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Robert Farrell

Interviewee, Retired

Victoria Lincoln

Interviewer, Student

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ALL EDITORS' NAMES LISTED HERE

Editors

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RF = Robert Farrell (interviewee)

HF = Helen Farrell (interviewee's wife)

VL = Victoria Lincoln (interviewer)

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

Victoria Lincoln: OK now it is going

Robert Farrell: I remember when I started, uh, became aware of Germans, you know what the Germans were doing, uh in Poland and uh Russia and all of that. Uh, we had a guy living in the back of us in Rochester, New York—uh what was his name, Wambach, Wambach, and he was a German, but uh everybody suspected him of being some kind of a spy, so everybody kind of walked around him and watched him all the time. And they had the FBI come in one time and checked his house out and they found a big radio unit—

VL: And this was in Rochester?

RF: Yeah, for sending and receiving and soon after that, uh, not too long after that, he kind of faded into the background some place and disappeared. But uh there was a lot of hatred of the Germans, depends whether their sons fought in Germany or Japan—there was hatred in Japan and of course places like Manzanar [Japanese-American Internment Camp in California] where they send a lot of the Japanese, uh and I knew some of the people that were later in life that were sent to Manzanar but uh the Americans, that I remembered talking to said they deserved it, they should take every oriental; Japanese, Chinese, whatever—even though they were our allies, uh and put them in a camp like that. So—

VL: So I hate to have to ask you to restate some of this stuff again, but it wasn't recording. Could you just repeat your name and uh, the year you were born and where you, uh, grew up real quick? I am sorry.

RF: Oh that is alright [laughter]. OK, let's see, make sure I am not lying here, uh my name is Robert J. Farrell Senior and I was born on May 5, 1933 in the city of Rochester, New York which was close to Ontario Lake, uh upstate New York. And about the family again?

VL: Yes please, I am sorry.

RF: OK, I come from a—[laughter] a family of nine, five brothers and three sisters. Um, my father, uh was an Irishman who was a tool and dime maker for general motors. My mother was uh, Dutch—and English and she was a house wife and um let's see, you want me to go through the brothers and sisters again, what they did?

VL: You can just say how many you had?

RF: Well uh nine, there were nine of us.

Helen Farrell: Did you miss the part about Uncle Raymond?

VL: Yeah I did, I am sorry.

RF: OK uh, at the—during the war, 1942—43 uh he was on his 99th mission over China Burma against the Japanese and the P 51 Mustang, and he was shut down, bailed out, uh and run through the jungles and waved at his buddies and then they never heard from him since then. But recently, within the last year, we [him and his wife Helen Farrell] found out there was a monument for him in Manila in the Philippines. Which was really—uh I wish my grandmother and grandfather could have heard that or read that—

HF: Not to him only [inaudible].

RF: Yeah it was for a lot of the military over there.

VL: How did you hear about that?

RF: Uh—

HF: On “Find A Grave”. I was looking through “Find a Grave” [website].

VL: Oh that is awesome.

RF: Yeah, she contributes to “Find a Grave”. Yeah we researched several cemeteries in the state of Florida [laughter]

VL: Yeah there is a lot.

RF: Uh, let's see, uh, did you get all of that about finding the Japanese stuff in the trash and—ok, I was eight years old when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Um I know there were—I had an uncle who was in the Navy, but I do not know if he was connected with Pearl Harbor or anything like that, I do not know much of a history about the military men on my dad's side. But um, my dad was never in the military. But after the bombing, people in our neighborhood, uh resented the Japanese, you know they were all whooped up about kill japs—called them japs and they threw everything that was made in Japan in the trash. Well, I was an eager person and I went through and found things that I particularly liked and kept, and uh, I do not think anyone called me [00:05:00] a trader or anything because I liked some of the stuff they threw away. But the first tragedy was when the uncle [Uncle Raymond] was shot down and uh gold star on a flag in the window, they use to put that up. And how about the metal scrap drives and the, uh bacon grease drives, and the war bonds, and the war stamps, and um, what did they call those stamps you had to use to buy meats or—

HF: Rations.

RF: Rations stamps, that's it, there you go. I remember that—

HF: So you were only allowed so much, so you know, I know uh, if my mother wanted to bake a cake or something to send to my father in the military, they would have to, the whole, everybody would have to say the grandmothers, the aunts, and all would have to give some of their sugar ration things to save up enough to do this [laughter].

RF: Yeah, yeah, and uh playing with my buddy Carl, we played “bombers” and back to Bataan, Guadalcanal, Iwo Jima and all of that. We were fighters and killing Japs and it was [laughing] well this was currently—I want to tell her about Adam. You know, uh Adam is our grandson, he lives in England and uh he called me one day and he calls me “grand-daddy”, you know, it is all of that English stuff. And he says “You were in the Marines?” and I said “Yeah”, and he says “How many Japs did you kill?” and I said thousands, and he says “Jolly good, jolly good” [laughter].

HF: Of course you did not kill a soul.

RF: I did not any Japs. You know, I was stationed in Okinawa, Japan for several years but [laughter], but I didn't kill any of them. Beat a few of them up, but did not kill them.

VL: When did you join the Marines?

RF: Uh, well I joined the Navy in 1950, and I got out 1954 then joined the Marine Corp and got out in 1958. Just before Vietnam broke out. I didn't get out because of Vietnam

was breaking out, I just, um, got married and um the core doesn't like wives. No they do not, the Airforce does, the army but not, not the marines. They say, "We didn't issue you a wife". So—

HF: So if they wanted you to have one, they would have issued you one [laughter].

RF: Yeah they would have issued you one. Uh so I didn't like the attitude in the Corp and the Corp started to go downhill as far as I was concerned in terms of discipline so I got out. I ended up going to school. Um, what else?

HF: There is a story about a man, down walking on the side walk here, during, in Fort Myers, during the war and this guy came up to him and said "I hate you Japs" and took a swing at him. The guy, you know—

RF: Mopped the floor with him?

HF: Mopped up the floor with him and says "I'm not Japanese, I am Korean" [laughter].

VL: Oh

RF: and I know taekwondo [laughter].

HF: Well, you know, back then also a lot of people—you know, we didn't have many oriental—so people cannot tell, couldn't tell the difference. You know, now most of us can tell when you look at someone whether they are Japanese, Chinese, or Korean, Vietnamese. We can recognize the differences, but back then—

RF: But one thing I noticed, I uh worked as a Peace Officer out in California, and people frowned on snow—are you a snowflake? No, no—

HF: Do you mean snowbird?

RF: Huh?

HF: Now snowflake is the cry baby, you know, liberal. Do you mean snowbirds?

RF: Young. No young person now a days—millennial. But I guess that is where they—but uh I saved my life several times. I worked East LA and South-Central LA with the gangs, and I saved my life several times by profiling. Identifying, "this looks like a gang-banger and he is flying colors and he is doing all this other stuff". Uh so back when I was growing up, people profiled, "he looks oriental", "he looks like a German", you know and they would avoid them or treat them bad and stuff. There was a lot of that, a lot of it.

HF: There was a lot of prejudice and a lot of fear connected with it.

RF: Yeah, a lot of fear and suspicion and um—

VL: So it wasn't just like the Japanese, it was also if you thought someone German as well?

HF: Definitely yeah.

RF: Yeah and particularly if they had any kind of accent. [Inaudible] say are you Polish, are you German? What are you? Are you Jewish? You speak [00:10:00] Yiddish, which is close to German?

HF: We had some, we had some German prisoners of war that worked at Page Field.

RF: Oh, I got another story. When I was little they brought a bunch of German prisoners to a place called Cobbs Hill. Uh and they, it was a huge camp, huge buildings, I do not know what the buildings were before, but they were a prison camps for German prisoners. Um and uh my buddy and I use to go up there and walk around the barbed wire and we met this one guy called Fritz. No wait—Hans, and he had a crow—not a crow, but a raven and that he called Fritz. And the raven use to say “Wie Geht's?” which is German for “hello, how are you?” Wie Geht's?

HF: How goes it? Yeah.

RF: Yeah and we use to, uh, talk to Hans and have a good time. We found he was a pretty nice guy, you know probably killed a lot of people but [laughing], he was a nice guy. And uh, I do not know whatever happened to him, they, a few years after the war, they closed that camp down and got rid of them or sent them back to Germany or whatever, I do not know. But, uh yeah, we had a lot of prisoners of war camps around New York State. Um what else, I cannot think. You got any questions?

VL: Um what was it like going to school during the war? Were the teachers —

RF: They weren't political.

VL: No? Were—did they tell you guys what was going on or anything?

RF: No—

VL: No? They just stuck to—

RF: None of that was uh discussed. Uh there was no politics in school, there was you go in, do your school work and bye-bye. Nobody—

HF: No politics, no religion, no private opinions.

RF: No religion or private opinions. It was just school, uh teach and learn. Um [laughter] I had a tough time too. I think, uh during those years I flunked two grades in grammar school and I, in the eighth grade, you know they use to call the kids—I do not know how this relates at all but they use to call kids up to the center of the room and say “Now Victoria is going to go to East High School”, oh wonderful. And when they got to me they [laughter], they says “We are sending Bob here to Paul Revere Trade School” which was for the retarded people [laughter] to learn how to bake cakes. So [laughter] I had a tough time when I had to take a test to get into an all boy school at Edison Technical and Industrial, in which I only did one year. And I—

VL: Was that a trade school?

RF: Yeah, you have regular subjects in the morning and in the afternoon I took like drafting. Um, I quit after one year and uh in the military I got my GED and went to college when I got out, so, so is that boring enough for you?

VL: No, no, no, not at all. It is a good story, it lets me know more about like high school, and like what school was like for students—

RF: Well the high school, uh Edison [inaudible] Industrial, all boys—and they weren’t retarded. And it was right in the middle of—and this is something—it was right in the middle of the black section of Rochester, New York. So when I would get off the bus in the morning, I had about four blocks to go up, to walk up to the school. It wasn’t that bad, but after school, three o’clock-three-thirty whatever they let us out, I run a gauntlet of these black guys that hated whites. And sometimes I made it quite well to that bus, just as that bus pulled up and I got home. But it was a tough area and it was a tough school, it was tough.

HF: You know, I talked to Mary-Ellen Hanson when she was still alive and she was in the same grade as my mother and they were saying that, particularly here in Fort Myers, which was a little town, little place back then, that this was sort of a very Romantic era in away. A lot of the boys that were seniors, juniors and seniors in high school, you know were ready to enlist in the war and going off to save their country and you know, it was all sort of Romantic.

VL: Mhm, I know I previously another uh, gentlemen and he grew up in Fort Myers and enlisted right—he was still in uh high school when he enlisted and he had said that is just everything everyone had to do in this area. It is just like it wasn't a matter of like option, it was you are going to do it, it is just a matter which service you wanted to do.

RF: Mhm

HF: But what a [00:15:00] you know, mind blowing experience it was for a lot of them that they come from this little, small town, this is the only thing you ever known, and suddenly you have this whole wide world in front of you. A lot of the men did not want to talk about it afterwards, the experiences—

RF: Well some of it is embarrassing for them too.

HF: Well, yeah, well I mean—

RF: Not just traumatic.

VL: Why embarrassing?

HF: You are talking more about Vietnam and North Korea. I mean the World War II was the last kind of romantic, save the world type of—

RF: Well I, if I was to pick a war, I would not pick Vietnam. Uh, I had a bunch of bodies who went to Vietnam, and uh they didn't come back and uh, well people I knew. Vietnam was such a screwed up mess—

HF: Well we are getting a little off topic.

RF: Oh yeah, back to the war, the Second World War.

HF: You know Fort Myers news press had uh, ran a series called “News about Service Men” during World War II, uh anybody that received a letter, from back home or something, would take it to the—to the news press office and they would publish them every, every day they had uh an article, you know, snippets for people, so that everybody kept up with some of these and there are some really, really interesting stories in there. One of them, told about the guy, that was you know over there, uh I think in Africa, I think, and you, know thanksgiving was coming up—this is appropriate for right now [laughter]

VL: This is yes.

HF: And so I guess the locals there, the—

RF: The Arabs

HF: The Arabs were going to make Thanksgiving dinner for them. Which was goat and uh [laughter] goat and lentils I think [laughter]. It is not quite the same [laughter].

VL: So would everyone get a copy of the newspaper who lived in Fort Myers?

HF: I think then, you know you did not have television, you did not have any other uh source of news, and uh everybody kind of really looked forward to the news press. Have you ever taken a tour of that, have you taken a tour of the news press and seen those big presses and everything?

VL: I have not, no.

HF: It is kind of interesting to do. But if you are looking for some information, you know as to what the feelings were and local flavor and all of that kind of set— the news on the service men is a great thing to look through.

RF: There is not too many Second World War veterans left—

HF: No

RF: Uh and it is unfortunate that uh people did not record them before they died off. I had uh—I was in the Marine Corp, when I was in the Marine Corp, I had a Gunny [Gunnery] Sergeant who survived the Bataan Death March. Have you ever heard of that?

VL: No, I have not.

RF: That is where the Japanese captured uh, some of the island, uh Military Americans. And they, uh run them on this tremendously long march, uh to some prison camp in the jungle, and those that kind of faltered were killed. Uh, not too many survived the Bataan Death March and he was one of them [Gunnery Sergeant]. I remember asking him one time, I said “Gunny what was that like?” and he did not want to talk about it. He said “Uh, forget it”.

VL: It is probably very painful to talk about too.

RF: It is painful, sure. But you get uh, when you are in the military you run into a lot of old guys that have been in different battles and stuff— Korea and uh, you are right Hel [Helen, Roberts wife] they—

HF: They did not want to talk about it.

RF: The ones that knew least talked the most.

HF: Yeah [laughter]. Well another part of that news about service men because it also told about the medals that they had earned and gotten in the like, and all the men coming back did not want to talk about it. Their families did not even know they had earned these medals.

RF: Yeah.

VL: Did, up in Rochester [New York], did they have um, newspapers like that, that submitted—?

RF: The Rochester Time Union was the one Democrat and Chronical, and the Rochester Times Union but I am trying to think if they ever printed stuff like that—they use to print when somebody was missing in action or wounded or something like that but, I do not remember the letters. They may not have done that up there.

VL: Do you think maybe it is probably because Fort Myers was such a small town?

HF: Probably.

VL: Everyone knew each other and wanted to keep—

HF: Yeah, everybody knew—

RF: Pretty much yeah. Well I am not from Fort Myers [laughter]

HF: There was, there was one young man—I think from Alba, it was reported, you know, dead, killed in—killed in action which later showed up in a German prison camp [00:20:00]. So you know, what a shock to his parents to think—

RF: Yeah

HF: you find out he is still alive. That is wonderful for . . .

RF: And a lot, there are a lot of stories like that. You talk—all these young kids during that time, you did not talk to many adults. You avoided adults. But once in a while you would be privy to a discussion between Aunt Martha or whatever and she would be talking about her cousin or her son or something, or some terrible tortures they went through. But uh that was about it.

VL: So you would not really bring up much, to the adults, what was going on? You would just over hear them talking about it.

RF: Yeah, just kind of snoop around and uh hear as they all sit around having a drink or something and you are sitting in the background. As a kid, we spent a lot of time in the background [laughter].

HF: [inaudible]

RF: “Did you hear what Aunt Minnie said about so and so...” [Laughter]

HF: There was more of that thought that children were meant to be seen and not heard type than there is today.

RF: Yeah. You know what I like about this young lady, she is shy but it is a quality.

HF: Yes.

RF: It is not a common quality and if I can say this to you, do not be embarrassed of you being shy. It is, it is really nice, nice to see. I was always shy myself.

HF: Yeah right [laughter].

RF: Yeah right [laughter]. So uh, any questions you got?

VL: Um, well you mentioned what you did for fun and what school was like. Um, in your neighborhood, pretty much the same things as your house, everyone just did not like the Japanese and threw away their stuff?

RF: Yeah

VL: Um

RF: Germans came kind of later after 1941, but they should have been talked about in 1939, but they were not. I do not recall anybody talking about the Germans or Poland or Czechoslovakia or [inaudible] and all that, but uh—

HF: Well your, your dad probably was not called into service because he had so many kids.

RF: Yeah—

HF: How about your friends in the like, did any of them have fathers that were gone because of them being in the service?

RF: You know, I do not remember any of them having their dads gone. They were a bunch of draft dodgers [laughter]. I do not know, but every, everybody I hung around with uh, there father was home.

HF: Well you see, here [Fort Myers] for us, all of the men were gone. And so my grandfather's house kind of became the—we all sort of gathered there for—all the cousins were pretty much hung out at my grandfather's house [laughter]. Because the women, the mothers, you know went to work—they worked and so the fathers were gone to war and the mothers were working—

RF: Did you ever hear the famous Rosie the Riveter?

VL: I have yes [laughter].

RF: Well we actually had a lady that was—

HF: A women down in Naples I think—

VL: A spokesperson as her?

HF: Yeah, well I do not know if it was a spokesperson or supposed to have been the original Rosie the Riveter.

RF: Rosie, yeah.

VL: So prior, [inaudible] sorry but prior to 1939, either of you were aware of World War II happening or like Germany?

RF: No, no I was not. 1939 I was six years old, I should have been more aware, but like I say though, you avoided adults as much as you could because they represented authority and you try to get up from under them. Uh so we use to hang around with guys, even at a young age just to stay away from home. [Inaudible] talk—

HF: That is why I was asking, in your Rat Pact, did any of them have uh, fathers that were in the—

RF: No, no.

HF: No, interesting.

RF: No we were all draft dodgers [laughter]. No, I—I do not remember any of them. Oh I remember uh, a friend of mine—I cannot think of his first name—Raddle—Deutschlander and his dad, Raddles Butchery, a butch market. And I remember uh, he

had a good going business until people started glomming on to the fact that we had Germans here and they were spies [inaudible]. And uh, his business started going down. He had—John Raddle, uh was my friends name—but he had two Doberman Pinschers [00:25:00] in uh, the butcher shop that sat behind the counter and uh, whenever anybody came in they would get up and look at them and stuff. And so, the word was, Raddle was a real Deutschlander, you know he had those killer dogs like the men from “Brazil”, you know that movie? And uh, so everybody was suspicious of Raddle’s father but not John Raddle—the guy that we hung out with.

HF: Because you knew him.

RF: Yeah we knew him. He was a big, husky German. Like a big blacksmith you know? Well how is that [laughter]? Ah, I remember my grandmother in, well in those days if you lost a son or a daughter or whatever, the government I think paid them ten thousand—dollars that was the insurance money for death. They assumed him [Uncle Raymond] dead after seven years, so she got ten thousand dollars. But grandma did not know what to do with the quote “blood money”, so she stuck it under this plate and up and under that cup and that pitcher, so it was all spread out in the kitchen. Now after my grandmother died, my Uncle Don went over to uh, itemize the house for you know for what uh—

HF: Inventory

RF: Yeah to inventory the house and all of the sudden the money disappeared. There was no money under the dishes anymore. We all thought Uncle Don got that “blood money”.

HF: Well she did not know what to do with it—

RF: She did not want to spend it because that was her son and I think a lot of people did that. Uh, [panting nose] what else?

VL: Um

RF: Are you a mama’s girl or are you a daddy’s girl?

VL: Oh, I do not—I think I am a daddy’s girl, definitely I think—

RF: Yeah, are you like your mother more or your dad more or what?

VL: Temperament wise I am like my mother but um, I like the same as my father does. So I um—the activities he does I usually do with him, that is where I get a lot of me—

RF: Do you like his strength?

VL: I do yeah.

RF: You feel very protected with him?

VL: Ah-huh, yeah.

RF: Yeah, see.

HF: I think Page Field, um, a lot of people you know, the airmen and the alike that came and trained at Page Field really liked Florida. So they came back after they retired and that is one thing that contributed greatly to the growth of the area.

VL: Well I know Florida, like the Fort Myers area first started off as being kind of as a major vacation area and for sporting fish.

HF: Yeah that introduced a lot—

VL: So I knew that brought in a lot of people but I—I can imagine people you know training here at Page Field that they probably saw—“Oh Fort Myers has so much to offer, look at the beautiful Caloosahatchee River we can fish on, the weather is beautiful”. But I can see that as building up the community—

HF: People who come here from Minnesota do not want to go back [laughter].

RF: You betcha. You know Helen is part of the Collier family.

VL: Oh are you?

RF: But not Barron Collier. The original Collier, W D or W T, and who was the first white settler on Marco [Marco Island, FL].

VL: So you have roots, you really have roots here?

HF: I really have roots.

RF: And cousins [laughter] all over the place, we—

VL: Thanksgiving must be wild.

RF: [laughter] we were going down to Chokoloskee one time—down to see the Daniels was it? But we stopped in this little wooden restaurant just before you get to Chokoloskee, and it had this big wooden tower on it. And we went in and sat down and this young girl came over—what was she about eighteen? And she walked over to the

table as the waitress and I asked her, I said “I bet you are a Daniels” and she says “How did you know?” Relative [laughter].

HF: Yeah I know, you are getting off topic again.

RF: I know, I wonder like that.

VL: It is really fine, it is just giving more background cause—it is we are trying to learn more what it was like growing up in that time. So it does help, you [Helen] was in a small town, you had roots.

RF: Well Rochester, when I was growing up—uh I remember when it came aware of population uh there was something like 332,000 people in it, which was considered a small town. But uh, now it is over a million I think—

HF: See Fort Myers was like 12,000 when I was—

RF: Yeah I had 700 something thousand, I do not know.

HF: I think considering Fort Myers, and Cape Coral, and North Fort Myers [00:30:00] I think it is pushing 700,000 now, I am not sure.

RF: But Rochester was separated in, like I said, the black section, the Polish section, the Irish section, the Germans, the Italians—the Italians we kind of grew up with—and they uh did not particularly communicate with each other that I noticed. They were “clique-ish”, kept to themselves most of the time.

HF: Well the war certainly threw them together.

RF: Well yeah that is for sure. But uh, I never recall Rochester as a happy town. I never...

VL: Did you live in a house or—because I know my mother grew up in Brooklyn and she uh, she lived in one of those like brick houses—a townhouse type of thing—

RF: We had an individual house. A forty-three foot double story and uh, I ended up sleeping in the attic. They had a little cut out room up there and I liked to be by myself.

VL: Away from your eight siblings?

RF: [Laughter] yes. There was always a fight going on, there was never any peace. That is why everybody tried to get out of the house. Just argue about what you are wearing, what you said, uh “he pointed at me”, uh that was tough.

HF: Like he said, his sister is coming over here, but she was too young—

RF: Yeah I hardly remember her—

HF: She would not have known any of this.

VL: Were most of the families in your neighborhoods that large, with nine children?

RF: Uh say that again?

VL: Were most families within your neighborhood having like, nine children or—?

RF: Yes, most—most of them had pretty large families. Uh, there were a few individuals who had one or two, uh but large families were in then.

HF: Irish, catholic, and Italian—

RF: Irish, catholic, and Italian, [inaudible]

HF: Big families.

RF: So more questions?

VL: Um...

RF: Um, [laughter] she sounds like Savannah.

HF: Yeah [laughter] you know there were also groups of women that did—that I know met here in Fort Myers that, that you know, did the war effort thing. They knitted the uh, knit socks, things like that.

RF: I do not know if they did that up in New York other than the collections of metals and stuff. And it—it really got us about that bacon grease, you know, what are you going to use bacon grease for? They—

HF: Tell her about the horse meat.

RF: The what?

HF: Horse meat.

RF: Oh that was great stuff. The government had a uh, an all-white store—painted, everything was white in and outside—and it was set up for the poorer people and it served horse meat, it sold horse meat. And uh, that was great because a lot of families

could not afford regular beef and steaks or even hamburger. So you ate a lot of horse meat, I use to eat a lot of dog biscuits.

HF: Yeah, well spam too was one of the—

RF: Oh spam was a life saver. Not only in the military [laughter] but at home. Yeah spam.

HF: People learned to like chickaree or postum—

RF: Oh postum, it was a wheat coffee.

HF: It was a coffee substitute. It was made from grain I think—somebody said—

RF: No it was wheat. Huh?

HF: Somebody said you can still can get it, that it is still...

VL: Was it good?

RF: Well you—

HF: Not particularly.

RF: You—it was like uh many, many years ago when I use to have a beer once in a while, it was like getting use to beer. Uh, you did have to get used to it but then when you switched over—if you ever got a cup of coffee some place it was odd you know? It was like “Uh this is horrible, I want my postum” [laughter]. Postum. Yeah, I wonder if they still do that.

HF: Somebody said they do and—and now of course spam is expanded. You get different flavors of spam and different—

RF: Well in the military lived on spam. And uh, and we lived on spam too but oh it went straight to your heart.

HF: But if you cooked it crisp enough it is [inaudible].

RF: Yeah you slice it real thin and then yeah crisp it, like jerky almost.

VL: So I am sorry, I am just—what is spam?

RF: It is—

HF: It is a pot—not exactly a potted meat product but it is kind of—

RF: Ham.

HF: Yeah, but is compressed and in a—

RF: In a gel.

HF: In a tin. Yeah.

RF: You know what souse [00:35:00] or a head cheese, what they call head cheese?

VL: No, I am sorry.

RF: Uh—

HF: Do not the Germans do a similar thing with turkey? Where they—

RF: Turkey?

HF: Scrapple or—

VL: Scrapple? I know scrapple.

RF: Well scrapple is American.

VL: Scrapple pie.

RF: Uh, look at her [laughter] she is a [inaudible].

HF: Well you can get it at Publix, Publix still has spam. You will have to go get some and experience it for yourself.

RF: Yeah from uh, from back in the Second World War days, uh get a can of spam—you won't want to eat it kind of raw-ish, you can eat it that way, but uh slice it up real thin and cook it like bacon.

VL: OK.

RF: And uh, try it out. And it will be on your hips forever [laughter]. Uh what are some of the other things, uh postum was a big deal—

HF: Like I said, because coffee was not—uh you could not get coffee, that was the substitute they came up with.

RF: Yeah.

VL: Did you guys have Victory Gardens?

RF: Oh yeah.

VL: Yeah?

RF: Yeah, we had Victory Gardens, but some took real good care of them and some did not. Uh, some planted and let it go.

HF: Like everything else.

RF: When I was a little boy—I will tell her this one, my mother bought me a Shirley Temple doll. I was real little and I loved Shirley Temple, the blonde hair and the uh blue velvet cape and dress she had on. And I had Shirley Temple, and my brothers use to pick on me and call me a little sissy and took Shirley Temple from me and buried it someplace in the back yard.

HF: And you dug up the backyard—

RF: And I dug [laughter], I dug about a hundred holes in the backyard trying to find her and I [laughter] could not. But that was during the Second World War. No boy should have a doll [laughter] and right now it is a collector's item.

HF: Yeah if you could find it.

RF: Yeah...

VL: Did you ever find it?

RF: Nope, no, never found it.

HF: Now they have ground penetrating radar, you might be able to find it.

VL: Yeah you can use some LiDAR, GPR—

RF: Yeah, yeah.

VL: Bring some archaeologist out there.

RF: Did you ever have a doll?

VL: I have had many.

RF: See ...

HF: Yes

RF: She appreciates dolls, I appreciated Shirley Temple.

HF: But boys were not supposed to play with dolls at that time.

RF: Well you know at that age you wonder whether you were a boy or a girl or what. I guess— it did not matter—

HF: Well I know, I am just saying if you are talking about how things have changed.

RF: But I never told all my buddies that I had a doll when I started growing up a little bit. I would not have lived that one down.

HF: Yeah there is a picture of you somewhere with it—he is holding it at the top of its head [laughter].

RF: Oh golly. I use to pick my girlfriends up like that—

HF: Did you? [Laughter]

RF: You know by their heads [laughter]—more questions?

VL: Um, so do you think that after—hearing about um, the bombing after—um, sorry, do you think after hearing about the bombing by the ja—Japanese and the United States getting involved in World War II, do you think that really had an influence to your life—at this point looking back?

RF: I think it might have made me a little more insecure. You are not really—when you are that young, you are not really aware that there is that much tension in the world and then all of a sudden somebody is bombing some country and killing a bunch of people. Uh, you say “My God it could happen here” and it almost did. We had an invasion up in the Aleutian [Aleutian Islands] by the Japanese, but the—our armies stopped them. We also had the submarines uh, right off of the coast—the east coast, German U-Boats and one of them stopped uh, in service in one night in New Hampshire. Uh, around Kittery, Maine—Port Smith, Maine uh, Kittery, Maine or Port Smith, New Hampshire. And the uh, submariners went to a movie in the town. They found tickets on them, you know, split tickets from the movies. And -I was on board, I went on board that—the U 505, the one that they captured right off the coast and that was uh, pretty interesting. Very utilitarian, no easy bunks or anything like that, just slept on torpedoes or whatever. But yeah, we came close and also the Japanese—uh, this one Japanese, I remember this story uh, got an idea [00:40:00] of uh, ballooning—uh, pyrotechnics, in the winds going across the ocean to the United States and uh, they floated into Lake Oregon and Lake Washington and stuff starting massive fires. But uh, our uh, intelligence was not leaked out to the

Japanese that it was working. So the guy that uh developed this balloon idea killed himself unfortunately, but it was working—

HF: He thought it failed

RF: Oh yeah, well but uh, I remember that and I remember they use to have air ra—yeah they had air raids over the town. Uh, our bombers would come over and drop sacks of flour. That is right, sacks of flours and I recall this now, and it would hit your roof, it was not big enough to tear your roof out, but it “boom”—and it would sound like an explosion. And that was just the American Air Force keeping you on your toes and making sure you darkened your windows at night and all of that to prevent raids.

HF: We never had to do that here in Florida, darken your windows.

RF: They did not have lights down here [laughter]. They did not have flushed toilets until 1980 [laughter].

HF: Yes they did.

RF: [laughter] But yeah I just recalled that. It is funny, things like that pop back up in your head. And they had air raid wardens that would come around with helmets on and knock on your door with their stick and say “Hey, there is a little light coming out of your attic window there”. They would keep you in line. I do not remember any bomb shelters or where we could have gone other than just your basement, but that was it.

VL: [to Helen] do you think it shaped your life a lot?

RF: You get what?

HF: Not—not really. You know I—I think learning about some of this stuff afterwards, you know there has been so many books written and films made and all this kind of stuff that today certainly we are much more aware of what took place than what we were at the time it was happening.

RF: Yeah.

HF: I think, you know learning some of these things you know, they even question whether our president knew those planes were on their way to bomb Hawaii, but decided—

RF: To just let it start.

HF: Just to get us you know, agitated enough to go to war—

RF: Collect the people to go to war, yeah.

HF: And uh, you know some of all this other stuff that—that you hear about and has impacted you far more—the holocaust, I mean we were pretty much—

RF: Protected from that—

HF: Isolated from all of that. You hear these stories after wards about how the United States, you know turned away ships—

RF: Ship loads of Jews that were trying to escape Germany and concentration camps. And England did the same thing, they did not want to have anything to do with it.

HF: Well today, you know the news—media is on stuff like that—I think that would have been handled a lot differently had it happen today.

RF: Yeah and yet—and yet there are people who, today—I do not know whether you are a lefty or a righty—but uh, who believe the holocaust never happened.

HF: Oh those are just some real radicals.

VL: Yeah I know there is—there are some people that are like it never happened. But I mean you can just visit some concentration camps—

HF: Yeah we have the proof, more than enough—

VL: Evidence

HF: We have proof, more than enough proof of all that but there are some people that are just...

RF: Well people say—well there was uh, six million Jews killed in concentration camps, that is true but the total amount was something like thirty-six million people that were uh mental retards, uh physically incapable of walk or whatever name it, religious people [inaudible], who was that?

HF: Catholic Priests

RF: Huh? Catholic Priests yeah because Hitler defined a new form of religion, you know, it was a cult. And uh so priests were fair game to his uh, SS (Schutzstaffel; Protection Squadrons) [inaudible]. But uh, people do not want to look at that now, but it could happen again, it could happen again. Fortunately Hitler was kind of a nut ball and he, he uh, spread out on too many fronts, started to get his rear end kicked.

HF: Well he got into drug use. [00:45:00]

RF: Yeah drug use uh, meth. Crystal meth, his doctor issued—

VL: I was unaware of that.

RF: Oh yeah, it was uh, and a lot of his SS troopers were on meth, because they were fearless because they were known. But uh, and uh, I had a book a long time ago about the psychiatric study of Hitler, and boy was that something, that was by his own counselor. And I cannot remember who stole it off of me but they did—bugger.

HF: You probable gave it away knowing you.

RF: I even—even “Mein Kampf”, somebody took that or I gave it to Kathy—

HF: You gave it away, if I know you—

VL: Did you read “Mein Kampf”?

RF: Huh?

VL: Did you read “Mein Kampf”?

RF: Yeah it was a goodie

HF: Have you read it?

VL: No but I am taking uh, I am currently taking a Nazi Germany—History of Nazi Germany right now. I am reading a lot about it.

RF: There is another one, “The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich”, get that.

VL: Is that by uh, Evans or something Evans?

RF: No I cannot think of the author, but uh, that book is gone too.

HF: You give everything away.

RF: Yeah... We have a German lady at a wellness center we go to exercise and her name is Honey. Full name is Honey Lori, and uh you had to get use to calling her Honey “Hey Honey” [laughter] you know, something like that. But she grew up during that war period and uh, some of the stories she tells—we kind of joke around back and forth and the other day I was telling my wife that uh, nobody knows weather Hitler is alive or dead, he may be in San Palo, [laughter]—

VL: I have heard that.

RF: And uh, I was sitting there with her [Honey Lori] and I was talking and I look at her and she says, says to me “You know I have a paper that I am pure Aryan”. Everybody that was Aryan had to have a paper to show. And I look at her a minute and I said “You know Honey, I really do not know who you are” [laughter] and I said, “Not only that, you do not really know who I am” [laughter]. We got a good laugh over that [laughter] spies... Well have I warned you down?

VL: I think we got a lot. Um, is there any other things that you wanted to finish off with?

RF: How about you Hel?

HF: No

RF: Some people call the Second World War romantic and it was in terms of young love going away to war, my dear, and all of that stuff. Dear John letters that is where they started I think. Uh, but I do not see and as a military person, I uh do not see war as romantic at all. It is blood and guts and our government sits back and sends them. I think with my frame mind now I may not have gone into the military back then when I was a young, dumb, stupid kid. Cannon fodder.

HF: Well it does not mean—the word romantic does not mean just the matter of the heart between a male and a female. It is talking about the, the romantic notation or the—of defending [the] country, the last—this was the last war to kind of save the world. That was there thought, that uh a pure goal. Whereas know, Vietnam and Korea had been quiet different...

RF: There was a joke that came out of the Second World War—I am going to tell her this.

HF: Remember, you are being recorded.

RF: That is alright. You know all of the Nazis, a lot of the Nazis escaped to South America, mainly San Palo. Uh so there are organizations down there that are still Nazis and uh of course uh, those who believed Hitler was still alive, he was down living with them. They were all getting together one day and they said “We need to start the Reich up again. You know, we have to go back and conquer the world”. And they said, “Well, we need our leader Adolf.” They said, “He will never agree to this.” Says “Well we have got to try. We have to get our leader back and conquer the world.” So they approach Hitler and they said “Adolf, mein führer uh lead us into combat again please.” And he says, “No, no, no [00:50:00], no” So they finally convince him and he goes “OK, only on one

condition,” “What is that Mein Führer?” he says “No more nice guy.” [Laughter] That was a terrible one [laughter]. Am I politically incorrect?

HF: You should be ashamed of yourself.

RF: I am ashamed but I love it.

VL: My professor told us that joke.

HF: Oh did he—

RF: Oh he did tell you? [Laughter] Was it the same way I told it?

VL: It was, it was the same way too [laughter].

HF: I keep telling you, you need new material [laughter].

RF: Well the professor needs new material too [laughter]. By golly [laughter], oh there was a song we use to have as young kids let’s see how does it go “Wenn der Führer says ‘Ve is der master race’ we go heil pff, hegel pff right in the Führer’s face” and we use to sing that when we were little. [Laughter] and I do not think we had any uh, one for the Japanese. Uh, Japanese...No I do not think we did.

HF: Did you have any Japanese friends or anyone that went into the uh, camp here in the United States?

RF: Oh--oh yeah, yeah Pat Hiroto. Uh was a friend of mine in El Monte, California. And Pat and his family went to Manzanar. And uh, Pat was a wonderful guy, he was really a wonderful guy and, and I got to talk to him for a little bet with and I said uh, “How did you feel towards us, we put you in a concentration camp? You were—you were as American as I was.” And he said “Well uh, it was almost like that uh, that movie that uh, Marlon Brando played in. Uh, *the Teahouse of the August Moon*...” You remember that?

HF: Yeah I do—

RF: Where he said, “The Japanese feel this, when the wind blows strong the weed bends but when the wind stops it is back up again.” He says, “That is we looked forward to. Uh, we knew in a sense that it had to be done even though it was not good.” But there were radicals in the camp that really gave a lot of people trouble but Pat Hiroto was not one of them and uh, I liked him a lot. He was good, kind of reminded me of *the Karate Kid*, what is the guy’s name in *The Karate Kid*? Uh, not Yoshi...well anyways *The Karate Kid*. Yeah so I did know him.

VL: Did you know anyone [towards Helen]?

RF: I knew a lot of people that she would not want to know [laughter]. In fact, she has a tough time knowing me, doesn't she [laughter]—

HF: No, you are [laughter]—

RF: Yeah [laughter], so what do you like to do to enjoy yourself?

HF: Bob you are getting off topic, she has got—

RF: Well we are pretty well done.

VL: I will stop this and I will answer your question.

[00:53:04]