

Texas City / World War II Oral History Project

Audited Transcript

Interviewee: Warren Jones

Interviewer: Rebecca Snow

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[0:00]

R: Okay, this is Rebecca Snow for Moore Memorial Public Library. Today I'm here with Mr. Warren Jones, and we're going to have a conversation to see what Mr. Jones wants to tell us about the years of World War II. Today is March 21, 2012, and we're over here at the Nessler Center in Texas City, Texas. So, Mr. Jones.

[00:37]

W: Yes, ma'am.

R: You can look at me.

W: Okay.

R: I mean, you don't have to, but you can look at (unintelligible).

W: That's okay, you're all right.

R: Well, thank you very much for coming. Thank you very much for giving us permission for this.

W: Thank you very much.

R: I guess what we want to do first is just establish pretty much what was your situation when, you know, back when the war was starting, like Pearl Harbor. Were you working at that time?

W: Yes, when Pearl Harbor—yes, I was working for the city. Let me see, I was working for the city, but before I started with the city I was working for another company—

R: Tin?

W: Tin smelter.

R: Longhorn—

W: Yes, Longhorn Tin Smelter. I worked for them. And then I came with the city.

R: And so did you—are you from, were you born in Texas City?

W: No, born in Port Arthur, Texas. But I came to Texas City when I was three years old.

R: Your family came here?

W: No, I had an aunt who was my father's sister. She the one came to Port Arthur and got me. But I did have a mother. My mother had passed.

R: Oh, I'm sorry.

W: From Port Arthur. My mother was out of Louisiana. So she came—my aunt came and got me from Port Arthur and brought me to Texas City. I was three years of age.

R: Did you leave your—so you left your father and siblings? No father?

W: Yes, my father. He was in Port Arthur too, but he and his wife finally separated. So he came to Texas City, because it was his sister, the lady who raised me.

R: Okay. So she brought you here. When you were three. But did you have to leave your brothers and sisters?

W: Well, I had some half brothers.

R: Half ones.

[3:07]

W: I had a half brother, and a half sister. But they were my father's children.

R: Right, by another mother.

W: By another mother.

R: So you came here at three, and so you were raised—so you lived here since then.

W: Since then.

R: So when the war happened—you went to school here?

W: Yes, I went to school here, Texas City—went to elementary school here in Texas City. And back in the day we had to catch a bus to go to high school in Galveston. So I finished over [at] Central. I got the picture at home now.

R: You graduated?

W: Yes, graduated from old Central.

R: Oh, that's great. And even having to go down there. That's great.

W: Yes, old Central. And after graduation, well I went to work in Texas City. My father was a longshoreman down on the docks in Texas City.

R: He was.

W: So I used to be their water boy.

R: Huh!

W: That's what I first started doing.

R: Right out of high school, like you were seventeen, sixteen—

W: Uh-huh. Water boy.

R: How old were you?

W: I was a pretty good age kid, because I went to service when I was twenty-one.

R: Twenty-one. So, before you went to service, had you just worked for the longshoremen?

W: For the longshoremen. Yes, worked for them.

R: And so how long did you work for them?

W: Well, I worked for them quite a while, for the longshoremen. And then from there I went to [the] tin smelter.

R: Did you go to the tin smelter before the war?

W: Yes. Yes, because de Brocky, there was a guy by the name of de Brocky—I've got the pictures and stuff at home now. De Brocky—they were the ones over [at] the tin smelter. So I worked there in the lab. I had gone to high school and I taken chemistry.

R: Good for you.

W: So they gave me a chance to work in the lab.

R: How did they find you? To offer you the job, or did you ask them?

W: Yes, well, you see, back then they were hiring. So I just went out there and they gave me the job.

R: There wasn't any problem—

W: No.

R: Because both black and white were working at the tin smelter?

W: Yes, tin smelter together.

R: Well, was there any other black people working in the lab?

[6:04]

W: There was a black lady, she was a dishwasher, cleaning the—I called them crucibles—the beakers, and all that stuff that for the chemists to use. My classification was a fuser.

R: Fuser.

W: I've got all that stuff at home now, with pictures, where the fuse was at, oh and—

R: Well, we'd love to have pictures, have copies made.

W: Yes. I got at home right now. I had to put it on a Bunsen burner. What they called a Bunsen burner. And I would stand up there and mix that stuff up, until it got real soft. Then I would take it in another room, where they had some women working. They would take those crucibles and pour that stuff in some glasses. In order where they could — what did they call it back then—they titrate it. (Laughs.) Where they would titrate it. But I worked fifteen years for [the] tin smelter.

R: Okay, but I'm trying to figure my dates, because I want to work in the—so, you were working at the tin smelter when they called you up—they drafted you?

W: Yes, they called me up. I got drafted in the Army. And I stayed in the Army, I think about twenty-four months. But by me having—I was married then, had grown up and was married. By me being married and had two children, two boys—they wouldn't—they let me off. Because, see, I had a job. So I didn't go overseas.

R: Okay, so tell me about—when they called you up, did you have your own place to live then?

W: Oh, I stayed with my aunt. The lady who raised me. We had a home—

R: Where did you live?

W: Down on the south side.

R: What was the address? Or street?

W: I think it was about 204 4th St. South.

R: 4th St South.

W: Yes, 204. We was near the plants, down near the plants.

R: But that's where you grew up, and then, but then when you got married—

W: When I got married, we still lived there.

[9:02]

R: With your aunt.

W: With my aunt and my—I had my first wife and my two boys. We stayed there. At 204.

R: So how many people were living in the house?

W: Well, nobody but my aunt, my wife and my two boys.

R: And so that was comfortable.

W: Yes, that was very comfortable. We had a nice home down on the south side.

R: And did your wife work?

W: Yes, my wife worked. My wife was from Illinois, my first wife. But I met her in El Paso. (Laughs.) Isn't that something? My kids were small, so I left—she left from here with my aunt, the one who raised me.

R: Yes.

W: She left from here with her, and she came up to El Paso, where I was stationed. And she and I stayed together up in El Paso, and she worked.

R: Wow.

W: Yes, she worked while she was up there.

R: But when you first met her in El Paso, was that before the war?

W: Oh yes. Yes, before the war.

R: You just went visiting there?

W: No, I went what we called back in those days to CC camp.

R: Ah.

W: Yes, I went to CC camp. I think that was like about \$30 a month. I think you sent like \$20 home, and you keep \$5.

R: So that was part of the Depression, right, they were trying to help people work.

W: Yes. That's right, sure was. Back in them days.

R: So you did CC camp.

W: Called it CC camp. And I went to El Paso.

R: Wow. So how old were you then? Did you leave the Longhorn Tin Smelter to go to the camp? Or was the camp—

W: Yes, yes, I left them and went to the camp, stayed there.

R: Was that just a better deal, or—

W: Well, back in them days, you know, the money was, yes. I forget what I was getting paid at the tin smelter.

R: But you left them to go there.

W: Left them to go there. We called it the CC.

R: Yeah.

W: And the CC was—the type of the work the guys did there, they would go out and build roads and highways, and all that stuff.

R: Right. The Conservation Corps.

W: Yes, yes.

R: Yes, I've read about it. Really, you all did some good work. But you had to be dislocated—you had to leave your—where you were living.

W: Yes, that's right.

R: But you were still pretty young then, maybe only nineteen, twenty?

W: Yes, I was young.

[12:01]

R: You don't remember how old you were.

W: No. I was young.

R: But how old were you when you went into the service?

W: I was round about twenty, twenty-one.

R: Twenty-one.

W: Something like that.

R: So after the CC, did you just do that a year or six months?

W: Yes, I went to the service. I think I stayed about twenty-four months in service. But I didn't go overseas.

R: But did you go to the service from Texas City?

W: Yes.

R: Or go from El Paso? No.

W: From Texas City.

R: Okay, so you met your wife in El Paso and then you came back to Texas City. Where'd you get married?

W: I got married in Houston.

R: Ooh.

W: (Laughs.) Go to Houston to get married. Back in them day, went to Houston and got married.

R: And then settled here.

W: That's right.

R: And then did you go back to the tin smelter after CC?

W: No, [the] tin smelter, I didn't go back. No, I didn't go back there.

R: When they called you up, do you remember what you were doing then? I know it's so long ago.

W: I have pictures at home.

R: When they called you up, the draft board, how did they call you up?

W: Yes, from the draft board—

R: They sent you a letter?

W: Yes, the draft board called me up.

R: They sent you a letter, or—

W: Yes, yes. They put me in I think, by like 3A, something like that. So I came.

R: Were you shocked? Or were you upset or worried? Do you remember?

W: Well, I didn't want to go because I was having a good time—not going because I had been reading about it, how a lot of the guys was going and getting killed and different thing like that. You know, back in them days they was fighting the Japanese, the Germans, all them different people. And I didn't want to go. I didn't want to go to Japan, unh-uh, not back in them—no, no.

R: Do you remember Pearl Harbor? Were you in Texas City then? When Pearl Harbor happened? Or were you up in El Paso, do you remember? When that news came out?

W: Yes, I remember Pearl Harbor. Now, my uncle, this lady what I call my aunt—who raised me down there on the south side, her husband was a World War I veteran. But they had separated. We had a nice house in the front, and we had an extra lot in the back of the house. So that's where he moved, over there, he and his mom and daddy. They moved over there. But they didn't stay in the house with us, though.

R: But you are all friendly?

W: Oh yes, oh yes. That was my uncle.

[15:06]

R: So he was a vet.

W: Yes, he was a World War I—

R: Did he ever talk to you about the war, what it was like?

W: Oh yes, yes, he brought a rifle home, and everything. He brought a rifle home.

R: But, in World War I, I didn't think that—they did have some African-Americans who actually fought, right?

W: Yes, indeed, yes. I had the bayonets—

R: No, I mean, I'm talking World War I.

W: Yes.

R: Yes.

W: With this rifle what he give me, it had a bayonet on it, all that stuff. With that thing, that short thing that (laughs) stick in there, oh yes.

R: So when they called you up, where did you have to go to be called up? Where did you go, Texas City?

W: I had to go to Houston to take a physical. Had to go to Houston.

R: And they took and gave you an exam?

W: You take an exam, from there—

R: What was the physical, what was it like? They said it was—you had to take everything off—

W: Oh yes.

R: Oh my gosh.

W: The physical examination, yes.

R: Were they nice to you, or was it —

W: Oh yes. It was wartime, back then. (Laughs.) They had to be good.

R: And then, everything was fine. They found everything fine.

W: Everything was fine. And what I did, they give me—by me being in service, I got to be a buck corporal. That was my rating. A buck corporal.

R: What do you mean, because you were in service? Because your work had been with the CC?

W: Because I had been with the CC, and I had the training or the marching, the drilling and all that stuff. CC camp taught you all that.

R: It did? Really?

W: It taught me all that stuff before I went in service. So I got to be a little buck corporal, what they called a buck corporal. And I was getting like about \$21 a month. I would get—keep five for myself—five dollars was a lot of money back in them days. Keep five dollars for myself, send the other money home. And they give me some money for my two boys, too. I forgot how much they were giving.

R: They did. Good.

W: They give money for my two boys, too.

R: And where did you go first?

W: I went direct to El Paso.

R: How long did you wait after they gave you the physical? Did they tell you right then you were accepted?

W: Oh, yes.

R: They told you. Were you angry?

W: No, I didn't want to go (laughs) but I had to go, though. They taking everybody.

R: When you were in that whole crowd, was it all — did it seem like there were a lot of African-Americans, blacks, mixed in?

W: Oh, yes, yes.

[18:02]

R: And Hispanic?

W: When I first went in, it was all black organization because they were sending them from Chicago, and all around—they sent them to my camp.

R: They segregated it.

W: Yes. And eventually they mixed them all up, though.

R: So the first camp you went to—

W: Was all black.

R: Was segregated. But when you went to your physical it wasn't.

W: No. No.

R: You were just right there with everyone. Wow. Where was the first camp?

W: My first camp was in—I think it was in El Paso. No?

R: Of course if you went different places, and that's a long time ago.

W: Yes.

R: How did you get there? From Texas City?

W: Train.

R: Train? From where? From this depot?

W: Yes. (Unintelligible) train. They brought a train to take us there.

R: Did they pay for you to—

W: Oh yes. Back in them days, yes.

R: And you had to say goodbye. How old were your little boys?

W: Yes, sure did.

R: How old were your kids?

W: And I'll tell you what—

R: Were they little babies? Still?

W: Well, they were small, yes, when I first left them, they were little.

R: Did they understand you were going?

W: Yes. They was big enough to know that I was being drafted. I was drafted, what they call draft, back in them days. And my wife, she came, left my two kids with my aunt—the lady who raised me.

R: Yes.

W: She came up there where I was, and stayed.

R: Did she have her own place?

W: We stayed with some more people from down south here. We paid for a room to stay there. And she worked.

R: What did she do for work?

W: She worked at a hospital, up there in El Paso.

R: What did she do in the hospital?

W: I forgot what her title was. But she was—she come out of Illinois, she was a pretty smart girl.

R: So she could—that's great, she got work. I heard a lot of, in World War II, a lot of wives did try to go around and stay near the camps, but it was hard to find places to live, they said. And places to stay and have your husband come and visit you.

W: Well, we stayed with some more girls, two other girls that was from down south here. And we paid for a room. So what I did, I just slept with my wife at night, because most of my time I had to spend time on the base, the Army base.

R: And so you were a buck corporal.

W: Yes, I got to be a buck corporal, what they they call buck corporal back then—

R: What part do you remember that was, was there any part that you didn't like about that camp? Where was the camp in El Paso?

[21:04]

W: We called it—it was out at Fort Bliss. There was an Army camp but we were on a Army camp. They had soldiers out there also. Had soldiers out there too.

R: So you were, you had to do training again?

W: Yes, had to do training. Yes, did training. We had to get up for what we called reveille every morning just like the Army did.

R: How early? Yes, that's pretty early.

W: Yes, yes. We had to get up in the morning, we had to get up during the afternoon, five o'clock, when they were taking the flag down, had to go stand out there—

R: So, Fort Bliss was Army, but you said it was like you were in the Army. You weren't really inducted in the Army?

W: I was basically inducted in the Army, yes.

R: But you said you did like the Army did, because it was segregated? Was it kind of like you were a different status?

W: No, we had our own camp. We had our own camp. The Army had their camp, and we had ours.

R: Well did they tell you you were going to go and—

W: But it was on Fort Bliss.

R: Ft. Bliss, I didn't know. Was Fort Bliss not Army?

W: Yes, Fort Bliss was where the Army camp was. Fort Bliss. And they had the CC camp there also. But we weren't connected, we was off on the side from them. But we had to get up and do the same thing they did. Reveille, we had to get up in the morning—

R: Are you talking about like CC, being in the CC now?

W: Yes.

R: How about when you became in the Army?

W: Oh, I was different—it was different in the Army.

R: Did you go to Fort Bliss when you went to the Army?

W: I'm trying to think now where I was.

R: So, when your wife came to see you, you were in the CC?

W: I was in the CC.

R: That's when your wife came to see you, that's my mistake. Okay.

W: But umm—

R: So, you said goodbye to them, and you went somewhere.

W: Yes. We traveled on trains. I even left and went to—we had some trains that would go different places and pick up people, soldiers. I even went to California on a train.

R: Wow.

W: Los Angeles, California.

R: So in the twenty-four months, were you in different places?

W: Different places, yes.

R: Do you remember any particular things?

W: I even rode ships.

R: What?

W: I even rode ships down—down what we called Puget Sound. Where they make the ships, build ships.

R: Yes.

W: I used to ride ships, you get on those ships and ride those ships down—down the channel. Yes.

[24:07]

R: Puget Sound? Isn't that out in Washington?

W: Yes, that was in Seattle, Washington.

R: So you went up there.

W: Yes, I went to Seattle. That's where I was, at Seattle. Riding ships.

R: Were you a segregated unit then?

W: Yes, it was all black unit, yes. And then afterwards, then they put us all together. After. You know, but we were segregated—we had our camp, they had theirs. Eventually they integrated the camps.

R: In Washington, was it integrated? Do you remember?

W: Yes.

R: It was, in Washington?

W: Yes.

R: So when you rode the ship, you were with just everyone.

W: Everyone. What we called was Puget Sound.

R: So that was just a—wasn't part of your duties, that was just something on your day off?

W: Your day off, to ride them big ships. They would make them there, in Seattle. Build them there, and you would get on them and just ride them down, what they called Puget Sound.

R: Beautiful.

W: Beautiful, yes. That was before they would send them back out to sea. Those ships. But I did a lot of things in Seattle. But I was glad to get out though. I was glad to get out though.

R: Did you get your mail regular?

W: Yes, we got our mail regular. What they called mail call. Yes, they had mail come in every day, and you had to go stand outside and the sergeant, somebody would call your mail out to you, hand it to you, stuff like that.

R: What about the food? What was the food like?

W: The food? We had a big cafeteria. Yes, you could go there and eat all you want to eat—they had good food.

R: How about cigarettes?

W: I KP'd. When you KP'd, you ate the best food though.

R: I heard that.

W: When you KP'd, you ate the best food. I was just a good normal guy, so I was treated good, you know? The guys liked me, the supply sergeant liked me so well he said, "I'm going to promote you to buck corporal." At first I was a private—from private to buck corporal. So that was two stripes thataway and a "T." Come up in the middle—called buck corporal.

Yes, I enjoyed, I enjoyed—but I wanted to get back home to my family though. So I finally got out. So what my folks did, my aunt, I mean my wife—she was from out of Illinois, but she had worked for some whites in Texas City. So they put up, signed a petition—say I was needed back home. I was well more needed back home than I was in the camp. So they finally let me out. And I came back home, and from there—

[27:36]

R: Where did they send the petition?

W: Ma'am? They sent it—

R: Who did they give it to?

W: They sent it up there to my camp where I was, and said I was much more needed back home than I was there. I wasn't doing nothing there, but—

R: Do you think if you had stayed, would you have been sent over?

W: I know I would. (Laughs.) Yes. Sure I would, yes. Because, boy, they were sending them over there right and left back in them day, yes.

R: Who did you think was the worst enemy? The Germans or the Japanese?

W: Them Japanese, they would string you up, the Japanese, and make you tell all you knew, yes, the Japanese. I had seen some Japanese—I forgot, one place where they sent me, and I had seen some—

R: California, maybe? No?

W: Somewhere, but they had a lot of Japanese there. But uh—I was in the—

R: Japanese people living here.

W: Yes, yes. And I said, "Lord." But the good Lord blessed me, I just was a good guy—

R: The Japanese, so they looked pretty different, don't you think?

W: Oh yes, yes.

R: It's kind of a shock to see a lot of different—it's a different culture than us.

W: Yes, indeed.

R: Well, there was no Japanese—few were in the military.

W: Yes, very—

R: And none in your unit?

W: No, none in my unit. Nothing but blacks and whites.

R: Did you have Hispanic?

W: Not recalling. Just blacks and whites, but they—

R: Spanish? Italians?

W: I can't say—

R: Germans? Did they say anything?

W: I can't recall that right now but I know they had—but in one of the companies I was in was mixed blacks and whites, and then one company I was in was all black. We had black officers.

R: Which was better?

W: Well, they was both about the same.

R: Some had the good and bad points, or—did you have any—did you get like, you know, like whites giving you a hard time, in the mixed ones?

W: Oh no. No.

R: Really, no?

[30:02]

W: Everybody got along good (laughs), because nobody wanted to go overseas. They didn't want to go overseas. You would get a punishment. If you did anything wrong, they would punish you. And the punishment, was like they would give you, they would lock you up.

R: In solitary.

W: Yes, solitary. They would lock you up.

R: How long?

W: If you was pretty bad, didn't want to do right, they'd stay in there quite a while. Yes.

R: You didn't get into solitary.

W: No, I was a good guy. (Laughs.)

R: You were good. You got promoted.

W: Yes, I was good and scared, so I did right.

R: Did you smoke cigarettes then?

W: I tried to learn how to smoke. Cigarettes was cheap back then.

R: Yes.

W: They were cheap. But I never taken the habit, the regular habit, because my uncle and my aunt, who reared me in Texas City, they smoked what they called back in them days Bull Durham.

Bull Durham was that cigarette you put in a machine. That machine would roll that thing up just like a cigarette. And that's what they would smoke, called Bull Durham.

R: Strong.

W: Yes. I never— now when I was in service though, you could buy cigarettes. You could go to the exchange—what they called it, and buy cigarettes. But I never did mess with

them. I never did mess with cigarettes. And right as of today, I never smoke. The one bad habit that I didn't fool with.

But the girls now, I had plenty of girlfriends, though. (Laughs) I had plenty of girls. Before my wife came to stay with me, I had plenty of girls. I was a little buck corporal, and I kept my uniform real neat, had a necktie on and all that good stuff. You had a winter uniform, you had a summer uniform. So I kept myself up real, real neat at all times.

R: And there was a lot of socializing, right?

W: Oh, yes. We —

R: Ladies were happy to—did you go to any of those—

W: Yes, we had dances, I mean—

R: Dances, where there would be chaperones?

W: Yes, we went to the dances.

R: And did you have to stand in line to get a partner?

W: Yes, back in them days, yes. If you didn't take your wife with you, back in them days, because my wife, she came and stayed with me.

R: But that was CC. That was CC.

W: CC yes, she stayed in the CC.

[32:59]

R: You said it wasn't during the service.

W: Unh-uh, stayed in the CC.

R: Like when you were in the service out in Washington, did they have any socializing?

W: Yes, we had to go to town. We had some big armored trucks where they would— they had to get—from the back you had to get up in them. They would take you free of charge. Then, when everything was over with, they would bring you back to your camp,

all that good stuff. But I was glad I didn't go overseas. No, no. I'm glad I didn't go, because—

R: And what did your wife do for—

W: She worked.

R: — work when you were gone?

W: Well, she—

R: Had she worked before she came to CC—

W: She worked—

R: When she worked here, when she lived here in Texas City, what did she do?

W: She worked for some Jewish people.

R: Mm-hm, that was that white family.

W: Yes, that's the people who she worked for.

R: And they helped her get a petition?

W: Yes, yes. She worked for some Jewish people. I left her with an automobile, because I had a car. Because I used to use my car to go to tin smelter. And see, I left her with an automobile and everything.

R: So you had a car. What car was it? Do you remember?

W: (Laughs.)

R: Ford?

W: It was one of them kind that—you know—crank, they had to crank it in the front there.

R: You had to crank it, okay.

W: You had to crank it.

R: Did she know how to do that?

W: Yes, she had to learn. She knew how to drive, and everything. Had a car, and then eventually—I just wrecked my last car what I owned here. I just wrecked it. Where did I wreck that? I went into a building here in Texas City where I get my money orders to pay my bills. I went through that darn building. I just had had—just had had that brace—
(shows foot brace)

R: Oh my gosh.

W: —put on there, so I couldn't— instead of me taking my foot off the accelerator, I mashed down on, I went through that darn building. (Laughs.) And the good Lord blessed me. I had to—my wife, what I've got now, she had to come and pick me up and take me to my doctor.

R: Oh man. I'm sorry.

W: They made this brace because this is a little heavier brace. So they made that brace for me. Well, my first brace was plastic. My first brace was plastic, so they made—

R: And so that's heavy duty. Good. I want to get back to—

W: Okay.

R: So when you came back, the war was still going on.

W: Yes. Oh, yes.

R: And what was it like, where could you get work? Could you get work, then?

[36:04]

W: I worked for—I used to work down on the waterfront with my daddy, with my father.

R: Yes. Did you go back to that? When you came back?

W: Yes, I went to that. I worked down there with them. I was a water boy. (Laughs)

R: Right. But after you left the service, when you came back.

W: When I came back, I came back—I worked on the waterfront.

R: (Unintelligible) the docks.

W: Like on the dock. And my daddy was a foreman.

R: Good.

W: He gave me a job of being the water boy. They had a big old crock barrel. You had to fill that barrel up with ice and water. They had a faucet down to the bottom where the guys would come and get their water.

R: I see. So you kept it cold. But when you came back, was there rationing?

W: Yes, at the grocery stores.

R: Where did you get your coupons?

W: My aunt taken care of that.

R: She did. For the household.

W: Yes, she'd taken care of that. If you ever go to the grocery store in that day—I [don't] know did the grocery store give those coupons or what, but I know you could take those coupons and get your food, back in those days.

R: And what was the food like then? During the war? Did you see a change in the quality of it?

W: No.

R: Do you remember? Like the chickens, some people said the meat wasn't so good. Or maybe in Texas City, it was all right?

W: Well, we went to a store. And my wife knew these whites that ran the store, so we got good stuff (unintelligible) all the time.

R: You did?

W: Yes, all the time.

R: So you didn't have to worry about not having sugar, or coffee? Did you drink coffee?

W: I didn't drink too much coffee. But they did, they drank coffee.

R: You didn't have to worry like, you had less. People weren't thinking like oh this is the war, we don't have enough.

W: No. We got enough, because we went to this big grocery—

R: In your house, did you have running water at that time?

W: Yes, but our running water was—had a faucet on the back porch.

R: Okay.

W: That's where the faucet was. Right on the back porch.

R: So you were—

W: And I used to have a—I used to go to an out—what we called outerhouse.

R: Outhouse. Yes, like latrine.

W: Yes, outerhouse. To do your bodily wastes—

R: Right. So there was no plumbing inside.

W: No, not, then. Eventually—

R: How about, do you remember what your aunt or your first wife used for electricity?
Did you have electricity?

W: No, we did lamps.

[39:00]

R: You had lamps.

W: We had lamps back in them days.

R: But even during the war?

W: Yes, we had lamps, but I think eventually come with electricity. But we had lamps.

R: So you didn't have like an electric refrigerator.

W: No, we had to buy ice. We had to buy the ice.

R: You did.

W: And put in the box. We had the box though—

R: Okay, that's a meat safe, or something.

W: Yes, we had to buy the icebox, and put that ice—

R: And there was no problem with World War II, getting it—how about the gas though?

W: Well now, what we—

R: Because you had to drive to work, you didn't walk to work.

W: No, got gas— we had a stamp, we had a book.

R: Coupons, right?

W: Coupon book they give you.

R: I heard it was just like three gallons a week, though.

W: Yes.

R: Was that enough to get you to work?

W: Yes.

R: Do you remember?

W: Yes. I could go to work on that. Because where I was working was at the old tin smelter. And so all I had to do—I had a Ford automobile back in that time.

R: This was not the cranking thing.

W: No.

R: This was later.

W: No, that was later. Bought some more cars later.

R: Was this during the war that you worked at the smelter?

W: Yes. Mm-hm.

R: The war was going on.

W: The war was going on.

R: And did—was there a difference in people who worked there, and they didn't have to go to service?

W: No. Unh-uh. Now, I worked for—the guy who I worked for—he was a Jewish guy, but he was over the whole lab.

R: Yes.

W: He was over the whole entire lab. I worked for him. And we had some more people work in the lab, too. He liked me. I first started off as a dishwasher, in the lab, and then I got promoted to what we called a fuser. I got that picture at home right now.

R: Was it more money, too?

W: Oh yes, it was more money, yes.

R: Good. So, were your boys going to school?

W: Yes my boys—

R: Were they old enough to go to school during the war?

W: Yes, they were old enough to go to school, but they didn't—they didn't—

R: You don't remember your wife having trouble getting like clothes, people sometimes had trouble getting, stand in line for things during the war for clothes?

W: No, because like I said she worked for this Jewish family. And he had a place there where you could go buy your clothes and all that stuff. This guy. So we never did have, we never—

R: But did she have to work, like—she didn't have to sleep there. Did she have to work long hours?

W: Yes, she worked, yes. And she was Catholic. And what I did, I was Baptist, before I met her. I was Baptist. She was always Catholic, growing up Catholic. So what I did, she started working for the Catholic priest. When she worked for the Catholic priest—

[42:23]

R: Was it Father Roach?

W: Yes, you've heard of Father Roach (unintelligible). Father Roach, yes. Father Roach and—I worked a long time. See, what I did, I used to clean up the church. That was one of my—that was an extra job. I cleaned Saint, what they call St. Mary's Church. That's the old church down on the south side now, that's the church I used to clean. But just the inside. Just the inside.

R: So I'm still trying to go on WWII. Like, did they have, do you remember any of the rallies? In some ways, we were just kind of like normal, but then there was, how—we're trying to figure out how was the life different then? Because the war was going on, you know. Did people talk about the Germans? Was there a German family that people were like, not—

W: No. They didn't do—

R: I mean, in Galveston, they hung an effigy of Hitler, but they didn't do that in Texas City?

W: No, no. Texas City, like I said, I [was] raised up in Texas City. Texas City always been good to me. I never had any problem. Because like I said, I had good parents and things who reared me, so I never got in trouble. I've never been in the penitentiary or anything. I just grew up to be a good guy.

R: But I was trying to think about—did people have war rallies? Do you remember that? Any rallies for the war? Or like posters, do you remember seeing posters?

W: I may have seen some posters, but other than that, though—

R: And how about the kids, did your kids collect, what did they collect, the copper, or they collect the—

W: Yes, they used to collect—

R: Foil.

W: Oil and broken soda water bottles, all that stuff. Lot of guys would go down what they called the alleys, and people set their trash can, instead of using bags, back in them days you had trash cans. And you set your trash can on the alley, and the guy would come by there and pick all that stuff up.

R: Okay, so but the kids, did your kids collect for the war effort?

W: Yes. They used to collect, you know, money back in them days, a nickel or a penny— all they wanted was their money to buy candy and stuff. Candy and stuff was cheap back in them days. I never will forget that.

R: And how about the blackouts?

W: Ma'am?

[44:59]

R: The blackouts?

W: No.

R: During the war? When you had to like keep the lights off at night?

W: Oh yes, yes. And our house on the south side there, where I was raised up at, we had a big light right on the corner. So that light burned all night long and the flare would shine on our house because we lived right on the corner. But we used to burn lights—

R: And what about World War II? You couldn't have a light like that during that time.

W: Oh no. Unh-uh.

R: Do you remember what they did?

W: No, sure don't.

R: So you don't remember blackout, having to put the shades down.

W: Yes, put the shades down—

R: Do you remember that? No?

W: Yes, let me see.

R: Maybe if you weren't using electricity then, maybe that wasn't a big deal for you guys.

W: We were using lamps a lot. You had to turn them lamps down to blow them out. To turn them down, the lamps. I believe people were using lamps then. Because like I said about the ice, before we got a refrigerator we used to buy the ice.

R: Where did you buy it?

W: We had a black guy that used to go around and sell ice. We used to take our ice—

R: He would chip it off?

W: Well, we would wrap it up in a sack and put it in a box. And then you could chip it.

Then you could chip it to make your water, cold water.

R: Do you know, did they see any German U-boats off of Texas City?

W: I seen, when I was in service, we had German prisoners used to work at our cafeteria, where we ate at.

R: Did you talk to them, or anything? Did they know some English?

W: Yes, but I do know they used to be in our— they used to cook for us. That was a good job, I guess. They used to cook for us. We had to go to the cafeteria like for breakfast, lunch, and supper, three times a day, if you wanted to eat.

R: Yes, some people said that the food was actually quite good.

W: Yes, it was good.

R: And after the Depression, it was nice to have that kind of food.

W: Yes, but I was glad to get out and come home, though, so—

R: So were you glad when the war ended, do you remember the war ending?

W: Oh yes, indeed.

R: What did you all think about that dropping that bomb? Do you remember people talk about that?

[48:04]

W: Yes, I heard them talk about that bomb they dropped. Kill all them people over there.

R: What about the Victory day? What happened then?

W: I can't recall but I know everybody was rejoiced over it though—that it had ceased, and it had stopped. The good Lord blessed me so, I just come up to be a nice guy. I

learned a lot. I didn't go to college but I did go to high school and I finished high school. Because I have all of that at my new house, where I live now. I have all of that there. I finished in Galveston.

R: That was quite an obstacle, to have to go there.

W: Yes. We used to ride a bus. Before we could go to the high school here in Texas City, we had to ride a bus to Galveston. And then finally they integrated, saying we could go to high school here though. Yes.

R: So, is it better that it's integrated now?

W: Yes, because all of my friends are white, right now—what I got. (Both laugh.) Girl, when I go to Nessler Center, they in a different meeting from the meeting I'm in, but I got a lot of white friends though. We all used to play together. The whites, the Spanish, all of us used to play together. And the only thing I didn't learn when I was a kid coming up, my folks was out of Jeanerette, Louisiana, but I never learned Creole. And I never learned Spanish. Never learned. I just—didn't learn it. Didn't learn it. (Laughs.) When I went to high school, because see I taken chemistry, and that chemistry was what helped me to get the job at the tin smelter. The chemistry did. I got paid a good salary, and everything.

R: Well, do you think it was good that we went to war?

W: Well—

R: Did your sons go in the service?

W: No, my youngest son—my youngest son died in August of this year. No, I mean August of last year.

R: Yes, and I'm sorry to hear that. But did he—

W: They didn't go to service.

R: They didn't go in.

W: Because see, they both were little. And my oldest son—

R: No, but I mean, when they grew up. Were they interested in going in the service?

W: No. They both went to work up in St. Paul, Minnesota. They went to work, both of them.

[51:06]

R: Well, so you're not sorry that you didn't get to go to the Pacific, or Europe?

W: No, well. They was killing themselves (unintelligible) they want to ride a boat to nowhere. Unh-uh. No. Torpedos, and all that stuff. Unh-uh.

R: Very dangerous.

W: It was dangerous, yes.

R: Still is today. Yes. Well, we actually have taken almost an hour.

W: That's okay, did I—

R: Do you think—is there anything you talked about, we didn't have really rationing.

W: Well, they—

R: How about if your car messed up? Do you remember, because they talked about spare parts were hard to get. Do you remember that?

W: Oh yeah.

R: Did your daddy talk about that or anything? How did his job change from the war?

W: My daddy, he had a car and I had one.

R: Yes. So who fixed the cars?

W: Well, we could send them to a shop.

R: Okay, so, when World War II happened the shop was still working?

W: Yes, yes.

R: How about your dad, if he was a longshoreman, during the war, was there more work?

W: Oh yes. Yes, see, because we had the grain elevator. Down on the docks they had called the grain elevator. And we had the longshoreman to do the ships.

R: Do you think there was more shipping because of the war?

W: Yes. Something what we were supposed to get back in Texas City, that old sugar refinery in Texas City, down on the dike down there? I've been going to these night meetings. And there's a lady they call Eastman. They supposed to take over the old place down there, the old sugar refinery.

R: Are they? I didn't know.

W: They're called Eastman. Because I go to some night meetings, and she be there. You know that old sugar refinery down on the docks down there. The sugar refinery's on one side, one of those dock's warehouse on the other side. So they're supposed to fix it up again, take over.

R: Wow.

W: I don't know they're going to make, but they're going to make something. But I can remember when I was a kid, we used to go down there and get that raw sugar down there. When it was a sugar refinery.

R: How did you get the raw sugar?

W: We used to go down there and they would give it to you. Because they had a lot of people working down there.

R: Well, you mean it was like sugar, sugar—

W: Yes, yes, sugar, sugar.

R: —like all coarse? What color was it?

W: Well it was—it looked like it was brown.

R: They gave you a handful, or you had something to put it in?

W: Oh yes, they would get something to put it in. They gave it to you. You'd go down there and get it.

[54:04]

R: You would take it home.

W: Take it home. Sugar refinery.

R: Yes, Texas City has had a lot of industry. Lot of different industries. So your dad worked, how many years did he, how old was he when he finally stopped?

W: My dad was a longshoreman in Port Arthur before coming to Texas City. He was a foreman in Port Arthur. And then he came to Texas City and got to be a foreman. And we had a local—

R: How old was he when he stopped working?

W: Oh, I can't recall. But he was—

R: Eighties? Seventies? No. Sixties?

W: He must have been about—seventy or so, like that.

R: Long time. He didn't hurt himself working that hard work.

W: Oh, no. No, he just retired.

R: Actually, I'd like to ask you sometime about your work in Texas City too. But I think now, this hour, I think we've kind of—can you think of anything else about the war that you wanted to say?

W: No. Unh-uh. I'm just glad I didn't go.

R: Well, you did. They had you for two years. You did some work for them.

W: Yes, Then I drilled—

R: Okay. Well thank you very much Mr. Jones.

W: Okay.

R: Thank you for your time, and I'm going to turn this off now. Closing down.

W: Okay, dearie.

[55:28]