

NATIONAL HOME FRONT PROJECT
Upper West Side Seniors
Finding Aid

The Upper West Side Seniors project is a community initiative undertaken by residents of Manhattan, New York, in January 2019. As members of the Bloomingdale Aging in Place group, the project's interviewers have access to local retirees who have memories of World War II in New York City and across the country.

Recording these diverse home front experiences helps bring a seminal period of history alive for the American public and has allowed the interviewers to gain a further appreciation for what their own parents went through during World War II.

For more information about these oral history collection efforts, please contact Karen and Herb Goodheart at karen.goodheart@gmail.com.

Project Coordinator: Karen and Herb Goodheart, Lead Interviewers, Upper West Side Seniors: karen.goodheart@gmail.com

Website Partner Page: <https://nationalhomefrontproject.org/upper-west-side-seniors>

SoundCloud Playlist: <https://soundcloud.com/nationalhomefrontproject/sets/upper-west-side-seniors>

Collection Summary:

- Chan, Lo-Yi
- Craig, Bruce
- Lichtman, Robert "Bob"
- Schneeberg, Geraldine "Gerry" (2 sessions)
- Schrader, Steven "Steve"

Quantity:

- Sessions: 6
- Narrators: 5
- Artifact Images: 7
- Audio Length: 2:40:11

LO-YI CHAN

Interviewee: Lo-Yi Chan

Interviewers: Karen Goodheart and Herb Goodheart; Millie Chan (wife)

Archival Processor: Anna Garow

Copyeditor: Cameron Vanderscoff

Date: July 10, 2019

Location: New York, New York

Session Number: 1

Project: National Home Front Project

Interview Contributor: Upper West Side Seniors

Accession Number: ChanLo-Yi_HFN-OH_071019

ABSTRACT

Biography

Lo-Yi Chan was born in Canton, China, in 1932. Fearing a Japanese invasion of southern China leading up to World War II, his parents initially fled to Honolulu, Hawai'i. There, they experienced the bombing of Pearl Harbor in December 1941. Concerned about the new possibility of a Japanese invasion of Hawai'i, the family once again emigrated, this time to the continental U.S., where Lo-Yi's father was hired for a teaching position at Dartmouth College. Lo-Yi subsequently spent the rest of his childhood in Hanover, New Hampshire.

Summary

In this interview, Lo-Yi describes his life during World War II, including growing up in Hawai'i. He recounts his experiences during the attack on Pearl Harbor, the ensuing fear that rose in Hawai'i, and his father's attempts to move his family to the mainland U.S. He also speaks about living in New Hampshire and how the war manifested itself there.

Keywords

China, Honolulu, Pearl Harbor, Japanese, bomb shelter, gas masks, air raid drills, V-12 Navy College Training Program, immigration, refugee

BRUCE CRAIG

Interviewee: Bruce Craig

Interviewers: Karen Goodheart and Herb Goodheart; Andrea Craig (wife)

Archival Processor: Fatimata Kane

Copyeditors: Erica Fugger and Cameron Vanderscoff

Date: February 25, 2019

Location: New York, New York

Session Number: 1

Project: National Home Front Project

Interview Contributor: Upper West Side Seniors

Accession Number: CraigBruce_HFN-OH_022519

ABSTRACT

Biography

Bruce Craig was born in 1938 in Chicago, Illinois, the eldest of four children. Soon afterwards, Bruce's family moved to Wilmette, Illinois, where they remained during World War II. They subsequently moved to Green Bay, Wisconsin.

During the war, Bruce's father worked in retail at the department store, Carson Pirie Scott & Co., and his mother stayed home to take care their children. Shortly after graduating high school, Bruce joined the U.S. Army Reserve, serving in the infantry and rising to the rank of sergeant. Bruce later worked as attorney and is currently retired in New York City.

Summary

In this interview, Bruce Craig speaks about his life during World War II, his parents' involvement in the war effort, and his cousin's duties as an aviator in the Pacific. He also recounts his memories of and feelings about rationing, Pearl Harbor, the Japanese, and German prisoners of war.

Keywords

rationing, collection drives, Pearl Harbor, Japanese, German prisoners of war, Clean Plate Club, racism, anti-Semitism, South Pacific, B-25s

ROBERT LICHTMAN

Interviewee: Robert “Bob” Lichtman

Interviewers: Karen Goodheart and Herb Goodheart; Susan Bronstein (wife)

Archival Processor: Jannice Hall

Copyeditor: Erica Fugger

Date: October 5, 2019

Location: St. Helena, California

Session Number: 1

Project: National Home Front Project

Interview Contributor: Upper West Side Seniors

Accession Number: LichtmanRobert_HFN-OH_100519

ABSTRACT

Biography

Robert Lichtman was born in 1933 and spent his early years living with his parents and maternal grandmother in a small apartment in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. His father, who was in his 30s, was exempt from military service during World War II as the head of the household. Fortunately, they had no immediate family who were in the war and, even though they were Jewish, they knew of no one who suffered in Europe during the Holocaust.

Bob’s school life in Manhattan was fairly normal, although there was concern of German U-boats being spotted off the East Coast. In spite of that, he had no personal fears about New York being attacked, even though there was talk of blackouts in the city. Bob was very curious about the war and followed it closely in the newspapers, on the radio, and at the Saturday movies in the newsreels. The Germans and Japanese were depicted as evil in all the movies at that time, and he and his friends had mocking rhymes about the Axis leaders. By 1945, his family moved to Chicago, where he heard about V-J Day while walking along Stony Island Avenue. Bob was, and still is, a big sports fan, mainly following baseball and football. He eventually became a lawyer and writer, and now lives in St. Helena, California.

Summary

In this interview, Bob recalls first hearing about the attack on Pearl Harbor while listening to a football game on the radio. He remembers running to the living room to tell his parents and their friends who were shocked by the news. Bob also discusses the patriotic songs on the radio and movies he watched during World War II, like Casablanca. He shares recollections about war bonds, victory gardens, scrap metal collection, and food and gas rationing. Since President Franklin D. Roosevelt declared that professional baseball would continue during the war, Bob remembers seeing a sixteen-year-old short stop who played at the time, and the second baseman who was a violinist and could not hit. Finally, Bob reflects on how the war made him appreciate American democracy more after seeing fascism in Germany.

Keywords

New York, Pearl Harbor, newspapers, German U-Boats, blackout, war bonds, rationing, Holocaust, atomic bomb, baseball

GERALDINE SCHNEEBERG

Interviewee: Geraldine “Gerry” Schneeberg

Interviewers: Karen Goodheart and Herb Goodheart; Jane Century (friend)

Archival Processor: Anna Garow

Copyeditor: Cameron Vanderscoff

Date: September 14, 2019

Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Session Number: 1

Project: National Home Front Project

Interview Contributor: Upper West Side Seniors

Accession Number: SchneebergGeraldine_HFN-OH_091419

ABSTRACT

Biography

Geraldine Schneeberg was born in 1927 and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her father was a manufacturer and her mother served as a community activist who sold war bonds. Gerry was the oldest of three children and a teenager on the home front during World War II. Her only family member directly involved in the conflict was a second cousin, who was a Marine killed the day he landed on Iwo Jima. After the war, Gerry attended college in Tennessee, Florida, and Pennsylvania. She went on to pursue a career that spanned publishing, teaching, and librarianship. Gerry met her husband in 1946 and they were married two years later.

Summary

In this interview, Geraldine discusses her childhood and family life in Philadelphia. She goes on to share her experiences during World War II, including her parents’ work and her feelings of insulation from the war until her cousin was killed in action. She also describes experiencing V-E Day in Times Square, her time working in the Junior Red Cross in Atlantic City, and how the conflict shaped her opinions of public service and the war in general.

Keywords

Iwo Jima, teenager, Jewish American, war bonds, gold stars, Philadelphia, Atlantic City, Junior Red Cross, Holocaust, Times Square

GERALDINE SCHNEEBERG

Interviewee: Geraldine “Gerry” Schneeberg
Interviewers: Karen Goodheart and Herb Goodheart
Archival Processor: Annie Javitt
Copyeditor: Erica Fugger
Date: October 20, 2019
Location: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Session Number: 2
Project: National Home Front Project
Interview Contributor: Upper West Side Seniors
Accession Number: SchneebergGeraldine_HFL-OH_102019

ABSTRACT

Biography

Geraldine Schneeberg was born in 1927 and raised in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Her father was a manufacturer and her mother served as a community activist who sold war bonds. Gerry was the oldest of three children and a teenager on the home front during World War II. Her only family member directly involved in the conflict was a second cousin, who was a Marine killed the day he landed on Iwo Jima. After the war, Gerry attended college in Tennessee, Florida, and Pennsylvania. She went on to pursue a career that spanned publishing, teaching, and librarianship. Gerry met her husband in 1946 and they were married two years later.

Summary

In this short follow up session, Geraldine recalls how during the war, she and a friend worked as hostesses on weekends at the Stage Door Canteen, in the basement of the Academy of Music. She speaks about how they were encouraged to dance and socialize with the soldiers and sailors who were stationed in Philadelphia, and how some of the girls arranged to meet up with the servicemembers outside of the canteen.

Keywords

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, teenager, work, canteen, Academy of Music, Stage Door Canteen, dancing, soldiers, sailors

STEVEN SCHRADER

Interviewee: Steven “Steve” Schrader
Interviewers: Karen Goodheart and Herb Goodheart
Archival Processor: Annie Javitt
Copyeditor: Cameron Vanderscoff
Date: August 12, 2019
Location: New York, New York
Session Number: 1
Project: National Home Front Project
Interview Contributor: Upper West Side Seniors
Accession Number: SchraderSteven_HFL-OH_081219

ABSTRACT

Biography

Steve Schrader was born in 1935 in New York City. His parents had immigrated from Poland in the 1920s, and he grew up with a brother in the Manhattan neighborhood of Washington Heights, which was largely Jewish at that time. His father ran a dress contracting plant and the family’s economic circumstances were secure during the war years. After World War II, his family moved to the Upper West Side of Manhattan. He went on to study at New York University and then joined the U.S. Army in 1959. Steve is currently a writer and resides in New York still today.

Summary

In this interview, Steve discusses his father’s successful business, including his wartime work manufacturing uniforms for the Women’s Army Corps (WACs). He remembers that his mother bought black market beef for the family, his father bought war bonds, and his school had a Victory Garden during World War II. He also recalls going to school and the state of race relations in Washington Heights. Steve reflects on how his memory of the war and Pearl Harbor came mainly from hearing songs and watching movies, and that he did not learn about the Holocaust until years later. He closes with a reflection about his views towards the war seventy-five years later.

Keywords

Women’s Army Corps, Victory Garden, Jewish American, New York City, childhood, scrap metal collection, Holocaust, race relations, war games, manufacturing