

MONA RYNEARSON ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT

Interviewee: Mona Rynearson

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Archival Processors: Michael Hershey, Jillian Curran, and Mairin Corasaniti

Copyeditor: Erica Fugger

Date: August 8, 2018

Location: Arcadia, New York

Session Number: 1

Project: National Home Front Project

Interview Contributor: Newark Public Library

Accession Number: RynearsonMona_HFN-OH_080818

ABSTRACT

Biography

Mona Rynearson was born in 1927 in Danielson, Connecticut. Her family moved to Niagara Falls, New York, in the 1940s. Rona's brother, Donald, was the only family member to serve in World War II, but the war pervaded nearly all other aspects of her life. She worked at an ice cream factory during the war with her mother to replace ice cream makers that had been drafted. Mona now lives in Arcadia, New York.

Summary

In this interview, Mona recalls living in upstate New York during World War II. She describes how she and her mother worked for an ice cream manufacturer during the war that traditionally employed men. Mona further recalls how her childhood was affected gasoline, coal, and food rationing.

Keywords

Niagara, New York, rationing, high school, radio, war stamps, Wendt Ice Cream Factory, Pearl Harbor, newsreels

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00:00 – Introductions

01:58 – Parents' origins

02:29 – Hearing the about the attack on Pearl Harbor

03:10 – Brother, Donald, served one year in the Navy

03:45 – Mother worked for a year and a half at an ice cream producer, Wendt

04:37 – Working alongside her mother at the ice cream manufacturer
05:56 – Ice cream flavors; chocolate being scarce during the war
07:23 – Round-robin-style sporting events; gas rationing affected school bussing
08:25 – Most high schoolers wanted to join the service when they graduated
09:01 – Air raid drills were rare
09:34 – Pop culture during the war; war newsreels at movies
10:50 – Relief that her father was too old to be drafted
11:32 – Some of father’s friends never returned from war
13:10 – Saving money for war stamps; feeling the effects of rationing
14:55 – Cooking with substitutes due to rationing
15:20 – Adding color to margarine to imitate butter
16:40 – Coal was scarce; Directing heat to brother’s room due to his rheumatic fever
[Note: Portion of interview audio missing]
17:47 – Soldier pen pal missing in action
18:56 – Thank yous and goodbyes

STORY TRANSCRIPTS

Story 1: Effects of Rationed Gas [07:30 – 08:17]

CSK: *During the war years, what do you remember about high school?*

Niagara Falls had three high schools at the time. During the war, there wasn’t money for gasoline to go to other schools for games, so they played round-robin games with the three high schools. Each high school played the other ones three times and never left the city. The competition was pretty strong, as you might imagine. In those days, it seemed to me that every kid in high school went to the games so that was one experience.

There was no bussing to high school. I walked a mile; that wasn’t considered unusual. There were city buses, I suppose, if one lived further away. But a mile probably would’ve been pretty much the range for La Salle High School.

Story 2: Pop Culture and Pastimes **[09:44 – 10:39]**

Yes, we went to the movies every Saturday. There was usually a double feature. The movie theater was down near the high school, so of course we walked. And there was always a newsreel in between the features that always featured what was going on in the war. And that was pretty grim.

As far as culture: yes, I think Hollywood was important to the people. It tied in with the war effort. A lot of the songs were either nostalgic about persons coming back from the service or waiting for someone to come back. That was a very pervasive part of the culture: the war. That was the main thing that people thought about and it really did control most of our actions

Story 3: War Bonds and Rationing **[13:13 – 17:17]**

Yes, we did [contribute to the war effort]. My family bought war bonds and we saved up as kids. We saved our money for war stamps. I think that was part of that whole bond issue business. Yes, we were very definitely supporting the government and trying to do what we were encouraged to do in order to support the war.

I believe that when I said what I said earlier about the war being all pervasive, it really was. It affected every facet. It affected the food you ate. It affected the fact that you couldn't buy the clothing that you wanted; wool clothing was hard to find. You couldn't buy tires for your car, you couldn't buy gasoline; it was rationed. When you shopped, you had to use ration stamps for butter and meat, sugar, those kinds of things that we had taken for granted. As a country, we'd gotten them from abroad and abroad was no longer available.

Story 4: Soldier Pen Pal Missing in Action **[17:47 – 18:52]**

I had a pen pal. I belonged to a youth group at church and we were given the names of men who might want somebody to write them a letter. He was from Lockport, [New York], which was a nearby city. And he was missing in action, presumed dead.

I got a telegram from the War Department when I was about—I was probably a junior in high school when this happened. It might've been the year before. And I remember the terrible tragedy. Now this is a man I didn't even personally know. I'd only written him a couple of letters and received maybe one or two from him. And yet, think of the thousands of families for whom this was a reality.

When you realize about, of course, what had been going on with the Holocaust, then it makes the war, perhaps, necessary. But so many wars have not been necessary. It seems like we ought to be wiser than we are.

PHOTO CAPTIONS

Current 1

Mona Rynearson poses for a picture after her interview (Photo Credit: Celeste Schantz Kovachi)

Current 2

Mona Rynearson discusses her memories of World War II (Photo Credit: Celeste Schantz Kovachi)