

Adults' Childhood Narratives of World War II on the Homefront

Name: Donna Ellett. Birth Year:1935.

Keywords, Descriptors: _____.

Location: 1720 Park Meadows Drive, Ft. Myers, FL 33907.

Collection Summary: _____.

Donna Ellett

Interviewee, Professional Title

Karla Pulido

Karla Pulido, Research Assistant

February 26, 2018, 1720 Park Meadows Drive, Ft. Myers, FL 33907

ALL EDITORS' NAMES LISTED HERE

Editors

Final edit date here

Karla Pulido: Alright, my name is Karla Pulido and today is February 26, 2018. Umm, would you please say your full name

Donna Ellett: Donna Ellett

KP: Alright and your age please?

DE: I'm 82

KP: Okay. Well and your birth year?

DE: 1935

KP: Okay, so can you tell me about your family background um and uh like what is your native language or your current language. (27sec)

DE: Umm English of course.

KP: Mhmm

DE: Um my parent's heritage, my mother was Irish and Scotch and my dad was German and French background but we were all born here.

KP: Born here?

DE: Mhm

KP: Alright, and how many siblings do you have? DE: I have one brother

KP: One brother?

DE: Mhm

KP: Okay, uhh what level education do your parents have?

DE: High school

KP: High school

DE: Mhm

KP: Umm...What do... What did they do for a living? (1:01)

DE: They both work Ford Motor company in Michigan

KP: Okay, umm... Any other important information about your parents?

DE: No

KP: No? Umm, what part of... Uh. Where did you grow up? (1:23)

DE: Dearborn, Michigan

KP: Dearborn, Michigan

DE: Mhm

KP: Okay

KP: Okay, umm.. Do you recall where you were living at the time of 1939 and 1945.

DE: (Pause) Yes, actually my parents moved into the house we lived in 1940 and uh in Dearborn Michigan.

KP: Dearborn, Michigan

DE: Mhm

(Pages rustling)

KP: Do you uh recall um like your home?

DE: Mhm

KP: Can you describe that to me? (1:59)

DE: Yeah, we had a two story Britt colonial three bedroom. Uh and um it was a real rural neighborhood.

KP: Mhm

DE: A lot of families.

KP: Yeah. Did you have other family near that lived nearby?

DE: No. My other... My grandparents and all my cousins lived in Pennsylvania.

KP: Lived in Pennsylvania. Oh wow. Okay

KP: Umm. Do you remember how your neighborhood was like?

DE: It was...

KP: The kids around?

DE: It was a lot of kids about the same age as my brother and I. And we. It was really a close neighborhood because back then it was you know it was a smaller town and uh we.

KP: Mhm

DE: I went to school with the same kids from kindergarten through high school.

KP: All the way through high school?

DE: Yeah

KP: Wow.

DE: Yeah. So I have pictures of the high school class has half of the kindergarten class that I started with.

KP: Yeah.

DE: So it was a really small kind of real family-oriented neighborhood.

KP: Okay. Wow mhm.

DE: Yeah

KP: Um, Were you in school at the time? I'm assuming you were right?

DE: Mhm. Yes

DE: Yes. I started school in I think in nineteen

(Pause)

DE: Nineteen- forty because I was five year old.

KP: Oh wow

DE: We had kindergarten

KP: Yeah.

DE: We started as a five year old

KP: Wow

DE: And my birthday being in November, I started in September before I was five. So I was always the youngest person in my class.

KP: (Giggles)

DE: Because my birthday fell in November

KP: Yeah

DE: When I started school before my birthday.

KP: Mhm

KP: Um. What was your school like?

DE: I went to a school called uhh...

(Pause)

DE: The name of it was uh Lindbergh High.

(Pause)

DE: Lindbergh Elementary School. It was named after Charles Lindbergh, the aviator.

KP: Mhm

(Pen Clicks)

DE: And it was a few blocks from the house. We walked to and from school. My brother and I and the kids in the neighborhood.

DE: It was about eight or ten blocks from home and we always walked back and forth.

KP: Did you enjoy school?

DE: Oh I loved it, yeah.

KP: Yeah

DE: Yeah

KP: Um. What did you like to do for fun?

DE: Well, we use to play outside and uh there was a couple of kids across the street that were about our same ages; and we played with them a lot.

DE: We played croquet and they had a swimming pool and just a little kiddy pool that we would go in and we would uh...

(Pause)

DE: We would play jacks and jump rope and um

(Pause)

DE: We would always play hopscotch on the sidewalk

KP: Oh yeah

DE: We would go out with chalk and play hopscotch

DE: Yeah

KP: Um...mmm

(Pause)

KP: Eh. Where did you like to go? Umm... Like where would you like to hangout with your friends besides doing all of those activities?

DE: Mostly we did it in our own neighborhood. We didn't go any, not at that. At our elementary age, no. We would just hangout in our neighborhood with friends.

DE: We wouldn't go to a...

DE: Well we didn't have malls or things like that back then.

[00 hrs:05 mins:00 secs]

KP: Yeah

DE: But we do go when I was a little older, we did go to the roller rink on the weekends

KP: Oh that's fun

DE: And roller skate

KP: Mhm

DE: And uh play tennis but it was mostly within the school or in the neighborhood.

KP: And within um nineteen thirty-five or thirty-nine, excuse me, and nineteen forty-five.

KP: Um were you aware of the war at that time?

DE: I, I was not so much aware of the beginning of the war but as as it got into the war my dad did not and was not in the service.

DE: But they had what they called "Civil Defense".

KP: Mhm

DE: And they had , um, I know they gave my dad, he had a helmet and he had a flashlight and they would go around the neighborhoods in the evening when it got dark to be sure everything was all right.

DE: And at that time they did have blackouts.

KP: Okay

DE: Whereby they would. Everybody had to turn their lights off.

KP: Yeah

DE: Because during the war, looking back there was times where there was uh submarines off the coast of Florida and off the coast of Carolina (6:06) and off the coast of

KP: Mhm

DE: Of um California. So they were preparing if there was ever an invasion that you know we were prepared to know what to do if something happened. We had these blackouts so there would be no lights on.

KP: So at that time how old were you? Like six perhaps?

DE: I was six, seven years old at the... At the very beginning of the war.

KP: Um. How did that make you feel? Did you...

DE: Well I always felt very safe and of course I had... We had both of our parents.

DE: My father was not in the service in a way which was a good thing you know. I've...I've feel that you would felt a lot safer when you have your daddy there to take care of you. You know?

KP: Yeah. So referring back to um his position as a civil defense

DE: Yeah they called it. I think they called it Civil Defense. They. They had neighborhood... It was...It was kind of like a preview neighborhood watch.

KP: Okay

DE: Where they would go and watch the neighborhood

KP: Yes

DE: And be sure that everything was safe. Of course all those kids were in at dark, you know.

DE: Eh...

(Pause)

KP: Um. What time was it? Like what was the curfew?

DE: Well usually we were in by dark whatever time that was. The summer time it would be a little bit later but uh, rarely were we out after dinner time. After dinner we were usually home.

KP: Mmm. What do you... What else do you recall from WWII?

DE: Well I remember my brother was a cub scout. He was a year older than me

KP: Okay

DE: And he was a cub scout and we collected newspapers. I don't, I don't know why but there was a big push on that you, you uh collected newspapers. I could remember we'd go around the neighborhood and collect everybody's newspapers and we would tie them up with bundles of string.

KP: (giggles)

DE: Then we would take them to school where a truck would pick them up.

KP: Okay

DE: So it was something for the war effort.

KP: Mhm

DE: And I also remember that um we had meatless Fridays.

KP: Meatless Fridays?

DE: Where we didn't have meat on Fridays

KP: Ahh

DE: Because the meat was saved for the troops

KP: Oh that's interesting

DE: And you know it helped save; and we also, they also had um

(pen writing)

DE: Food-food stamps like uh ra-ration stamps they'd call them.

KP: Ration stamps

DE: You were ration. You could only get so many gallons of gas. You had a book with stamps that went in it

KP: Wow

DE: Too.

DE: You were only allowed to because of the gas and everything went into the war effort.

DE: And on the Saturday movies we would go to the movies and they always had buy war bonds

KP: Mhm

DE: On the screen and uh... So we were aware of it and they always had a newsreels and it was always about the war

KP: Yeah

DE: They'd have a 5 minute newsreel before the movie ended on Saturdays.

KP: Um. How did you feel about that? When you would see that on...

DE: Well, like I said I felt really secure where we lived

KP: Yeah

DE: It was such a nice neighborhood and a nice area and it was just, I never felt afraid. I was always felt safe.

KP: Mhm

DE: All the time. I do remember, I must've been 10 years old when the war was over and I could remember the headlines in the newspapers said "VJ DAY"

KP: Mhm

DE: Which was Victory over Japan.

KP: Mhm

DE: It was when Japan signed the surrender and I remember seeing a picture in the newspaper of the atomic bomb, you know the big mushroom

KP: Mhm

DE: Bomb when it was dropped in 1945

KP: Mhm

DE: I was 10 so

KP: Yeah

DE: I was quite aware of that

KP: Yeah

DE: I mean that picture was everywhere. That was what ended the war and

KP: Mhm... Um...

(Brief Pause)

KP: (Inhale) Um. Did it affect any of your other family members? During, um WWII?

DE: I had a cousin, well I had three male cousins that lived in Pennsylvania

[Time Code 00hrs:10mins:00secs]

DE: And they were all in the service and I had one cousin who was on the destroyer for like seven years during the war and back at that time they had flags that they put on the windows

KP: Yes

DE: And with the stars in it and of course my aunt had one on her window with three stars. She had three sons and they were all in the service.

(Inhale)

DE: But they all survived it and nobody was killed in the family

KP: Ehh. That's nerve wracking

DE: Yea, yeah

KP: Yeah

DE: Especially when you you know somebody like that has had so much family in the war

KP: Yeah

DE: Because they were all older than my brother and I

KP: Would um...

DE: Those boys

KP: Would you worry for them at times?

DE: Well, at times. You see we were never close to them. We were in Michigan and they were in Pennsylvania. We would maybe visit once a year so it wasn't in your mind until you would see it. (10:45sec)

KP: Okay

DE: When you would be there in visit them you would think more about it

KP: It's different... Yeah

DE: Because you're closer to it but when you're away from it you just... it doesn't affect you as much

KP: Mhm. Mmm... What are some of the stories that you would hear as an adult... umm... (tongue click) or that adults would talk about during that time?

DE: In the war... I really don't... I really don't remember much except about the... the paper drives and the gas rationing and that kind of stuff

KP: Mhm

DE: I don't remember there ever being a lot of talk about the actual... war part of the war as far as...

KP: Do you think that it is because it was kept more on the hush side?... Or to keep...

DE: I just think we were away from it. We would just... uh... We would just sort of in a cocoon where it was... where it was it just wasn't blasted at you. Like i said we would see it on the news... on um... Saturday morning we would go to the movie theaters. They always had a newsreel before the movie and it was always about something about the war effort.

KP: Mmm

DE: But it was just like a little 10 minute clip then we were off to the cartoons and the westerns and we were over it. (Laughter) You know.

KP: Yeah. Um... What kind of music did you listen to at that point?

DE: Well...

KP: In WWII

DE: In WWII, most of it was like big band music, Glenn Miller

KP:Mhm

DE: And that kind of thing.

KP: Okay

DE: Because that's what you were hearing as they were entertaining the troops and he was in the service and you were kind of aware of it on the radio. Which was all we had.

KP: Yeah... Um... How about in movies?... Um...

DE: They did have a lot movies that were like if you back now in the 40's there's a lot of war movies on. I am sure that was sort of propaganda

KP: Okay

DE: Of course in the movies we always won

KP: Yeah

DE: Everything ended up okay and I'm sure that was a form of keeping people upbeat and keeping them um... because if you look back to the 40's there's a lot of war movies about the airplanes and things... and I'm sure it was a form of propaganda by... whereby to keep everybody....

KP: Um.. How does that... as you grew older and you reflect back on that do you think it influence you or shaped you as a person?

DE: Not really because basically when I graduated from high school and was of 17 or 18 years old of age we were already into Korea and so that was more in my head than when I was 9 or 10 years old.

KP: Yeah

DE: Because I just was always protected by family and...

KP: Yeah

DE: I never felt... I never felt at any kind of danger

KP: Danger

DE: No

KP: Mhm

DE: No

KP: Mmm...

DE: And then of course with Korea all the kids I went to school with were going over. So that... that was more... that was closer to my thinking as an adult.

KP: So as a child you were more worried about like your childhood experience through through that time...um... so like you said your community was cocooned. So it wasn't too much of...

What is the word I'm looking for?...um... It wasn't something that... you know to make you feel insecure.

DE: To be afraid?

KP: Yeah

DE: To fear

KP: Yeah

DE: No, I never felt that whether it was family or neighborhood or where I grew up or what. But I never felt that. I never felt like you know we were really deprived of anything. I'm sure my parents were more aware than I was

KP: Yeah

DE: Because they were the ones dealing with it.

KP: How do you think your parents felt?

DE: I think they were really thankful that... you know lived the way we did

KP: Mhm

DE: And that they were able to [Time Code: 15mins:00secs] gives us the protection and the feeling of safety that we had.

KP: Did you... um... ever come across anybody that was um... a friend of yours that was around the area during World War... Two?

DE: No, no I didn't know other than my cousins who were... and then... I didn't... we didn't really have a lot of contact with them even after they came back from the war. Um as far as talking to them about it or learning anything about it yeah.

KP: Mhm. Okay. Um...

(Pause)

KP:(Tongue clicks) Ah. Going back to your childhood um what did the schools do in order to um... Did they mention anything about the world, WWII going on?

DE: Well, yeah part like I said,(15:56) we did this paper drive and we would do things like that at the school. They would do that as well.

KP: Mhm

DE: Umm...and I think um at one time they had like the red cross, the women rolled bandages or something like that early on.

KP: They rolled bandages?

DE: Uh... yeah.

KP: So in order to shh..um...ship off 16:19

DE: Yeah...Yeah everything... and then of course um where I lived um for a motor company. It was a big company and of course they were doing a lot with the war effort because they were making jeeps and planes and all of that were being made there (background noise) in the car factories

KP: So you're saying...

(Background noise)

DE: At the time (banging)...so I was aware of that.

KP: Was...you said your father was...?

DE: He worked for Fords

KP: Fords?

DE: And uh...he was um...he was just a um um...an auditor. He just did paperwork.

KP: Okay

DE: And my mother was a typist. She just typed you know. She was like a secretary typist

KP: Mhm

DE: But um... like I said at that time Ford Motor Company was pumping out airplanes and jeeps and things like that. (17:00) So I was aware of it but it's not you know, being 10 years old

KP: Mhm

DE: That much in your mind

KP: Well...

DE: You kind of knew about it but...

KP: Yeah and what about your brother? I know you said he's a year...

DE: He's only just a year older

KP: Older

DE: So he was only 11

KP: 11?

DE: Yeah

KP: Mmm. Did you ever talk to him about... um...

DE: No, not really. Now he was in the army when he grew up of course but uh...that was you know was WWII um... like I said we were very aware of it but I was never afraid, never. I don't think any of us kids in the neighborhood were. It just... we just felt secure and safe there.

KP: Mhm. Mmm...

DE: And that was a credit to the type of neighborhood it was

KP: Yeah

DE: And where we lived. We just lived in a really good area.

KP: Um. Was there a lot of...was there propaganda around the...

DE: Not so much.

KP: area?

DE: Uh-uh...

KP: No...

DE: Mmm mmm... Like I said other than the blackouts that they would test. Everybody would turn their lights off on a certain night at a certain time.

KP: Um... Did... Were you aware why you had to do that?

DE: Yeah

KP: Yeah

DE: Yeah

KP: Mmm

DE: Yeah because my dad had his helmet and his flashlight (laughter)

KP: (Laughter) (18:19)

DE: (Laughter continues)

KP: So you knew you had to...?

DE: So I knew...Yeah...and his arm...I think he had an armband too (giggles) like something on it.

KP: Um do you... Does he...Do you have any of that um...?

DE: No

KP: ...items left?

DE: No, no

KP: Um.

DE: No and my dad is long gone

KP: Yeah

(Paper sounds)

Pause

(Bird chirping in the background)

KP: Did you know of any other friends um that they had any um par...or fathers that were off to war?

DE: No, not any of my close friends.

KP: No.

DE: Not uh.

KP: They were all...

DE: Yeah.

KP: local. (19:01)

DE: I didn't...I don't... None of my close friends or fathers were in the service

KP: (whispers) in the service.

Pause

KP: You said that you had um the ration stamps

DE: Mhm

KP: And that was for gas?

DE: We had gas rations stamps and food stamps

KP: Food...

DE: Food rations

KP: Food rations

DE: You know you could only get so many pieces of meat or whatever and... but you had to have the stamps in order to get it.

KP: Okay

DE: So it was ration. You couldn't just really go in and buy anything you wanted.

KP: Oh okay. Um... did your mom ever make a comment about the whole...

DE: Nope, she did the best she could (giggles) of what she had

KP: Yeah

DE: Everybody did back then

KP: Yeah

Pause

(Whispers) [Time Code 00 hrs:20 mins:00 secs]

Clicking

KP: (Whispers) It's going. So um you said you moved here in 19...?

DE: 1954

KP: 1954

DE: Mhm

KP: And how was it?...How was everything afterwards....after WWII? Like to move down here.

DE: This was a really quiet little town when I first moved here. There was...you know, there was no Lehigh acres no nothing. You know where you are the college was a swamp (chuckles)

KP: Mhm

DE: And uh, of course like I said before the war they trained a lot of airmen here and so up through 1945 and thereafter um that's... that's what brought a lot of people here. A lot of them came back here and married local girls and stayed and raised their families here.

KP: Mmm

DE: So that if... if you get some people of that age group period you should get a lot of information.

KP: Mhm

DE: They had a bombing range out in Buckingham. Um, they trained hundreds and hundreds of airman right over here at where this Page Field airport is (21:07) right now.

KP: Mhm. Umm was there a lot of recruitment going on in Michigan in your area?

DE: I don't remember so much.

KP: When you were...?

DE: I'm sure there was of course back then there was the draft so

KP: Yeah

DE: They drafted them immediately when they got to be of age.

KP: Mhm. Yeah.

DE: And um... so they didn't really have that much. Recruitment usually is when there isn't a war and they'll try to recruit but during war time at that time

KP: Mhm

DE: They just automatically drafted them.

KP: Mhm

DE: And most kids when they first get out of highschool if there was a war going on they would get drafted.

KP: Yeah. Um... So you said your father um... was a lucky one...

DE: He was just the wrong age to have been there (laughter)

KP: Oh

DE: Which was a good thing

KP: Yeah

DE: For us anyway (21:51)

KP: Yeah. Did you ever think that um, when they were doing the draft, did you ever think that your father might of...

DE: No, because most of the younger men, see my dad was in his mid-thirties by the time I was born

KP: Mhm

DE: And so they were taking all the younger men right away

KP: Mhm

DE: And uh... and I think they had uh a number system (tapping on table) were not you know certain ones were drafted and certain ones weren't

KP: Within a certain age

DE: Yeah

KP: Mmm

DE: But it just happened that he wasn't of the right age group at the time

KP: Mhm

DE: And if you were married and had children. At that time I don't think that mattered, they would draft anybody that they need...they needed an army they'd take anybody they could.

KP: Did you know of any of your neighbors that might've...?

DE: Nope, none of my...none of my immediate neighbors were my friends parents and things. None of them were in the war either.

KP: Mhm

DE: Not...not the immediate uh friends that we had in the neighborhood (22:43)

KP: Okay. Umm... Did you ever read a newspapers... um... based on WWII? Uh.

DE: Uh... since WWII?

KP: Um... dur... yeah...During WWII.

DE: Yeah. Umm... I don't... I don't remember. I remember like I said seeing pictures and...and the headlines VJ Day, I do remember that; and I remember pictures of the atomic bomb... and, but as far as reading the newspaper we didn't do that much of it.

KP: Mmm

DE: As... as kids...

KP: Yeah

DE: But you know our parents had read them.

KP: Yeah. Um... So you didn't read anything on like Germany?

DE: Mmm-mmm.

KP: No?

DE: Mmm-mmm. Of course I have since a lot and uh, a lot of the things we weren't, we weren't aware of the Dark Hour, any of that you know...

KP: Mhm.

DE: At the time. Since then we've been all made aware of it of the horrors that went on; but as a child I didn't really know anything about that.

KP: Mhm. Um. Now um... as you... we've gone through time... um... do you think that um... oh... umm... (long pause) Do you feel that it um has any impact on you? Like just...

DE: No... no.

KP: No.

DE: Mmm-mmm. Not like I'm sure it has many people...

KP: Mm.

DE: And of course I think people who've lived in big cities and were... a totally disadvantage to what I was in the environment that I grew up in.

KP: Yeah. Mmm... (Pages flipping) When you said you collected the newspapers to have them...

DE: We turned them in and some truck got them I don't [00:25:00] know what it was used for but that was quite a thing. The paper drive was always a big deal and the cub scouts always collected them and it-it all we ever heard was it's for the war effort...

KP: Alright.

DE: So I don't know what they actually did with the newspapers or why we collected them but I'm sure they had a purpose but I didn't know what it was.

KP: Mmm. During WWII?

DE: Mhm. Mhm.

KP: So you... you had no idea you just...

DE: We just did it.

KP: (Laughter)

DE: Because... (Chuckles) everybody collected newspapers. Newspaper collections was a thing.

KP: Um... you collected them at each home?

DE: Yeah. We would go around the houses and collect them and then we bundle them up. I can remember tying them up with string and so many packages and then taking them. We took them to the school and then a truck would come and pick them up and...

KP: Did..

DE: Take them wherever they took them do whatever they did with them.

KP: Did you and your brother ever question it?

DE: No.

KP: No?

DE: When you're 10 years old you don't really think about it or... they just said collect newspapers so we collected newspapers.

KP: Um. How did it make you feel when you saw the VJ banner?

DE: It... It was the war was over and that was everybody's... you know the war is over the war is over. Of course we didn't have t.v. or anything like that. We had radio.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And uh... and the newspaper and that was all but it meant that you know there was a surrender.

KP: Mhm.

DE: Peace would pursue we hoped. Little did we know...

KP:Mmm.

DE: (Laughter)

KP: Right after.

DE: (Laughter continues) Yeah.

KP: Um. Wha...

DE: We are still seeking peace.

KP: Yeah

DE: (Giggles)

KP: So in 1945 you said you were 6 years old...

DE: No, I was 10.

KP: Oh, you were 10...

DE: I was 6 when the war started and I was 10 when it...

KP: When it... Okay.

DE: When it ended in 1945.

KP: Mhm.

(Pages flipping)

KP: Um... Do you... What other things did you do when you were a child at that time? Besides playing around... um with the neighborhood kids.

DE: It's basically what we did.

KP: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

KP: There wasn't much out...

DE: Mmm-mmm. We had...

KP: Much to do?

DE: Mmm-mmm. There'd be like (mumbles) at Halloween they had big festivals at the school they had parties (27:10) and we would go there. We'd go trick-or-treating uh... but (pause) other than that we would like I said we roller skated, we rode bikes, um... we just sort of played in our own little neighborhood.

KP: Were there um... ehh... you didn't have television at the time

DE: Mmm-mmm.

KP: You said until. (mumbles) How about on the radio? Did you.... Would you hear anything about...

DE: Not a great deal.

KP: Umm...

DE: I... I think my parents probably kept us shielded from a lot of it. You know so we didn't have to listen to it because we did listen to radio programs but I don't remember; and of course President Roosevelt at the time came on with his fireside chat and things like that but I don't remember them. I'm sure my parents listened and they probably kept us out of it as much as possible so they didn't frighten us, you know make us afraid.

KP: Are you um... um... are you happy your parents did that?

DE: Yeah.

KP: During that time...

DE: Yeah.

KP: To kind of like, you know preserve your childhood

DE: Yeah, right.

KP: Umm...

DE: Yeah.

KP: Keep you from...

DE: From worrying

KP: Yeah. From missing out...

DE: Yeah, I'm sure they had plenty of worries during the war time but they shielded us from that pretty much.

KP: Did you ever speak to your parents about WWII, after it all happened, the aftermath?

DE: Not really, I... I married young and left home (giggles).

KP: Mhm.

DE: I had kids of my own. (giggles)

KP: Mhm. Umm.. your husband... Did he um... have any...

DE: Uh...

KP: Relations to the....

DE: He. Lets see...

KP: War.

DE: He was in the service in the 50's. So it was after the war and he didn't see any action. He was a... he was a baker and stationed in Paris. (laughter)

KP: (laughter)

DE: (laughter) So...so he didn't have really any rough duties. (laughter)

KP: That sounds like fun. (giggles)

DE: Yeah, yeah, he had to bake and be a baker and they had a lot of time off. He had it pretty good. (giggles)

KP: Mhm.

DE: So... and it was after Korea and it was before Vietnam. So he was in you know the good times. But he didn't... he didn't see anything like that either.

KP: Um. Did your... during the holidays, was there anything um going on during...

DE: Nothing

KP: The war...

DE: That I could recall

KP: Second war?

DE: Mmm-mmm. Nope, not that I remember.

KP:Mmm. Did you um... I know you said your cousins, even though you weren't that close...umm... [00 hr: 30 min: 00 sec] Would you ever get together for any sort of holidays?

Or...

DE: No.

KP: No.

DE: No. I...I bet I didn't see those cousins ten times in my whole life.

KP: Oh, wow.

DE: Yeah.

KP: Yeah.

DE: And... they all lived in Pennsylvania and we lived in Michigan and...

KP: You'd go visit.

DE: We would go maybe once a year but most of the boys weren't even there at the time and I have cousins today I have no idea where they are. I mean I have no family left anymore. My mother and dad and brother are all gone.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And uh I have most of my aunts and uncles are dead. I just you know my immediate family, my kids.

KP: So during that time it was just more of your immediate family?

DE: Mhm.

KP: Which is your mother...

DE: Just the four of us. Yeah.

KP: So you said your mo-mo-mother was a secretary...

DE: Uh-huh.

KP: At the time during WWII?

DE: Well actually she didn't work during the war. She didn't go to work until like 1950.

KP: Mhm.

DE: So she was she was home... she... she was home raising us at the time she didn't... she went to work when we were in high school.

KP: Mhm.

DE: But she had stayed home and uh... took care of us.

KP: At the time?

DE: Mhm. Dur-during all that time. We were like 15 before she went to work.

KP: Oh okay.

DE: Yeah.

KP: Did you...

DE: But my...

KP: And you enjoyed that?

DE: Yeah, oh yeah. Yeah. There's nothing like having your mother and you know. Today so many of these kids don't have that.

KP: Mhm.

DE: You know because it takes two parents to

KP: Mhm.

DE: Work today and it's a shame because they probably need more mothers

KP: Mhm.

DE: With kids.

KP: Is there anything specific that your mom would make? Umm...like treats for you and your brother.

DE: Yeah. One of her... one of her favorite desserts which she would melt chocolate chips in milk and make like a chocolate syrup and put it over ice cream.

KP: Mmm.

DE: And that was one of my very favorite things that she did (laughter)

KP: Mhm.

DE: And I loved her chocolate cake with white icing on it.

KP: Mmm, that sounds delicious.

DE: It was so good. Yeah, yeah. And she was a good cook. She did a lot of things. In fact, my sister-in-law learned a lot from my mother cooking. I asked my sister-in-law, "Was my mother a good cook because I barely remember." (laughter)

KP: (laughter)

DE: Because I was so young when I moved out and left home. I was only 18. So...

KP: Mhm.

DE: All that stuff doesn't register until you get to be grown

KP: Mhm.

DE: And sort of get your own family and you think back about the things that...

KP: To the way mother cooked.

DE: Yeah!

KP: Some good food! (giggles)

DE: Yeah! Yeah! (laughter) She did some good things. She did good pork chops. She would do uh... pork chops that you cut in the middle and stuff with stuffing...

KP: (mumbles)

DE: Oh my, they were so good.

KP: Mmm.

DE: Yeah. They were good.

KP: Um. What would you do for like family trips?

DE: Uh...

KP: Um. Did you take family trips?

DE: Yeah we did. A lot of times we would go back to Pennsylvania to visit

KP: Mhm.

DE: Family and uh... mostly we... we did take several trips on the train back to Pennsylvania.

Uh, one time she took us when we were really little on the bus. I don't know how she ever managed to... (laughter) and uh, that was quite a trip for her and then as we got a little bit older...

KP: Traveled all the way to Pennsylvania?

DE: Mhm.

KP: Wow.

DE: And as we got a little bit older we would take uh, road trips. We'd- we'd vacationed a lot up in the Northern Peninsula of Michigan. In the summer, we would go up there for a couple of weeks and they usually had a group of their friends. There would be like 4 or 5 couples and all their kids. So...

KP: Mhm.

DE: It would be a big bunch but it was a lot of fun.

KP: And during that time of... 1939 to 1945, did you take trips around that time?

DE: I don't remember taking... the only trips we did at that time were usually back to Pennsylvania.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And we did take a train trip when I was 10.

KP: 10.

DE: Back to Pennsylvania, one time to visit my grandparents and my aunts and uncles and things.

KP: Mmm.

DE: And uh, I was 10 years old.

KP: Did you enjoy that trip?

DE: Yeah, yeah. They had a compartment on the train where we slept on the train and that was pretty special I thought at the time I was 10 years old I thought, Jesus it's nice. (laughter)

KP: Anything at that age...

DE: Yeah! Yeah! (laughter)

KP: Is fascinating.

DE: It was kind of fun, yeah. I've never done anything like that so I thought it was pretty, pretty special.

KP: Uh. When you arrived to Pennsylvania, did you go straight to your grandparents home?

DE: Yeah, my aunt and uncle usually picked us up and take us to the grandparents. Now my grandparents died when I was... (sniffs) probably 11 years old. So they've been gone a long time but in fact, my grandfather died the same day that President Roosevelt died of the same thing.

KP: Mmm.

DE: He had an aneurysm

KP: Yes.

DE: In his brain, a stroke, which was April 10th, 1945.

KP: Wow. [00 hr: 35 min: 00 sec]

DE: And uh, then my grandmother just died a year after that. So that was 1945, so they both died fairly young.

KP: Wow.

DE: Both in their 60's.

KP: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

KP: So that was... that trip was the... was that the last time?

DE: That was the last time we saw them.

KP: Wow.

DE: My grandmother did come one time after my grandfather died to see us in Michigan and then that was the last time we saw her, and then she died in 1946.

KP: During that trip did you... or is it just... or was it your parents that joined?

DE: Mhm.

KP: Okay. So it was the whole family.

DE: Mhm. Yeah.

KP: I figured it was all...

DE: Yeah! (laughter) Oh yeah. (laughter)

KP: (chuckles)

DE: As my brother and I couldn't be (giggles)

KP: Mhm.

DE: Send off on our own.

KP: Mmm.

DE: Yeah, and I was really close to my brother. We were just 13 months apart.

KP: Yeah.

DE: And uh... so we were really close and he died about six years ago.

KP: Mmm.

DE: So my whole family has left me. (giggles)

KP: Yeah.

DE: But I'm still here. (laughter)

KP: (giggles)

DE: Still here (laughter)

KP: So you were both really close. You would always play together?

DE: Yeah. My brother was very studious. He was very smart...

KP: Mhm.

DE: Way smarter than me and uh of course going through school I was.... At that time we had half years. I was just a half year behind and every teacher would say "Oh, you're Dick's sister. You'll probably be smart like him." Well I wasn't smart like him.

KP: Aww. (chuckle)

DE: (laughter) I was always felt intimidated until we got in high school we kind of went separate ways. He took different course than I did but uh, he was the smart one in the family and he loved to read and uh we kids would always want him to come out and play and he'd want to read.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And uh... I guess it was good because he was very smart. (chuckles)

KP: Did he read to um... a group of kids?

DE: He would... he would just... he read books con... all the time. And I could remember he had a chemistry set when he was a little kids and that was a big deal to have a chemistry set

KP: Yeah.

DE: When you are a kid; and he would make invisible ink and we would write notes with it.

KP: That's interesting.

DE: And uh... at that time he had Lincoln Logs when were like at least 9 or 10 years old and-and a rector set where they build all kind of stuff. It had motors and it would.. you could make...

KP: Oh okay.

DE: Spinning wheels and-and carousels and all... it was a metal uh, and you screwed them all together and made... we'd make... (37:28)

KP: Did you help him with that process?

DE: Oh yeah, yeah. We'd... we'd have fun with those kind of things.

KP: Yeah.

DE: Yeah, that was. And he'd made model airplanes. He was really good at that.

KP: Mhm.

DE: They're uh... they were made out of balsa wood, real lightweight wood.

KP: Mhm.

DE: They came in kits and he loved to do that.

KP: Mmm.

DE: He was a good guy. Yeah.

KP: Did he um...did... so it seems like you were really close as children... um... and what, it was all the way up until? You always remain close.

DE: Yeah except you know life gets in the way.

KP: Yeah.

DE: I got married and came down here to Florida and he went to college and went in the service. He married and had children, he was up there. So there were a lot of years we couldn't get together but after the kids got all raised; and uh the last, maybe the last 10 years of his life we got together quite a bit which was good because he did die so young.

KP: Mhm.

DE: So that was nice that we did get to spend a lot of our older years together.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And I'm still very close to my sister-in-law. She's like a sister to me.

KP: Mhm.

DE: Because I never had a sister. (laughter)

KP: Yeah.

DE: So... (laughter)

KP: It always just you

DE: Yeah.

KP: And your brother.

DE: Mhm.

KP: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

KP: Uh. So he stayed in Michigan?

DE: Mhm.

KP: After...

DE: Yeah.

KP: You moved out?

DE: He was a teacher.

KP: Mmm.

DE: He taught for 35 years in Michigan.

KP: Wow. It's crazy.

DE: Him and his wife were both teachers.

KP: Oh.

DE: He lived... he bought the house when my mother died. He bought the house from my dad. So he lived there 20 years after.

KP: Oh wow.

DE: Um...after my dad sold it to him and then he did buy another house but he lived in the house he grew up in for about 20 years.

KP: Mmm. Umm...i-is there anything interesting of anything else as well that happened while you were young?

DE: I don't... I can't think of any... I had a really what I call a happy insulated childhood you know.

KP: Yeah

DE: The neighborhood that we lived in, like I said I went to school with the same kids from kindergarten and graduated high school with most of the same kids.

KP: Mmm.

DE: And we all lived within about 20 block radius

KP: Mhm.

DE: Because it was a fairly small town back then

KP: Mhm.

DE: And uh...

KP: Do you recall [00 hrs, 40min: 00sec] how your classroom was at the time?

DE: Yeah. I can remember like 3rd, and 4th grade, 5th grade.

KP: Yeah.

DE: Kind of what it was like in-in... what is was like you know on the playground. When we go out and play on the playground.

KP: Mmm... Was it um a small class setting or was it...

DE: Umm, we would have about probably twenty to a class.

KP: Twenty to a class?

DE: Yeah.

KP: And....

DE: Yeah.

KP: What about when you were six years old? Was it around twenty kids as well?

DE: Mm...well I don't think when we were younger there was quite that maany. Um... I was just trying to think of kindergarten I think we had about eighteen kids in it

KP: Okay.

DE: And probably more than half of those I graduated high school with.

KP: Oh wow.

DE: So, we all went through all 12 years of school together.

KP: Wow.

De: Yeah.

KP: That's...

DE: People just don't....

KP: Was it...

DE : People don't do that now.

KP: Was it a small town?

DE: Well, it was actually a pretty decent size town. Dearborn was actually built by Ford for Ford workers...

KP: Mhm.

DE: ... because they had the big Ford Plant and it, it basically started out as a town for the Ford workers.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And a lot of the people from the south came up to work and um... they had-had to have housing

KP: Mhm.

DE: And so it was still a fairly small community, although, we did have... like we had Dearborn that was basically Ford employees and then they had what we called "Inkster", which was the black... a sections for blacks because a lot of blacks that came up from the south to work.

KP: Mhm.

DE: Then there was a town called Hamtramck, which was all Polish.

KP: Hamtramck?

DE: Hamtramck

KP: Huh.

DE: And then there was Ecourse and Wyandotte and see all of these cities were built around the Ford Motor Company.

KP: So they were cities? Or um...

DE: They were little individual cities.

KP: Oh wow.

DE: Uh-huh. And um... of course we also had Great Lakes Steel which was a big steel mill and so of course all of this went into the war effort.

KP: Oh okay.

DE: And so they had you know these little towns would spring up because these people would come from

KP: To...

DE: Different parts to-to work.

KP: Yeah.

DE: And uh between the steel mills and the Ford Motor Company...

KP: So-so then it all became...

DE: It's not all destroyed... there's still some of these... there's still small cities.

KP: Mhm. Okay.

DE: Within it's...it's in sort of outside of the Detroit Metropolitan Area.

KP: Okay.

DE: And uh.... There's-there's still... there's still individual cities but Dearborn has expanded tremendously since I left. I don't have any idea what the population of it was back then but I know it was way smaller than it is today.

KP: Yeah. So is it something similar like Naples or... well I mean Naples down...

DE: Uhh...

KP: You know Naples?

DE: Size wise, maybe yeah. Yeah, square miles I don't know um... because we had these big Ford Plants around um. These towns were around the Ford Plants and uh...

KP: What was in your town at that time when you were... what you could recall from when you were...

DE: Well we had the library and we had um... restaurants and we had two mov-movie theaters I think. That was-that was our big entertainment was the movies.

KP: The movies.

DE: We always wanted to go to the movies made double features back then. (chuckles)

KP: How much were movies back then?

DE: About 25 cents.

KP: Wow. (chuckles)

DE: Yeah. (laughter) Yeah we always begged to go to the movie on Sunday afternoon, after church. We wanted to go to the movies and uh like I said on Saturdays they would have you know kids shows

KP: Kid shows.

DE: And we would go; and I think they were only like a nickel or something.

KP: Wow.

DE: They weren't that much.

KP: Okay.

DE: And like I said they always had um... They were mostly westerns at the time. They would always have westerns and they would have these serials where each week was a different chapter in the serial, like a western.

KP: Yeah

DE: And like I said, they always had the newsreel.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And uh... and they always had a cartoon and then the main feature.

KP: So the newsreel

DE: Cartoon.

KP: Mhm. What was... so they provided news in the movie?

DE: Yeah, yeah and like I said meant most of it in the 40's was about the war.

KP: Mhm.

DE: But, of course, it was all our side.

KP: Yeah.

DE: Our side (mumbles) You know, it was all... everything was going well.

KP: Mhm.

DE: Like I said, it just...it just keep-keep your spirits up and...and they always... and they always had buy war bonds was always a thing on the screen too.

KP: Oh okay.

DE: You could buy war bonds. [00 hr: 45 min: 00 sec]

KP: To help out?

DE: Mhm.

KP: Wow.

DE: I think they were twenty-five dollars or something like that. It might not have been that much.

KP: (laughter)

DE: (laughter)

KP: Well now in days. (laughter)

DE: Yeah. (laughter)

KP: Yeah.

DE: Yeah. It's hard to... It's hard to remember that but...

KP: Twenty-five dollars?

DE: Yeah. It just-it just... it was a government issue bond that they would guarantee you. You would-you would pay let say \$12 and then in five or seven years in return you'd get \$25 but that money towards the government to uh war effort.

KP: Wow.

DE: A lot of people did that because you got you know a return on your money.

KP Yeah

DE: Eventually. (laughter)

KP: Yeah.

DE: Yeah.

KP: Wow. And then afterwards they would show the cartoon.

DE: Mhm. And then the main feature; and like I said most of the time it was a double feature. Of course, the movies were only like an hour and 20 minutes or an hour and a half and they did have two movies at the time.

KP: Would you stay there for

DE: Mhm.

KP: The double feature.

DE: Oh yeah.

KP: (laughter)

DE: Oh yeah, we stayed as long as we could. (laughter)

KP: (laughter)

DE: We loved it. Yeah.

KP: Were the showings usually early in the day?

DE: Uh... about midday.

KP: Midday?

DE: Yeah.

KP: Oh okay. So (46:07) roughly around what time...

DE: On Saturdays and Sundays. I don't think during the week they had

KP: Yeah

DE: They had matinees

KP: because of school

DE: Because of school

KP: And work hours.

DE: And it was always Saturdays and Sundays that they had matinees.

KP: How long did that last until the whole showing on weekends?

DE: It would be... it would probably not be more than two, two and a half hours because the cartoons were short. They were just a few minutes and then everything that they had and the two features like I said, they were only about an hour and 20 minutes.

KP: Wha-what was um included in the two features?

DE: Well they would just be two different movies.

KP: Oh okay.

DE: Yeah but now on Saturdays we probably didn't have two features because they always had the serial. The-the show that was a different chapter after every Satur... you wanted to go every Saturday. . because you wanted to see what happened.

KP: To keep up. Yes.

DE: Most of them were western (46:53) so you wanted to know what happened to each chapter.

KP: Cliffhangers. (laughter)

DE: Yeah, yeah. They did... they would have cliffhangers (laughter) at the end of every one. So you wanted to be sure to go the next week and see what happened.

KP: Um...

DE: So we probably had one movie on-on that when we had all that going on.

KP: Wow.

DE: But regulars, regular movies they would have two movies.

KP: To movies.

DE: Yeah.

KP: Well, uh, what else was there around in the town to do?

DE: Well I said roller skating. We did...

KP: Oh yes

DE: We did roller skate.

KP: I remember you mentioned roller skating.

DE: We went to roller rinks. Um, a good bit.

KP: Was that near your house or...?

DE: Uh, there was one that was not real close. It was um... a little bit away. My parents would have to take me.

KP: Mhn.

DE: And uh... and then a couple of years I took dance lessons and my mother would take on me Saturday to dance lessons.

KP: Oh wow.

DE: And then she'd take me to a restaurant and get ice cream. So I think that's what I went more for... (laughter)

KP: (laughter)

DE: Than I cared for the dance lessons. (laughter)

KP: The incentive (mumbles).

DE: Yeah. I did do the dance classes for a while. (laughter)

KP: Mhm. Um... What kind of dance did you...?

DE: Tap dance.

KP: Did you enjoy it?

DE: I enjoyed it but I didn't do real well at it. I didn't do it for too long and I had to practice

KP: Yeah.

DE: And all that stuff. So...

KP: So like...

DE: So I kind of bombed out on it.

KP: (laughter)

DE: Because when I was little I wanted to be a tap dancer when I grew up (chuckles) but I certainly didn't work very hard at it. (laughter)

KP: Mhm.

DE: So...

KP: Yeah.

DE: But I was.... that was probably by the time I was 9, 10.

KP: 9 and 10.

DE: Yeah.

KP: Wow. Um. Anything else that was around to do?

DE: Well, I was in the Girl Scouts and Brownies.

KP: Oh yeah.

DE: And uh... Brownies and then Girl Scouts and so we had Girl Scouts meetings.

My mother was a Den Leader for the Boy Scouts and my brother was Boy Scout. So um, I got to go along on a lot of their things because...

KP: Okay.

DE: Mother would go and she'd take me along.

KP: Mhm.

DE: Yeah.

KP: What would you do in the Girl Scouts?

DE: Oh my, we did all kinds of things. You had to earn your merit badges and

KP: Mhm.

DE: you learned cooking, sewing, and

KP: Oh wow.

DE: All that stuff.

KP: I wonder if they still do that now?

DE: I...they still have Girl Scouts. I don't know what they do

KP: I know they have a boy scouts. I'm pretty sure they have Girl Scouts.

DE: Yea.

KP: Because of the Girl Scouts cookies.

DE: Yeah they have the Girl Scouts cookies. They- they're doing those right now. Every place you go there's Girl Scouts.

KP: Does that bring back memories?

DE: Yeah.

KP: Seeing them.

DE: We had a good time and I belong to the MYF Youth Groups at the church and we did little things and we sang in nursing homes...

KP: Mhm.

DE: And did things like that.

KP: Mmm. Did the church do anything... like did they um, say anything during... about the war?

DE: Nnn-not really because they-they wouldn't like. And we went to the Sunday school. They may have in church.

KP: Mhm.

DE: You know my brother and I would go to the Sunday school.

KP: How was Sunday school?

DE: Oh it was fine.

KP: Yeah.

DE: It was great, yeah. We-we loved church. Uh... It was a big part of your life back then you know.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And they would have church dinners and things like that. Oh it was... it was just a-a kinder gentler time. Life was so much different than it is today.

KP: Mhm.

DE: It just did... [00 hr : 50 min: 00 sec] it just was you know. Even looking back at you know when raising my kids it was kinder and gentler than it is today.

KP: Mhm.

DE: It's-it's scary raising kids today. I'd hate to be raising kids.

KP: (chuckles)

DE: In this day in time. You know my grandchildren I worry about but it was just... I mean I've never had that fear growing up or anything like that

KP: Mhm.

DE: You know...

KP: It seems like times back then were simpler

DE: Oh they were

KP: And they were.

DE: Much simpler.

KP: Mhm.

DE: Yeah.

KP: Oh.

DE: I'm sure there was a lot more worry to the war than I was aware of

KP: Yeah.

DE: Because I was so young.

KP: It was like uh, a safe haven.

DE: Yeah. Yeah it was. It's a good word for it.

KP: Mhm. Wow.

DE: Yeah.

KP: (giggles) Um. Did um... You said you left when you were 18.

DE: Mhm.

KP: From Dearborn?

DE: Mhm.

KP: Mhm. Um did you enjoy all your time while you were... like after... once you... after the war? Did you..

DE: Oh yeah. My high school years and that were... were fine, they were wonderful. And like I said we were still with the same group of kids we'd grown up with and um.

KP: Mhm.

DE: Because I left the area after I graduated from high school and got married and moved down here.

KP: Mhm.

DE: So I didn't really spend anytime there as an adult.

KP: Mhm.

DE: And in Michigan..

KP: It was more of your childhood?

DE: Mhm.

KP: Up until...

DE: Until I was 18. Uh-huh. And then I left and never went back

KP: Mhm.

DE: Except to visit but you know.

KP: Yeah.

DE: So I left all that behind me.

KP: Mhm. Mmm.

DE: (laughter)

KP: Is there anything else you'd love to share about your childhood experience?

DE: I can't think of anything. I've think we covered it all pretty well.

KP: Mmm. Thank you so much for um your help and your contribution.

DE: Oh you're welcome.

KP: And the project.

DE: It will be interesting to compile all of this.

KP: (laughter)

DE: (laughter)

[00 hr: 52 min: 04 sec.]

.