was probably a big thing mentally. Our country got into the war later and they more or less really helped a lot. So I imagine everyone was pretty proud of what was going on.

*KW: Yeah, that's interesting because that's the complete opposite of my upbringing. I'm twenty-two. When do you think that shifted? Because right now, like you said, it's like everything's out there, everything's public. Things are controversial now, and people disagree openly about a lot of stuff. When do you think that shift happened?*

I can remember—I'm trying to think of how old I was—we graduated in '57. I remember going into the Kennedy years and when Kennedy was first President, the Bay of Pigs happened. When he was assassinated, his popularity was really, really low, and even on my level, people were down on him. But of course, when he got killed, then he was the greatest thing that ever happened and everybody felt bad. But before that, I remember a lot of resentment.

Before him, I think it was Eisenhower. Everybody loved him from his war record and all that, and there wasn't much bad said about him at all. I can remember that. But boy, Kennedy really got it. And a lot of stuff that has been revealed now about his playboy stuff, we weren't aware of that—at least I wasn't—but they didn't like how he was running the country. I remember that. And that's about when I became aware of things, I guess.

### **Story 2: Childhood Finances and Brother's Health**

**[07:00 – 7:54]**

*KW: So, growing up in that time, would you say your family was well-off? Were you on the lower class, middle class?*

We were definitely not well-off. When my brother was born, he had like ten operations, at least, while he was still very young. He had lots of things wrong with him: it was spina bifida and he had no—

*KW: No knee caps.*

—no knee caps, no roof in his mouth. They said he would never walk or talk; they should put him in an institution. And [my parents] wouldn't do that. So they mortgaged their home three times to pay for all the medical [bills]. So they weren't really well-to-do because of all of that. But I never felt like we were—we were better off than a lot of my friends. We weren't poor.

**Story 3: Wartime Rationing**  
**[15:23 – 16:10]**

*KW: So, between 1939—when you were born—and '45, were you and your siblings aware that there was a war happening?*

I mean, I was very young. And I can't say that I remembered a war and people were fighting over in Germany. I had no conception of that. But I do remember little things they'd talk about for sugar and things like that. They were only allowed to get so much. And I remember those little coins, they were red and blue and you used them for different things. I remember my mom talking about them. They'd kept them in the china closet, and boy you couldn't touch them, *[laughs]* because they were valuable for whatever they used them for.

**Story 4: Dad Volunteering at the Fire Station**  
**[18:17 – 19:34]**

*KW: Did [the war] affect anyone in your family, like did you have anybody that served?*

Not that I'm aware of. My dad already had the three kids, so he didn't go. But my uncle, the one that's the printer that we talked about, he did go. But he only had the one child. I guess they kept going down, and they didn't get down to somebody with three kids to go.

But my dad did a lot of different things because men were gone. When I was little—I do remember flashes of this—we lived in Cincinnati until I was four years old, but I remember we lived next door to a fire department. And my dad helped them a lot. I heard about this in my lifetime. In 1937, there was a huge flood, I mean really disastrous. And he did a lot and went out with the firemen and the fire boats, and put out fires and all of that. But he wasn't a fireman. I just remember that firehouse being there and that he'd be over there. So, the war caused that, that a lot of the firemen were gone.