

## NANCY PELLETIER ARCHIVAL DOCUMENT

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### ABSTRACT

#### *Biography*

Nancy Pelletier was born in 1930 in Syracuse, New York, where she spent the duration of World War II. Her father left his job as a traveling salesman to support wartime production, while her mother served as an air raid warden and her aunt worked at the L.C. Smith & Bros. Typewriter Company as part of the war effort. Nancy enjoyed summers at her family's house on Lake Ontario, and went on to be the first female student in her graduating class to receive a driver's license after the war and gas rationing concluded.

#### *Summary*

In this interview, Nancy provides an overview about how her childhood and schooling were affected by World War II. She shares memories of her family's Victory Garden and the potatoes they would eat with every meal. Nancy further recounts listening to the news on the radio, collecting stamps, and saving for war bonds. She also tells stories about the women she knew who worked outside of the home during the war, and the friends and classmates who enlisted in the military.

#### *Keywords*

*Syracuse, New York, rationing, radio, fireside chats, air raid drills, Pearl Harbor, war bonds, Japanese, Victory Gardens*

### INDEX

00:00 – Introduction, including childhood memories and family  
02:42 – School experiences  
04:00 – Father leaves job as a traveling salesman to work in war productions

05:22 – Mother as a homemaker  
07:08 – Childhood home  
07:44 – Refrigeration, iceboxes, and the iceman  
11:00 – Dinner; eating potatoes every night  
12:25 – Food stamp; rationing of shoes and sugar  
13:20 – Saving tin foil  
14:10 – Radio and FDR’s fireside chats  
15:52 – Music and singing  
17:20 – Cars and gas rationing  
20:38 – Summers spent at grandparents’ cottage on Lake Ontario  
23:48 – Reading *Nancy Drew* books  
24:20 – Comic books  
24:43 – Newspapers  
25:48 – Air raid drills; talking about war in school  
26:04 – Assembly to announce first alumni casualty, Russell Kiggins  
27:20 – Movies and newsreels  
27:50 – Pearl Harbor  
29:27 – War bonds and collecting stamps  
30:37 – Anti-Japanese sentiment  
30:53 – Air raids; mother as air raid warden  
33:45 – Shoe rationing  
34:17 – Nylon rationing; leg coloring  
36:40 – Pets nearby  
38:01 – Sister’s Victory Garden  
39:38 – Aunt begins working at L.C. Smith & Bros. Typewriter Company  
41:47 – Coal heating  
42:29 – Gas rationing; ration levels  
43:49 – Not having phones during the war  
44:48 – Painting traffic lights  
46:05 – Being the first girl in class to get driver’s license  
47:04 – School graduation

47:52 – Expression of gratitude

48:34 – Advice to younger generations to respect elders and appreciate life

50:15 – Conclusion

## **STORY TRANSCRIPTS**

### **Story 1: Assembly to Announce First Alumni Casualty [26:04 – 26:33]**

I remember one day the principal had everyone go to the auditorium. All the kids assembled in the auditorium, and he got up and announced that the first casualty from our school had died, and he gave the day. His name was Russell Kiggins, and he was the first one from our school that got killed in the war.

### **Story 2: Collecting Stamps for Bonds in School [29:35 – 30:03]**

At school, like about once a week, they would sell stamps. You could buy a twenty-five cent stamp. And they had books and you filled your book, and then you could get a twenty-five dollar bond when your book was filled. Kids, every week you'd come in and get, my mother gave me a dollar and I got four stamps every week until I filled my book.

### **Story 3: Mother as an Air Raid Warden [31:02 – 32:08]**

My mother was like a captain for the neighborhood, and each neighborhood had their own captains. And they wouldn't tell you that we were gonna have an air raid. All of the sudden the whistle would blow and you had to get off the street and put out all your lights. Not just pulling your shades—put your lights out. My mother was a captain and she'd have to go to every house and be sure that everything was dark.

CSK: *Like around what time? Give me an example of when this could happen.*

Oh, well like at 8:00 at night. That could happen at 8:00 at night.

CSK: *So, what would she do? Just look at the house, or would she actually go up to the—?*

NP: Most of the people would come out of their houses and they'd all be outside, and she would just be sure that they didn't leave any lights on inside.

**Story 4: Replacement Nylons**  
**[34:17 – 35:32]**

Oh, nylons! There were no stockings. And my sister was nine years older than me; I was eleven at the beginning, so she was twenty. She worked for the government. And you couldn't get nylons. You couldn't get stockings. So, they came out with this stuff that you colored your legs with. [*laughter*] It was this tan goop. She'd stand in the bathtub and she'd rub this stuff all over her legs, and then it would dry. If someone was real clever, they could draw a seam—your stockings then had seams, and you could draw a seam down the back of your leg, or someone else would do it for her. So then, she had these stockings on. However, this stuff rubbed off on the sheets and my mother would get so mad! [*laughter*]

**PHOTO CAPTIONS**

**Current 1**

Portrait of Nancy Pelletier being interviewed in her home in Pennfield, New York (Photo Credit: Celeste Schantz Kovachi)

**Current 2**

Narrator Nancy Pelletier (on left) with her daughter-in-law, Margaret Pelletier (Photo Credit: Celeste Schantz Kovachi)

**Artifact 1**

Nancy (second from left) and her class posing with war bonds after filling their stamp books (Courtesy of Nancy Pelletier)