

## **Texas City / World War II Oral History Project**

### **Audited Transcript**

Interviewee: Gwen Atwood Uzzell

Interviewer: Vivi Hoang

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[0:01]

Vivi Hoang: This is Vivi Hoang. I'm here with Gwen Atwood Uzzell. We are in the meeting room at Moore Memorial Public Library in Texas City, Texas. This interview is for an oral history project about Texas City during World War II. Today is March 26, 2012.

Okay. Mrs. Uzzell, thank you for coming in today.

Gwen Atwood Uzzell: Mm-hm.

VH: Can you tell me when your birthday is?

Gwen Atwood Uzzell: Yes, April twenty-first.

VH: And what year is that?

GAU: 1920.

VH: So that makes you also ninety—

GAU: Almost ninety-two. (Laughs.) Next month.

VH: Oh, that's right, that's right. Um, let's see here. Where were you born originally?

GAU: Garden, Kansas.

VH: And how and when did you come to [Texas City]?

GAU: Well, my family moved from Garden to Palacios, Texas. One of my brothers had asthma, very severe, and the doctors said he had to get out of the cold climate so my mother had an uncle who lived in Palacios and ran a grocery store, so we moved to Palacios and then he learned the grocery store business from my mother's uncle.

VH: Where is Palacios?

GAU: It's down on the coast, Matagorda Bay, not too far from here.

VH: Okay. And from Palacios, how did you—?

GAU: And then we went from Palacios to Alvin, where my dad purchased a grocery store and he went into the grocery business there.

[1:42]

VH: And after Alvin?

GAU: And after Alvin, I moved to Texas City. Same thing: He went into the grocery business in Texas City.

VH: Okay. Do you remember what year that was that your family moved here?

GAU: Oh, let's see. Twenty—we moved to Texas City in '33, yeah, 1933.

VH: Tell me a little bit more about your father's grocery store here in Texas City.

GAU: Well, I don't know that there's much to tell. It was just a general grocery store with a meat market and all the, all the other things that go with a grocery store.

VH: Is the building still here?

GAU: No, no. It's—the store was down on 3<sup>rd</sup> and (speaks to husband, Troy Uzzell) was it, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>?

Troy Uzzell: What?

GAU: Where Dad had the grocery store. I think it was 3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> versus 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup>.

TU: (Unintelligible.)

GAU: Mm-hm, yeah, 3<sup>rd</sup> Street and 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue. But it's not there anymore

VH: How many years was it open for?

GAU: Uh, well, let's see. It was there I guess it's four years and he became ill and had to retire from the grocery business.

[3:10]

VH: I see. While the grocery store was open were you involved in any way?

GAU: No, no. I was a teenager.

VH: Okay.

GAU: I was just starting high school.

VH: Okay. Did you go to Texas City—?

GAU: No, yes, Central High School it was called then.

VH: Okay. Tell me a little bit about what going to high school here in Texas City was like.

GAU: Well, you knew everybody. (Laughs.) We still have a group that meets the second Wednesday of every month out at the Reef—those of us who went to school together—and have dinner out there and just socialize. We've known one another practically all our lives. We're in our late 80s and early 90s. (Laughs.) We have maybe, I don't know, fifteen or twenty who still are able to come.

VH: Have you—does that mean you've been in Texas City ever since then?

GAU: Yes.

VH: That's pretty amazing.

GAU: Yes.

VH: Time-wise, it sounds like you were in high school in the years just before the war started, is that correct?

GAU: Correct.

VH: Okay. Can you describe how life changed for your family once the war started?

GAU: Oh my goodness. It changed for everyone. I had four brothers, no sisters. And my father and two of my brothers were at the age where they were called up to service. The other three were—the other two—were a little bit too young, so they finished high school and then they were called up. So we had a military family. (Laughs.)

VH: So it sounds like all the men in your family eventually went into the military.

GAU: Except my father. He didn't actually go, yeah.

VH: Except your father. Wow. How did that—what did that mean to your family? How did that effect—

GAU: Well, it's just—you never knew when they went if they were coming back. It was a trying time, as it was for everyone, you know, not only us. My mom and me, we made it okay. And fortunately they all came back, so that was great.

[5:44]

VH: Good. What order are you and your brothers?

GAU: I'm the second.

VH: Second oldest?

GAU: Uh-huh, yeah.

VH: One of the things we hear about is rationing. Can you talk about what your family did?

GAU: Yes, we had ration books every family was issued. Ration books according to the number of people in your family. And everything was rationed. You had food items, gasoline, shoes, whatever.

I have to tell you about the shoes. We didn't have leather shoes because all the leather went to the service men so they could have shoes. I had a pair of high heels and the soles were cardboard (laughs) and the uppers were sort of a canvas thing. Oh my goodness—you didn't have hose. If you were fortunate enough to have a relative or a boyfriend or somebody in the service, they could go to the commissary, maybe, and get you a pair of nylon hose. Oh, (claps hands together) that was a big treasure.

We had to wear rayon hose. Now, I don't know whether you know what rayon is but we'd pull them on—'course, we had garter belts to fasten them to—and when you sat

down in a chair like this, with your knees bent, when you got up, well, the knees were still bent like you were still sitting down (laughs).

VH: Oh my goodness!

GAU: It wasn't very attractive.

VH: So you weren't very fond of them.

[7:16]

GAU: No, no, finally it got to where we painted our legs with makeup, you know, makeup like they have now. And that worked pretty good. But we did without a lot of things like that that you just took for granted.

VH: What gave you that idea, the painting your legs?

GAU: Well, just, you know, we just hated those old rayon hose. And the paint, unless you got wet or something, it didn't—it stayed on. But back then, women didn't wear the slacks and things like they do now. We wore dresses. So it was a bit airy (laughs) with painted legs and no hose in the wintertime.

VH: Right. Where in Texas City did your family live?

GAU: We lived on 318 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue North.

VH: Food-wise, where—you went to the grocery store to get your food. Or did you use—by then your father's grocery store was closed, is that right?

GAU: Yes.

VH: What was the nearest grocery store that you would typically go to?

GAU: Oh, it was down on 6<sup>th</sup> Street. It was about two-and-a-half blocks from where we lived.

VH: Did you walk there?

GAU: Oh, we walked everywhere. You didn't have enough gasoline to joyride or do anything like that.

VH: When was the car used then, if gas was—?

GAU: Well, to go to church or something like that. We didn't—we were very stingy with our gasoline usage. But Texas City was small; you could walk most anywhere without fear of being accosted or anything like that, so.

[9:13]

VH: Do you remember what kind of car your family had?

GAU: Uh, yes, it was a little old Chevrolet. I don't remember what year or model it was.

VH: Um, by then, it sounds like your father was ill, is that right?

GAU: Yes.

VH: Was your mom working?

GAU: No, no. No. No.

VH: Was your father working?

GAU: Well, after he recovered from his illness, he went to work in a furniture store. Is that what it would be called? (Looking at husband.) Where he sold, you know, furniture, you know, couches and beds and chairs and—I don't know that they had stoves to sell because that was another item that was metal and was very scarce. You just didn't have things like that. You had to put your name on a waiting list. And I waited for several years for a Mixmaster (laughs).

[10:16]

VH: Did you end up getting one?

GAU: I finally got one.

VH: How long did you have to wait?

GAU: Well, I guess I waited four or five years, I guess, because even after the war was over, you couldn't get things. You had to wait till the supply caught up with the demand.

VH: So there were waiting lines for—

GAU: Mm-hm, yes.

VH: What were some other—do you know what other objects there were waiting lines for?

GAU: Well, yes, any kind of appliance, electrical appliance, things like that. And automobiles. You had to get on the waiting list. Just, most anything like that. Refrigerators. We still used the old icebox (laughs), kind where they delivered the ice and you took the tongs and put the ice in the refrigerator.

VH: Did that work for your family? Or was that—

GAU: Oh yeah, it worked for everybody's family. That's all we had. Gradually they started manufacturing the electric refrigerators and, like I said, supply caught up with demand and you could get them but for a long while, that's all we used.

VH: During the war years, your father was working at the furniture store?

GAU: Yes, yes, part of the war years, yes.

VH: Okay. How about the rest of your family? Did anyone else—

GAU: Well, my oldest brother went to work for, at the time, it was called American Oil. He went there. And he was—then, of course, he was in the service. He went to the Air Force and was a glider pilot out of North Africa and in the invasion of Southern France.

VH: And your other siblings? Which branches did they go into?

GAU: The next brother went into the Army and the next in the Army and the last one went in the Air Force. (Laughs.)

[12:15]

VH: And how about you? Did you work, during?

GAU: Well, I worked for some attorneys at the beginning of the war. And then they built the tin smelter and I went to work out there and worked until it closed in 1957.

VH: Mr. Uzell had said that was the only tin smelter—

GAU: Mm-hm. In the western hemisphere.

VH: —in the western hemisphere. When it came to Texas City, do you remember what sort of, how the community received it?

GAU: Oh they were thrilled to death. It meant jobs, for a lot of people. A lot of people came down from East Texas. Men, particularly, because there was no employment there and they went to work at the tin smelter because all of the old men down here were drafted or in the service.

VH: Did you—was that noticeable, this influx of people (unintelligible)?

GAU: Oh yes. Yes. They built housing projects and things like that to accommodate the new people who came in.

VH: Do you remember where in Texas City those were built?

GAU: Well, it was called Snug Harbor and Chelsea Apartments. Chelsea Apartments are still there. Pretty bad stage of disrepair now. And the Snug Harbor, some of those places are there. That was down on, oh, I guess it must have been off 9<sup>th</sup> Street between 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue, something like that.

VH: You said a lot of people came from East Texas. Was it mostly men or were there—?

GAU: Well, mostly men came and then their families came, after that.

[14:11]

VH: I see. How did you end up working at the tin smelter?

GAU: Well, they needed people. My dad at that time had gone to work for the construction company who was building the tin smelter. He was in the safety division. And they needed some help. And of course, my lawyer employees, they were going to be drafted, too (laughs), so I went out and applied and I worked there till 1957.

VH: What year did you start?

GAU: I started in 1942. Yeah. It was after Pearl Harbor.

VH: Who were your attorney employers?

GAU: Goddard and Dazey.

VH: Okay.

GAU: Goddard later became a judge and I don't know what Bill Dazey became after that but they were both in the service.

[15:08]

VH: What kind of job did you have at the plant?

GAU: Oh, I was a secretary. Yeah.

VH: Okay. One of the things I'm curious about is—you'd said it had opened up all these jobs—well who, was it mostly men who worked there or were there women?

GAU: In the beginning it was just mostly men. Of course, they had the plant that had several divisions of operations. This oil came in from South America or it came from Indonesia and it had to go through a process of roasting and leaching and all of this until it got to the point where they could melt it and smelt it. And then they made tin ingots out of it to be shipped wherever they needed tin. But later, they employed more women. But I was one of the first to be employed.

VH: What was that experience like for you, working there?

GAU: It was fine. Great people, great people I worked with. I thoroughly enjoyed it, so.

VH: And you'd been doing similar work at the attorneys' before you went to the tin smelting plant.

GAU: Yes, uh-huh.

VH: The tin smelting plant—that was one of the defense contracts here in Texas City?

GAU: Mm-hm.

VH: So at the time, was there any sort of confidentiality—you know?

GAU: Oh yes, yes, yes. My job was classified as confidential. I think there were four of us who had that classification.

VH: Were those just the two levels, confidential and (unintelligible)?

GAU: Yes. That's all.

VH: How did you feel about working a government job with that level of—?

GAU: Well, I didn't really think much about it. (Laughs) That's the way it was, so we just went with it. But you had to keep a lot of things confidential. You couldn't go blab everything that you knew, so.

[17:18]

VH: Did you also walk to work there as well?

GAU: Oh, no, no, no. We had to drive. 'Cause it was out on this Loop 197 South. It's not there anymore. Nothing is there of the tin smelter. It's completely leveled and gone. They built a road from 197 South out to the tin smelter.

The first winter we worked there, it was muddy so we wore a pair of shoes to work and took a pair of shoes so when we got there, we could take off our muddy shoes and put on our good shoes to where we looked halfway decent. (Laughs.)

VH: Because it was so muddy.

GAU: Because it was so muddy, yes.

VH: Oh, interesting. Okay. I want to go back to just home life. Can you talk about if there were blackouts or blackout drills in Texas City?

GAU: No. I don't remember. I don't remember that. I belonged to—my boss at that time was real gung-ho on patriotic things and we had, oh I don't know what it was called, but was to do with the Air Force. It was supposed to spot airplanes and things like that. And so he talked me into joining that, which I did. But I think all we did was hold a few close-order drills. (Laughs.) I never spotted an airplane during the whole time.

VH: Tell me more about that. What did that involve, the spotting?

GAU: You know, you see airplanes, but I didn't know one airplane from another so that really wasn't—I wasn't much help to them. They did have the blimp over in Hitchcock, which patrolled the Gulf to look for submarines and things like that. But Texas City was just a little bit too far back from the Gulf to really be a spotter. But anyway, I never did anything very constructive in that. (Laughs.)

VH: Did they give you any training in terms of—?

GAU: No, no, we did, we'd get out there and march around a little bit and that was it. It was a waste of time. (Laughs.)

[19:46]

VH: Where would you go? Would they take you somewhere or would you just—?

GAU: No, no, we'd have our little close-order drill. Well, they were somewhere around here, City Hall, because the Mayor, Lowry, was part of the group. Yeah, it was in here, someplace, where we had our meetings.

VH: Oh, and you said you did—did you call them "close-quarter drills"?

GAU: Well, that's close order where you march and you about-face and you do all this. It had nothing to do with spotting airplanes.

VH: So it's kind of like a military—?

GAU: Yeah, yeah. It was a military—we had our little khaki skirt, shirt, that sort of thing.

VH: What was it like for you? What did you think of it all?

GAU: Well, not much (laughs) because we never did anything.

VH: When you were spotting, did you have binoculars?

GAU: Yes, but we never did see anything. Like I said, I didn't know one airplane from another. I don't know, I think it was just one of those things, a passing fancy or something. It didn't last very long, anyway.

VH: With the rationing, how did that affect the way your family did the cooking at home?

GAU: Well, you just had certain things to cook with and so much of it. Meat was in very bad supply. It all went to the military. You just didn't have much meat. 'Course, Dad had a vegetable garden; we had plenty of veggies and that sort of thing. And back in those days, everybody had a cow. (Laughs).

[21:34]

VH: Did your family have a cow?

GAU: Yeah, we had a little Jersey cow. That was milk, you know, butter, and things like that. But food was just—you got so much for so many people and that's what you made do. But Mama was a wonderful cook. And she could make a meal out of nothing, almost.

VH: What were some common meals she would make for you?

GAU: Well, if you had a little bit of meat, you made stew and things like that, and you made casseroles and just whatever was on hand, you kind of stretched it out to make a bigger you know, casserole, or something. We were never hungry. We never went hungry or anything like that.

VH: What did your family do for fun?

GAU: We went to the movies and that was about it. 'Course, during the war, there was the USO for, to entertain the troops, the visiting troops. There was—over at Hitchcock,

there was Camp Wallace, which had a lot of servicemen there. And there were dances in town, you know, to entertain them and all the single girls would go out and be there. Yeah, I was there. But there were things to do. But not a whole lot of anything special. It was more geared toward making the boys feel at home that were here.

[23:18]

VH: Which theater did your family go to, to watch those movies?

GAU: What?

VH: Which theater did you go to?

GAU: Well, we had two. We had one called the Texas Theater and the other one called—(to husband) do you remember what it was called?

TU: (Unintelligible.)

GAU: What was—the Jewel? The Jewel Theater? I think that's what it was, yeah.

VH: Do you remember—did they play war reels or anything like that?

GAU: Yes, yes. That was part of every movie. Preceded the movie, they showed the war reels, what was going on and what they could get, I guess. But yes, that was very important for everybody.

VH: Were there any particular war reels that made an impression on you?

GAU: Well, it was just kind of keeping up with what was going on in the various war fronts.

VH: So they were giving you news about what was going on.

GAU: Yes. But we didn't have television, so.

VH: Did you have a radio?

GAU: Yes, we had radio.

VH: Was that another way—?

GAU: That was another way that you got your news. And that was entertainment, too. Because there were the movies, serials, like "Fibber McGee and Molly," those things. And we all gathered around—we had a little radio that was about like that (gestures

approximate size with hands)—and we all gathered around, watched, listened to the radio. One was the Orson Welles' "The Shadow," I think, was what that was called. Anyway, that was our entertainment. Very simple.

VH: How—did you hear the Fireside Chats on the radio?

GAU: Roosevelt? Yes, yes, yes.

VH: How often did those happen?

GAU: You know, I just don't remember. I don't remember. But anytime they had something like that, everybody listened to it, of course. Everyone had loved ones in the theater of war, wherever it was. They tried to keep up with what was going on.

[25:33]

VH: Did you read the newspaper?

GAU: Newspapers? Oh yes, mm-hm.

VH: Which newspaper did you read?

GAU: Well, we had the *Texas City Sun*, I think that's what it was called. And then there was the Houston paper. The *Houston Post* or the *Houston Chronicle*, I don't know which it was. It may have been both. But Houston-published paper. And Texas City had their little paper, too.

VH: Okay. Do you remember there being—actually, we already touched upon it—special events or programs that went on in the community that were related to the war effort?

GAU: Well, we had war bond drives.

VH: Oh, tell me about that.

GAU: I remember that. Well, selling war bonds, trying to get money for the government to finance the war. Celebrating Armistice Day was a thing of the past because that was the day that was supposed to end all wars, World War I, and here we were in World War II, so that was moot. Moot business, then. But no, I don't recall anything other than the war bonds drive.

VH: Where did those take place?

GAU: Well, they sold them in the plants, or in the banks, or wherever, where they'd have a public thing where everybody would come and buy a war bond if they could.

VH: Did your family buy a war bond?

GAU: Oh yes, yes. We bought war bonds.

VH: Do you remember what the government was saying in terms of trying to get community support for the war bonds?

GAU: Well, it wasn't any problem because, like I said, everyone had somebody fighting somewhere. And it was just a patriotic thing to do.

VH: One of the things I was interested in finding out in terms of how the community was helping with the war effort was if there were block captains. Is that something—?

GAU: Yes, there were. They were called—oh, what were they called? Well, kind of like air raid wardens and things like that but we never had anything like that happen. But there were certain people responsible, should an occasion occur like that, that they were to mobilize into action (laughs), fast as possible. But I don't recall that we ever had any occasion for an alarm of any kind.

[28:17]

VH: How were these block captains chosen?

GAU: Well, they volunteered. Most everything was volunteer. And then the volunteers gathered and then they appointed certain ones to certain levels of supervision.

VH: Did you happen to know anyone who did that?

GAU: No, no. I really didn't.

VH: Let's see here. Did you happen to know anyone who did coast watching?

GAU: No. I don't. I know there were coast watchers, yes.

VH: What was their job?

GAU: Well, to spot any suspicious action along the coast, I guess a submarine, periscope, or anything that was out of the ordinary.

VH: Were there any reports of things like that?

GAU: Not to my knowledge because I was not involved in that.

VH: I was interested in finding out how, if, your neighborhood changed during the war because you know, there were all these people suddenly moving to town.

GAU: Yes. Yes, it did. We had a lot of—lot of people rented out rooms to newcomers who came in, so that changed the neighborhood. And then new families would move in.

There was nothing, where we lived, there was not a drastic change that was noticed but there were certain areas where they had built these little, they called them shotgun houses. They weren't really, you know, fancy homes but they were, it was a place for people who came in to live. 'Course, that brought a whole new neighborhood in.

But it changed. You know, the churches absorbed new people and civic organizations. Texas City grew. It was a sleepy little town to me. You didn't come to Texas City unless you had a job here or had family here (laughs). You just went by the highway down there.

[30:30]

VH: Was the city able to keep up with that boom?

GAU: Mm-hm. Yes. Yes.

VH: How would you describe your neighborhood, the one you lived in during those years?

GAU: It was just a typical neighborhood. Families, we'd known them forever. Because my family was, like I said, we came here in 1933. So Texas City was very small, just a few thousand people and you knew everybody.

VH: It must have changed so much, the city, in the next ten years.

GAU: Oh yes, yes, it did. Changed. Tremendously.

VH: One of the things I was curious about was during the war years, did you notice any certain prejudices come up during that time?

GAU: No, I don't think in my particular way of life. People weren't as prejudiced as I think. Maybe in the service that—the service, of course, I wasn't involved in that— there was prejudice against the blacks, I think.

VH: In the service, you were talking about.

GAU: Mm-hm.

VH: I see.

GAU: But in civilian life, I don't remember that we had prejudices like they do now.

VH: Was there any tension toward people of German or Japanese background?

GAU: Oh yes, oh yes.

VH: Can you talk a little bit about that?

GAU: Oh, yes. Well, we didn't like the Germans and we didn't like the Japanese (laughs) because we were at war with them. But we didn't have that here because we didn't have any German immigrants or Japanese immigrants here. I think that was more along the West Coast, with the Japanese, and—I don't know, the East Coast? Certain areas of Texas had a lot Germans in them but they'd been here for years, so.

But there were prisoners of war—I can't remember where they were located—German prisoners of war that we had in this country. And of course the Japanese were put into prison camps, which shouldn't have been because they were here a long time, too, but you know, you have that kind of prejudice in a war. They're the enemy.

VH: Do you remember where you were on the day the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor?

GAU: Mm-hm. My best friend and I were out walking. And we came back in and the blare was on, about that the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor. It was a shock.

[33:30]

VH: What reaction did you see happen in the community that day?

GAU: Well, everyone: "Get out (laughs) and fight the Japanese." Everything just became suddenly mobilized. You've never seen a country just, like, turning over a leaf and they were ready to fight.

I remember it was the Japanese admiral and after they bombed Pearl Harbor, he said, "I fear we have awakened a sleeping giant," talking about the United States. And that was the truth. Everybody just began to support the war effort and got busy.

VH: What about V-E Day on May 8<sup>th</sup>?

GAU: V-E Day, that's—?

VH: 1945. When Germany surrendered.

GAU: When Germany surrendered. Yeah, that was a big day.

VH: What were people saying in Texas City?

GAU: Well, they were just glad that that phase of the war was over. But then there were lots of soldiers who finished that phase and they were headed for the Pacific to fight the—Troy was on a ship that transported men. And they picked them up in France or various places and they were headed straight for the Pacific to fight the Japanese.

VH: Your brother, is that—?

GAU: No, that's my husband.

VH: Oh, I'm sorry. I was thinking—oh, okay. How did, locally, the reaction to V-E Day, how did that compare with V-J Day, when Japan surrendered?

GAU: Well, it was a joyous day, I know. But I think everybody was so tired of the war, and of course, the atomic bomb went off and it was just a dreadful time. It was a sad time for everybody. But I think the surrender of Germany was—of course, everybody hated Hitler. (Laughs.) They were glad to see him go. But I don't know. I guess they were both joyous days, as far as a cessation of hostilities.

[36:05]

VH: I was just curious because I've heard that V-J Day, the reaction was bigger here, so I just wanted to see if you had gotten the same impression as well.

GAU: Mm-hm.

VH: Let's see here. I think that's all the questions I have. Is there anything about just everyday life here in Texas City during the war that I'm forgetting to cover that you'd like to bring up? I'm interested in just kind of day-to-day life and how the war affected that here in Texas City.

GAU: Well, they got up and went to work. Just a normal routine of life.

VH: How many hours a week did you work at the tin smelting plant?

GAU: Worked forty hours at first and then we worked forty-four hours a week. We didn't work all day Saturday; we worked half a day on Saturday.

VH: Just because of the—it had to be ramped up.

GAU: Yes. Yes.

VH: I see, I see.

GAU: Now the plants, of course, they worked nonstop shifts but as far as my type work, we didn't do that.

VH: The workers at the plant, do you recall roughly what the breakdown by race was?

GAU: Well, we had Hispanics. Some blacks, not a whole lot, but blacks. A lot of, they called them "cowboys" from East Texas. (Laughs.)

VH: They were their own group?

GAU: Yes. (Laughs.) But I guess there was not too much of a racial issue at all.

VH: That was actually going to be my next question. What kind of relationship did the workers have with each other?

GAU: They got along, they got along well. Yeah.

VH: How about in just the city, what were the relations between the different races here?

GAU: I don't recall that they were any great differences. I guess everybody was just so concentrated on doing what they could for the war effort, that I don't believe we had time to nitpick things like they do now.

VH: Did the demographics of Texas City change greatly with this influx of people coming in?

GAU: Well, yes, yes, it changed, because Texas City was kind of an old-fashioned town and when you have new people, of course they bring their ideas and their way of life with them. But there was no really drastic change.

VH: It was more like you said, everyone was concentrated on doing—

GAU: Yeah, yeah. They were all integrated in a nice way.

VH: Mm-hm. So does that mean your siblings went, eventually were drafted, was it just you, your mom and your father at home for part of that?

GAU: Uh, yeah, yeah.

VH: What was that like for you?

GAU: Well, it was different (laughs). It was different. But two of my younger brothers, they were still in school when the war broke out so they were there for a while and then they were drafted. But, well, I don't know. We just, we just did what we did. (Laughs.) That was it.

[40:13]

VH: I'd heard with so many people coming in, at the school, they had to do double shifts.

GAU: Oh yes, oh yes. They had temporary buildings and they had schools on shifts because all these people who came in, like I say, from East Texas and other places, they had their families, and Texas City was not prepared for a great influx of children, school-aged children. So there were trailers, you know, that they had school classes in. Not air conditioned, either; it was hot.

VH: And your brothers, what was their school life like? Which shift, I guess, did they go to for school?

GAU: I think they went early morning, early afternoon, as well as I remember.

VH: Did that mean that the second shift happened after that?

GAU: Yes, yes. Uh-huh.

VH: So school was open for a lot of hours during the day.

GAU: Yes, yes.

VH: And they were in high school at the time.

GAU: Yeah.

VH: Okay. How far was the school from where you lived?

GAU: Oh, let me see, one, two, three, about five blocks from where we lived. We walked to school. Well, I went anyway. Went home for lunch. Poor Mama, she fixed lunch for all of us. (Laughs.)

VH: Oh really? Was that pretty common, to go home for lunch?

GAU: Yes, yes.

VH: Oh okay. Interesting. All right. Well, let's see. Well, Mrs. Uzell, I think we've covered all the topics I'd like to cover. Is there anything you'd like to add?

GAU: Well, no. I think this is wonderful what you're doing because you know, a lot of people don't even know what World War was.

[42:09]

VH: Well we really appreciate you coming in and sharing your story.

GAU: You see so many young people who really don't know. Every once in a while Troy has his hat on and we'll see a young person, maybe twelve, fourteen, and they'll say, "Thank you sir, for your service." And it means a whole lot because so many of them, they don't even know what World War II was. It really—it's, I think we're forgetting a lot of history. So this is a good thing that you're doing.

VH: Well we appreciate your coming in and talking to us about it.

GAU: Well, I'm happy to do it.

[42:50]