

DONNA ELLETT ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT

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ABSTRACT

Biography

Donna Ellett was raised in Dearborn, Michigan, where she lived throughout World War II. Her father was involved in civil defense and while her family did not talk much about the war, she had three distant relatives who fought overseas. She learned about the war primarily through radio and movie newsreels, and collected newspapers for the war effort.

Summary

In this oral history, Donna reflects on her childhood, including the day-to-day consequences of and responses to the World War II. She remembers rationing and her school having newspaper drives to help the war effort. Donna further recalls feeling like she was in a “cocoon” as a child, and that her parents tried to keep from talking to her and her brother about the war.

Keywords

Dearborn, Michigan, paper drives, movies, news, radio, civil defense, blackouts, curfews, war bonds

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STORY TRANSCRIPTS

Story 1: Newspaper Collection for the War Effort [24:50 – 25:58]

KP: *When you said you collected the newspapers to have them—*

We turned them in and some truck came and got ‘em. I don’t 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. All we ever heard was, “It’s for the war effort.” 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 don’t know what it was.

KP: *So, you had no idea, you just—*

No, we just did it. *[laughs]* Everybody collected newspapers; newspaper collection was a thing.

KP: *You would collect them at each home?*

Yeah, we would go around the houses and collect them. And then we’d bundle them up. I can remember tying them up with string in so many packages, and then taking them to the school. Then a truck would come and pick them up and take them wherever they took them and do whatever they did with them.

KP: *Did you and your brother ever question it?*

No. When you’re ten years old, you don’t really think about it. They just said, “Collect newspapers,” so we collected newspapers. *[laughs]*

Story 2: Awareness of the War and Entertainment of the Day **[11:39 – 13:00]**

I just think we were away from it. We were in a cocoon where it just wasn’t blasted at you. Like I said, we would see it on the news on the Saturday morning when we would go to the movie theaters. They always had a newsreel before the movie, and it was always something about the war effort. But it was just like a little ten-minute blip; then we were off to the cartoons and the westerns and we were over it. *[laughs]*

KP: *What kind of music did you listen to at that point in World War II?*

In World War II most of it was big band music, Glenn Miller and that kind of thing. That’s what you were hearing ‘cause they were entertaining the troops. He was in the service and you were aware of it on the radio, which was all we had.

KP: *How about in movies?*

They did have a lot movies that were like—. If you look back now in the ‘40s there’s a lot of war movies on. I am sure that was sort of propaganda. Because of course, in the movies we always won, *[laughs]* everything ended up okay. And I’m sure that was a form of keeping people upbeat.