JOURNEY OF LOVE:
ORAL HISTORIES OF WORLD WAR II WAR BRIDES

Courtney Belville Skinner
B.A., University of California, Davis, 2004

THESIS

Submitted in partial satisfaction of
the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

HISTORY
(Public History)

at

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, SACRAMENTO

SPRING
2011
JOURNEY OF LOVE:
ORAL HISTORIES OF WORLD WAR II WAR BRIDES

A Thesis

by

Courtney Belville Skinner

Approved by:

__________________________________, Committee Chair
Patrick Ettinger, Ph.D.

__________________________________, Second Reader
Christopher Castaneda, Ph.D.

Date
Student: Courtney Belville Skinner

I certify that this student has met the requirements for format contained in the University format manual, and that this thesis is suitable for shelving in the Library and credit is to be awarded for the thesis.

__________________________________, Department Chair

Aaron Cohen, Ph.D. Date

Department of History
Abstract

of

JOURNEY OF LOVE:
ORAL HISTORIES OF WORLD WAR II WAR BRIDES

by

Courtney Belville Skinner

Roughly one million American servicemen married foreign women while serving abroad during World War II. After the war, these foreign “war brides” immigrated to the United States en masse. “Journey of Love” is an oral history-based research project that explores the overseas wartime social relations that resulted in six of these wartime marriages, and the postwar experiences of these brides living in the United States.

After secondary research in the historical literature on World War II and war brides and a review of oral history theory and methodology, interviews were recorded on audiostream tapes and a digital recording device with six women who immigrated to the United States from five different countries: Great Britain (England), Australia, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and the Philippines. The resulting interviews were transferred to CD and deposited, along with either full transcripts or finding guides, as an archival collection at the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento. There they will be available as a resource to scholars interested in World War II war bride history and twentieth-century immigration history.

This thesis relates the broader history of American war brides, analyses the experiences of these six women, and provides a detailed account of the process of creating the “Journey of Love” oral history project.

______________________________, Committee Chair
Patrick Ettinger, Ph.D.

______________________________
Date
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This thesis is dedicated to my parents, Shannon and Deborah Belville, who have offered perpetual help and encouragement throughout my entire education. For that, I am eternally grateful. I love you very much.

I would also like to thank my husband Todd. When I doubted the completion of this project, he inspired me to keep going. You are my best friend and the love of my life. Thank you to my beautiful children, Claire and Isaac. You two have taught me the meaning of hard work and have motivated me to finish strong. Many thanks to my sister Kindra, who always makes me laugh. Thank you for staying positive, and for keeping a smile on my face. Thank you to all my family and friends who have shared this journey with me. Thank you for praying and offering words of encouragement; I could not have done this without you. My heartfelt appreciation goes to the war brides who shared their stories with me. Without them, this project would not have been possible. Thank you to Professor Patrick Ettinger, who patiently walked through this entire process with me. Thank you for believing in me, and for providing invaluable guidance and support.

And, thank you to my grandma Edith Haslam. You are a woman of grace and beauty, and you will forever be an inspiration to me. You are living proof that love never fails.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.......................................................................................................... v

Chapter

1. INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................................. 1

2. WORLD WAR II WAR BRIDE HISTORY ................................................................. 6
   A Brief History ............................................................................................................. 6
   Great Britain............................................................................................................. 6
   Australia.................................................................................................................... 13
   Czechoslovakia ....................................................................................................... 18
   Italy ........................................................................................................................... 22
   The Philippines ....................................................................................................... 27
   The War Brides Are Coming! ................................................................................... 32

3. HISTORICAL LITERATURE ON WAR BRIDES .................................................... 36
   Literature Review .................................................................................................... 36

4. HISTORY, THEORY, AND PRACTICE OF ORAL HISTORY ............................... 42
   A History of Oral History ....................................................................................... 42
   Theory and Practice ............................................................................................... 45
   Oral History’s Unique Value .................................................................................. 49

5. PROJECT METHODOLOGY .................................................................................. 51
   Identifying Participants ......................................................................................... 51
   Interview Preparation ............................................................................................ 54
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

*Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides* is an exploration of wartime social relations, specifically examining the impetus for wartime marriage and the postwar implications of these marital unions. Roughly one million American servicemen married foreign women while serving abroad during World War II. After the war, these foreign “war brides” immigrated to the United States en masse from over 50 countries, necessitating a breach in U.S. immigration policy.¹ With “The Greatest Generation” in their eighties and nineties, it is a crucial time for historians to address any withstanding inquiries related to World War II and the postwar era. In light of the vast amount of material that has been published on World War II, one might wonder what there is left to uncover on the subject. Yet, even with innumerable volumes of scholarly research, war bride history is one area that demands further inquiry. These women’s remarkable stories provide insight into the mass phenomenon of wartime marriage during World War II—a largely unforeseen outcome of the global conflict. According to Paul Thompson, oral history is particularly useful in documenting the past because, “[r]eality is complex and many-sided; and it is a primary merit of oral history that to a much greater extent than most sources it allows the original multiplicity of standpoints to be recreated.”² *Journey

---

of Love gives voice to these incredible stories, giving future researchers the opportunity to better understand the impetus and lasting implications of wartime marriage.

The author’s maternal grandmother, Edith (Jackson) Haslam is a World War II war bride. Born in the small farming village of Yedingham, England, in 1921, Edith was in her early twenties at the height of World War II. While living in Edinburgh, Scotland, and serving in the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), she met the author’s grandfather, John Haslam, who was on a month-long furlough from training for the U.S. Army 89th Signal Company in Iceland. The two married in late 1944, roughly eleven months after their first meeting. After the end of the war, Edith immigrated to the United States in 1946 to reunite with her husband, and has resided in Santa Cruz County, California ever since. Inspired by her grandmother’s story, the author sought to broaden her perspective on war bride history, and decided to look for other war brides who would be willing to share their stories.

Considering the advanced agedness of this particular group, the author defined minimal criteria for selecting participants for the project. The first criteria was that the person fit the definition of a war bride as defined by Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta in their book, War Brides of World War II: “a war bride or groom is any foreign national who married an American member of the armed forces or an American civilian who was in a foreign country as a result of U.S. mobilization for World War II or as a result of the subsequent military occupation.”³ The second criterion was that the person be in good enough physical and mental condition to sit through a one-

³ Shukert and Scibetta, War Brides, 2.
to-two hour recorded interview. Once the author met a good number of willing and “qualified” participants at the Bay Area chapter of the national World War II War Brides Association, she chose interviewees based upon their country of origin, largely to ensure a varied representation of perspectives.

For the purposes of this project, the author interviewed six war brides from five different countries of origin: Great Britain (England), Australia, Czechoslovakia, Italy, and the Philippines. The author crafted a list of interview questions, focused upon the following five areas: 1) Family background and childhood; 2) World War II; 3) Arrival of the American G.I.’s; 4) Courtship and marriage; 5) Immigration experience and life in the United States. Depending upon the narrator’s country of origin, the author adapted the questions per interview as needed. This involved substantial research on part of the author, so that the questions being asked of each narrator would be relevant to their experience. The interviews were recorded on both audiocassette and a digital recording device. The author opted for dual recordings to ensure the longevity of the taped interviews; audiocassette tapes have a finite lifespan and, at present day, the world relies primarily upon digital media. The audiocassettes and digital copies of the interviews, as well as three interview transcripts, were donated to the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.

While World War II war bride history has received little scholarly attention to date, oral history further opens the door to exploring this unique wartime phenomena. Oral history has dramatically broadened the scope of what is considered historically relevant. In his book, *Doing Oral History*, Donald Ritchie writes that “[o]ral history
derives its value not from resisting the unexpected, but from relishing it. By adding an ever wider range of voices to the story, oral history does not simplify the historical narrative but makes it more complex—and more interesting.” Oral history enables researchers to ask questions and to probe for answers that would be difficult, if not impossible, to find using traditional sources. While traditional sources can usually answer the who, what, when and where of history, the interview allows the historian to ask why and how something occurred. Oral history also broadens the scope of whose history is considered historically relevant. War bride stories are an example of Thompson’s assertion that “[t]he scope of historical writing itself is enlarged and enriched; and at the same time its social message changes. History becomes, to put it simply, more democratic.” Oral history is a unique resource because it provides the opportunity for individual perspectives on history, therein giving individual narrators a voice in recording the collective past.

One of the primary objectives of this project was to make its findings relevant to future researchers. The author began *Journey of Love* with the following question in mind: What have historians already identified as key areas of scholarly interest and what will future researchers be looking for in this set of interviews? According to Ritchie, “[r]esearchers will want to hear the first-person observations of events great and small, and to learn what sense those people made out of the events in their own lives.” War bride stories are exceptionally personal, and their narratives offer valuable insight into

---

5 Ibid., 45.
7 Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 45.
love and marriage amidst the chaos and uncertainty of wartime. These one million wartime marriages were an outward expression of heartfelt affection, as well as a strong demonstration of people’s desire for family normalcy in chaotic times. Future researchers will undoubtedly be interested in the long-term implications of these marital unions. This includes the massive wave of foreign national immigration to the United States, and its post-war impact upon American culture. How much did these women assimilate into American culture, and did they carry forward any of their old traditions in their new country? War bride narratives offer valuable insight into twentieth century U.S. immigration history, and this project hopes to highlight the historical relevancy of these women’s remarkable stories.
Chapter 2

WORLD WAR II WAR BRIDE HISTORY

A Brief History

After the December 7, 1941 Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, President Franklin D. Roosevelt quickly brought the United States into war against the Axis powers in Europe and Asia, necessitating the deployment of millions of young American G.I.s all over the world. Roughly one million American soldiers fell in love with and married foreign women while they were abroad. Each love story is unique, shaped by the overarching political, social and cultural wartime conditions of the nations where these marriages took place. The six war brides that were interviewed for *Journey of Love* originated from Great Britain (England), Australia, Czechoslovakia, Italy and the Philippines. Because the war impacted each nation differently, it is necessary to understand the historical context for each war bride’s country of origin. For the purposes of this project, Great Britain will be considered one “nation” because of the unification of England, Scotland and Wales.

Great Britain

When American G.I.s arrived in Great Britain in 1942, they added a new dimension to the Allied war effort. Great Britain had been at war with Germany since 1939, and the grim realities of war had worn away at the spirits of many British men in

---

9 Shukert and Scibetta, *War Brides*, 1.
the armed forces. Thus, when the American G.I.s arrived, they brought with them a refreshing air of life and vitality that had been missing for over two years. According to Pamela Winfield the G.I.s were “animated, brash young men, pouring into a war-worn Britain where the prevailing shades of life were grey, from the drizzling skies to the dust swirling round craters of bombed-out buildings.”10 British women found the G.I.s’ optimism particularly attractive: the G.I.s offered young women fun and excitement when war times were particularly bleak.

British women reacted positively to the G.I.s arrival in Great Britain. In many instances, the G.I.s were the first Americans they had ever seen outside of the silver screen.11 Thus, Hollywood inspired images swayed some British women’s perceptions of the G.I.s. Many of the G.I.s used these misconceptions to their advantage, and sometimes exaggerated their wealth and social status in the United States.12 British women were fascinated by the “exotic” places G.I.s had come from. Averil Martin, a British teenager at the time, was excited by the American G.I.s, and remembers how she thought, “‘they were sublime, they were cute, they walked differently—they loped along—and they came from all sorts of exotic places, California, Florida, New Orleans, Malibu. . .’”13 British women who had never traveled outside of Great Britain, used their preconceived notions of the United States (often based upon Hollywood imagery) to map the G.I.s’ “exotic” homelands. Arguably, some of these women’s idealized perceptions of the United States

12 Winfield and Hasty, Sentimental Journey, 28.
13 Gardiner, Over Here, 110.
had a profound impact upon many of their decisions to marry American men and immigrate to the United States.

American G.I.s not only enticed British women with their Hollywood-like personas, many of the G.I.s also exuded a natural air of confidence, persistence, and directness that was different than most British women were used to. The G.I.s’ behavior and treatment of women exemplified the differences between British and American culture during the 1940s. Traditionally, British culture was more reserved; however, British women were excited by the American G.I.s’ forwardness, often finding their confident way of speaking complimentary rather than degrading or disrespectful. G.I.s often used catch phrases such as “Hi there, honey,” and “Hiya cutie,” to attract British women’s attention. According to Pamela Winfield, “From [the G.I.s] it was ‘Hiya cutie’ to every female from fifteen to fifty.” Where age may have conferred a measure of social status in Great Britain, the American G.I.s frequently used diminutive terms to allure women, regardless of their age. Furthermore, the G.I.s frequently complimented British women on how they looked, which was particularly well received due to the drab effects war rations had on these women’s appearance. Clothes were in short supply, and women had to make the best of their scarce resources. Women made skirts and dresses out of just about any fabric they could get their hands on; one woman even remembered using Camp Coffee to tan her legs when silk stockings were unavailable. Many British women agreed to go out with American G.I.s because they

---

16 Ibid., 7.
were flattered by their many compliments. One woman, who was a teenager in
Gravesend in 1944, remembers the compliments of an American G.I.: “I love your hair
Rusty,’ he’d say. It’s a mixture of autumn leaves and a beautiful sunset.”\textsuperscript{17} G.I.s
whistled at British women as they walked down the streets, often calling out compliments
in regard to specific body parts, particularly their legs.\textsuperscript{18} Although British culture was
much more private and reserved than American culture, the G.I.s paid little respect to
these cultural differences, and used their charm and fun-loving light-heartedness to win
the affection of many British women.

British women were also attracted to American G.I.s because they offered a good
time away from work and wartime worries. American G.I.s and British women often
spent their time in dance halls, jitterbugging to the big band sounds of Cab Callaway and
his orchestra, Artie Shaw, and most famously, Glenn Miller.\textsuperscript{19} The owners of many
dance halls tried to prohibit jitterbugging because they saw the behavior as too risqué, but
these prohibitions were usually ignored.\textsuperscript{20} These prohibitions against jitterbugging are
indicative of the reserved nature of British culture. These restrictions were intended to
limit the British women’s exposure to the morally lax, sexual influences of the United
States. However, these restrictions did little to stop young people from letting loose and
having a good time. The dance halls offered British women and American men the
opportunity to have fun and get to know each other better through the close physical
contact of dancing.

\textsuperscript{17} Longmate, \textit{The G.I.’s}, 257.
\textsuperscript{18} Gardiner, \textit{Over Here}, 113.
\textsuperscript{19} Longmate, \textit{The G.I.’s}, 265.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 264.
Jitterbugging in dance halls was a clear demonstration of social changes that were happening throughout Great Britain. During the course of the war, three million G.I.s passed through or served in Great Britain.\textsuperscript{21} Wartime prompted a drastic change in sexual expression and promiscuity. According to the December 1943 issue of \textit{Time}, American G.I.s were known for being “‘free-spending’ ‘free-loving,’ and ‘free-speaking,’ drinking too much, consorting with prostitutes, and necking in doorways.”\textsuperscript{22} With most of the young British men gone at war, British women were lonely and eager for male companionship.\textsuperscript{23} The chaos and uncertainty of wartime released many British women and G.I.s from restraint, using wartime as a pass for free sexual license.

Wartime prompted couples to take risks that they would not have taken otherwise. For many G.I.s and British women who engaged in sexual behavior, risk did not come without consequence, with an alarming rise in venereal disease and unplanned pregnancy.\textsuperscript{24} Fraternizing with G.I.s also had social consequences. G.I.s were known for their loose morals, and British women who dated them were often deemed guilty by association. Not all British women were “loose” and for those not engaging in this kind of sexual behavior, it was an undeserved stigma that was hard to shake. Joan Posthuma remembered being negatively stigmatized for marrying a Yank,

\begin{quote}
I went to get my papers [and] I got this very snooty girl. You had to have your marriage certificate and your birth certificate and everything and I handed them in and she looked at it and she said, “What were you doing, waiting on the dock for the first Yank to get off the boat?”\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 126. 
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 115. 
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 127. 
While some young people were just having a good time, others (like this war bride) found themselves victim of an undeserved bad reputation. While engaging in explicit sexual behavior was certainly risqué, the decision of 115,000 British women to marry American G.I.s was no less risky. These women made a bold decision to leave all they had ever known, with great aspirations of creating new lives with their American husbands.

These 115,000 wartime marriages did not occur without some opposition. The British and United States governments were not in favor of these unions, feeling that they distracted men from the war.26 The United States military acknowledged the G.I.s need for sex by supplying them with condoms and medical treatment for venereal disease, but marriage was not encouraged. As the incidence of overseas marriages increased, the United States military decided to follow a policy whereby “‘headquarters declined to give express consent to marriage or to refuse the same.’”27 While the period of dating before marriage was short (compared to today’s standards), in most cases, marriage was not a fly-by-night affair. The military required a two-to-three month waiting period before marriage, and the commanding officer’s approval.28 While the United States and British governments did not look favorably upon foreign wartime marriage, some young British women faced the most severe opposition from their parents. Parents worried about losing their British daughters overseas, knowing they would rarely see them again—if ever.

Edith Haslam’s father strongly disapproved of his daughter’s engagement to an American G.I. because he wanted her to live close to home. When it came time for the wedding, he

26 Ibid., 30.
27 Ibid., 31.
28 Ibid., 37.
refused to attend the ceremony. While many parents eventually adjusted to the prospect of having an American son-in-law, many responded with some trepidation.

British women were drawn to the American men because of their optimism, charm, and fun-loving attitude. This attraction, however, does not explain what compelled roughly 115,000 American G.I.s and British women to marry during World War II. Although we can only speculate, some of the conclusions may be drawn from what we know about the era and the interaction that was shared between the G.I.s and British women. American G.I.s and British women shared physical and linguistic similarities, yet they were differentiated by their cultural mores and geographical history. Thus, American G.I.s occupied a unique space in the British imagination, a space wherein the G.I.s were simultaneously conceptualized for their likeness as well as for their “otherness.” Arguably, it was partly this symbiotic amalgamation of the familiar and the “other” that let G.I.s and British women to be particularly intrigued by each other—quite possibly to such an extent as to enter into marriage. Additionally, American G.I.s and British women may have married each other because marriage provided a sense of security in chaotic times. American G.I.s, with the tangible threat in mind that they might die in battle, were quick to marry British women because they wanted to create for themselves a sense of security and hope. British women married American men because marriage offered them an opportunity at bettering the condition of their lives; in contrast to the bleak and ravaged European landscape, the United States shone bright with opportunity and prosperity.

---

29 Edith Haslam, interview by Courtney Belville Skinner, tape recording, 13 December 2009, Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides, Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
Australia

Similar to Great Britain, the arrival of American G.I.s in Australia had a profound impact on the land “down under.” Australia had officially been at war against Germany since 1939; however, it was not until the Japanese attacked the United States at Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 that war became a real and present danger to Australia. For many years preceding the Japanese attack on the United States, Australians feared Japan’s southward advance. Yet, despite these fears, Australia was not in Japan’s immediate war plans. Now that Japan had taken the offensive against the United States, Australia joined forces with the U.S., declaring war against Japan on December 8, 1941. Facing the prospect of war on multiple fronts, the United States immediately diverted troops from the Philippines to Australia. The first contingent of American G.I.s arrived in Brisbane on December 22, 1941. By June 1942, there were nearly 89,000 troops based in Australia.

Between 1941-1945, approximately one million American G.I.s passed through Australia. The presence of the G.I.s was, at different times, celebrated and scorned. Australia was stricken with fear over the “yellow peril,” yet it never became a battleground in the traditional sense. Other than a few bombings that occurred in the north, few died in action on the Australian mainland. According to John Hammond Moore, “[w]ar in Australia was not bullets, bombs, and bloodshed, but gnawing fear of

what might happen.”  Many of the American G.I.s who arrived in Australia had traveled further from home than they had ever dreamed, and with them came an air of youthful optimism and a determination to seize the day.

The Yanks’ arrival in Australia significantly impacted wartime social culture. For the Australian women, the American G.I.s were a welcome diversion from the bleak uncertainty of wartime. Australia had been at war against Germany since 1939, which meant that many of Australia’s young men were fighting in Europe when the Americans moved in to help defend the Pacific. Similar to the G.I.s in Great Britain, these young American servicemen were quick to seek female company. Nearly as soon as they arrived, they showed keen interest in the opposite sex. Linda Schwartz, a young woman who was working at the Liberty picture theatre when a convoy of G.I.s passed by, recalled:

I heard these trucks coming. There must have been fifty to a hundred trucks coming, full of GIs. They had just come in on a transport ship and were being unloaded. As they hit the theatre they could see the figures of the girls in evening dresses with the lights behind them, and the first words they said were, “Jesus Christ, look at the women!” . . . All these GIs were craning their heads out of the sides of the truck, trying to see the girls . . . One of the girls said, “What did they expect to see, kangaroos!”

In many ways, the G.I.s and the Australian women were well-matched. They spoke the same language, yet were intrigued by each other’s cultural differences. By and large, American men were more extroverted than their Australian counterparts, and showed more “finesse” when it came to dating. The G.I.s were well-dressed, polite, and exhibited gracious social manners. For instance, Australian women were not accustomed

---

34 Moore, *Over-Sexed, Over Paid, & Over Here*, ix.
to a man opening their car door on a date, and this kind of chivalrous behavior was certainly well received. The American G.I.s also had far more dispensable income to lavish on their dates, often arriving with flowers or chocolates, which were a welcome treat because of wartime rations.\textsuperscript{36} Jackie Hansen, a young woman from Perth, remembers her American beau (who later became her husband) taking her on dates to the movies, to dinner at the Bachelor Officer Quarters, and to Perth’s beautiful beaches. Jackie fell in love with the way he treated her: “I thought he was very nice. He was nice looking. He was good, he was polite and considerate and I liked it. And he grew on me.”\textsuperscript{37} Yet, while American G.I.s were generally welcomed for their aid in the war effort, fraternizing with Australian women was generally frowned upon.

American G.I.s in Australia undoubtedly changed the country’s social atmosphere, yet their presence triggered some aggravation. Australian soldiers were particularly unimpressed by the G.I.s snazzy uniforms and carefree spending. The popular saying “over-paid, over sexed, and over here” reflected some peoples’ negative attitudes toward American servicemen.\textsuperscript{38} The Australian soldiers were glad for the Americans help in the war effort, however they did not want the G.I.s fraternizing with their women. The following poem entitled “Digger’s Lament” speaks to the frustration felt by Australian soldiers,

\begin{quote}
We hear of the boys from Alabama,  
And the guys from Boston, Mass.,  
Who are the “cat’s pajamas”
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{36} Ibid., 32.  
\textsuperscript{37} Jackie Hansen, interview by Courtney Belville Skinner, tape recording and transcript, 6 December 2009, \textit{Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides}, Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.  
\textsuperscript{38} Moore, \textit{Over-Sexed, Over-Paid, & Over Here}, 35.
When they’re dating up a lass.

There’s the glamour boys from Texas,
Who are tops at “pitching woo”,
Who have all the social graces
And know exactly what to do.

How’s a poor benighted Digger
To get himself a lass,
With his “jungle green” clad figure?
“Pass on soldier; you’re no class.”

Is it we haven’t got good looks,
Or don’t get so much tin,
That we are on the outer,
On the outside looking in?

When I get back to Australia
I’m off to Bourke or Bogan’s Tank,
To get me a country lassie
Who hasn’t seen a Yank.39

One man noted, “[t]he one point at which there is greatest friction between Australians and the Yankee soldiers . . . is women.” 40 Despite these tensions, American and Australian servicemen managed to get along fairly well, finding enough common ground to occasionally talk, drink, and carouse together.41 However, negative attitudes toward fraternization between Australian women and American G.I.s ran wide and deep.

For better or worse, American servicemen piqued everyone’s interest; yet, general opinion dictated a “look but don’t touch” policy. Australian women faced harassment for associating with G.I.s. At risk of being considered morally lax, many women chose to

39 Ibid., 144.
41 Moore, Over-Sexed, Over-Paid, & Over Here, 144.
keep their distance. Adelie Hurley remembered, “[w]e were rather looked down upon. They thought we were women of easy virtue. Going out with Americans! That’s a terrible thing to do! Why didn’t we go out with all these lovely Australian men?” But the truth was, many of Australia’s own countrymen were gone, risking their lives in aid of the war effort. Considering this fact, many thought it disloyal for Australian women to date American servicemen. Occasionally, hostilities over women escalated to the point of jeers and fistfights between American and Australian servicemen. Pat Rehrig remembered being taunted by Australian soldiers while on a date with an American, “They would constantly be making comments—and digging—all the time at us. All we could do was just sit there and say, ‘Just pretend you don’t hear. Just don’t look.’” While negative public opinion curbed some interaction between G.I.s and Australian women, it certainly did not cease it to exist.

While these relations were not favored, some women chose to buck social convention and date a Yank. During and after the war, up to 15,000 marriages took place between American servicemen and Australian women. While there were definitely negative feelings about G.I.s fraternizing with Australian women, some women found that their love for a soldier outweighed anyone else’s opinion. In Jackie Hansen’s case, love for an American naval pilot came unexpectedly on a blind date: “[H]e was just the nicest person I’d ever dated. And way he treated me, and his manners, and all those things that you value, he had. Course, I had feelings about going all that way far from

42 Potts and Potts, Yanks Down Under, 295.
43 Potts and Strauss, For the Love of a Soldier, 34.
44 Potts and Potts, Yanks Down Under, 295.
45 Potts and Strauss, For the Love of a Soldier, 35.
46 Ibid., 5.
home. But he promised my parents I could go back and I did. I had quite a few trips back there.”

47 After convincing her parents, Jackie and Lee Hansen were wed less than a year after their first meeting. After the war, Jackie joined thousands of other Australian brides who set sail to rejoin their American husbands in the United States.

Czechoslovakia

Czechoslovakia (now the Czech Republic) experienced drastic social and political changes during World War II. Before 1938, Czechoslovakia was a democratic republic, with a population of over 14 million. Czechoslovakia’s population was made up of primarily Czechs, Slovaks and Germans, as well as Hungarian, Polish and Ukrainian minorities. The Germans primarily occupied Sudetenland, a northwestern segment of Czechoslovakia. In 1938, Germany’s petition for the surrender of the Sudetenland to German control was approved in the signing of the Munich agreement. 48 The Czech government ceded this land in an effort to appease rather than resist; however, it only allowed Germany to gain a stronger territorial foothold in Europe. Germany seized the opportunity to further encroach on Czechoslovakian lands, which eventually lead to German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia. On March 15, 1939, the Wehrmacht marched on Prague, establishing the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. Czechoslovakia’s reaction to German occupation was mixed, which is not surprising considering the country’s diverse population. As Nazi soldiers marched into Prague,

47 Hansen, interview, 6 December 2009.
some people waved paper swastikas and screamed, “Heil Hitler,” while others wept.\textsuperscript{49} Ruth Smith, a young woman born and raised in Prague, remembered her city before German occupation, “It was a beautiful city. Very democratic and very free. Free of religion . . . race. Really ideal place to live at the time.”\textsuperscript{50} However, as soon as the Wehrwacht set foot in Prague, Nazi occupation foreboded difficult times to come. An American consulate stationed in Prague at the time commented, “Prague streets, usually so animated, now completely empty and deserted . . . Tomorrow, to be sure, they would fill with life again, but it would not be the same life that had filled them before; and we are all acutely conscious that in this case the curfew had indeed tolled the knell of a long and distinctly tragic day.”\textsuperscript{51} German occupation of Czechoslovakia changed the country forever.

While German occupation of Czechoslovakia was comparatively less severe than what was experienced elsewhere during the war (Poland, the USSR, and Yugoslavia), the country still felt the harsh effects of wartime. Czechoslovakia retained its governmental institutions, but they were subordinate to German rule.\textsuperscript{52} Czechoslovakian Jews suffered greatly at the hand of the Nazi’s “Final Solution.” Not only did Hitler want to eradicate the Jewish population, he wanted everyone to conform to German culture. He wanted to create a uniform people, marked by the same race, culture and way of life.\textsuperscript{53} This totalitarian regime robbed the Czech people of their freedom, instilling fear in everyone.

\textsuperscript{50} Ruth Smith, interview by Courtney Belville Skinner, tape recording and transcript, 11 December 2009, \textit{Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides}, Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
\textsuperscript{51} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 1.
\textsuperscript{52} Dear and Foot, \textit{Oxford Companion}, 279.
\textsuperscript{53} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 3.
Ruth Smith was acutely aware of what was happening to the Jews, and remembered the severe consequences if anyone made the slightest misstep,

[U]fortunately, Hitler came very strong and especially with the Jewish population. A lot of our friends were put in the concentration camps, because of being Jewish. Also, if you were part Jewish or married to a Jewish person, you had to wear a Star of David on your clothes. And that was very difficult times . . . And actually, the non-Jewish people were put in the concentration camp for very minor offenses. Like the black market started with food, because the food started to get very scarce. If a farmer killed a pig and somebody reported him, the farmer went to concentration camp because he’d killed his own pig and didn’t report it.\(^54\)

As Smith noted, the Germans maintained complete control over the food supply. Many simple food items like onion and garlic were unavailable, and slaughtering your own animals was not allowed without permission. The Germans controlled the media, making it very difficult for the Czech people to know what was really going on during the war. Some people managed to catch foreign radio broadcasts, but doing so was very dangerous. According to Smith, “If you were caught listening to like BBC, you were immediately taken away and put in a concentration camp yourself. So very little news trickled through, but it did come eventually.”\(^55\) Nazi rule was incredibly harsh, dispensing a zero tolerance policy against anyone who did not adhere to Germany’s demand for total uniformity.

While German rule was harsh, life in Czechoslovakia continued without major social unrest. There were some uprisings against Nazi rule, but for the most part, Czechoslovakia remained at peace during German occupation. According to a Reich German visitor to Czechoslovakia, “Surrounded by war, a truly worldwide conflagration,

\(^{54}\) Smith, interview, 11 December 2009.
\(^{55}\) Ibid.
the Protectorate was the only Central European land living in peace.\textsuperscript{56} Czechoslovakia was home to a strong armaments industry, and the Germans had a vested interest in keeping the Czech people working. The Czechs’ contribution to the war effort was substantial, providing tanks and artillery to the eastern front.\textsuperscript{57} The Nazi’s had to hold back from the unspeakable cruelty that was meted out elsewhere during the war, although their tyrannical presence was by no means idyllic. Many Czech people were made to quit their family trade, and placed in forced labor. It was not until May of 1945, when Soviet troops liberated Czechoslovakia, that an end finally came to Germany’s totalitarian rule.

Seeing that Czechoslovakia was under German control during the war and was liberated by the USSR (now Russia), how did Czechoslovakian women meet and marry American servicemen? The majority of marriages between Czech women and American servicemen occurred postwar. During the war, American troops advanced into Czechoslovakia as far as Plzen, and some Czech war brides met and married their American husbands as a result of this occupation. Another way Czech women met American servicemen was as refugees in West Germany.\textsuperscript{58} Despite the fact that Czechoslovakian women had far less contact with the G.I.s than the British and Australians, the ones who met and married American servicemen shared many of the same experiences as war brides from other parts of the world.

Ruth Smith met her American husband in Prague. In 1946, John Smith arrived as part of a military basketball team, invited to play exhibition games at a Czech sports club.

\textsuperscript{56} Bryant, \textit{Prague in Black}, 179.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{58} Shukert and Scibetta, \textit{War Brides}, 170.
Smith’s brother was helping out at the sports club, and met John during the week of play. At the end of the week, there was a ball, where Ruth’s brother introduced her to John for the first time. For this couple, it was love at first sight. John Smith was in the Air Force, stationed in Germany, but he returned to Czechoslovakia several times to visit Ruth after their first meeting. Eventually, the couple married, and after living in Germany for seven years, they came to permanently reside in the United States in 1955.

Italy

Italy’s World War II history is particularly unique, marked by the country’s dramatic switch from the Axis to the Allied forces mid-way through the war. In June 1940, dictator Benito Mussolini officially announced Italy’s entry into the war. Despite being poorly equipped for battle, Italy joined forces with Nazi Germany. Italy “decided to wager on German might,” and entered at a point when Germany had made great successes in fighting. Mussolini’s strategy was for Italy to “enter the war when Germany had gained the upper hand to share in the victory without taking much of a risk or incurring much expense.”59 These imprudent decisions ultimately lead to Italy’s wartime demise.

At the outset of the war, Italy was under the control of Mussolini’s fascist regime. Fascism was a rigid political and social system, favored by the bourgeoisie for its ability to keep the lower classes in check. Italy’s ruling elite, including the king, trusted Mussolini with the entire Italian government and military. Fascism outlawed strikes, kept

workers’ wages down, and silenced any opposition to the war. Mussolini’s fascist regime enabled him to move forward with his plans unfettered.\footnote{Ibid., 581.} Mussolini lacked proper social, political and military advisement, which resulted in poorly executed strategy on all fronts. Despite Italy’s involvement in the war, Mussolini wanted to maintain the appearance of normalcy on the home front. This charade did not last long, and eventually wartime restrictions became an absolute necessity, drastically altering living conditions throughout the country.\footnote{Ibid., 582.}

Wartime Italy was characterized by severe rationing of food, clothing, and other products. By the end of 1941, petrol driven cars were forbidden, and methane fuelled the limited public and private transportation that remained.\footnote{Ibid., 586.} For the average person, the daily food intake was below 1,000 calories a day, and shoes or clothing could only be purchased once a year. According to Maria Leonardi-Lamorte, a young Italian woman living in Naples during World War II, “[w]e had to wait in long lines at 5:00 a.m. for food which was rationed. Sometimes, by the time we reached the front of the line, everything would be gone and there would be nothing to eat . . . Many times we were starving and had to eat grass.”\footnote{Maria Leonardi-Lamorte, \textit{Maria: The Life Story of a World War II Italian Bride} (New York: iUniverse, Inc., 2006), 9-10.} As food became increasingly scarce, the black market flourished. People with money were able to take advantage of it, purchasing items such as bread, butter and olive oil for astronomical prices.\footnote{Ibid., 582.} Francesca Stewart’s family looked to the black market for survival, “[t]he black market kept us alive . . . If you have
no money, you don’t survive.” This was a harsh system, where money (or lack thereof) became a deciding factor between life and death.

Civilians faced the harsh reality of living in a war-torn country plagued by hunger and destruction. Allied bombings caused massive devastation, forcing displaced civilians to seek refuge underground. According to Francesca Stewart, “The war destroyed Naples. The English came and bombard at night from six o’clock to six o’clock.”65 These bombings drastically altered civilian life, leaving many people homeless.

Stewart’s family was amongst the Italian aristocracy, and lived in a house near the royal Italian palace. Consequently, when the royal palace was bombed, Stewart’s family home suffered the same fate, “My house fall down, my house was bombard . . . We had to find a place to live. A place to live was very hard because there was no place to live. People lived in the basement, people lived in the tunnel.”66 Stewart’s family managed to find an apartment in Naples, where they lived for the rest of the war. The Italian people did their best to survive these difficult and chaotic times.

The Italian military was ill-equipped to fight, and had no ability to defend itself for the duration of the war. Italy fell under German occupation, and the Italian people suffered at the hands of Nazi control.67 July 1943 marked a major turning point in Italy’s war history, when the country’s ruling elite ousted Mussolini from his dictatorial position. Marshal Badoglio replaced Mussolini, but this upheaval precipitated far more than just a change in political power. Under Badoglio’s leadership, Italy switched

---

65 Francesca Stewart, interview by Courtney Belville Skinner, tape recording, 19 December 2009, *Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides*, Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
66 Ibid.
alliances from the Axis to the Allied forces. In the months that followed, “Italy became a country fought over by foreign powers.” The mountainous terrain gave the Germans an advantage, forcing the Allied troops to improvise new tactics. The Allied forces launched “The Italian Campaign,” fighting their way northward through Italy. These were hard-fought battles, with high casualties and small geographical gains. Eventually, however, the Allied forces gained ground, reaching northern Italy by the time ceasefire was declared in May 1945.

Italian women and American men became acquainted during Italy’s Allied occupation, which is how Francesca Stewart met her future husband. One evening as Francesca’s family finished dinner, an American knocked on their door and asked if he could come and pay his respects to the family. This American serviceman was Stefano Stewart, and while he did not speak Italian, he managed to communicate by creating what Francesca called “a new Italian language.” Using Latin that he roughly translated into Italian, he was able to exchange a few words with Francesca and her family who did not speak English. Despite this considerable challenge, language was a barrier that Francesca and Stefano managed to overcome.

Language was just one of many cultural differences between American servicemen and Italian women. Francesca remembered that when Stefano took her to a dance at the officer’s club, “They dance a boogie-boogie. Oh, God. I’ve never seen anything like. They don’t dance my way. I sit down at the table . . . He say, ‘I’m going to...

69 Ibid., 573-579.
70 Stewart, interview, 19 December 2009.
get a nice American drink.’ He brought me a glass of coca-cola. ‘Oh, I don’t like that.’”

As evidenced here, Italian women found some cultural differences difficult to adjust to. Yet, these dissimilarities were met with an equal amount of intrigue. Maria Leonardi-Lamorte remembered being strongly attracted to her future husband,

I noticed a small group of American soldiers conversing in a corner. They were not aware of us at all. Like a magnet, my eyes were focused on the one blond in the group. I felt something very special about him. I was fascinated by his strong looking build and I felt this man must have blue eyes. It seems strange but true, but I was strongly drawn to this soldier from America.71

Both from Naples, these Italian women fell in love with American men. For Stewart and Leonardi-Lamorte, love for American servicemen overshadowed cultural dissimilarities.

Italian women and American servicemen who fell in love during wartime had to overcome substantial obstacles before they could be married. When an American serviceman wanted to court an Italian woman, he first had to ask her father’s permission. In Italian culture, parents carefully guarded their young women, and dates were often chaperoned by a male family member. When an American suitor was ready to propose, he asked the woman’s father for permission to marry. If her father approved, the couple began the involved process of getting consent from the U.S. military. For Leonardi-Lamorte, this proved to be the couple’s most challenging obstacle: “We got the necessary papers, but there were still difficult times to go through . . . First of all my family had to be investigated and made sure we were good people. Next, I had to undergo a full physical . . . They made it very difficult for Tony and I. In the end, I was beginning to

71 Leonardi-Lamorte, Maria, 13.
lose patience.” While the Italians were no longer foes, in the eyes of the U.S. military, they were not exactly friends either.

The military was leery to consent to these marriages, and Italian women had to undergo careful scrutiny to make sure they did not pose a threat to the United States. Francesca Stewart’s immediate family was thoroughly interrogated before her marriage to an American serviceman was approved. After questioning her father, mother and brother, Stewart recalled: “finally they asked to talk to me in private. The first thing they asked me was, ‘What do you think about Mussolini?’ . . . ‘Are you fascist?’ I said, ‘Yes, I am’ . . . But the man said when we finished up, ‘You know something, you are the first person to say the truth.’” Having been born into Italy’s elite aristocracy, raised in a society where fascism was the norm since her birth, Francesca did consider herself a fascist. Francesca’s honestly paid off, and Francesca and Stefano’s marriage was approved. Although, due to security related concerns involving Stefano’s duties in the air force, the couple had to wait until after the war to be wed. During the postwar occupation Stefano continued to serve in the military, and the couple lived in Egypt and Spain for a time. In 1955, the couple permanently moved to the United States, and has resided there ever since.

The Philippines

From 1941 to 1945, the Philippines were a place of hostility and social unrest. At the outset of the war in the Pacific, the Philippines were a commonwealth of the United

---

72 Ibid., 16.
73 Stewart, interview, 19 December 2009.
States. The Filipino people wanted independence from the U.S., and by way of the Tydings-McDuffe Act, a ten-year commonwealth was established with independence scheduled for 1946. When war broke out, they were “neither entirely independent nor wholly under the control and protection of a great power.” When the Japanese attacked on December 8, 1941, the combined U.S. and Filipino military forces were not strong enough to fend off the invasion. It took only hours to cripple the U.S. air defense, and within days, Japanese troops marched on Manila. By the end of December 1941, General MacArthur declared Manila an open city; shortly after, MacArthur and the top Philippine government officials capitulated, promising to return.

The Japanese occupation of the Philippines was brutal. As a commonwealth of the United States, there was a sizable contingent of Americans living and serving in the Philippines when war broke out. American civilians were stripped of their freedom and placed in internment camps, given barely enough food and water for survival. Yet, this does not compare to the horrific treatment meted out to American and Filipino troops intercepted at the Bataan Peninsula. In what has become known as the Bataan Death March, remaining troops were forced to walk sixty-five miles from Mariveles to San Fernando, whilst being beaten, clubbed, and bayoneted. As a result, many of the troops died along the way. The Japanese considered any offense—such as stumbling due to dehydration—punishable by death.

75 Dear and Foot, *The Oxford Companion*, 877.
76 Ibid., 878.
77 Ibid., 570.
Filipino civilians suffered greatly at the hands of the Japanese. The Japanese were brutal oppressors, acting swiftly and heartlessly. According to Rosalina Regala, the Japanese violated women without thought or consequence, “they were so mean, you know, that if they see you walking, especially if you are a girl, they will rape you and then violate you . . . That is the way they are.” Rape was one of many ways the Japanese assaulted the civilian population. As a young Filipino teenager, Nina Edillo witnessed a Japanese soldier commit a horrific murder,

I don’t know what she did. But he slapped her down, took the baby, threw [the baby] up and skewered her with the bayonet. That is always in my mind. As old as I am, I cannot forget that. And I was what? Fifteen, sixteen? That was the worst thing I ever saw . . . But we had to run away and hide, because if they see you seeing them doing that, well, that’s the end of us too, I’m sure.

Survival was a game of accommodating the Japanese, while also knowing when to take flight. Isabel Galura’s father sensed the Japanese were coming to their village, and had his family temporarily seek refuge in the mountains. She recounted the ordeal: “So about 5 o’clock in the morning . . . there were some noises. So somebody went and looked down, there were Japanese . . . I think that the Japanese were so mad that nobody was in the village. They started to machine gun the whole place. Machine gun everyone they could find. Except the chicken and the pig and the eggs.” The terrifying reality is that this kind of treatment was commonplace.

---

79 Nina Edillo, interview by Courtney Belville Skinner, tape recording, 16 December 2009, Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides, Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
Life during Japanese occupation was characterized by violence and brutality, and MacArthur’s promised return was long awaited. The Japanese controlled the media, so information about the Allied advance was limited at best. MacArthur returned to the Philippines in October of 1944, and by the beginning of 1945 the Americans were advancing towards Manila. The battle for Manila lasted for two weeks, and the city suffered terrible destruction. As the Americans began to regain a foothold in the Philippines, their imminent presence was met with increased Japanese violence against the civilian population. The already brutal climate became a genocidal war zone.

In the final days of the Japanese occupation in Manila, the city was set ablaze, and people were forced to run for their lives. During this time, death was a real and tangible threat. The Japanese literally mowed down civilians in the middle of the street with machine guns. Edillo and her family were among the civilians that faced imminent death,

They would herd us out and tell us to go up the stairs of this burning house, and come out the other way, because there was a back stairway . . . We had to climb up the stairs and it was so hot because it was burning . . . They saw us and “Get out. Move. Go to the hospital.” Which was across the street, and my dad said, “No, don’t go.” What do you know? Those who were crossing were all machine gunned.

According to Edillo, the days that followed were long and terrifying. She and her family managed to seek refuge beneath a house, and hid there for two days. On the third day, they left their hideout in search of water. After finding one cup of water to share, they huddled together in a lean-to and tried to remain hidden,

Early dawn, we heard Japanese running back and forth, and as soon as it started getting light, we saw another group of soldiers coming, so my dad said, ‘Pretend we’re dead’ . . . And we just said a little prayer, because dad said, “I think we’re going to die.” Because we saw the soldiers coming. What do you know? They
were American soldiers! Because when they came, they would look into every lean to. I said, “Oh my God! It’s an American! He has blue eyes!” He had almost the same color of uniform as the Japanese, but then that was the fatigue that they had, but he had a different helmet. When he looked, he said “Good morning!” . . . I said, “Say it again.” “Good morning!”

As evidenced by Edillo, the Filipino people welcomed the American return. While the Americans recaptured Manila by February, fighting continued throughout the Philippines until Japanese conceded defeat in August 1945.

The return of the U.S. military to the Philippines resulted in a number of postwar marriages between American servicemen and Filipino women. During the war, General MacArthur called American servicemen of Filipino descent to serve in the Philippines. Thus, a contingent of the Americans serving in the Philippines shared the same ethnic makeup as the native population. Yet, while some American servicemen and Filipino women shared similar ethnic roots, courtship and marriage in the Philippines was decidedly different than in other parts of the world. Typically, women were courted from within their family home, and “dating” consisted of visiting in the living room for two to three hours at a time. According to Rosalina Regala, “you could not hold hands with them guys. That is why if you want to court a lady before, you got to go to their house . . . You talk, that’s all. You could not bring her to the movie, because some parents, like my parents, we are watched.”

Women were appropriated less independence than women in other countries, and the family carefully oversaw courtship and marriage.

Nina Edillo met her future husband after the end of the war, and her parents carefully supervised the couple’s courtship. Nick Edillo, an American serviceman of full

---

Filipino descent, asked her parent’s permission to court Nina. According to Nina Edillo, “I was barely eighteen when we got married in December, because my birthday is February. But he asked my mom and dad if he could court me, and my mom said, “Well he is a mature man. He’ll take care of you.””

Nick Edillo was in his thirties when he courted Nina, but her parents considered his age a mark of his maturity and his ability to provide for a family. Nick and Nina married, and after living between Japan and the Philippines during the postwar occupation, they eventually settled permanently in the Untied States in 1954.

_The War Brides Are Coming!_

Of these one million marriages, an estimated seventy-five percent of these war brides eventually entered the United States. War brides originated from over 50 countries, coming to the United States via military or privately sponsored transportation. War bride immigration is particularly significant because it forced a breach in U.S. immigration policy. Some of the restrictions of the Immigration Act of 1924 were lifted to accommodate the tidal wave of overseas brides waiting to be reunited with their American husbands. The Immigration Act placed a quota on the number of immigrants that could enter the United States each year. The quota was based upon the 1890 census,

---

82 Edillo, interview, 16 December 2009.
83 Shukert and Scibetta, _War Brides_, 2.
and established that only two percent of the total number of the foreign-born residents of each nationality would be permitted to enter the United States each year.\textsuperscript{84}

Despite a long history of immigration restrictions, the U.S. government actually aided in the transport of thousands of immigrants to the United States. On December 28, 1945 Congress passed the War Brides Act, which mandated that, “Regardless of section 9 of the Immigration Act of 1924, any alien admitted under section 1 of this Act will be deemed to be a nonquota immigrant as defined in section 4 (a) of the Immigration Act of 1924.”\textsuperscript{85} The Immigration Act of 1924 was completely lifted for these brides, thus they did not have to go through the formal procedures of being treated as “quota immigrants. Most women were brought to the United States aboard ships, and once in the U.S., many were transported to their individual destinations by train.

The American media responded favorably to war bride immigration. Just as the United States government made provisions for war brides to come abroad, the media recorded the brides’ travels with fervor and excitement. \textit{Life} magazine ran an article in February of 1946, entitled, “War Brides Begin Arriving in U.S.” which helped acquaint the American public with British war brides. The article focused on the first contingent of war brides that came to the United States on the Army’s first “dependents-transportation program.” A portion of the article reads,

The \textit{Argentina} numbered 456 wives and mothers, all British subjects and their 170 babies, all of them U.S. citizens (the wives can become so in two years). It is estimated that the program with add more than 70,000 citizens and citizens-to-be to the U.S. population…There was time to enjoy wonderful American meals, to


\textsuperscript{85} Congress, 79\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 1\textsuperscript{st} sess., 28 December 1945.
walk on deck and to watch movies that were to acquaint them with their new country... One girl, bound for a Southern home, practiced hard on a Southern accent. 86

This passage demonstrates the media’s desire to create a positive image of British war brides. It is clear that the children coming to the United States were already U.S. citizens, and that the war brides would be able to become citizens in a matter of two years; thus, although the women themselves were not citizens yet they would be able to become citizens very soon. This passage also demonstrates how war brides were portrayed as amiable immigrants. The reference to the British girl practicing a Southern accent makes it appear that war brides were preparing to assimilate even before setting foot upon American soil. In many ways, this is indicative of how war brides were perceived by the media and the American public: as non-threatening immigrants who would easily blend into and adapt to American culture.

One article published in The New York Times Magazine, entitled “War Brides, Beware! The G.I wants a wife who can cook something tastier than dehydrated eggs,” points to the domestic ideal war brides were expected to occupy upon arriving in the United States. The article discusses the G.I. diet during the war, and warns G.I. wives that they should be careful not to serve particular “blacklisted” food items. When one G.I. was asked which foods he particularly disliked, he replied, “‘Off my list for life are beef and lamb stew, and dehydrated eggs; serving either in my house will be grounds for divorce.’” 87 The title of this article indicates that the American media wanted to help war brides adapt to life in the United States. This article also assumes that war brides would

occupy the role as “homemaker,” and as such, would need to know what to serve their husbands for dinner.

Unlike other women who came to the United States as immigrants, particularly the Irish of the nineteenth-century, the war brides were not expected to assume low wage jobs as domestic servants and the like. Due to the fact that the brides were already married to American men, they were automatically placed within a higher income bracket than most immigrants when they first arrived to the United States. Foreign war brides entered into the United States surrounded by thousands of native U.S. war brides. World War II changed life in the U.S. forever, and because of this, all foreign and native-born wives had to collectively learn the new rules of wifehood and domesticity. Therefore, being on the same plane as other brides made it somewhat easier for the foreign war brides to identify with American women and acculturate to life in the United States.
Chapter 3

HISTORICAL LITERATURE ON WAR BRIDES

War bride stories are an intimate reflection of love amidst a world of hate, and provide evidence of the human desire for family normalcy during times of chaos and brutality. The sheer breadth of World War II, spanning from 1939 to 1945 and penetrating “every aspect of existence for almost all people then alive,” speaks to the complexity and multi-faceted nature of this global conflict. The war necessitated the deployment of millions of young American G.I.s overseas, resulting in roughly one million wartime marriages. After the war, war brides from all over the world immigrated to the United States to start a new life with their American husbands. Differentiated by vastly different national origins, war brides stories share distinctively common threads. A careful review of the existing literature, specifically pertaining to wartime social culture, foreign marriage and the war bride immigration experience, was necessary before embarking on this project.

Literature Review

War bride history has been researched and documented by a select few writers and historians, a group primarily composed of war brides and descendents of war brides. The 1984 publication of Sentimental Journey: The Story of the GI Brides, by Pamela Dear and Foot, Oxford Companion, xvi.
Winfield and Brenda Wilson Hasty, marked the first historical monograph dedicated entirely to this incredible wartime phenomenon. Before 1984, scholars acknowledged the historical significance of these several-thousand wartime marriages by documenting them as part of American G.I. social history. Two notable examples of this are, Norman Longmate’s, *The G.I.s: The Americans in Britain 1942-1945* (1975), and John Hammond Moore’s *Over-Sexed, Over-Paid, & Over Here: Americans in Australia 1941-1945* (1981). Longmate and Moore chronicled the G.I.’s social experiences during wartime, offering valuable insight into the Americans’ socio-cultural impact upon Great Britain and Australia. Wartime changed the way men and women interacted with each other, and the American G.I.’s easy charm and bold confidence challenged normative behavior roles in gender and sexuality. Longmate and Moore’s research laid the foundation for further inquiry: What factors defined the war bride experience? And how did war brides acculturate to their new lives in the United States?

The publication of *Sentimental Journey* validated the historical relevancy of the war bride experience. Nearly four decades after the war brides arrived in the United States, war brides Pamela Winfield and Brenda Wilson Hasty published this insightful collection of war bride stories and recollections. A combination of personal experience, historical narrative, and other war brides’ remembrances, *Sentimental Journey* is an intimate look into wartime social culture from the perspective of the British war bride. The G.I.s offered a carefree diversion from wartime, and “they all appeared to be
gentlemen to the google-eyed girls who were literally swept off their feet.” Winfield does an excellent job describing the excitement and challenges of wartime courtship and marriage, while also providing valuable insight into the painful reality the war bride’s faced by leaving their homeland: “[m]any women stayed faithful to England to the last, they stood crying at the rails, arms outstretched. ‘It was as if they wanted to pull themselves back to pull England along with them.” Sentimental Journey speaks to the joys and hardships of war bride life, offering candid perspectives from the British women who made the bold decision to marry an American and immigrate to the United States.

The most comprehensive account of war bride history is War Brides of World War II (1988), by Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta. Daughters of World War II war brides, Shukert and Scibetta published the first multi-national war bride history. War brides immigrated to the United States from all over the world, and this monograph speaks to the diversity of these women. War Brides is the culmination of painstaking research and extensive interviewing; to date, there is no other publication that provides such a thorough account of war bride history. Shukert and Scibetta collected personal recollections and studied archival material in an effort to understand, “Who were these women?” and “What effect did this mass immigration have on American society?” According to Shukert and Scibetta war brides are defined by their inner-strength and perseverance: “Because of their individual strengths,” they wrote, “these women have adapted to life in America in spite of many difficulties . . . As wives,

89 Winfield and Hasty, Sentimental Journey, 5.
90 Ibid., 53.
91 Shukert and Scibetta, War Brides, 3.
mothers and part of the work force, they have given much to their adopted country."

War Brides is an insightful presentation of war bride history, emphasizing the diversity and complexity inherent to the war bride experience.

During the late 1980s and through the 1990s, scholarship on war brides increased dramatically. Personal memoirs and historical monographs further detailed the war bride experience. Many of these writings were small press publications that are currently out of print. A few monographs received widespread distribution, and amongst these were: *For the Love of a Solider: Australian War-Brides and Their GIs* (1987), by Annette Potts and Lucinda Strauss; and *Good-bye, Piccadilly: British War Brides in America* (1996) by Jenel Virden. These monographs provide further insight into the postwar British and Australian war bride experience. They explore how war bride immigration was fundamentally different than previous waves of immigration to the United States, and how war brides acculturated to life in their new country.

*For the Love of a Solider* provides valuable insight into wartime social culture and postwar immigration, offering an intimate look at the Australian war bride experience. Combining historical narrative and first-hand remembrances, Potts and Strauss effectively convey the excitement, uncertainty, and homesickness felt by thousands of Australian war brides. For most, the decision to immigrate to the United States was not easy; it was a decision to forego the familiar for a chance at love and happiness in a foreign country. According to Potts and Strauss, “[c]ourage, love, loyalty, ambition, a spirit of adventure—these were among the qualities possessed by the women

---

92 Ibid., 258.
who went.”\textsuperscript{93} Many of the Australian war brides who did immigrate to the United States found it difficult to adjust to their new life: “‘We were all so homesick within those first two years. If we’d had the money we’d have been on a boat and gone home.’”\textsuperscript{94} For the Love of a Solider speaks to the postwar challenges faced by Australian war brides.

Jenel Virden’s Good-bye, Piccadilly is a scholarly account of British war bride immigration. Virden argues that the World War II British war bride immigration was fundamentally different than previous waves of immigration to the United States. When British war brides immigrated to the United States, they did not settle into pre-established ethnic enclaves like other immigrants before them. Instead, British war brides joined their American husbands who were at home in their native country. According to Virden, “[u]nlike other female immigrants, British war brides had married into American society. Therefore, their husbands were at home in their environment while the women faced the transition to a new culture.”\textsuperscript{95} Virden cautions against the assumption that war brides easily acculturated to their new life in the United States. While many British war brides appear to have assimilated well, Virden concludes that war brides never fully acculturated, and to this day, maintain a “hyphenated” existence. “If you ask them who or what they are,” she notes, “the majority will tell you they are British-Americans. They conceive of themselves as hyphenated Americans with membership in two countries. Conceptual assimilation has not taken place.”\textsuperscript{96} Good-bye, Piccadilly offers an insightful

\textsuperscript{93} Potts and Strauss, For the Love of a Soldier, 74.
\textsuperscript{94} Ibid., 110.
\textsuperscript{95} Virden, Good-bye Piccadilly, 8.
\textsuperscript{96} Ibid., 143.
perspective into British war bride history, highlighting the challenges faced by this unique group of female immigrants.

While historians have carefully studied the British and Australian war bride experience, many aspects of war bride history remain relatively unexplored. War brides immigrated to the United States from over fifty nations, yet with the exception of War Brides, most war bride literature is focused solely upon Great Britain and Australia. This narrows the scope of war bride history substantially, considering the incredibly diverse origin of the war brides. War bride histories from other parts of the world (for example, Czechoslovakia, Italy and the Philippines) are lesser known. Personal accounts are very useful in filling in these gaps, especially where scholarly monographs are absent. Several war brides have written personal memoirs, although these can be difficult to obtain because they are not widely available. Oral history is particularly useful in documenting war bride stories because it allows the historian to record voices and perspectives that might have been otherwise lost.
Chapter 4
HISTORY, THEORY, AND PRACTICE OF ORAL HISTORY

A History of Oral History

Oral history is an ancient historical method, dating back to the far reaches of recorded time. Oral history is not to be confused with oral tradition, a method used to pass information from generation to generation through the telling of stories. Oral history is concerned with preserving the public record, not performing history for an audience. According to R.J. Grele, oral history is defined as “the interviewing of eye-witness participants in the events of the past for the purposes of historical reconstruction.” The earliest known usage of oral history dates back to ancient China during the Zhou dynasty, wherein the emperor assigned scribes to record common sayings for the court historians. A few centuries later in ancient Greece, historians used oral sources to gather first-hand information regarding the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars. For thousands of years, people have used oral sources as a means of recording history; however, the scientific movement of the late nineteenth century called this historical method into question. Could orally transmitted material be trusted? Historians of the day agreed that oral sources lacked objectivity to “simply show how it really

98 Ritchie, Doing Oral History, 38.
was,”‖ and opted for a more “scientific” approach to history—relying exclusively on other source material to determine the historical record.101

Oral history was not widely used for the next several decades, and it was not until the 1930s that historians began to recognize anew its usefulness and significance. During the Great Depression, the Federal Writers Project emerged out of New Deal’s Works Progress Administration (WPA). The goal of the Federal Writers Project was to hire “unemployed writers to chronicle the lives of ordinary citizens.”102 While the initial aims of the project were more limited in scope, the writers ended up collecting more than 10,000 first-person narratives from ordinary Americans.103 Particularly valuable were interviews the WPA writers conducted with former slaves; interviews historians used forty years later to reconstruct their understanding of American slavery.104 In retrospect, this was a defining moment in the evolution of oral history, because it validated the everyday American experience of people of diverse race, background, and social origin.

Historian Allan Nevins also recognized the usefulness of oral history. However, he did not focus on recording the recollections of everyday Americans, but used it for documenting the histories of those most prominent and influential in American society. Nevins wanted to add these influential perspectives to the historical narrative, and in his work The Gateway to History (1938), he called for the creation of an organization that would make “‘a systematic attempt to obtain from the lips and papers of living Americans who have lead significant lives, a fuller record of their participation in the

political, economic and cultural life of the last sixty years.” Nevins felt that history lacked life and energy, and believed that giving a voice to men of prominence would bring vitality back to the field. Nevins pursued his dream, and headed “the oral history project” at Columbia University in 1948. This project was among the first to use a wire recorder to capture interviews, which were later transcribed for future researchers. Unsurprisingly, Nevins’ oral history projects focused on powerful, white male subjects.

While historians had differing opinions about whose history was historically relevant, many agreed that oral source material should not be blindly disregarded. During the 1960s, the availability of portable cassette recorders coincided with the beginning of a social backlash against “white male” history. The idea that history belonged to everyone (not just the privileged elite) started to make its way into mainstream historical discourse. By the 1970s, American historians began writing history “from the bottom up,” turning to oral sources for lack of written documentation. Studs Terkel’s best selling books, _Hard Times_ (1970), _Working_ (1974), and _The Good War_ (1984) propelled the oral history movement further, engaging the reading public with stories of ordinary people’s lives. Everyday people began to play a significant role in the interpretation of past events.

With oral history beginning to take shape as a real academic discipline, historians recognized the need for professional objectives and standards. In 1966, seventy-seven

---

106 Ibid., 22.
107 Ibid., 23.
professionals came together for the “National Colloquium on Oral History,” to discuss the theory and practice behind this burgeoning historical field. Many topics were discussed in an attempt to gain consensus on some important issues relating to oral history: How do you define oral history? What are oral history’s current and future uses? What techniques should be used for interviewing? And among other topics, what are the professional objectives and standards of this historical discipline? In 1967, The Oral History Association adopted a set of oral history standards entitled, “Goals and Guidelines.” The guidelines were provided to direct the relationship between interviewee and interviewer, stressing that the interviewee’s wishes “must govern the conduct of the interview.” Overall, these guidelines stressed that a mutual understanding must be achieved between interviewer and interviewee throughout the entire interviewing process. In an effort to create clear oral history guidelines, many more questions were raised than answered. Issues of authority, memory, and the validity of oral source material are topics that continue to engage historians in an ongoing debate.

Theory and Practice

Oral history is a dynamic process that is not easily defined. Oral history interviewing requires preparation and forethought, met with an equal amount of spontaneity and quick wittedness. According to Donald Ritchie, “[s]imply put, oral history collects memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through

110 Ibid., 26.
recorded interviews.”

Ideally, the interview process begins with careful research and preparation on part of the interviewer. It is vitally important for the interviewer to become well-versed in the interview topic before proceeding forth with questioning. During the interview, the interviewer should minimize their vocal presence, asking open-ended questions and allowing the interviewee to answer without interruption. The interviewer’s responsibility is to direct the interview, while also following the interviewee to unexpected places that may yield interesting information. For an interview to be considered an “oral history,” it must be recorded, processed, and placed in archive, library, or other repository. Ideally, oral historians look beyond their immediate needs and conduct their interviews with the future researcher in mind. Yet, while there are clearly defined principles and standards for practicing oral history, it is important to remember that when it comes to oral history, “[f]or every rule, an exception has worked.”

With more people conducting oral history projects than ever before, universal standards are necessary to ensure the production and preservation of good oral history work. It is vital for oral historians to consult the “Principles and Standards of the Oral History Association” before embarking on any oral history project. Interviewees must be clearly informed of the purposes and procedures of oral history before contributing to a project. This includes how their interview will be used, and how it will later be made

---

111 Ritchie, Doing Oral History, 19.
113 Ritchie, Doing Oral History, 24.
114 Ibid., 14.
115 Ibid., 19.
available to the public. Interviewees must sign a legal release of their interview before it is used, disseminated, or stored in a repository. The interview relationship must remain professional, while at the same time, friendly enough for the interviewer to gain a rapport with the interviewee. In his aptly titled book, *A Shared Authority*, Michael Frisch set forth the idea that the interview process is an equal partnership between the interviewer and the interviewee. While the interviewer is responsible for preparing and directing the course of the interview, the actual value of the material collected rests completely in the interviewee’s story.116 Good oral history work considers the shared authority between participants, and approaches each interview with this in mind.

*Concerns and Criticisms*

Oral history is extremely useful in collecting and preserving histories from a variety of perspectives, but its practice does not come without criticism. Can oral sources really be trusted? Certainly, all interviews contain some measure of subjectivity, so how do oral historians manage the space between fact and personal interpretation? The first thing to remember is that all historical sources may contain some subjective bias. Scholars trust other documentation, such as correspondence, diaries and autobiographies, which may be biased or incorrect; yet, many historians remain leery about trusting oral evidence. While these are valid concerns, it is important not to trust any one piece of information without testing it against other sources.117 This holds true when studying

---

oral history work, especially considering the fallible nature of memory, and the human propensity to interpret past events.

Memory is a curious phenomenon, defined by its incredible storage and recall, as well as its amazing interpretative capabilities. While the human memory is an incredible resource when it comes to more fully understanding past events, oral evidence must be assessed in light of memory’s limitations. “People remember what they think is important”, and this certainly leads to some concern over the reliability of oral testimony.\(^\text{118}\) Studies have proven that memory changes with the passage of time. According to Daniel E. Schacter, in his book *The Seven Sins of Memory*,

> At relatively early points on the forgetting curve—minutes, hours, and days, sometimes more—memory preserves a relatively detailed record, allowing us to reproduce the past with reasonable if not perfect accuracy. But with the passing of time, the particulars fade and opportunities multiply for interference—generated by later, similar experiences—to blur our recollections.\(^\text{119}\)

Considering its inherent fallibility, can we trust memory for reliable historical evidence? Oral historians answer yes, but not without careful consideration of other factors.

Oral testimony requires historians to carefully assess each interview for factual validity. Interviewers must become extremely knowledgeable about the history relating to an interviewee’s experiences. This prepares the interviewer in advance to spot factual discrepancies, enabling them to carefully cross-examine the interviewee and dig for further details.\(^\text{120}\) Furthermore, interviewers must consider the credibility of their interviewees. Was this person in a position to experience events first hand, or is this

\(^{118}\) Ibid., 32.


secondhand information? And most importantly, how closely does an interviewee’s oral testimony compare to other documentary evidence of the time? With these considerations in mind, oral histories may be better utilized for their unique contribution to history.

Oral History’s Unique Value

Oral history has dramatically broadened the scope of what is considered historically relevant. With practically an infinite number of avenues to explore, oral history allows for inquiry into topics that bear unique social and historical significance. Oral history provides future researchers with firsthand interpretations of past events, often from a varied representation of perspectives. In addition to diversity of perspective, oral history enables researchers to ask questions and probe for answers that would be difficult—if not impossible—to find using traditional sources. According to Allessandro Portelli, one of oral history’s defining characteristics is “that it tells us less about events than about their meaning. This does not imply that oral history has no factual validity . . . But the unique and precious element which oral sources force upon the historian and which no other sources possess in equal measure is the speaker’s subjectivity.” Oral history allows for personal subjectivity, where a narrator’s unique historical perspective is valued alongside their factual memory of the past. Paul Thompson stated it most eloquently when he wrote: “Oral evidence, by transforming the ‘objects’ of study into

---

121 Ritchie, Doing Oral History, 34.
'subjects’, makes for a history which is not just richer, more vivid and heart-rending, but truer.”¹²³ Oral history calls for us to reconsider our collective past, one that “allows heroes not just from leaders, but from the unknown majority of the people.”¹²⁴ History is not bound by race or religion, nor is it swayed by social status or political prowess; history in its purest form is an attempt at representing the past, that which involves the entire human race. Oral history gives us the unique opportunity to give voice to the past, a spoken legacy that defines us and carries us forward.

¹²⁴ Ibid., 21.
Chapter 5
PROJECT METHODOLOGY

*Journey of Love* is a project that includes six oral histories, three of which have been fully transcribed. Interview finding guides are provided for the three interviews that are not transcribed. The author sought to follow the Oral History Association’s “Principles and Best Practices” for conducting this oral history project. As the author journeyed through the process of finding and selecting participants, preparing for and conducting interviews, and finally transcribing and editing, it was necessary to make several decisions about how to proceed practically and professionally. In making these decisions, the author found Donald A. Ritchie’s *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide*, Edward D. Ives’ *The Tape Recorded Interview: A Manual for Fieldworkers in Folklore and Oral History*, and Willa K. Baum’s *Transcribing and Editing Oral History*, the most useful for the purposes of this project.

Identifying Participants

The author’s maternal grandmother, Edith (Jackson) Haslam, is a World War II war bride. Intrigued by Haslam’s bold decision to leave England for her love of an American, the author desired to learn more about this fascinating wartime phenomenon. Did war brides share a common experience, despite having vastly different national origins? The author’s immediate challenge was to find at least five more interview
candidates in addition to Haslam. The author first asked Haslam for any leads, but she did not know of any other living World War II war brides. According to Ritchie, “[t]he oral historian has to play detective. Word-of-mouth referrals will unearth many potential interviewees, but quite often, oral historians have to hunt for their subjects.” The author decided to try an unconventional approach, and turned to the Internet for potential leads. The author used the popular search engine, Google, and queried “World War II war brides.” Surprisingly, this search yielded promising results, with a web link to the national World War II War Brides Association.

Using the website’s contact information, the author emailed the Association’s current president, Robert Pence. Via email correspondence with Mr. Pence, the author learned that the “Bay Area War Brides” chapter met on a monthly basis, and accounted for the largest organized group of war brides in the United States. After the author explained the parameters of her oral history project, Mr. Pence invited the author to the November 2009 war brides luncheon. The author gladly accepted this invitation, seeing it as an opportunity to establish face-to-face contact with several war brides in her area. The author also decided to use the popular networking site, Facebook, to see if any of her “Friends” had any war bride contacts. As it turned out, someone did know of a World War II war bride named Kat Hartman (England), and gave the author her contact information.

Considering the advanced agedness of this particular group, the author defined minimal criteria for selecting participants for the project. The first criteria was that the
person fit the definition of a war bride as defined by Elfrieda Berthiaume Shukert and Barbara Smith Scibetta in their book, *War Brides of World War II*, “a war bride or groom is any foreign national who married an American member of the armed forces or an American civilian who was in a foreign country as a result of U.S. mobilization for World War II or as a result of the subsequent military occupation.” The second criterion was that the person be in good enough physical and mental condition to sit through a one-to-two hour recorded interview. At the war brides luncheon, the author provided everyone with a handout detailing her academic background and research aims [Appendix A]. At this luncheon, the author established a good rapport with several war brides, with whom she exchanged contact information. The author chose to later follow-up with war brides Jackie Hansen (Australia), Ruth Smith (Czechoslovakia), Francesca Stewart (Italy), and Nina Edillo (the Philippines) based upon the fact that they met the defined interview criteria, as well as provided a varied representation of perspectives.

The author called each war bride two weeks after the luncheon, and asked if they were still willing to participate in the oral history project; they all agreed to schedule an interview. The author also called Haslam and Hartman at this time, and they agreed to participate as well. The author then sent each prospective interviewee an interview confirmation letter [Appendix B]. The interview confirmation letter reminded the interviewee of the date and time of their scheduled interview, as well as provided a brief overview of the interview topics that would be covered. The confirmation letter also fully disclosed the author’s intent to record the interviews and have each interviewee sign

---

an interview agreement form [Appendix C]. Interviewees were encouraged to contact the author if they had any questions.

**Interview Preparation**

After selecting interview candidates, the author needed to research World War II history from the perspective of each war bride. This necessitated an in-depth look at Great Britain, Australia, Czechoslovakia, Italy and the Philippines during wartime. The author conducted her research at the McHenry Library at University of California, Santa Cruz. Researching war bride history before starting to interview enabled the author to identify key areas of scholarly interest. Some of the areas the author identified were:

*What was the impetus for wartime marriage? How did wartime change normative behavior roles in gender and sexuality? How did wartime conditions affect courtship and marriage? What the reaction (public and private) to foreign wartime marriages? How did war brides adapt to life in the United States? Did war brides assimilate into American culture? And what social, economic and cultural contributions did they make?*

Identifying areas of scholarly interest allowed the author to formulate better interview questions. The oral historian must consider the future researcher, and it is vitally important to ask questions that will yield rich and enduring responses. According to Donald Ritchie, “[a]vailability for general research, reinterpretation, and verification
defines oral history. By preserving the tapes and transcripts of their interviews, oral historians seek to leave as complete, candid, and reliable record as possible.”\textsuperscript{127}

The author developed a set of interview questions based upon her preliminary research [Appendix D]. The interview questions focused on the following five areas: 1) Family background and childhood; 2) World War II; 3) Arrival of the American G.I.s; 4) Courtship and marriage; 5) Immigration experience and life in the United States. Depending upon the narrator’s country of origin, the author adapted the questions per interview as needed. The author sought to formulate open-ended questions that would elicit prolonged responses from the interviewee, for example: \textit{How did wartime time change gender roles? How did the American G.I.s change the social atmosphere across the country? What were your first impressions of the United States?} Having a strong list of well-defined interview questions was critical \textit{before} embarking upon the interview process. However, as noted by Ritchie, “[a]n interviewer must always be prepared to abandon carefully prepared questions and follow the interviewee down unexpected paths, always helping the interviewee by questioning, guiding, coaxing, and challenging.”\textsuperscript{128}

Ultimately, the direction of the interview is a “shared authority” between the interviewer and interviewee.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 29.
Recording Technology

The author opted for dual recording technology to ensure the longevity of the interviews; audiocassette tapes have a finite lifespan and, at present day, the world relies primarily upon digital media. According to the Oral History Association’s “Principles and Best Practices” (2009), “[o]ral historians should use the best digital recording equipment within their means to reproduce the narrator’s voice accurately, and if appropriate, other sounds as well as visual images.”

The author used two recording devices for each interview: a Radio Shack CTR-121 cassette recorder and an Olympus VN-6200PC digital voice recorder. To optimize the audio quality of the cassette recording, the author used a Radio Shack 33-3029 external microphone. The author used Maxell UR, IEC Type I, 60-minute cassette tapes. After the interview, the author connected the Olympus digital voice recorder to a Dell Studio laptop, and imported the audio files to the computer. The author immediately stored these audio files on a flash drive, and subsequently burned the interviews to a CD.

Before conducting interviews, the author spent time familiarizing herself with the recording equipment. The interview is not the time to learn how to use the recording equipment, so it was critical to test each device before arriving at an interview. Familiarity with the recording equipment reduced stress for both interviewer and interviewee. It was important to have plenty of blank cassette tapes on hand, and well as extra batteries for the cassette and digital recorders (in the rare instance of a power outage.

---

or scarcity of electrical outlets). The author arrived at each interview on time, set up the equipment, and did a test recording. Thankfully, the author experienced no trouble with her recording equipment during any of the interviews.

Conducting Interviews

After weeks of preparation, the author began conducting interviews. Having some previous experience in the field, the author felt comfortable with the interview process. Each interview was conducted one-on-one in a quiet spot of the interviewee’s home. The only exception was the Francesca Stewart interview, conducted at her home with her husband and daughter present. Interviewing one-on-one provided the most optimal setting, allowing for a more focused, less conversational interview. The author reminded each interviewee that the interview would last approximately one to two hours, with an assurance that the interview could be stopped at any time. The author stressed the shared authority between interviewer and interviewee, making sure each interviewee understood the intended use of their recorded interview. The author had each interviewee sign an interview agreement form before starting the interview. That way both parties were in full agreement at the outset of the interview process. If an interviewee had decided to rescind their release after the interview, the author would have kindly asked them to reconsider, but ultimately would have respected their wishes. Thankfully, the author never encountered this problem.
Before starting, the author explained to the interviewee that she would try to refrain from using verbal encouragements while recording the interview. After posing a question, the author used nonverbal cues (such as smiling or nodding) to show the interviewee that she was listening. The author did this to minimize her verbal presence as much as possible during the interview, so the interviewee’s recorded narrative would not be compromised by the interviewer’s unnecessary verbiage. According to Ritchie, “[t]he interviewer’s task is to do thorough research beforehand, then ask meaningful questions, suppressing the urge to talk and listening instead.”\footnote{Ritchie, Doing Oral History, 13.} The author tried to adhere to this interview method as carefully as possible, asking follow-up questions only after the interviewee had finished speaking.

Edward Ives describes the tape recorder as a “blind third party.”\footnote{Edward D. Ives, The Tape-Recorded Interview: A Manual for Fieldworkers in Folklore and Oral History (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1997), 46.} When the interviewer takes time and care to verbally explain things, it dramatically increases the interview’s usefulness to a future listener. The author recorded a lead at the beginning of the interview, which provided a clear verbal introduction when recording commenced. For example: This is Courtney Skinner. I’m with (interviewee’s full name) at her home in (interview location). It is (month, day and year), and I will be interviewing interviewee) about her experiences as a World War II war bride. This is Tape 1, Side A. On more than one occasion, an interviewee shared a picture with the author during the recorded interview. When presented with an image, the author did her best to describe it and ask relevant questions. The author also asked the interviewee to spell unfamiliar words,
names and geographic locations. According to Ives, “[t]he tape should be as complete and accurate a record of the interview as you can possibly make it.”\(^{132}\) The author kept this in mind, offering descriptions and clarifying remarks whenever possible.

The interviews flowed relatively well, eliciting a mixture of short and prolonged responses. Most interviews were between one and two hours long. The author guided the interviews, but refrained at times from strictly adhering to her prepared material. Ives advises the interviewer,

> At the beginning, assume that you are going to direct the interview, but interviewees may have ideas of their own of what they want to talk about. Be conscious of what is happening, and listen carefully. They may seem to get off on terrible tangents, but they may also be telling you about what they know best, and you should explore those things first.\(^ {133}\)

In retrospect, there were missed opportunities when the author could have followed the interviewee further, instead of retreating back to her prepared list of questions. It can be difficult to gauge when a tangent might lead somewhere interesting, and when it is strictly a tangent in order of redirection. It is an intuitive skill on part of the interviewer—knowing when to follow and when to pull back—always having to keep in mind the clock, and ultimately, the research aims of the project.

While conducting interviews, it became readily apparent that the war brides were very nostalgic about their wartime love stories. This is an interesting illustration of Ritchie’s point that, “[p]eople remember what they think is important, not necessarily what the interviewer thinks is most consequential.”\(^ {134}\) The author arrived with a

---

\(^{132}\) Ives, *The Tape-Recorded Interview*, 46.  
\(^{133}\) Ibid., 49.  
\(^{134}\) Ritchie, *Doing Oral History*, 32.
thoughtful arrangement of interview questions, but in most cases, found the war brides eager to jump ahead and share their love stories before other topics of discussion. For many of the war brides, this “love story” was the defining moment of their lives. Regardless of national origin, the decision to marry an American serviceman and immigrate to the United States was a life-changing decision. Many war brides hold these memories dear to their heart, making it difficult to “move the interview away from nostalgia to confront the past candidly and critically.”135 How do you ask an interviewee to reconsider their past, when it is the very thing that defines who they are today?

The author’s “insider” status as descendant of a war bride was a help and a hindrance throughout the interview process. The author was welcomed into the war bride community, and easily found willing interview participants; however, the author found it difficult to ask hard, probing questions in some areas because she felt a personal connection to these women. According to Ritchie, “[t]he ‘clinical’ interviewer from outside the community may be seen as more neutral and discreet. Outside interviewers will take less for granted and encourage interviewees to talk over subjects that may be well known within the community but less recognized and understood beyond its boundaries.”136 The author tried to counteract this tendency by carefully preparing for the interview in advance, and posing interview questions without presumption or expectation. The author decided to tread carefully in some areas, choosing not to disrupt nostalgic memories related to a war bride’s “love story.” With the exception of Francesca Stewart, all the war bride’s husbands were deceased at the time of the interviews, and the author

135 Ibid., 35.
136 Ibid., 56.
did not want to challenge memories that these women held most dear to their hearts. The author’s insider status certainly did have an impact upon the interviews, but to what extent this helped or hindered the project remains unknown.

Processing Interviews

“Processing” refers to the practice of transcribing and editing recorded interviews.\(^{137}\) According to Willa K. Baum, “[p]rocessing focuses on making the material collected as accessible (you can find it and have permission to use it) and usable (in a form and a degree of understandability to be used fairly easily) as possible.”\(^{138}\) In an effort to make *Journey of Love* accessible and useable, the author fully transcribed three of the six interviews: Jackie Hansen (Australia), Kat Hartman (England), and Ruth Smith (Czechoslovakia). The author chose these three interviews because they provide a good representation of perspectives, from both the European and Pacific Theatres. The author would have liked to transcribe all interviews, but strict time constraints prohibited the completion of this process. The following three interviews were not transcribed: Nina Edillo (the Philippines), Edith Haslam (England), and Francesca Stewart (Italy). For the interviews that were not transcribed, the author created interview finding guides. The interview finding guides will help future researchers identify the subject contents of the interview recordings.

---


\(^{138}\) Ibid., 5.
Before starting the transcription process, the author needed to determine how she wanted to proceed with editing. Should she take a verbatim approach, transcribing the interviews as closely to the spoken word as possible? Or should she do more thorough editing, working with the narrator to check facts and correct unclear statements?\(^\text{139}\) Baum suggests that the transcript should be edited “with the goal of producing a manuscript that is the closest possible rendition of the spoken interview and at the same time useable by researchers, historically authentic, and acceptable to the narrator.”\(^\text{140}\) The author opted for a verbatim approach, attempting to document the recorded interview as closely as possible.

The author created the following transcription guidelines, so that the interview transcripts would remain consistent: 1) Type words exactly as they are spoken, including incorrect grammar usage, awkward sentences, and moments of forgetfulness. Do not try to “fix” what they have said; 2) Punctuate to the best adherence of the spoken word, and do not worry if punctuation does not follow correct grammatical style; 3) Listen and stop run-on sentences at reasonable points; 4) Include some verbal tics (“so”, “um”, “you know”) for flavor of speech, but omit those that distract from the overall readability of the narrative; 5) Omit false starts, and include speaker’s rephrased speech. In some cases, when there are several false starts without rephrasing on part of the speaker, construct the meaning of the sentence as carefully as possible; 6) Indicate interrupted speech or “trailing off” with ellipses (“ . . . ”); 7) After several repeat attempts, if there is

\(^\text{139}\) Ibid., 39.
\(^\text{140}\) Ibid., 40.
something that cannot be heard, indicate that something is missing in the transcript ([inaudible]).

The author did not send transcripts back to the interviewee’s for review. The author wanted the transcript to remain true to the interview, and had sincere concerns about altering it to make it “the most accurate account of the events being discussed.” While sending it to the interviewee may have resulted in helpful correction (the author may have misheard or misunderstood a point the interviewee was trying to make), the author worried the transcript might lose authenticity in the process. Changes to the interview transcript could dramatically alter the meaning and dynamic of the exchange between interviewer and interviewee. Ultimately, sending the transcripts back to the interviewees would have given them more authority over the final outcome of the project; however, the author determined the best way to preserve the integrity of the interviews was to keep the transcripts as close to the spoken word as possible.

Archival Partnership

Original audiocassettes and CD copies of the interviews, as well as three interview transcripts (Jackie Hansen, Kat Hartman and Ruth Smith), were donated to the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento. The author chose to donate this oral history project to this repository because they will preserve the recordings, making them available to students.

141 Ibid., 39.
and future researchers. The University Archives does not currently have a collection of war bride narratives, and these interviews provide a unique perspective on wartime social culture and the postwar immigration experience. The author hopes that by placing these oral histories in the University Archives, they will serve to enrich someone’s future understanding of World War II.
Chapter 6

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

The six women interviewed for *Journey of Love* had extremely positive experiences as war brides. For these women, their love for an American was enough to forego the familiar for the complete unknown. This decision, made so early in life, was bold and risky; these women took the ultimate chance at love as they followed their husbands to the United States. Starting a new life in a foreign country was not easy, but these women eventually adapted to American lifeways. Many of the war brides became housewives and mothers, fulfilling the domestic ideals of the 1950s. These women are marked by their adventurous and resilient nature, and their love stories are a testament to the good that exists, even in times of social upheaval and total uncertainty.

*Project Findings*

It is important to note that this discussion is intended to represent the interview findings from the *Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides* project. These findings are based upon a group of six interviews. While these interviews offer valuable insight into the war bride experience as a whole, the findings must be weighed according to the limited scope of the project. This discussion will briefly examine three areas of scholarly interest: 1) Female autonomy during wartime; 2) Impetus for wartime marriage; and 3) Postwar life in the United States.
**Female Autonomy During Wartime**

Women experienced a dramatic increase in freedom and autonomy during wartime. During World War II, unmarried women in Great Britain were called to duty to aid in the war effort. Women assumed tasks on the home front that men had traditionally preformed. During the war, English war bride Edith Haslam served as a military police officer for the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS). As a part of the ATS, Haslam moved to Glasgow, Scotland, the farthest she had ever been from home. Living on her own, she had the ability to make her own decisions, apart from the influence of her family.

Haslam met her American husband at a dance hall in Glasgow, and they soon fell in love and agreed to get married. Haslam’s father disapproved of her marriage, and refused to attend the wedding. Wartime accelerated social change in England, but Haslam’s father preferred the traditional way of life. He wanted his children to continue living as his family had done for generations. According to Haslam, her father “was living as they had done at the turn of the century . . . Just married somebody that was in their neighborhood . . . settled down . . . and raised their children in the same neighborhood as his parents before him had done . . . We were all doing something where we were going to move away, and not be there in the same vicinity anymore.”

Haslam’s father did not want her to leave the village, let alone leave England and move to the United States.

---

142 Haslam, interview, 13 December 2009.
Despite her father’s disapproval, Haslam followed her heart and went ahead with the marriage. When asked what gave her the strength to defy her father, she replied “I had left home. . . I had been away from them so I was totally able to make my own decisions, because I been so far away from home for quite a while in the Army. I had grown to the point where I didn’t feel the need to worry one-way or the other. If they liked it, fine. If they didn’t, fine too.”

Even in the short time that Haslam dated her husband before marriage, she knew he was someone she could depend upon, “I felt that he was a person who was very normal, and very sincere. That he would be there, and we would have a life. Not that he promised me anything really lavish or anything like that. But I felt if we got married, we’d definitely have a home and a family, and live a normal life.” While her father disapproved, Haslam had the freedom to make her own decision. Ultimately, Haslam chose person over place; she left her homeland to start an entirely new beginning with her husband in the United States.

**Impetus for Wartime Marriage**

Love was the primary impetus for wartime marriage. While there may have been other underlying factors, this group of war brides said love was the main reason they decided to marry. English war bride, Kat Hartman, was a dancer during World War II. She traveled with a performance troupe, and met her future husband while she was on the road. When asked what gave her enough confidence to marry an American, she replied, “I guess, love . . . I thought he was wonderful and I was happy with him. And he treated

---

143 Ibid.
144 Ibid.
me so lovely and took care of me." Australian war bride, Jackie Hansen shared a similar experience. After dating for less than a year, Hansen agreed to marry her husband because, "Well, he was just the nicest person I’d ever dated. And the way he treated me, and his manners, and all those things that you value, he had. Course, I had feelings about going all that way far from home. But he promised my parents I could go back and I did. I had quite a few trips back there." As Hansen pointed out, distance was a concern, but her husband’s reassurances that she would be able to return home allowed her to take a chance with him. From Hansen’s perspective, the love she had for her husband was enough to carry her to the United States.

These wartime love affairs blossomed quickly and effortlessly. Czechoslovakian war bride Ruth Smith described her first meeting with her husband as “a love story.” Smith recalled meeting her husband for the first time: “my brother introduced to me to this man, and he looked at me and I looked at him, and wow. We connected right then and there . . . we danced and we talked and my brother practically disappeared after awhile.” Smith and her future husband experienced an immediate connection that evolved into a romantic love affair. However, when asked how she had enough confidence to marry him, Smith replied, “Well, it was just a shot in the dark, let’s put it that way.” Smith’s mother had sincere apprehension about her daughter marrying an American, “She knew if I married him, she would lose me. So there was some tense

---

145 Kat Hartman, interview by Courtney Belville Skinner, tape recording and transcript, 9 December 2009, *Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides*, Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
146 Hansen, interview, 6 December 2009.
147 Smith, interview, 11 December 2009.
148 Ibid.
moments before we solved the problem.” Ultimately, Ruth Smith’s feelings for her future husband outweighed her mother’s apprehension; she married her husband in a civil ceremony in Prague.

Aside from love, what other factors influenced this life-changing decision? Certainly, the United States shone bright with opportunity compared to the war-ravaged landscapes of other parts of the world. Might the prospect of social prosperity have factored into the decision to marry and immigrate? While each war bride’s experience was different, it appears that socio-economic opportunity was a consideration for some women. Filipino war bride, Nina Edillo met her American husband after the Japanese occupation. Edillo witnessed horrific tragedy during wartime, and her family nearly faced certain death at the hands of the Japanese. After Edillo fell in love with her American husband, her parents encouraged the marriage because, “He could take care of me and love me . . . At that time, unemployment was so high in the Philippines, there’s nothing. So mom said, ‘Either you don’t get married, or if you do get married, marry somebody who can provide for you.’” Edillo married for love, but socio-economic conditions were a consideration.

Postwar Life in the United States

Postwar living in the United States was an adjustment for the war brides. They immigrated alone, and immediately became part of their husband’s family and social network. Jackie Hansen was among the war brides who had an extremely positive

---

149 Ibid.
150 Edillo, interview, 16 December 2009.
experience. Hansen remembers being warmly received by everyone she came in contact with, “And his parents here, his family here, they were very nice to me. And so, I was just welcomed everywhere with their friends. I wasn’t like an outsider.” While Hansen received a warm welcome by her husband’s family and friends, not all women were so fortunate. Both Smith and Haslam found that their mother-in-laws disapproved of them. According to Smith, her mother-in-law disliked her because “I stole her one and only child, and a son on top of that. That was a very, very difficult situation at first.” Haslam felt that the relationship with her mother-in-law was strained because, “I wasn’t the kind of girl she wanted him to marry. Of course, the fact that he met and married me abroad, she didn’t have a chance to have any say.” Edith came from a large family in England, and found that, “That was the one thing I did miss, that I didn’t have any family. But . . . I just accepted it.” Certainly, family (or the lack thereof) impacted each woman’s ability to adjust to her new life.

In addition to family, domesticity proved to be a difficult adjustment for some women. Italian war bride, Francesca Stewart was born into an aristocratic Italian family, and spent her youth being cared for by a governess. Her mother was a regular presence throughout her childhood, however she did not perform domestic duties, such as cooking, laundry, feeding, and diaper changing (the domestic help completed these tasks). After Stewart immigrated to the United States, she assumed the position of middle-class domestic housewife. This was a big change in socio-economic status—one that has taken
her a lifetime to adjust to. Francesca remembers those early years in the United States, “The first three years was very hard. We found an apartment in New York, I had two baby, one-year-old, three-year-old, a house and a husband to take care of. All by myself. . . Even today, after sixty-four years, I’m not used to it. I tried to do my best . . . I live in America, I live like an American.”155 Stewart not only faced the challenge of adapting to life in a new country, she had to learn how to function as a domestic housewife and mother. Yet, despite these challenges, she worked hard to acculturate to domestic standards of living in America.

Social groups and clubs were a place for war brides to establish networks outside the home. Soon after her arrival, Haslam quickly became involved in church and community groups, such as the St. Anne’s Guild. Her husband was a member of the Optimist Club, and Haslam joined the club’s wives group, which met for lunches and fundraising activities; she even served as the president for a year. Her husband was also a member of the Elk’s Club, and Haslam remembers joining in ladies’ activities there. Edith felt welcomed by the small town atmosphere where “everybody knew everybody.” She remembers that she always felt welcome, and never felt as though people resented her for coming to their town. Haslam was easily accepted by these groups, and was amazed by how friendly and happy-go-lucky Americans were in comparison to how reserved the British had been.

Adjusting to life in the United States took initiative and persistence, but in time, the war brides embraced American culture as their own. When asked if she ever

considered moving back to Czechoslovakia, Smith replied, “I loved the country and I miss a lot of things, I still do, but I never want to move there. I’m just Americanized Annie.” The war brides all pursued American citizenship, some shortly after immigrating, others much later in life. According to Haslam, her own English cultural influences have diminished with the passage of time, “Well, I think over the years, I have slipped away from those, and have become more Americanized all the time. I’m sure that when I first came over here, I was trying to live the way I had lived in England, well I think that is long since gone.”156 While some traditions have been lost, the war brides held fast to some aspects of their cultural heritage. Cooking is one way that these women carried forward their old traditions in their new country. Haslam, Smith and Stewart all took pride in preparing traditional dishes in their American homes, such as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, svickova, and handmade ravioli. These traditions speak to each war bride’s foreign heritage—a past that is distant, but not forgotten.

Looking back, the war brides do not regret their decision to marry and immigrate to the United States. Edillo shared fond remembrances about her early courtship and marriage, “I was barely eighteen when we got married in December, because my birthday is February. But he asked my mom and dad if he could court me, and my mom said, ‘Well he is a mature man. He’ll take care of you.’ Then of course he promised, ‘I’ll take good care of her, I’ll love her, I’ll cherish her’ . . . Well, that’s how it was, I never regretted it.” Similarly, when asked if she made the right decision coming to the United States, Stewart replied, “Well, I never regretted marrying my husband. I could never

156 Haslam, interview, 13 December 2009.
regret that.”

Despite the challenges they faced, the war brides found that love was enough to carry them through. Reflecting upon what she cherished most about being a war bride, Hansen concluded, “Oh, my husband. I really do, because we were great. We were good friends, you know, as well as loved each other. He’d do anything for me, and I’d do anything for him. It was just an ideal marriage to me.” These are the memories that war brides hold most dear, defining the legacy of the World War II war bride experience.

Important Considerations

While these six narratives represent successful marital unions, not all war bride stories ended up this way. After the war, abandonment, divorce, and death kept some war brides from having a “happy ending.” It must be noted that all six war brides remained married until their husbands passed away. The author met the majority of her interview candidates at the World War II War Bride’s Association. War brides who experienced abandonment or divorce may have been less interested in associating themselves with this type of social group. Therefore, the author’s pool of potential candidates was derived from a group of women who shared an overwhelmingly positive experience as war brides.

158 Hansen, interview, 6 December 2009.
159 Francesca Stewart’s husband was alive at the time of the interview.
Last Thoughts

Overall, the war brides interviewed for *Journey of Love* adapted very well to life in the United States. As wives of American servicemen, they were treated as citizens before they arrived upon U.S. soil. Within a few years of immigrating to the United States, many of these women became housewives and mothers, fulfilling the domestic ideals of the 1950s. Yet, adjusting to life in the United States was not always easy; it required a great amount of persistence and determination to start a new life with their American husbands. While the war brides assimilated well into American culture, these women held fast to some of their old traditions, carrying them forward in their new country.

Today, World War II war bride immigration has been largely forgotten in the American memory. Arguably, this is largely because these war brides were viewed as “invisible immigrants.” As the wives of American citizens, they were not perceived as “foreigners,” but rather were treated as Americans before and after they arrived in the United States. Yet despite their “invisibility,” the histories and life experiences of these women were just as real. War bride immigration must be realized and not forgotten; these women’s stories and experiences help us more clearly understand United States immigration history in terms of its past, present, and future. Although a cloak of invisibility has thinly veiled these women’s histories, *Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides* hopes to have uncovered some of these stories and experiences, so that they may be recognized for their impact on our collective American past.
APPENDIX A

War Bride Handout
My name is Courtney Skinner, and I am a graduate student at California State University, Sacramento. My grandmother, Edith Haslam, is a World War II British war bride. She met and married my American G.I. grandfather during the war, and immigrated to Santa Cruz, California in 1946.

I am looking for World War II war brides to interview for my Master’s Thesis Project.

• Interviews will last approximately 1-2 hours, and will include questions pertaining to your childhood, your memories of WWII, your immigration experience, and your life in the United States.

• Interviews will be scheduled and conducted in a quiet place, such as your very own home!

• This is not a test, and there are no “right” or “wrong” answers. My objective is simply to record personal histories and preserve them for future generations.

• If you have previously recorded your history, I ask that you still consider meeting with me for an interview. The more we record and document these stories, the more they become part of the public memory.

If you have any questions or are interested in scheduling an interview, please feel free to contact me by phone, e-mail or standard mail:

[Contact information]
APPENDIX B

Confirmation Letter
Dear Participant,

I am delighted that you are willing to participate as an interview subject for the World War II War Brides Oral History Project, being coordinated by myself for the fulfillment of my Masters degree at California State University, Sacramento. I am very excited at the prospect of preserving your memories in this tape-recorded interview.

As we discussed on the telephone, the interview is scheduled for [Date and Time] at [Location]. The questions I have prepared will focus on your own personal life experiences, including your family background, your experiences during World War II, your immigration experience, and your life in the United States. You do not need to worry about “preparing” for the interview or recalling specific dates.

I will bring tape-recording equipment to the interview, and we will need to find a relatively quiet spot in your home to conduct the interview. I expect the interview will take approximately 90 minutes or so, and it would ideal if we could have an uninterrupted period of time to conduct the interview one-on-one. I will also bring an interview agreement form for you to sign, which gives your permission for the tape-recorded interview to be conducted and for the tapes to be donated to a local repository.

Again, thank you for agreeing to offer your time and memories for this project. If you have any immediate questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at home [Phone Number] or on my cell phone [Phone Number].

Sincerely,

Courtney Belville Skinner
Public History Graduate Student
California State University, Sacramento
APPENDIX C

Oral History Release Form
Oral History Release Form

In consideration of the recording and preservation of my oral history interview, I hereby grant, assign, and transfer to the Department of Special Collections and University Archives, California State University, Sacramento, all rights, including all literary and property rights unless restricted as noted below to publish, duplicate, or otherwise use and dispose of the recording(s) and/or transcribed interview(s) conducted on _______________________________.

This includes the rights of publication in electronic form, such as placement on the Internet/Web for access by that medium. I hereby give the above mentioned Department the right to distribute the recording(s) and/or transcription to any other libraries and educational institutions for scholarly and educational uses and purposes.

Note any restrictions below:
APPENDIX D

Interview Questions
Sample Interview Questions:
Great Britain

Introduction

This is Courtney Skinner,
I’m with [Participant] at [Location].
It is [Date].
I will be interviewing [Participant] about her experiences as [Country of Origin] World War II war bride. This is Tape 1, Side A.

Section I: Family Background & Childhood

1. Let’s begin by talking a little bit about your background. Where were you born and when?

2. Tell me about your mother. When and where was she born?

3. And how about your father. When and where was he born?

4. Do you have any siblings? If so, can you tell me their names and birth years?

5. What was your relationship like with your siblings?

6. Tell me about where you grew up. What was it like there?

7. How did your parents earn a living?

8. Can you describe a typical day in the life of your mother? How about your father?

9. Can you tell me what the school system was like in England when you were a child?

10. When and where did you begin school? (Name of Elementary School)

11. What is the highest level of education you received?

12. When you reflect upon your early years, what did you enjoy most about your childhood in England?
Section II: World War II

So let’s begin talking about your experiences during World War II…

13. About how old were you when Great Britain declared war on Germany (9/3/39)? Where were you living at the time?

14. How did the early years of the war affect your everyday life?

15. How about wartime rationing? What kinds of things did you have to go without?

16. How would you describe your social life during this time? What did you do for fun?

17. What fears/concerns did you have at the time?

18. How were you affected by the German air raids? Can you describe what it was like during an air raid? Did you fear your life was in danger?

19. The government called women to duty to aid in the war effort on the “home front”. Did you assume a wartime job or position? Please describe your duties and responsibilities.

20. How did women working during wartime change gender roles? Did you notice a change in male/female social behavior?

Section III: American GI’s in England

Now let’s begin talking about the American GI’s arrival in England.

21. By the time the United States officially entered the war on the Western Front (Nov 1942), Great Britain had been at war for nearly three years. Tell me what is was like when the American GIs began arriving in England… How did this change the social atmosphere across the country?

22. What was your reaction to the arrival of the GIs?

23. How did the American GIs differ from British men? (Personality, dress, etc).

24. Were women encouraged or discouraged from interacting with the GIs? By whom?
25. How did your parents feel about the GIs?

26. Had you seen many American movies prior to the GIs arrival? Did this have any bearing on how you imagined the United States? How did the GIs compare, looks and personality wise, to the American movie stars?

27. Did you to date much, either British or Americans?

28. So let’s talk about your “future” husband… What branch of the service was he in?

29. What was his name?

30. How old was he and where was he from?

31. How did he end up in the service? Did he enlist voluntarily or was he drafted?

32. Do you know how he ended up in England? Had he served elsewhere, or was this his first destination?

Section IV: Courtship & Marriage

Now let’s begin talking how you met your husband…

33. So tell me how you first met…

34. What was your first impression of him upon meeting?

35. Where did you go on dates?

36. What was the nature of your courtship? How long did it last? Was it interrupted at times because of his military service?

37. What did your parents think of him? Did they approve?

38. What made you fall in love with him?

39. Did he propose? What happened?

40. During your courtship, what did he tell you about his life in the United States? (Where he grew up, his childhood, the geography/climate, etc.)

41. What about this sounded different than where you grew up in England?
42. What was it about him that gave you enough confidence to consider moving to the United States?

43. How long was he stationed in England? Did he eventually need to serve elsewhere?

44. Did wartime conditions cause you to move forward with your wedding plans more quickly than you would have done otherwise?

45. Where did you acquire your wedding gown? How did wartime conditions affect your wedding plans?

46. Was it difficult for your husband to acquire time off/permission for marriage from the military?

47. Tell me about your wedding… When and where was it held?

48. Who was in attendance?

49. Did you have time for a honeymoon? If so, where did you go?

50. What was the reaction to your marriage? Did you ever receive any negativity from family, friends or strangers for marrying an American?

51. Did you know of any other English women marrying American GIs?

52. How long was it between the time of your wedding and the end of the war? (Germany surrendered, May 7, 1945 and the war ended August 14, 1945 when Japan declared surrender over a radio broadcast. September 2, 1945 (official V-J Day) when Japan officially signed surrender.)

53. Did you see your husband after the end of the war? What kind of correspondence did you have with him?

Section V: Immigration Experience & Life in the United States

Now let’s talk about your immigration to the United States…

54. How did you receive passage to the United States? Please describe this process. Was it easy or difficult?

55. Do you remember the day you left England? How did you feel leaving family and friends behind? What day did you embark?
56. Please describe your journey from England to the United States, including any trials and challenges you may have faced (by ship, train, etc…).

57. Where did you first land upon arriving in the United States?

58. What were your first impressions of the United States? How did this compare to what you had imagined?

59. Where did you finally reconnect with your husband (location)?

60. What was it like seeing your husband for the first time on American soil? Did meeting him on American soil feel different than when were in England?

61. Did you feel like you were getting to know each other all over again? How was it different being together out of wartime?

62. Where did you and your husband live? Is this where he grew up?

63. Tell me about your in-laws and other family in the United States. How did they treat you upon arrival?

64. Did you feel well received by the American public?

65. Did you ever feel discriminated against?

66. Were you able to make friends?

67. What did your husband do for work?

68. Did you stay home?

69. Was there a clear division of labor between yourself and your husband in the household?

70. Did you get involved in any social groups or clubs?

71. Did you keep in touch with any war bride friends? Did you know of any in your area?

72. Did you and your husband have any children?

73. How long after your arrival to the United States were your children born?
74. What were those first years like living in the United States?

75. What was difficult for you to adapt to? What came easily?

76. How did your expectations prior to immigrating meet the reality of your life in the United States?

77. What cultural influences do you think you brought with you from England? (Cooking, ways of speech, family/holiday traditions, etc).

78. Did you pursue American citizenship? When?

79. Did you keep in close contact with your family/friends in England?

80. What do you miss most about England?

81. How many times have you returned to visit? Did any of those visits include your husband?

82. When did your husband pass away?

83. Did you ever consider moving back to England after his passing?

84. Do you consider yourself an “American”?

85. Reflecting upon the past sixty years, do you feel you made the right decision coming to the United States?

86. What memories do you cherish most about your experience as a World War II war bride?

87. Is there anything you’d like to add?

THANK YOU!!!
APPENDIX E

Jackie Hansen Interview
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

M.A. Thesis Project
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Interview

with

Jackie Hansen

December 6, 2009
Santa Cruz, California

By Courtney Belville Skinner
California State University, Sacramento
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

Interview History for Oral History of
Jackie Hansen

Interviewer’s Name: Courtney Belville Skinner

Interview Date and Location: The interview was conducted on December 6, 2009, at Mrs. Hansen’s home in Santa Cruz, California.

Interviewee’s Country of Origin: Australia

Context Notes: Mrs. Hansen is an Australian World War II war bride. The interview was recorded on audiocassette tapes and a digital recording device. Courtney Belville Skinner preformed the interview transcription. Verbal ticks such as “you know” and “so” were largely omitted from the transcript. Minor editing of the interview was done to remove false starts. The tape recorder was stopped once when Mrs. Hansen left the room to get a photograph. The transcript was not sent back to the interviewee.

Tapes and Interview Records: The original audiocassette tape recording, CD copy of the audio files, and full transcript of the interview are held at the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
SKINNER: This is Courtney Belville Skinner. I’m with Jackie Hansen at her home in Santa Cruz, California. It is December 6, 2009. I will be interviewing Jackie about her experiences as an Australian World War II war bride. This is Tape 1, Side A.

Okay, Jackie, so let’s begin talking a little bit about your background. When and where were you born?

HANSEN: I was born in Perth, Western Australia, on June 2nd, 1924.

SKINNER: And can you tell me a little bit about your mother? Do you know when and where she was born?

HANSEN: I beg your pardon.

SKINNER: Your mother, do you know when and where your mother was born?

HANSEN: She was born in Western Australia, too.

SKINNER: Great, and do you about what year she might have been born?

HANSEN: Oh, gosh, I don’t know.

SKINNER: That’s okay. How about your father?

HANSEN: He was born in Adelaide, and then came over to Perth when he was a child.

SKINNER: So you said it was Western Australia, and where was the specific city or town that you were born in?

HANSEN: Perth.
SKINNER: Perth, okay. And did you have any siblings?
HANSEN: Yes, I had a sister and a brother.
SKINNER: And what was their age in relation to you?
HANSEN: My sister was about ten years older, and my brother seven years older.
SKINNER: So you were the youngest of your family?
HANSEN: Um-hum.
SKINNER: Could you tell me about Perth, where you grew up. What it’s like there.
HANSEN: Well, the tourists tell me it’s the most beautiful city in Australia. It’s on the Swan River, and there’s a lot of boating, and it’s a lovely place. Swimming and . . . you know. And that’s where the Catalinas, the US Navy Catalinas came in and landed there on the river.
SKINNER: How did your parents earn a living?
HANSEN: My father was a mechanical engineer. Worked in an office.
SKINNER: And your mother, what did she do?
HANSEN: Well, she was a housewife.
SKINNER: And so could you describe a typical day in the life of your mother? What kind of tasks she normally did throughout the day?
HANSEN: Oh, dear. Taking care of us, and we had a housekeeper too. But she was always busy, you know. We didn’t have a lot of mechanical things that day to help.
SKINNER: So she kept very busy with cooking and . . .
HANSEN: Yeah, cooking and course the housekeeper did some cooking too, but she’d do a lot of things with us. Take us different places that we had to go.

SKINNER: So what kind of activities were you involved in?


SKINNER: And your father, did he work Monday through or Friday, or what was his work schedule like?

HANSEN: Oh, he worked five days a week, Monday through Friday.

SKINNER: So was there a clear division of labor between your mother and father?

HANSEN: No, he had his work and . . .

SKINNER: So when and where did you begin school?

HANSEN: It was at Perth College, private girls school. And I guess kindergarten and graduated from there. Then I wanted to go to a fashion design school, and my father wanted me to continue with school. But anyhow, he had a friend who was a retired professor, and he would come two nights a week and tutor me, and then I was able to go to the fashion design school. So we both won. [Laughs]

SKINNER: So how many years did children typically attend school in Australia?

HANSEN: Let’s see, I think we had a little longer school year than they do here. But I think they can leave school at fourteen if they want to. But I went on longer than that, and then course I had my tutor, and I could have taken an
exam, and I think it was a degree but I didn’t like exams, so I didn’t take it.

SKINNER: At the fashion design school, what things did you study specifically?

HANSEN: Well, we learned how to make patterns and fabrics. Well, I don’t know, we’d make the patterns. It was interesting. I loved it.

SKINNER: So you really liked clothing design?

HANSEN: Um-hum, yeah.

SKINNER: So in today’s standards, what is the highest level of education that you received?

HANSEN: Oh gosh, I don’t know. About the same that was here, eighteen. Because you get your junior certificate and then your leaving certificate, which is the highest one there. So I imagine it’s about eighteen. I can’t really remember.

SKINNER: When you reflect upon your early years, do you have a favorite childhood memory, or something that you enjoyed most about your childhood in Australia?

HANSEN: I enjoyed a lot of it. [Laughs] But I know I used to love to go up and visit my aunt or stay with her, because they had a river nearby and she taught me to swim. And it was very nice there. And it was nice at home too, you know. And I don’t know what else to say.

SKINNER: Where did your aunt live?
HANSEN: She lived at Bassendean, which was outside of Perth on the suburbs. She was wonderful.

SKINNER: So did you participate in swimming competitions later on?

HANSEN: No, I didn’t. I could have, but I didn’t. Cause our school had a swimming pool. And a lot of the girls, you know it was a girls’ school, and they liked that. I didn’t, I liked diving. And I hear I was very good at it.

SKINNER: So let’s begin talking about your experiences during World War II.

HANSEN: It was frightening because up in the northwest the Japanese bombed Darwin. And we also had ships going up and down our west coast. Some of them were going over to get oil, you know. But I don’t know what else they were doing on our coast. And then, I was in town one day in Perth shopping, and here are all these sailors there. And so I said to someone, “Do you know where the sailors came from with the funny white hats?” And the Americans had arrived. And so they were fine. But I remember that Australian beer is a lot stronger than American beer, and there were a lot of drunk sailors. [Laughs] But when they got used to that, they were fine. We didn’t have any trouble.

SKINNER: So on September 3, 1939 Great Britain declared war on Germany. And as a result, Australia was also considered at war.

HANSEN: Oh, yes, all our military was over there.

SKINNER: Right.
HANSEN: So we didn’t have much in the way of defense. And so when the Americans came we were very thankful.

SKINNER: About how old were you when the war officially first started?

HANSEN: Oh gosh, I’m 85 now, so subtract something. [Laughs] 1924 I was born…

SKINNER: About 15?

HANSEN: Um-hum, yeah.

SKINNER: How did the early years of the war affect your everyday life?

HANSEN: Well, we were on food rationing, which was adequate. Because we were sending food to our troops, and so we had to cut back. But we weren’t hungry or anything like that. But we were careful.

SKINNER: So what kind of foods were rationed?

HANSEN: Oh, well I know butter. And we’re tea drinkers, and you know, tea. And well, whatever they needed. And we had ration books for fabrics and food and clothing.

SKINNER: What fears and concerns did you have at the time? And what threat did Japan pose to Australia’s safety?

HANSEN: I beg your pardon, say it again.

SKINNER: What fears did you have at time? Especially about Japan, and what threat they posed to Australia.

HANSEN: Well, we were of course a little frightened. They sent a miniature submarine into Sydney harbor. And of course we knew they were all around us on the coast after they bombed Darwin. It was pretty serious.
SKINNER: What do you remember about the day you received news that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

HANSEN: Well, it happened somewhere around the same time as when we were bombed. So no, it was bad. I always wondered why did they do that? Well, they were taking over small areas and they were concerned that the Americans were going to stop them.

SKINNER: Did you ever fear that Japanese attack on Australia was imminent?

HANSEN: Well, no, I don’t feel that way, but it was frightening. It could happen.

SKINNER: Was that the general feeling in Australia at the time, that everyone was frightened of the Japanese?

HANSEN: Well, see all over the city there were air raid shelters built, and we were told that if anything happens go down in there. And that was frightening.

SKINNER: Do you remember the day that Darwin was bombed, on February 19, 1942?

HANSEN: Well, I remember hearing about it and how frightening it was, but that’s a long time ago. But it was very frightening.

SKINNER: I’m not as familiar with the geography of Australia, but how far is Darwin from where you were living?

HANSEN: Well, it’s like from Northern California down to San Diego or further. Australia is quite a large area.

SKINNER: So how did Australia respond to the attack on Darwin? What was the collective feeling and response to the war and Australia’s future freedom?
HANSEN: Well, they were concerned about the residents there. And I know they were moving them out, away. They moved further south.

SKINNER: So the further south in Australia was considered safer?

HANSEN: Oh yeah, well, it’s all desert in the middle you know. There was nothing there for the Japanese to really go after.

SKINNER: So who was moved away? Were children?

HANSEN: Well, families. I think some of the men stayed, but I think the postmaster, he was killed. I’m not sure quite about that, but there was something about the postmaster and his family, and they moved further down south. But no, that was really frightening.

SKINNER: Do you remember the subsequent Japanese air raids? Did anything come close to where you were?

HANSEN: No.

SKINNER: How would you describe your social life during this time? What did you do for fun?

HANSEN: Well, I still went swimming and was with friends, and things like that. Because we didn’t have the Japanese right there, you know. And I think that parents tried to assure their children that everything was alright, it’ll be alright. And of course then when the Americans came there, with the funny white hats. [Laughs] They were very nice, polite and of course girls started dating them. And all our men were overseas. And it was very nice, a lot of marriages.
SKINNER: Did you take up any job or position in aid of the domestic war effort in Australia?

HANSEN: No, what do they call it, not the war department, but anyhow . . . I got a notice that I was to go to work at the store in the men’s department, seeing that all the men were gone. And there were two men in the department, and so I was the third. And I outsold them, and they got upset. And so they took me and put me in the fabric department. [Laughs] Well, I would go up to a customer and ask them if I could help them, and the men would stand there. So who’s going to serve them?

SKINNER: Was that at a local department store?

HANSEN: Yes, it was like Penny’s or something like that.

SKINNER: Do you remember the name of it?

HANSEN: The big one is Bonds (phonetic). It will come back maybe. Anyway, I stayed there until I got married.

SKINNER: So how did gender roles change during the war? As you were saying, you were sent to work in the men’s department, so did other women assume jobs that men traditionally held?

HANSEN: Oh, I think some of them did. I don’t remember, but I remember sort of things that they took over because there was no one to do it, you know. But it was the Manpower Department that sent me to the department store.

SKINNER: Okay, so now we’ll begin talking about the American GI’s arrival in Australia. So you were mentioning the men with the funny hats . . .
HANSEN: They were the Americans, we hadn’t seen those kind of hats on sailors before.

SKINNER: How did their arrival to Australia change the social atmosphere in the country?

HANSEN: Well, people were inviting them to their homes for dinners. They made friends with them. They were very thankful they were there; they appreciated them.

SKINNER: So the general consensus was that the Americans were welcome?

HANSEN: Oh, very welcome.

SKINNER: And how did you feel about the G.I.s arriving?

HANSEN: Oh, it was okay, you know. And then a friend of mine was dating a Naval officer who was also a pilot, and his friend, well the four of them were going out with this girl, then she couldn’t go. So my friend came to the house and asked if I would go instead. And I said, “No I don’t like blind dates. I had one and it was terrible.” I said, “I don’t like them.” “Oh but he’s so nice” and she kept on praising him, and my mother’s listening into it. Finally she said, “Well, look dear, you go and if don’t like it, Daddy will come and get you.” We went to a Navy ball, and it was formal, so I had a pink lace dress and it was just lovely. I met him, and he told me later, he said his mouth fell open. [Laughs] And so, after that, every time he was off duty he’d call or come get me, pick me up, and take me to movies or down to the BOQ, Bachelor Officer Quarters, or maybe to
dinner or something. So he grew on me. [Laughs] I was just under twenty-one. Course, at eighteen you couldn’t get married then, but I was under twenty-one, and so my parents had to approve. My mother just thought he was the nicest fellow, you know. And so did my dad, but my mother said ‘well, alright.’ And my dad needed a little more urging, and he said ‘okay.’ So we were married in Perth College Chapel, which is my school.

SKINNER: So upon your first meeting with him, how did you feel? I mean, his mouth fell open, so what about yours? [Laughs]

HANSEN: Well, I thought he was very nice. He was nice looking. He was good, he was polite and considerate and I liked it. And he grew on me. If you wait here I’ll get a photograph.

SKINNER: Okay, sure. I’m going to stop the tape while Jackie gets a photograph.

[Stop tape]

[Start tape]

SKINNER: We’re back on. I’m looking at a photograph that Jackie brought out of she and her husband. When was this taken?

HANSEN: 1944.

SKINNER: What’s your husband’s name?

HANSEN: Lee, Lee Hansen.

SKINNER: He’s very handsome.

HANSEN: ‘Handsome Hansen’ they used to call him. [Laughs]
SKINNER: Boy, you were beautiful too.
HANSEN: Oh, thank you.
SKINNER: Very beautiful.
HANSEN: Well, I didn’t have the coupons to buy a wedding dress. And I had a hat that went with that.
SKINNER: Was this taken on your wedding day?
HANSEN: Yes.
SKINNER: So this is your wedding picture?
HANSEN: Yeah.
SKINNER: So your wearing a blue dress, it looks like. What was the length of it?
HANSEN: Oh no. Short.
SKINNER: Just below the knee?
HANSEN: Yes.
SKINNER: That’s beautiful, Jackie. Where would you like me to put it?
HANSEN: Wasn’t he good looking?
SKINNER: Oh, very handsome.
HANSEN: And such a good fellow. We had such a happy life together. Very happy.
SKINNER: Let’s go back a little bit. How did the American GI’s differ from the men in the Australian Military Force?
HANSEN: Well, the accent for one. And they were considerate and nice. But so were the Australian men, but from a different country, they’re just a little different in ways.

SKINNER: Had you dated Australian men prior to . . .

HANSEN: Oh yes.

SKINNER: Were the Americans more outgoing than the Australians?

HANSEN: No, I wouldn’t think so. But all our men were overseas. And then the Americans came, so we dated them. [Laughs]

SKINNER: So your parents obviously encouraged you to go on that date. So how did they feel about the arrival of the G.I.s?

HANSEN: Well, his friend and my friend, they had come to the house and met them and thought they were nice. And they were polite, considerate. And then, gosh, every time he was off duty he was there, or we’d go to the movies or do something. Couldn’t get rid of him. [Laughs] Thank goodness. We had a very, very happy life. We both liked the same things.

SKINNER: Do you feel the way your parents felt about their daughter dating an American GI was the same as how other parents felt about . . .

HANSEN: I don’t suppose they were all happy. Mine were concerned, because you know, Australia to here is a long way. But he promised them that I could go home and visit them when they wanted me to, which I did. And then, after he retired, the two of us went back and all my family and relatives
entertaining us and taking us places. Oh it was lovely. They liked him too.

SKINNER: Had you seen many American movies prior to the G.I.s arrival in Australia?

HANSEN: Oh, yes.

SKINNER: And how did the G.I.s that you met compare to what you’d seen in the movies?

HANSEN: Of course they weren’t in uniform in those days, in the movies. It was like Clark Gable and those, you know, way back. To me they were just men. You just don’t think of that. They entertained us, and Bing Crosby sang.

SKINNER: So let’s talk about Lee, your husband, a little bit. You already mentioned, but for the sake of the record on the tape, what branch of the service was he in?

HANSEN: I beg your pardon.

SKINNER: What branch of the service was he in?

HANSEN: Oh, he was in the Navy.

SKINNER: And did you say that he was in the Air Force?

HANSEN: No, he was a pilot in the Navy.

SKINNER: And how did he end up in the service? Did he enlist voluntarily?

HANSEN: No, he was going to San Jose State, and they had . . . he really wanted to fly so he went right away from the University, and signed up for the Navy.
And then he went home and told his parents what he’d done. But he did
not want to be in the Army, he wanted to fly. And he got his wish.

SKINNER: Do you know how he ended up in Australia?

HANSEN: Well, there were a lot of US men came into Australia for protection. We
didn’t have any defense. So we were thankful that they came. And course
Perth, having a big river there that the Catalina flying boats could land on,
but he also flew SBD dive-bombers. He’d tell me ‘Well, I’m going to be
gone for a week or ten days. ‘Where are you going?’ ‘I don’t know.’
Well, he knew. [Laughs] But then he’d come back. One time I asked
him, I said, ‘Did you ever bomb people?’ and he said ‘Oh, I didn’t see
anyone.’ He just couldn’t say that he’d killed people.

SKINNER: So he was actually stationed in Australia and from there he went off on
these missions?

HANSEN: Yeah, he was in Perth.

SKINNER: Do you remember the month and year that he first arrived?

HANSEN: Oh gosh, I don’t know. Because we were married December 7th, and I had
gone out with him for eight or ten months and he was there a little before
that. Well say, ten months before that.

SKINNER: So maybe January or February?

HANSEN: Um-hum.

SKINNER: And what the year on that, ‘44? Did you say?

HANSEN: December 7th, 1944 we were married.
SKINNER: Okay, so he might have arrived in January of ‘44 or February.

HANSEN: Um-hum, yeah.

SKINNER: Had he served elsewhere, or was Australia his first destination?

HANSEN: I think he was in Hawaii for awhile, and then from there they came to Australia.

SKINNER: Okay, I’m going to turn the tape so we don’t run out.

HANSEN: I mightn’t be quite accurate on there, but was about that. It’s been a long time ago to remember.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

SKINNER: So you told me how you first met Lee, it was a friend of yours. Was she dating . . .

HANSEN: No, she was dating his friend. And there was this ball, and he had the tickets and everything to go, and the girl he was to go with, who was her friend, she couldn’t go. So she asked if I would go. And she pressured me, because I didn’t want to go on a blind date again. And so my mother said, “Well go, and if you don’t like him” she says “call and Daddy will come get you.” So he didn’t come. [Laughs] But when they met him and got to know him they were very pleased about him.

SKINNER: Well, that was a fortunate turn of events that that other girl didn’t go on the date with him.
HANSEN: But she saw me the day before the date, and she said, “Take care of my boyfriend.” And I said, “Like he was my own.” [Laughs] And I did. It was funny.

SKINNER: So you told me a little bit about where you would go on dates. Where did Lee like to take you?

HANSEN: We’d go to a movie or something like that. And then at the BOQ, Bachelor Officer Quarters, I could go there to dinner with him. Oh, we’d go out to the beach, we have beautiful beaches there. And just things like that.

SKINNER: So what do you think made you fall in love with him?

HANSEN: Oh just the way he acted towards me, and polite to others too. He was a fine man, I think.

SKINNER: So tell me about when he proposed. What happened?

HANSEN: Proposed. I don’t know. He bought a ring, well he sent me to the jewelers to get the ring because he was busy. And so I did, and it was so hard to get anything. They’d sold out, couldn’t get more stock in. And it was this small one here. And he went to pick it up.

SKINNER: Oh, that’s beautiful.

HANSEN: But he wanted a bigger stone, but couldn’t do it.

SKINNER: Oh, well that’s beautiful, Jackie.

HANSEN: Uh-huh.

SKINNER: It’s wonderful that you still have the original ring.
HANSEN: Yes, and this was my mother’s engagement ring. She gave that to me.

SKINNER: So you two discuss the idea of getting married?

HANSEN: Not before that, I mean, we were just very close and cared about each other. We didn’t always care about being with others. We were satisfied. . . and that’s how we were through life. I mean, we had about four travel trailers. People want to go with us, well we have something all planned, and we get there and they’d say, “Oh, we don’t want to do that” so we felt we had to do what they wanted. So he said, “Let’s go by ourselves,” which we did. We both liked to play golf. We both liked to go fishing. We had a boat we’d take along with us. You know, it was just a good time.

SKINNER: During the time you were dating, what did he tell you about his life in the United States?

HANSEN: Oh, well, he told me about how he signed up when they were going to draft people and he was at the University. And he told me his parents had a ranch in Cupertino, and he told me about that. They were Danish. Oh, his father was Danish. And the Danish Lodge, I met those people and they were nice and welcomed me. Very nice people.

SKINNER: Where was he born, and where did he grow up?

HANSEN: In Perth.

SKINNER: Oh, I’m sorry, Lee, your husband.

HANSEN: He was born and raised in Cupertino.
SKINNER: And do you know what year he was born?

HANSEN: 1921.

SKINNER: So he was just about three years older than you?

HANSEN: Uh-huh.

SKINNER: So what was it about him that gave you enough confidence to consider marrying him since he lived back in the United States? [Laughs]

HANSEN: Well, he was just the nicest person I’d ever dated. And way he treated me, and his manners, and all those things that you value, he had. Course, I had feelings about going all that way far from home. But he promised my parents I could go back and I did. I had quite a few trips back there. But my mother wouldn’t come here because there were too many gangsters. She’d always heard about Al Capone and all those . . . [Laughs] But she let me come. [Laughs]

SKINNER: You must have had some fears though about moving to the United States away from your parents and everything.

HANSEN: Well, I felt that I could go home. And his parents here, his family here, they were very nice to me. And so, I was just welcomed everywhere with their friends. I wasn’t like an outsider.

SKINNER: Did the wartime conditions cause you to move forward with your wedding plans quicker than you would have done otherwise?

HANSEN: No, I don’t think so. But I didn’t have a wedding dress because of the war.
SKINNER: Yes, I was just going to ask you that.

HANSEN: People were borrowing them from friends and all that, you know.

SKINNER: How did you acquire your wedding gown?

HANSEN: I didn’t. I had that on in the wedding. That’s one of the wedding pictures.

SKINNER: Yes, it’s a beautiful dress. So is that something you had already?

HANSEN: No, we bought it, but it took a lot of coupons.

SKINNER: So how did the coupons work?

HANSEN: I forget how many you needed for a yard of material or something like that. And of course, food rationing, you were only allowed so much of anything. It was adequate. I remember I invited Lee to dinner, and this was when we were going together, and course we were stretching it, and I said to him, “Would you like some more” and my mother goes like this to me. [Laughs] Because there wasn’t anymore.

SKINNER: Did you make the dress? I guess you bought it pre-made . . .

HANSEN: No, I bought it. But it cost coupons and money. Shoes were rationed and everything was rationed.

SKINNER: Was it difficult for Lee to acquire time off? Permission to get married from the military?

HANSEN: Well, we were only gone four or five days on a honeymoon. And I had to go to the Consulate to get a permit, and I had to get a clearance from the police. And we had to get interviewed by our minister and his recommendation. What else? Seemed like I was always going
somewhere to get approval. But anyhow, that all worked out. Course he had to go on some of these things. And his commanding officer approved it cause he knew me. We made it, and I’m glad.

SKINNER: Did the US military, did they encourage these marriages between . . .

HANSEN: No. They didn’t encourage things.

SKINNER: So was it slightly difficult? Did they make it a little bit difficult for . . .

HANSEN: Well, you had to go through all these things. And if they were all approved, you could get married.

SKINNER: So you were married at Perth College Chapel?

HANSEN: Um-hum.

SKINNER: Who was in attendance at your wedding?

HANSEN: Well, my parents and an aunt, and the best man and my bridesmaid, and just three or four other people. People were busy and they couldn’t take time off because there wasn’t staffing where they worked. So not too many people could get time off.

SKINNER: And you said you went for a honeymoon for about four or five days. Where did you go?

HANSEN: Bunbury, which was south of Perth.

SKINNER: What is that place called again? Bun . . .

HANSEN: B-u-n-b-u-r-y.

SKINNER: Bunbury, okay. And what is it like there?
HANSEN: It’s a coast town, south. I’d been there before. It was very nice. We stayed in a hotel. It was good.

SKINNER: What was the public reaction to your marriage? Did you ever receive any negativity for marrying an American?

HANSEN: No.

SKINNER: So how long was Lee stationed in Australia? Because you were married December 7th of ’44.

HANSEN: I think about a year and a half.

SKINNER: So you were still able to stay together then?

HANSEN: Oh, yeah.

SKINNER: He didn’t have to leave for an extended period of time?

HANSEN: When he was transferred they sent him back here.

SKINNER: And when was he transferred? Would that be ’46?

HANSEN: ’45 or ’46, I don’t know. Say ’46. I was going to tell you something . . . It will come back.

SKINNER: When he was transferred back here, did you not see him again until you immigrated here to the United States?

HANSEN: Yeah, that’s right. See we’d hear all the time the war brides from the east coast were getting ships and going back. And there was nothing for us in Western Australia. So one time in the paper there was a notice from a city council member, Counselor Caddy (phonetic). And he said he wanted all the war brides to meet at the town hall on a certain time. So we all went,
and he told us, he said “I want you to go home and write to your husbands immediately, and tell them to write to their Congressmen and tell him that you want a ship for their wives.” So they did, and we got a ship. But it was coming back from Japan or something in the war zone; of course the war was over now.

So they sent the Ainsworth to Perth, or the Port of Fremantle, and so we were notified and course we were rushing around getting papers ready, and passports, everything. Anyhow, we got on board, course it was kind of sad with all the parents on the wharf. We left. We went to see our cabin and it had nineteen cots in it, two-decker cots. And there was no way to store anything, so we had suitcases under the beds and in the aisles. And you’d have to walk bunk to bunk to get in and out. And then one of the girls had a bright idea, she got some string and she tied it around a bolt in the bulkhead and hung it down and put a loop there and hung some clothes on. So we thought that was great, so we did that too. Well, the officer of the day came around [Laughs] and he looked and he said, “Stow this!” And one of the girls said, “Where?” Well, the next day they had found extra beds in bunks.

They had cabins with four bunks in them for people who had babies or children, see. So I was transferred to one that had babies, and I like babies and I cuddled and helped. So that worked out much, much better. It was a lot better. When we washed our clothes we did it all by
hand, and tried to hang it up in the cabin. [Laughs] Mostly underwear and things like that. And the Red Cross women were on board. There were two of them, and they were a big help. They helped us. I guess one of the ladies in the war brides group over in Campbell had one from England, and she called in the ship from hell. I didn’t feel that way, because once everything settled down, it was okay. It was hard leaving family for all of us. And some never saw their families again. But I did, I was very lucky.

SKINNER: When your husband was transferred back to the United States, he was in San Diego?

HANSEN: Down to San Diego.

SKINNER: And what was he doing in San Diego?

HANSEN: He never talked much about what he did, but he was doing some flying I know. I don’t think it was Catalinas. No, he was very mum about what they did, and that was good.

SKINNER: Did you have much correspondence with him once he was back in the United States?

HANSEN: Oh, yes, he wrote to me. We wrote back and forth. He was good.

SKINNER: I imagine that was hard, being apart after getting to be together for so long during the war, and then for him to leave.

HANSEN: Well, yeah, because it took over a year for me to get here. But it was a month coming from Western Australia here, and it wasn’t a very speedy ship, you know. [Laughs]
SKINNER: During your month long journey on the ship, you were telling me about some of the activities they had you do on board the ship. Was that just to keep you entertained and occupied at the time?

HANSEN: But there wasn’t too much to do. That was when we crossed the equator. That’s always a big deal on ships, if you cross the equator. That girl looking for Neptune, and then the cutting their hair “Oh no! No no!” It wasn’t until after they realized that they weren’t having their hair cut. They did such funny things those fellows. And the captain was there watching while all this went on. And I think he was entertained. They didn’t do anything to me. I didn’t come up there. [Laughs]

SKINNER: So where did you first land upon arriving to the United States?

HANSEN: San Francisco.

SKINNER: So by this point, Lee was back . . .

HANSEN: He was in San Diego when I arrived, and his parents came to San Francisco. And they were looking, and I was blond and they kept looking. There was one blond, and the first one they saw, his father said, “Oh they would marry someone that looked like that.” But she had long blond hair. So I was looking and I saw them, and finally I called out “Hansen!” “Yes!” They were able to come onboard and help with suitcases and things. It was quite a year, him being away, and wondering, and winding back and forth. But I missed him very much. No, he was very good. I
think we had an excellent marriage because we really enjoyed each other. Then we had a perfect daughter.

SKINNER: It sounds like you had a very welcome reception from your in laws when you arrived to the United States. Were you nervous about how that might go?

HANSEN: No, I just didn’t think about that. They met me, and going back to Cupertino we stopped and had lunch and talked. I think all of Cupertino was waiting for me. [Laughs] And then going to the Danish Lodge on Lodge Night, I went and met a lot of people. His grandmother was a sweetheart. She was a tiny lady. You know, Danish people have the largest babies in the world. She was shorter than I am, and she’d have thirteen-pound babies. Can you imagine that? But she had a lot, four or five I guess. Thirteen pounds, oh. The way she cooked anything. Someone brought a dish or something to the family (inaudible) a meat dish, and the gravy was too thin. She says, “Oh Grandma, look,” and she said “Don’t worry.” She got the Wheaties box, put a few handfuls of this, stirred it up, and it all thickened up. Nothing bothered her. She was just a wonderful little lady.

SKINNER: When were you finally able to reconnect with your husband?

HANSEN: It was in the summer. Well, he came up when he knew that I was here, and he got time off. Then we drove back to San Diego. What’s the name
of the place down there, San Diego? It’s a Navy . . . Ensenada? Is Ensenada down there?

SKINNER: I believe so.

HANSEN: I think that’s where we were. And then I got down there, there was a friend of mine from home. She was married to an American seaman, too.

SKINNER: Was this an old friend, or someone you had met recently?

HANSEN: Oh no, I’d known quite awhile.

SKINNER: Do you remember what month you arrived in the United States?

HANSEN: I think it was summertime.

SKINNER: So it wasn’t too long before Lee drove up and you were able to reconnect with him?

HANSEN: Oh yeah, he drove up as soon as he could get his time off. It took a few days, and he drove up.

SKINNER: So did you two live down in San Diego for a little while?

HANSEN: Just a short time. Well, he did some flying down there. I think he wanted to get out. The war was over and he applied for discharge. A commercial airline asked him, and he said no. And I said “Why not?” and he said be like driving a bus. You go there, you turn around, and you come back. Back and forth. I never thought of it that way. But after flying for the Navy, it wouldn’t be exciting like the Navy would be.

SKINNER: So what did he do for work?

HANSEN: Me?
SKINNER: What did he do for work after he left the Navy?
HANSEN: Well, he came back here.
SKINNER: To Santa Cruz?
HANSEN: Well, we were in Cupertino. And he is uncle owned an electrical business. And he asked Lee if he’d come and work for him. And my husband, I never saw anyone work math like he did. He looked at it and had the answer. And there’s a lot of estimating with electrical work. So he ended up, he was the foreman there. And he liked it. And he did well.
SKINNER: And what was that business called?
HANSEN: Frank Carol Electric.
SKINNER: Frank Carol Electric?
HANSEN: Electric.
SKINNER: Did he do that for his entire career?
HANSEN: He stayed there until he retired.
SKINNER: When did you move to Santa Cruz?
HANSEN: I think ’46.
SKINNER: Did you feel well received by the American public?
HANSEN: Did I feel what?
SKINNER: Well received and welcomed by the American public?
HANSEN: Yes, yes. Well a lot of people were curious too. No, we were treated well. I think all the girls were.
SKINNER: Did you ever feel discriminated against?
HANSEN: Oh, no.

SKINNER: Did your expectations of the United States meet up to the reality once you arrive here?

HANSEN: I don’t know. I just knew what he’d told me about the area and things like that. And I didn’t believe that like the movies that it was all going to be like that. No, I think he described it the way it is.

SKINNER: What brought you from Cupertino to actually living in Santa Cruz?

HANSEN: I beg your pardon.

SKINNER: What brought you from living in Cupertino?

HANSEN: Oh, his uncle.

SKINNER: So did the uncle own the business on this side of the hill?

HANSEN: Oh yes, it was down by River Street. Frank Carol Electric. Very busy place. He did the estimating down there for a long time. Alfred Hitchcock, he did some work for Alfred.

SKINNER: Really?

HANSEN: Oh, Alfred Hitchcock used to live out near Scotts Valley area. You didn’t know that?

SKINNER: You know, I don’t think I did.

HANSEN: Oh, he had a home up there. And he treated my husband well. There were a couple other stars too. I can’t remember. Cause I’d hear him say he was at Mr. Hitchcock’s doing such and such. I can’t remember who the others were.
SKINNER: I’m going to start another tape, so I’m going to end here, and we’ll start up again in a minute.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

SKINNER: So you were just saying that the American people were very nice to you.

HANSEN: Yes, they were. They were very nice. Course the Australians had been very nice to their men, too. But they were very nice, especially the relatives. They were very nice.

SKINNER: Do you feel the war forged a stronger relationship between the United States and Australia?

HANSEN: Oh yes. No doubt the Japanese would have come in. We felt safer with the Americans there, much safer.

SKINNER: So your husband worked full time for Frank Carol Electric as the foreman, so what did you do when you first arrived here?

HANSEN: Well, in those days we had to hang out the clothes on the line. And when we brought them in when they were dry, the starch things were dampened down for ironing tomorrow. And you’d put them in a bag and wrap everything up and then it would take till noon to get everything straightened up. And then you had other things to do. And I did the lawn and everything. I was busy all day. Course when my daughter was born, I was busier. Then when she went to school, if the teacher needed some help or something or they’d go on trips, she’d ask the students, “Whose
mother do you think will do so-in-so,” and she’d always say, “Mine will.”

So she did that all the way through high school. I said, “Why do you do that?” And she said, “I know you will.” But no, I was busy all the time. Especially before we got dryers, and we didn’t have to iron things. It just was a change. I never iron now, everything’s permanent press. It’s a big change.

SKINNER: Did you move into this house here?

HANSEN: Oh no. The other side of the city there, and we lived there. We looked and looked for places. It was so hard to find accommodation. As for building a house it was rare at the time, course it picked up when more men were home and everything. Then we came up here, and we didn’t plan to live in this house forever. But we liked it, and we only had one child. And I’m glad we did, because I’ve had good neighbors and made good friends. Been happy here.

SKINNER: So you’ve lived in this house for many years? Since . . .

HANSEN: Oh yes, since 1950 or something like that.

SKINNER: Did you get involved in any social clubs or groups?

HANSEN: Golf club, golf groups.

SKINNER: Was that immediately after?

HANSEN: No.

SKINNER: How long did that take you?
HANSEN: Oh, my daughter was in school, and someone really pushed me to play golf. They wanted someone to play with. So I said alright, and I just bought a set of used clubs because I didn’t want to invest in that. And I took some lessons, and the more I played, the more I liked it. And I got better clubs, and I’ve done well with it.

SKINNER: Did Lee play golf?

HANSEN: Yes. And we both played golf and we both fished. We’d go out on the boat fishing. We both liked the same things, and that’s wonderful in a marriage.

SKINNER: Well, you are quite the golfer. You told me you’ve had six hole-in-ones. How many tournaments did you say you’ve won?

HANSEN: Oh, at DeLaveaga I’ve been Club Champion five times. And I don’t know about Valley Gardens, I think it’s more than that. But anyhow, I’ve won a lot. Did you see the trophies hanging around?

SKINNER: I’ll take a look after we’re done. I’d love to. I think it’s wonderful.

HANSEN: I even have some in the bathroom. [Laughs] I ran out of space.

SKINNER: Did you keep in touch with any of your war bride friends?

HANSEN: Yes, I still have. There’s Shirley Tronic, one of those. She lives up in Nevada.

SKINNER: Her name’s Shirley . . .

HANSEN: Tronic, T-r-o-n-i-c. Then course all the war brides here. It’s remarkable because they’re from every country you can think of. And you don’t hear
any nastiness from one to the other or anything. They’re all helpful and happy. It’s really, really nice.

SKINNER: What about the friend of yours that was down in San Diego, that was an old friend?

HANSEN: Oh, she’s passed away now. Oh isn’t that awful. She’s been gone quite awhile. I just can’t think of it. But she was helpful to me down there.

SKINNER: Shirley Tronic, she was from Australia?

HANSEN: Yes, she’s one of . . . which one is she? There’s writing on the back, and I put the print on the back too, for you. [Looking through photographs]

SKINNER: Was she someone you met aboard the ship?

HANSEN: Yes, uh-huh.

SKINNER: Did a lot of the ladies aboard the ship have babies with them?

HANSEN: Some did, yeah. They had brought milk products or powdered milk or canned products with them. And they wouldn’t let them use them. And there’s one in the cabin that I moved to; she’d feed the baby and it was like a pump coming out. That baby would throw it up. So I said, “let’s go down and tell them.” Well she says, “I have and they won’t listen to me.” So I told them. I said, “This is terrible.” I said, “This baby is going to be ill by the time we get there.” You know, a month of that? So anyhow, I think they let her use what she brought.

SKINNER: Why do you think they wouldn’t let the women use the canned products?

HANSEN: I don’t know.
SKINNER: Were they wanting them just to use cow’s milk that they had aboard the ship? What were they using?

HANSEN: No, it was something that you mix up, like they have here.

SKINNER: A formula?

HANSEN: A formula, um-hum.

SKINNER: You mentioned that you and your husband had one daughter. And what was her name?

HANSEN: Vicki Temple, V-i-c-k-i Temple.

SKINNER: And what year was she born?

HANSEN: Well, she’s fifty-six now. So you do the math. [Laughs]

SKINNER: So, it was a couple years after your arrival to the United States that she was born.

HANSEN: Oh, no. It took us seven years to find the formula. [Laughs]

SKINNER: So how would you describe those first years of you living in the United States? How was it adjusting to your new life here?

HANSEN: It wasn’t bad at all. I think Australia and United States are very similar in ways. I won’t say that about England and United States, but I think it was very similar. Not exactly the same, but it’s easy to adjust.

SKINNER: What was difficult for you to adapt to?

HANSEN: Well, I missed my family. But you get used to that. It just takes time. Then when you make friends . . . See you come here, it was alright being
with his family, and then we moved to San Diego and didn’t know anyone. But as soon as you start making friends it helps a lot.

SKINNER: Did you quickly make some friends in this area, in Santa Cruz?

HANSEN: I beg your pardon?

SKINNER: Did you quickly make friends here in Santa Cruz?

HANSEN: Oh yes. Well, my husband’s aunt lived down on King Street, below the hill. And she was awfully good to me. And course when my daughter was in school, there were other mothers. It didn’t take too long to meet people and make friends.

SKINNER: What cultural influences do you think you brought with you from Australia?

HANSEN: What?

SKINNER: What things like maybe cooking or family traditions . . . What things did you bring with you . . .

HANSEN: I don’t like cooking. [Laughs] Oh, I don’t know. Things are a lot the same. Family traditions. I really can’t think of anything. Cause you make your own traditions. Well, I just can’t think of any.

SKINNER: Did you pursue American citizenship?

HANSEN: Oh yes, I have dual citizenship.

SKINNER: When did you pursue becoming also an American?

HANSEN: After just a few years, I applied. If I was going to live here, I just felt that I should be an American. And I wanted to vote.
SKINNER: Did you keep in close contact with your family and your friends in Australia?

HANSEN: Oh yes. And now with e-mail, it’s wonderful. It’s so much better than writing a letter. I get replies right back. My relatives, and nephews and nieces now, because my immediate family has gone. But, it’s nice.

SKINNER: What about your siblings? You had a brother and sister. Were you able to maintain contact with them?

HANSEN: Oh yes, I used to write to them. My sister-in-law, she was very nice. I have to tell you a story, can I?

SKINNER: Yes, you may.

HANSEN: Not to go on there. [Indicates tape recorder]

SKINNER: Okay, do you want to save it to the end? I’m going to mark down that you’re going to tell me a story, and we’ll come back to it.

How many times have you returned to Australia to visit?

HANSEN: Oh, about five.

SKINNER: When was the first time you were able to go back?

HANSEN: Around 1950, I think.

SKINNER: Did you have to go by ship in 1950?

HANSEN: I flew, and that was a time we didn’t have jets. And it took thirty-six hours to get to Sydney. We stayed overnight in Honolulu, and then in Fiji, and then down to Sydney. And then there was another five hours across from Sydney to Perth. And our seats made into bunks on the plane, which
they don’t now, cause of the jets. Thank goodness for jets. But that was mighty slow flying that way. Course it would with a ship.

SKINNER: This was before your daughter was born?

HANSEN: Oh yes.

SKINNER: Well, that made it easier.

HANSEN: Oh yes. There were a couple of women with their babies on board. Did you hear that someone went through childbirth, there happened to be a doctor? [Referring to recent news story about an in-flight childbirth on a commercial airline]

SKINNER: My husband mentioned it to me, it happened recently.

HANSEN: When was it yesterday? Something like that. Oh my goodness. She was eight months pregnant.

SKINNER: Sounds terrifying to me.

HANSEN: Oh gosh. They said that someone was on board that did not pay a fare. No papers. [Laughs]

SKINNER: What do you miss most about Australia?

HANSEN: I really don’t know, because my life is a lot like it was there, here. To me they’re the same. Apart from family, of course I miss them. But, no it’s very similar I think. And I’ve heard tourists say the same thing.

SKINNER: You said at least once you and your husband were able to travel to Australia together?

HANSEN: Yes, uh-huh.
SKINNER: When did you do that?

HANSEN: After he retired, we went down there. We went all over Australia. We went to New Zealand and Tasmania, the island state. He was very welcomed with my family. It was a nice trip.

SKINNER: Were your mother and father still alive for that trip?

HANSEN: No, they were gone then.

SKINNER: How many visits were you able to go on while your parents were still alive?

HANSEN: I think about four. My father had died earlier, but with my mother about four visits.

SKINNER: Do you have any idea about when they passed away? What decade or year?

HANSEN: Oh gosh, I really can’t remember.

SKINNER: Now your husband has passed away. When did he pass away?

HANSEN: Fifteen years ago. What was that? ’96 or something like that.

SKINNER: Did he become ill, or was sudden?

HANSEN: No, he was ill awhile. And it was a strange feeling, because he wasn’t in pain, but I knew he was going. And I wanted him to go, but I wanted to keep him. A few weeks before he died, he said, “It’s been good, hasn’t it?” So that’s a good memory. And it had been good. He’d rather go with me than go with his friends. And I felt the same way. No, we had a good time.
We traveled a lot in our trailers. And then, when he started to get ill, he still wanted to go, but it was too much for him towing the trailer, and I said to him, “What if we sold the trailer and bought a motor home?” And he said, “Okay.” I said, “Then I can drive it.” “Oh, yeah.” And I towed a little car, no a little pick-up. Oh, gosh. It drove men crazy. I’d be up at a stop sign. [Gives thumbs up sign] Okay. It was so funny. [Laughs] And some man said to my husband, we were parked somewhere, driving it. And I said, “No, I drive.” “You drive it?” And I said, “Yes.” “Oh.” And this one man, he watched me come into the park, and I backed it in. Well, I took the truck off; I unhitched that, and parked it where it was supposed to go. And then I backed the motor home into the space. He just couldn’t believe it. [Laughs] It was funny. We women can do a lot of things; they just don’t give us credit for it.

SKINNER: Good for you. Did you ever consider moving back to Australia after your husband passed away?

HANSEN: No, not really. I went back again. But, no, I didn’t because my daughter’s here and her family. And then I’ve got friends here. You know, everything’s set. It would just be a big turmoil to move back.

SKINNER: So do you consider yourself an American?

HANSEN: I consider myself both.

SKINNER: When did you get involved in the World War II War Brides Association?
HANSEN: Oh, it’s been quite awhile. I don’t know the date of that, but it’s been quite awhile. I heard about it, and was asked to join, so I thought I’d try it. But it’s a good group; I’m really surprised. And this Shirley Tronic, they have an annual meeting too, and she’s always there so I get to see her once a year. It’s nice. And everyone cares about each other. There’s no fighting. Usually in these groups you belong to, there’s always someone who makes a fuss. You know what I mean? And we haven’t experienced that, at least I haven’t.

SKINNER: Was it Shirley who wanted you to join the Association, or was it someone locally here?

HANSEN: No, I think it was someone around here. Two of the daughters from Dorothy Berry live over near Scotts Valley. You probably know that. I just can’t remember how I got involved with it. Maybe someone wrote to me. That’s right . . . They have a list of all the gals in the country, the war brides, and they probably saw the address Santa Cruz . . . Yeah, that’s how.

SKINNER: And you’ve made some good friends through the Association?

HANSEN: Yeah, I think so. And some a little closer than others, you see more often. And then, Ruth Smith, you’ve seen her, I knew her through golf. But she’s had that awful ankle trouble. And that’s too bad. Now she’s from Czechoslovakia, and I was reading the other day about when the Germans went in there. Oh gosh, they bombed cities and flattened things. That
must have been terrible for her. Thank goodness they didn’t do all that with Australia, although they did bomb up in Darwin. Nowhere near like the other countries. And I watched World War II for a couple of weeks, and oh the Germans. I knew Hitler was a monster, but that doesn’t describe it, he was so terrible. Where do those people come from? And why do people listen to them?

I went to Japan with my daughter. And there’s a Mr. Isobi, Isobi-san. And during World War II, they made him head of a war camp, a prison camp in Japan. Well, there was a lot of military men in Western Australia who’d been his prisoners. After the officials had left the prison camp, he told the men, he said, “I’ll give you all the food I can. I’ll do everything I can with this and that, but when the inspectors come on me . . .” So when the inspectors come, they had some in cages. It was just terrible to look at, but it was all a put on. Well, they converted him to Christianity, they taught him to play bridge. [Laughs] Then they flew him down to Perth afterwards, and they treated him . . . Well, I told you there’s a river and a lot of boats. This very wealthy family had this big boat and they put him on, and they made him captain for the day. And they had him where the cap and he had to steer the boat, and all these ex-prisoners on boards. It was just wonderful.

So when my daughter and I were in Japan, they wanted us to meet him. And so he met us. When we got off the plane, there he was. And
we got to talking about that . . . He says, “Oh what they did. Oh what they did.” [Laughs] And you know, the Japanese people are lovely people. And I was talking to a Japanese lady, I said, “You hear the war and you just can’t understand how people can do that.” She says, “Oh, that was the military.” She says, “Now we democracy.” Like the German people under Hilter, they’d be killed if they were against him. So, but anyhow, Mr. Isobi, he was so nice.

SKINNER: And how do you spell that last name?

HANSEN: I-s-o-b-i, Isobi. And of course, and putting s-a-n on the end is mister. Isobi-san. But san isn’t his name, you know, but he was a lovely man. He’s gone now, but his prisoners just adored him. [Laughs] Oh they flew him down there to Perth, oh gosh, the things they did, he was saying, “Oh what they did. Oh what they did.” And he was staying with my sister and her husband for a while in their home. No he was a good man.

SKINNER: So reflecting on your life, do you feel you made the right decision coming to the United States?

HANSEN: Oh yes, definitely. I mean, well I didn’t feel like it was coming to the United States, I was being with my husband. I didn’t find much difference getting used to living here, because to me it was very similar to the way I had lived.

SKINNER: What memories do you cherish most about this experience, this journey you’ve been on as a war bride?
HANSEN: Oh, my husband. I really do, because we were great. We were good friends, you know, as well as loved each other. He’d do anything for me, and I’d do anything for him. It was just an ideal marriage to me.

SKINNER: Is there anything you’d like to add?

HANSEN: No, I can’t, I mean we had fun. We had a lot of laughs, you know what I mean? It was a happy time. I wish everyone could have a marriage like it. It was very happy. I don’t know what else to add.

SKINNER: It sounds like you’ve had a wonderful life living in the United States, and I definitely appreciate you meeting with me for this interview, and I thank you very much, Jackie.

HANSEN: Well, okay. Just don’t embellish it, huh? [Laughs]

SKINNER: I’ll keep strictly to everything you’ve said, Jackie. [Laughs]

Alright, I’m going to turn off the tape.

HANSEN: Okay.

[End Tape 2, Side A]
APPENDIX F

Kat Hartman Interview
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

M.A. Thesis Project
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Interview

with

Kat Hartman

December 9, 2009
Aptos, California

By Courtney Belville Skinner
California State University, Sacramento
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

Interview History for Oral History of
Kat Hartman

Interviewer’s Name: Courtney Belville Skinner

Interview Date and Location: The interview was conducted on December 9, 2009, at Mrs. Hartman’s home in Aptos, California.

Interviewee’s Country of Origin: England

Context Notes: Mrs. Hartman is an English World War II war bride. The interview was recorded on audiocassette tapes and a digital recording device. A couple times, the interviewee’s phone ringing halts the progression of the interview. The interviewee is heard calling out for “George” to answer the phone. The tape was not stopped. Courtney Belville Skinner preformed the interview transcription. The interviewee retains a strong English accent, and the transcript reflects her natural speech patterns. Minor editing of the interview was done to remove false starts. The transcript was not sent back to the interviewee.

Tapes and Interview Records: The original audiocassette tape recording, CD copy of the audio files, and full transcript of the interview are held at the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
SKINNER: This is Courtney Skinner. I’m with Kathy Hartman at her home in Aptos, California. It is December 9, 2009, and I will be interviewing Kathy about her experiences as an English World War II war bride. This is Tape 1, Side A.

Okay, Kathy, so let’s begin talking a little bit about your background. When and where were you born?

HARTMAN: I was born in London, in the year 1926. My family moved to the suburbs of London, which was Surrey, when I was five years old. So that’s where I went to school and started my career.

SKINNER: And tell me about your mother, do you know when and where she was born?

HARTMAN: Yes, my mother was born in London, too. And my father, they were both London’s.

SKINNER: And do you happen to know about what year each of them was born?

HARTMAN: Let’s see . . . I think in the late 1800s. I think my mother was 1903 and my father was 1898.

SKINNER: Great. And did you have any siblings?

HARTMAN: Yes, I have one brother, Brian, and one sister, Lillian.

SKINNER: And what is their age in relation to yours?
HARTMAN: My sister, she’s deceased now. She was four years older than I was, so she was born in 1922. My brother was nine years younger than myself so he was born in 1935.

SKINNER: And what was your relationship like with them?

HARTMAN: It was very good, I was close to my sister, course we were the only two for quite awhile. And then my brother came along, and then that’s when the war started soon after that. I was thirteen, and my brother and I were evacuated to Whales. And my mother was an ambulance driver, my father was a firewatcher, and my sister joined the RAF, WAAF’s it was called, Women’s Auxiliary Air Force. So we all did our bit for England. So we was evacuated, Brian and I. And when the bombing was going on, our home was bombed. Do you want to know anymore about that time?

SKINNER: Yes, you can tell me as much as you remember about that time.

HARTMAN: Yeah, it was pretty scary times. But we all came out of it safely. My mother was injured when she went to the air raid shelter to help somebody, she broke her leg. My father’s job was a firewatcher, and he had to go on the roofs of the buildings, because the German’s used to drop what they called incendiary bombs by the basket loads, so they were trying to ignite the buildings. So he would be up there with some his fellow men, and then they would get in touch with the firemen. I don’t know how they got in touch, because there was no cell phone. I don’t
know if they had walkie-talkies, I can’t remember. But they would get in touch with the firemen, and come up onto the roof and put the fires out.

And so, my brother was very homesick in Whales. I kind of enjoyed it. I didn’t like it at first, cause they made fun of us with our accents, and being from a different part of the U.K. And I started going to dances there, I was really enjoying myself. So when my mother and father were going to come down to see us, which wasn’t very often because the gas and petrol was rationed so much, I would bribe my brother by telling him, “I will buy you all the sweets you want if you say you like it here,” and he’d say, “Okay.” But soon as he saw my mother, that was it, “I want to go home!” You know. [Laughs] Anyway, eventually we came back to home.

SKINNER: Now did you say you also assumed a position during that time?

HARTMAN: Pardon?

SKINNER: You assumed some sort of position in aid of the war effort? Did you?

HARTMAN: No, no, I was too young. I was thirteen when the war started. But then I had a choice after I came home, course I left school at fourteen, that was the age. Too young. So I had a choice, and I had been going to dancing school, and I had been in what they call pantomimes, which I don’t think they have here. For pantomimes at Christmastime was where we told the story of Cinderella, Jack and the Beanstalk. So I’d go for six weeks at Christmastime to perform in those. And so then I had a choice . . . I don’t
know if I became a professional dancer then or not. I think so, because I had a choice of going into a factory, or if I went on with the theater company I would have to do six weeks of the year for the troops, called ENSA, which was like the USO here. So I didn’t want to go into a factory, so then I went on tour as a dancer.

SKINNER: So at age fourteen?

HARTMAN: No, no, I worked in London at hotel called Claridge’s, and the Savoy.

SKINNER: How do you spell that?

HARTMAN: C-l-a-r-i-d-g-e-s, Claridge’s, and the Savoy. I was there not too long, probably a year or so. I didn’t like that, so I went through auditions, and then I started my dancing profession. So I went on tour. Every week we would have shows Monday through Saturday, and on Sundays we’d go on the train, which was steam engines in those days, which I just loved the sound of. We didn’t really get any days off. So we’d go to a different town. The theatre in those days was like we go to the movies now. People loved the theatre, and there was many of them in each province, in the northern part of England and everything. Sometimes I was in musical comedies, like The Desert Song, Chocolate Soldier. Sometimes it would be a variety show, different types of shows. So I did that for four years.

SKINNER: How old were you when you started that?

HARTMAN: I was fifteen.

SKINNER: That’s very interesting.
HARTMAN: Um-hum.

SKINNER: So tell me about Surrey, and what it’s like there, where you grew up . . .

HARTMAN: It’s beautiful, yeah, very nice. That’s where I go back to visit. My brother lives in Surrey, and my sister did too, and my cousins, I have cousins in Surrey. It’s very green and beautiful. Have you ever been to England?

SKINNER: [No]

HARTMAN: Oh, you haven’t? Oh, okay. Yeah, it’s very nice. Course, in England you can’t go very far from the seaside, as it were the coast. London is fifty miles to the coast; Brighton I think is the closest. It’s nothing to go for the day to the seaside. But people . . . I’ve seen such a vast difference now when I go home from how it used to be, yeah.

SKINNER: What are some of the changes you’ve seen?

HARTMAN: Well for one thing, cars. Oh! I mean, when I used to go over, after I came to the states, the cars were very small over there and the roads were very narrow. I saw a few American cars over there. They couldn’t get around the bends on the narrow roads, it was funny. But now, there are all big cars. They have very good freeways, very, very busy, but they still have the country lanes, which is very lovely. I like the country lanes, to stop at the pubs, you know. And the greenery is beautiful, because it rains so much in England, so the roses and flowers are very lovely. Of course they have the influence of our fast food places, McDonalds and Burger King and I think Colonel Sanders was the first one over there. And the foods
improved. Anyone who used to go to England would say, “Oh my God, they’ve got the worst cooks.” I mean everything they boiled, everything, the vegetables. But now they have the influence of continental food, like we get a lot Germans and Italian chefs. And the restaurants are very, very good now. The food’s wonderful, pricey but good. And let’s see, getting back to what? Well, how I met husband . . .

SKINNER: We’ll come to that.

HARTMAN: Oh, okay.

SKINNER: I promise you. [Laughs]

HARTMAN: Oh, okay, that’s fine.

SKINNER: Let’s see . . . Did you tell me how your parents earned a living prior to the war?

HARTMAN: No. No, my father, he worked in a factory when he was young. And he always wanted his own business. So after we moved to Surrey, he started a coal business, a coal merchant. They used go around with it on what they called lorries, but on trucks. Course everything was coal. And when we had a fog, and there was a black out during the war, because you couldn’t light a cigarette . . . You’d have what they called these pea soup fogs, you’d put your had up, you couldn’t see it because of the smoke. It was horrible. So anyway, he was a coalman. And my mother, to help, she used to drive his truck, this lorry. While he delivered the coal, she would drive the truck. Now this was in the thirties, and that was very unusual for
a woman to be driving in England, let alone a big lorry truck. So he did that, and he was quite successful. We had a nice life. I don’t think my mother worked, she was busy raising us at that time. So we were a very close family, with lots of relative and cousins. Transportation was very good over there, so you could travel without a car, course most people didn’t have a car or telephones. We had a telephone, and my dad used to say you can’t use that phone. That’s only for my business. He wouldn’t let us make any telephone calls. We used to sneak those. I had a fun childhood, very happy. Let’s see . . .

So in the summertime, he didn’t have any work, being a coalman nobody had fires going, so he’d always get an odd job of some kind. So one year he decided he would buy some peaches and fruits and buy some local races. In England, they’re big gamblers. They love to play horses and dog racing, so we went to place called . . . I was home visiting and he said, “Okay, we’re going to go out to Epsom Downs,” which is a big race at Epsom Downs. He’d say, “Okay, we’re going to sell our fruit.” Well, I hated it. My sister was a natural, but I had to say, “Four for a bob, four for a bob,” for these peaches. Oh, and I’d pick out all the good ones, and I’d come back with all the rotten peaches. And they’d say, “Look, when you sell the peaches, you’ve got to give some of these that are bruised a little bit, you know.” I wasn’t a very good salesman that way, so anyway. We had a lot of fun doing that. So he did that one year, and I think he did a
few other things in the summers. He was a very hardworking man. He was not educated, but he had a lot of common sense. He really did. He could foresee . . . And one of his sayings to us was, “Put some money away for a rainy day.” So my mother, she was the opposite, she want to spend it, everything she got. They kind of clashed a little bit on that, but that was okay. So, let’s see, what else about . . .

SKINNER: Would you consider your family middle class at the time?

HARTMAN: Yes, at the time, yes.

SKINNER: Had your father and mother grown up middle class? [Phone ringing]

HARTMAN: My father very poor, he . . . George? [calling for someone to pick up the phone] It will go on the answering machine. Yes, he had a very hard childhood. He was one of nine children, and his father died very young, quinsy of the throat they called it, but it was probably tonsillitis where his throat closed up. And they were Catholic, his mother didn’t have any money at all, and so she didn’t know what to do. So the priest came around and she said, “Father, I need help. I’ve got nine children,” and unfortunately he didn’t want to give them any help. And my father heard that, and from that day on he had no time for the Catholic faith, because he saw his mother suffering so much. So him and his brothers were put into an orphanage . . . It was like the workhouse in those days. Very, very cruel. But he came out of that alright. Then he went to Whales after that, to work on a farm with a family. And he had a little room, he said, by
himself. Very lonely, it must have been. He was just a young man, and he had no friends. The family had nothing to do with him, they had two sons, but they were middle class probably. And so he used to sit in his little room every night and have a cigarette, and read whatever he could get, the paper or a book. Then they went off to war, and so then my father really helped the family farming. I don’t think he worked in the coalmines there, I don’t think he did. He might have, he might have worked in the coalmines, I don’t know, for awhile. But he worked on the farm. Hard work, up at five, that’s why he used to say he’d like to put me in the Land Army so I’d have to get up at five o’clock. Have you heard of the Land Army?

SKINNER: [No]

HARTMAN: Oh, okay, well that was one of the things that the women did during the war. If they joined up, like instead of the army or air force, the Land Army where they helped on the farms. And he said, “Love to put you in the Land Army so you’d have to get up at five in the morning.” Even though he wasn’t hard, he was the softest man underneath, but he still remembered his hard days. And I think he would like . . . When my mother would buy us nice shoes, he’d say “Buy ‘em a pair of boots,” you know. [Laughs] Anyway, he was a very hardworking man, very honest. And my mother, she was a wonderful person. She had a good sense of humor, everyone just loved Ivy. She came from a large family, I think
there was . . . eight. There was more but the twins died. I always
remember her mother and father, my grandmother, they’d always have
parties at their homes and we’d all sit at the top of the stairs listening.
There’d always be a piano, and everybody sing, and just a real good time.
Didn’t have much material things, but people enjoyed themselves.

SKINNER: It sounds like you had a really nice family.

HARTMAN: Yeah, I did. We were very close.

SKINNER: Did you say the highest level of education you achieved, you went through
age fourteen?

HARTMAN: Yeah, that was like high school here.

SKINNER: Let’s begin talking again about your experiences during World War II. So
you were evacuated to Whales, you were there with your brother, and your
sister was helping . . .

HARTMAN: She joined up. What she did, she was only five foot. I mean, I’m short,
five-foot-two, but she was only five foot. And she used to drive, she loved
to drive, just like my mother. And so she would drive the airmen to the
planes with the petrol, the gas, to fill up the planes before when they went
to the raids over Germany.

SKINNER: So who were you living with?

HARTMAN: When?

SKINNER: When you moved to Whales? When you were evacuated to Whales?
HARTMAN: Oh, actually it happened that my mother, working as an ambulance driver met this lady that was an ambulance driver, and my mother was very upset because they was evacuating the children. And what they were doing, they would just put their name on them and they would have their gas masks, and go on trains and the parents had no idea where these people were going, their children were going. Some were abused, some very sad cases. If children have got to go, send them to my brother who lives in Whales. So that worked out very well.

Very poor family, very hard life they had. They had three children, the father and the son both worked in the coalmines. My aunt, I used to call them Auntie and Uncle, my auntie never went anyplace. She’d have the shawl and the clogs, and there was a little shop around the corner, and that’s as far as she ever went. My uncle he had a better life, he’d go to the pub all the time and he had a motorbike. But the woman . . . And then when they’d sound the siren, for there’d been something gone wrong in the coalmines, it was very hard on those ladies. They’d all run to the mines, and then . . . So anyway, it was very primitive. There was no hot water or anything, no bathtubs. What they do, when they came home they only had heat in this kitchen area. So when they come home, course they just come out the coalmines, so they was very black. And so they’d say “Okay, you can stay here in the room,” because it was the only warm place, “but you’ve got to cover your eyes.” So my auntie, she had to heat
the water on top of a stove with wood and stuff, coal, and then pour it in
this big wooden tub. And that’s where my uncle and his son, John, they
bathed. And I’d sit there like this you know [covered eyes]. And they,
“Okay, you’re peeking,” and I was so embarrassed, it was terrible. I was
like fourteen, going on fourteen then, and he was fifteen, John, so you can
imagine it was horrible. I’d say, “I’ll go in the cold room, I’ll go in the
parlor,” so I used to go in the parlor because they used to make such fun.
But anyway, yeah, those were hard times for those people. He got killed
on his motorbike, actually. So I’m sure she didn’t live very long, Auntie
Rose, because as I say, she looked so old to me, but she was probably in
her thirties. Oh, George, this is Courtney . . .

GEORGE: Hi

SKINNER: Hi, nice to meet you.

GEORGE: Thank you . . . [inaudible]

HARTMAN: She’d lost all her teeth. She had no teeth. She had a cigarette, that was her
only joy. She used to buy these cheap cigarettes. That’s all she could
afford. A very hard life.

SKINNER: That must have been a big adjustment for you and your brother, being
away from your parents . . .

HARTMAN: Yeah

SKINNER: Living with your aunt and uncle . . .
HARTMAN: Yeah, being made fun of. Because, you know, we went to school. They’ve got quite heavy accents, the Welsh. And some of them, a lot of them, spoke their own language. Course I went in my, what they called gymslip, I mean it was navy blue. It was a uniform, with a tie and white blouse and everything and pigtails. Oh, they made such fun of me, it was terrible. So anyway . . . And the funniest thing, they were going to have a dance. I forget what kind of hall they called it, but it was where the locals went. And I didn’t know anything about this, so they said, would you like to go to the workman’s hall to the dance, and I said “Oh, yeah,” it sounded wonderful, a dance. So I wrote to my mother, “Send me something nice to wear,” I’ve been a bridesmaid before to my auntie, so I said, “Have my dress shortened,” so she sent this dress. Oh my God. I’ve never been so . . . I wanted to fall through the ground. I had this fancy dress on, and I walk in, and there’s all these girls in clogs and shawls and they just looked at me. And oh, I felt horrible. Anyway that passed, and I did meet a boy there, so we used to go dancing after that when I could get out. It was funny, cause John he kind of liked me, and he was okay. So he used to snitch on me, and he’d say to his dad and mum, “I wouldn’t let Kathy go out, no she shouldn’t be going out,” because I was going with this boy. But it was fun.

SKINNER: And he was British.

HARTMAN: No, they were Welsh.
SKINNER: Welsh, I’m sorry. Yes, not an American . . .

HARTMAN: No.

SKINNER: Not an American . . .

HARTMAN: No.

SKINNER: Not yet. [Laughs]

HARTMAN: Actually, no. And I lived not far from where Tom Jones was born.

SKINNER: Cool.

HARTMAN: Yeah, he was younger than me, but I knew the family.

SKINNER: So how did wartime rationing affect you?

HARTMAN: Oh, it was horrible, absolutely horrible, with the ration books. I mean, people say they were rationed here, ha; they have no idea. I’m sure you’re grandmother’s probably told you about two ounces of meat a week. So the housewives would save the coupons just so they could buy, they call it a joint, but a piece of roast for the weekend. And the men looked so tired going to work because of the diet. I mean they just had bread and cheese most of the time. We were allowed maybe, I don’t know what, one or two eggs a week each person. Everything was rationed. You’d see a line, and people would . . . They say, “[inaudible] to the end of the line,” because you knew it was something that you couldn’t get, so you might get a couple of apples or things like that. Well, my brother never saw a banana or anything till after the war . . . fruit. Because everything had to be imported, being an island, you know. So it was very hard, the rations were
very difficult on people. I don’t know what people cooked. I say now, “What are we going to have for dinner?” We’ve got such a choice, and those people had no choices at all.

SKINNER: Alright, I’m going to turn the tape so we don’t run out.

HARTMAN: Okay.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]

SKINNER: So how did wartime change gender roles? With women taking up jobs that men traditionally had . . .

HARTMAN: In the factories, um-hum. Yes, everybody I will say did their part to help the war. Very much so, they sacrificed and . . . You know, the children were going to suffer, because when the women worked all day, it was very hard to go home and cook. So what they did, they really took care of the children. The schools had hot meals every day for the children. I mean, a vegetable, and either fish or meat, and a dessert. In fact, my mother did that. She used to deliver the dinners to the school, and in between. She used to drive, course she could drive. And she had two old fellas that used to help her, and they would pick up the big tins of food and take it to the schools. They really did try to see how the diet affected children, and it really did, and they tried to make sure. [Phone ringing] I never know if he’s taking a nap in there. George! Oh, that’s one of my children . . .
SKINNER: Okay, so let’s see here . . . So in Wales you were never affected by the air raids?

HARTMAN: No, not in Wales.

SKINNER: Not like what was happening in London?

HARTMAN: No, no. There was parts of Wales that was bombed, but I wasn’t in the part, I was in a place called Llanbradach, which was about to fifty miles north of Cardiff, which is the capital.

SKINNER: And you said your actual house was bombed . . .

HARTMAN: Yes.

SKINNER: So what happened after?

HARTMAN: Well, we had to go some place else to live for quite awhile. It was a landmine that came down. So we went to live with relatives, until they could put it in condition to move back into the house.

SKINNER: So, Great Britain was at war for nearly three years before the United States entered the war, so tell me what it was like when the American G.I.s started arriving in England. How did that change the social atmosphere of the country?

HARTMAN: It did. [Laughs] Yes, it did very much. They were so different to the English person. Some of them, you know, were very loud, and they’d go in the pubs. They were so different. But, I think the girls were really impressed with them because of their manners. I mean, you could be in a . . . I know my mother telling the story, she was on the bus and she was
standing and everything, and this American got up and says, “Ma’am would you like my seat?” And so, oh she thought that was lovely, wonderful. But eventually they did come over here to live after years later. But she said, boy that really changed in Chicago, where I was living, they’d rush to get the seats. Knock you down nearly to get it. [Laughs] So, yeah, people were impressed.

I think, there was a little bit if jealousy there, especially among the American forces, because they didn’t make very much money compared to the American. So the American . . . you’d go to the movies, the pictures as we used to call it. Go to the movies, and the Englishmen always had to take you . . . ‘cause in the movies, they had different prices. The front seats were the cheapest, and the middle and the back and the circle upstairs. And you always went in the front with the Englishmen. And, well, the Americans would take you in the best seats, and buy you a box of chocolates, well you couldn’t get chocolates but well they did at the PX, they’d bring things from the PX. They impressed a lot of people. And course we were so thankful for them there, the way they helped England so much.

The biggest thing, when I was traveling, even though I danced all night, we still loved to ballroom dance, my friends and I. In the finale, we would try to take our stage make-up off, and put our regular make-up on, so we could rush out to where the dance . . . we’d always find out where
the ballroom dancing was. I think the curtain came down about a quarter to ten and most dance halls, ballroom dance places, closed at ten thirty, so we’d only have like three-quarters of an hour. But we would do it because we just loved to ballroom dance.

And what I noticed, we’d be in a town, and we’d go to the dance, and there was black Americans. Over there, I was never raised with any prejudice, most people wasn’t. Because we didn’t have any black people, maybe a few boxers or entertainers, and that was it. And so they would go to the dance, and ask a white girl to dance, and they would think nothing of it. But that didn’t go very well with a lot of Americans. I mean there was a lot of fights in those dance places. The MP’s would always have to come in and break up a lot of fights. I did notice that, that was puzzling to me. But anyway . . .

SKINNER: So working for the theater, you said you would go from town to town doing these performances, what kind of audiences were you performing for?

HARTMAN: Oh families, families loved the theatre. Or it was really the night out for the husband and wife that had been working very hard. Always a full house, we had. So we were very well rewarded with the audience.

SKINNER: Yeah, it sounds like it was a lot of fun.

HARTMAN: Um-hum.

SKINNER: So were you paid for the job?
HARTMAN: Oh, yeah. I guess it wasn’t bad pay, but say I’d worked in a factory, I probably would have made about thirty shillings, which is one pound thirty. And as a dancer, I’d earn four pounds a week. I was supposed to send money home to my mother, but I’d always send, “Mom, I had to buy this hat I saw,” or “I had to buy . . . “ you know, she never got any money from me, I’m afraid. But anyway, that was okay.

SKINNER: And how many years did you perform as part of this theatre group?

HARTMAN: Till I was nineteen.

SKINNER: So four years. Do you remember the name of this theatre group or this dance company that you were working with? Did it have a name?

HARTMAN: Um, yes it did. Oh gosh, something I can’t remember, I haven’t even thought of it. I remember the names so well. The last year, I worked in London in the cabaret, I was a dancer in the cabaret, there was just six dancers. It was membership only, it was a very nice club. I found out after, there as a lot of things going on in there, the owner Mr. Murray, it was called the Cabaret Club, which was very famous. And apparently, I knew something was going on, they knew everything that was going on. And we were the dancers, and they had what they called hostesses, that used to sit with the customers, if the customers wanted someone to have dinner with. It was usually not all service people, usually naval officers and things of that, not many Americans. They didn’t have many Americans, it was hard for them to get a membership, I don’t know why.
After the war, my mother sent me the newspaper, *The News of the World*, and it was talking about the Cabaret Club, that was where they had a lot of spying going on. I didn’t realize. I knew there was something going, they knew everything that went on. Because I’d have a telephone conversation, and Mr. Murray, one time my husband called me and he must have listened in, because he said, “Is that right, you’re getting engaged?” And I said, “Yes, how do you know?” He said, “Oh, I know.” Yeah, some of these hostesses would sit with these business people and intelligence officers. And I know one girl used to travel a lot, she used to travel to the Middle East a lot, and I think she was doing what they called the “fifth columnist”. That’s what it was called during the war, which was a spy for the country. And I’m sure she sat with these people to get information from them. There was a write up, I wish I’d saved the paper now, but I didn’t. So that was interesting.

But I worked there, and the last show and there was a show at ten o’clock and I think one o’clock, so it was probably two o’clock in the morning when I got through. And I used to walk to Waterloo Station by myself, I didn’t think anything of it, over the bridge. Waited for the milk train every morning that came at four o’clock, and I’d go on the train to go home to the suburbs. Yeah, I did that. I was so young, but I didn’t think anything. Nowadays, probably wouldn’t go around the corner. But, yeah, that was interesting. Then I remember, then they had D-Day, the victory,
and you couldn’t even move. I couldn’t get home that night, because people in the streets, just celebrating and stuff. So my mother was very worried because I couldn’t get near a telephone box to call her to say I couldn’t come home.

SKINNER: So you lived with your parents while you were performing?

HARTMAN: When I was in London. But otherwise, I used to stay in these horrible digs, they used to call them, where they took theatre people in. Some were alright. Now you could give your ration book, they would take your ration book, so they would cook your meal for you, so that when you got home, you’d have a hot meal. And I think we used to get breakfast, and then we’d be off to rehearsal, you have to rehearse every morning.

SKINNER: Did you date much while you were working as a dancer?

HARTMAN: No, no. So my friend and I, we decided, oh we’ve had enough of this, we can’t go out with anybody. Because the show was late, we’d have matinees twice a week, Wednesday and Saturday, so we decided we’d look for a job in London. So we went to the hotels, to see if we could be anything. So they offered . . . We said to them, “We’d like to be chambermaids,” [Laughs] And they said, “I don’t think so, um how about in the telephone room?” And we looked at each other; well we’ll never meet anybody if we sit in the telephone room all day. Anyway, that’s when I looked at the newspaper, The Variety, and they had an audition in London. So I said, let’s go for this audition, it will be in London, so she
says, “okay.” Well, unfortunately, I got it and she didn’t. It’s kind of sad, I traveled with her, and she was a very good friend. So I didn’t really want to take the job, and she said, “No, go ahead, you take it. You want to be in London,” because I’d had enough of being on the road. It’s very hard. This was hard. Yep.

SKINNER: So how did your parents feel about the Americans G.I.s?

HARTMAN: Oh, they were fine, they did . . .

SKINNER: Were women encouraged to interact with the G.I.s?

HARTMAN: No. I don’t think that they were encouraged, a lot were against it and just going with the Americans, because they thought they wild and wooly kind of thing, you know, and a lot of the Americans were stationed outside of London and they would come into London for their furloughs, so that’s when they’d really get wild when they got off base. So, a lot of the families in these small towns forbid their daughters to go out with the Americans.

SKINNER: Let’s talk about the man you eventually married. What branch of the service was he in?

HARTMAN: He was in the airforce. The 8th Airforce.

SKINNER: What was his name?

HARTMAN: Maurice.

SKINDER: M-a-u-r-i-c-e?

HARTMAN: Yes, Hartman. I met him going to the dance after the show.
SKINNER: Okay, I’d love to hear about that. Can you tell me what happened?

HARTMAN: Well, what happened, my friends and I were in a place called . . . I was just back there just a couple of years ago, I wanted to go back for my brother. He took me back. But anyway, we was in the area, and we was in the show, so we decided to go to dancing after, and we did. And this American came over and asked me to dance, and I did, and I was having good time. And then there was suddenly a tap on his shoulder, and this officer said, I would like to, you know, and I thought that was cheeky. Anyways . . . okay, so I did, and was really angry that he would do that, but then by the end of the evening, he was making me laugh and we had a good time. So, the next night he came to the stage door, and I said that “I’m not going out with you by myself, how about you got any friends, and I’ll bring a couple of my friends.” So he did and he arranged for a couple of the Americans to come.

Well you know, in the shows in those days, the men were mostly homosexuals, so that’s never bothered me, because I worked with them. But it was funny when someone would come to meet one of the girls, after the show, they would always try to make a date with the guys. [Laughs] It was so funny. We always had a lot of fun in the show. They’d come and borrow your eyebrow pencils. They was so sweet, most of them, all of them. So, anyway, that’s how I met him.

SKINNER: Was this when you were in the traveling theater group?
HARTMAN: Yes, right.

SKINNER: Where were you at when you met him? Do you remember the city?

HARTMAN: I’m trying to remember. Isn’t that awful. It’s a big town. I was just there.

That’s awful. I can’t believe that. But I will. Then we used to write letters. Keep in touch by telephone.

SKINNER: So, he was in the Air Force.

HARTMAN: Yes.

SKINNER: How old was he and where was he from?

HARTMAN: He was from Chicago. He went to the University of Chicago. He was ten years older than myself.

SKINNER: Did he enlist voluntarily or was he drafted?

HARTMAN: Yes, no, he joined up right before the war, before the Americans went into the war. He went to the Air Force Academy.

SKINNER: How did he end up in this part of England? Was he stationed there at that time?

HARTMAN: Right. Yeah, he was stationed there.

SKINNER: Was your dating interrupted when he had to go off on missions?

HARTMAN: Oh yeah, we were not together that much, until I was in London, and I did see him more when I was in London. And my family liked him very much and he used to give us all kinds of goodies. Because the officer’s club was closed at one time and they took over a lot of the mansions in London, headquarters and things, so they said you could take what you want. So he
got, now I see he took pictures, and I didn’t realize what they were, but
they really were Tahow (phonetic) . . . And he got along really well with
my family, which was good. And then he brought a friend home one time,
and he took my sister out. He’d been a fireman. He was a driver for my
husband. He was a fireman in Boston, and he took my sister out in the
jeep, or something. And oh, she said that she never had such a ride,
because you know those fireman how they drive. They had a lot of fun
together.

SKINNER:  Do you know what kind of missions he went on or what he was
specifically doing during the war?

HARTMAN:  Yeah, he was a bombardier. So, he was flying missions over to Germany.
And when the war ended, and he ran the officer’s club in London for quite
awhile. He was going to stay in the service, and they were going to send
him to Germany, but he hadn’t seen his parents in six years. So he wanted
to do that, so he went on his way home. They said all unattached, if you
weren’t attached to a company at that time, if you wanted to stay in the
service, you’d have to stay in as a sergeant, you’d lose your commission in
other words. Anyway, he decided not to stay. Which I’m glad he didn’t
because I was so homesick, it was terrible. It really was, I missed my
family so much. I didn’t think I would after being . . . but I was very bad
about being homesick. So, he used to stay home a lot with me.
SKINNER: What was your first impression when he stepped in on the dance? What aspects of his personality did you love about him?

HARTMAN: He used to tell me a lot of things I didn’t know. He was quite intelligent and I enjoyed that. I learned a lot from him. He had a good sense of humor. And he was a good man, a good man. He was an only child.

SKINNER: What did he study at the University of Chicago?

HARTMAN: Well, his father wanted him to be a lawyer, and he never wanted to be a lawyer. So, he was interested in the sciences. He used to buy these books all the time about outer space and all that, way back. When he came home, he had left piles of them, but when he came back, he asked his mother where’s the books, she had got rid of them, and he was really upset about that. But, he loved to read science fiction books and things. That was his love. He was never interested in law.

SKINNER: How long did you date before you got married?

HARTMAN: It was probably two years.

SKINNER: And those were intermittently through those two years?

HARTMAN: Yes.

SKINNER: Would you see him for periods of time, like a week or more at a time, before he had to go on his next mission, or was it just a day here or a day there?
HARTMAN: No, I didn’t see him that much, not a week at a time, or anything, no. But after we got engaged, I gave up my show business, so I could be with him, I would go to the base.

SKINNER: What did your parents think about you being engaged to an American G.I.?

HARTMAN: Well, they didn’t really say a lot. They were never really against it, because it was something that I wanted. So, they never really discouraged me, with: “you’re going to go a long way away, you’re going to leave us” and like that. No, they were very good about that.

It was more like a funeral when I left, than a going away . . . So, then I went to this camp, where they sent all the brides. I could have gone home with him on the Queen Elizabeth, but I kept putting off signing the papers, so I missed that, so I had to go later. So, we were sent to this camp, it was a horrible place. They had German prisoners of war used to be there waiting, and we would line up for our food with a tin plate. It was just like being in the army, I guess.

And I was going to go on this ship called the Jolly Erikson, which was an old troop ship converted to ship, and anyway, we had to get shots and x-rays before we came. Well, I had the tetanus shot and got very sick from it and I had a bad infection under my arm. But anyway, we went and that ship should have taken six days, it took ten, it broke down in the ocean. It was a horrible voyage. And I had never been on a ship before,
and so the first night, there was real battering, and good food, so I ate, and I never saw the dining room on the whole ten days. I was really ill with seasickness . . . that between the hospital part for intravenous feeding.

My mother-in-law had sent me this black outfit, and I would wear that when I get off the ship, but I was 116 pounds and I went down to 98 pounds. I must have looked real . . . in that black outfit. The nurse was kinda helping me down, I was so kinda weak, and my husband said, “Where’s my blooming bride that I left behind.” He felt so bad, he had a trip planned, and a shopping trip to take me to New York because things had been rationed so long. But I said, “You know what, I don’t want to try on shoes.” He said, “Oh my God, you must be sick, if you don’t want to try it on.” Anyway, we did go on the trip to Niagara Falls and we stopped in Washington DC, and his family had a friend that was in the Senate or something, so we got to sit in at the White House . . . That was a nice experience, I would like to do that now.

SKINNER: I’m going to stop and start a new tape.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

SKINNER: Go ahead. You just remembered something.

HARTMAN: I just remembered where he was stationed. It was a place called Norich, a very lovely cathedral there, the Norich Cathedral.

SKINNER: Do you know how to spell that?
HARTMAN: Yes, N-o-r-i-c-h.

SKINNER: So that is where he was stationed throughout the war?

HARTMAN: Yes, most, yes.

SKINNER: I just have a few more questions about you getting married and arriving. Did he propose to you?

HARTMAN: Yes, on, I think it was, not D-Day, it was when the Japanese, which was called, one was V-Day.

SKINNER: And one was V-J Day.

HARTMAN: Yeah, very week he would come to the house, and he celebrating, and everybody was making bonfires. And my mother, oh gosh, she was a character, she was go get the chickens around. We had chickens, so we could have eggs and that and she brought that up to put on the bonfire, and that was quite nice. That was when he proposed to me.

SKINNER: At your parent’s house?

HARTMAN: We were sitting out on the lawn, yes. That’s when it all started.

SKINNER: Had he told you a lot about his life in the United States and Chicago?

HARTMAN: Yes, and he didn’t tell me any stories. So many of those G.I.s told terrible stories. I was with a girl on the ship, she was going to, I think it was Mississippi, and I don’t know what he told her, but it was horrible. Cause she went, and she was a nice girl, and he took her to this horrible place in the woods, and there was no electricity and no nothing, and the family was all against her. And he didn’t stick up for her, I mean he sided with the
family. They had somebody picked her up for him, apparently. Well, she became pregnant, and she called me, and she said, “I’m going home, because I can’t live like this anymore.” And as I say, if he been with her, and for her, she would have probably battled it out, but he wasn’t, he was just for family, and there were quite a few cases like that.

SKINNER: Compared to that, did Maurice tell you a lot . . .

HARTMAN: He even told me about the . . . I was very kinda famous, those were my young days, and my hair had to be just right, and he would say, “You know, I have to tell you Kat, they call it the Windy City, because it is windy.” And I said, “Oh really.” Yeah . . . he told me a lot. Yes . . . and everything . . .

SKINNER: And his parents, what was their socioeconomic status?

HARTMAN: His dad went to the university, but his mother didn’t. Apparently, her father ran away and left the mother with all the children, so she had kinda a hard life. But she worked, she worked for the state for many, many years.

SKINNER: So coming here, you figured you would probably be middle class and felt secure with that?

HARTMAN: Oh yeah, I did, yeah, I did.

SKINNER: What was it about him that gave you enough confidence to consider marrying and moving so far away from home?
HARTMAN: I guess, love [laughs] . . . I thought he was wonderful and I was happy
with him. And he treated me so lovely and took care of me. So that was
nice.

SKINNER: So tell me about your wedding. What was that like?

HARTMAN: Well, it wasn’t that good because I didn’t have any coupons to buy a dress
even . . . so I bought a regular outfit, or my dad did, so it was a Justice of
the Peace. It was in Epsena (phonetic), which was where we got married.
And so we had quite a few friends come and everyone was crying, it was
horrible, because they knew this was it and I would be going. Up until
then, you think oh, but when you actually get to that point, you know this
is it. So, it was really said. Then, we got limousines and went up to
London for the reception at a hotel.

SKINNER: Were your parents at the wedding with the Justice of the Peace?

HARTMAN: Yes.

SKINNER: How long between your wedding and when you embarked on the ship?

HARTMAN: I was married in May of ‘45, and I came to the States in May of ‘46.

SKINNER: Was it difficult for your husband to acquire time off or permission from
the military to get married.

HARTMAN: Um, no, we didn’t have any trouble.

SKINDER: Did you have any time to go on a honeymoon?

HARTMAN: Yes. We went to a place called Torqay in Devonshire.

SKINNER: How do you spell that?
HARTMAN: T-o-r-q-a-y. And I got a slight toothache, so I went to the dentist. I guess you have heard about the dentists in England. Nobody . . . didn’t go to dentists, like they do today more, but you notice English people have terrible teeth. And so I had this slight toothache, so I thought, oh gosh, I don’t want to go on my honeymoon with a toothache, so I went to this dentist, and he says, oh yeah, we’ll just pull it out. So, he yanked out the tooth. So, off we went to Torqay, and I got this terrible pain, oh my God, I was in pain, so my husband said that we got to do something about it, so we got a cab, and he said take us to the best dentist around. So he did, and we walk in, and on the wall, there was a plaque that the dentist had studied at Northwestern University in Illinois. He said I had a dry socket. So it was very painful and he took care of it, but my husband was so angry, he was going to call up the dentist in the middle of the night and tell him that he was really upset that he would even pull the tooth out. He had wonderful teeth, and all my kids are thankful that they have his teeth. So, he was pretty angry about that, that this dentist would even yank the tooth out in the first place instead of trying to save it. So, we had a nice honeymoon, and nice clothes and things. So that was nice.

SKINNER: So then, you said that he went back on the Queen Mary?

HARTMAN: Yes, he went back on the Queen Mary and I went on this old troop ship, the John Erikson, which burned in New York Harbor. Thank goodness, got rid of that. It was horrible. So anyway, that was pretty bad.
SKINNER: How long was it between his leaving and your coming to the U.S.?

HARTMAN: It was two months or three months. I think it was three months. And he came to New York to meet me from Chicago. I had never seen him civilian clothes, and I said, “Oh my gosh.” I had only seen him in a uniform. He had a hat and everything. He looked so different. Yeah, it was really funny. He waited, he came on the day it was supposed to come in on the ship, and it never did.

Anyway, I got this telegram on the ship and it said, “Happy anniversary darling,” and looked and said, “Oh you’re doing that to make me feel better,” I was so ill . . . how could he get a message out to the ship? But it was real and he waited for the 10 days until I came in.

SKINNER: Do you remember the day you actually left England and what it was like to say goodbye to your family?

HARTMAN: It was awful. It was bad. I went on the train, they took me to the train, and I had to go on the train. They didn’t actually see me go on the ship, because I went to this camp, to report to this camp, this horrible place. And yet they let you make one telephone call from this, to call your family. And that was a waste of time [Laughs], because you were just crying. So no, they never really saw me go off to the ship, because they took us by bus to the ship.

SKINNER: When you first landed in New York, this was your first time . . .
HARTMAN: This was May 31. That was a big holiday. Memorial Day. The bands were playing and everything, and I said, “Oh, what’s going on here,” so he says, “That’s for you honey, because you have arrived in America.” [laughs] Anyway, the thing that impressed me, there were all these stands along the street, fresh orange juice, oh, I couldn’t stop drinking that because I hadn’t seen even an orange, let alone fresh orange juice. Oh yeah, that was wonderful. Food was wonderful. On our way back, we stopped at this place, and we had a steak, and the steak was like this [gestures large portion], so I said, “Please, can someone take a picture” they had photographers in there, I said, “Take a picture of this steak so that I can send it home.” This was amongst rations, and here this one dinner with the steak, oh God, it was wonderful. So, I was very impressed.

We lived near Lake Michigan. We lived in a nice area just around the university. I was all right until I got letters and it started all over again. So he did try to get a job in England, in Scotland actually, with one of the Scotch distributors, but it didn’t work, didn’t happen. Anyway, but once I started having my family and that, and then I’d go home, and he had a friend that moved to California right after the war, and he called my husband, and said, “This is the place to come. Come to California. It’s just starting, everything.” Because although he had saved money during the war, he had so much put away, we had about $8000, but we could not buy a house on that money. There was just no building and with everyone
coming back, they hadn’t built anything for many years. So, we would look in the papers for an apartment all the time because we were living with his family, and it was just impossible. So finally, we got this horrible, horrible apartment on the third floor, ah, it was awful. They had big heater in the middle of the living room, and he had to go down to the basement three floors for oil to bring up and put in there, and we had to buy the furniture in get the apartment, $1400. And I mean the gas stove, the spring had gone out and it had a piece of rope around it, it was just horrible. He felt bad for me, and of course, he had never lived in conditions like that, but to just have our own place, because there was a little problem with his mother, I think because he was the only son, and she couldn’t kinda accept me I guess. His dad and I got along fine, but anyway.

So, his friend in California said, “Come out, and we are all starting here.” So, he said, “Would you like to go to California?” So, I said, “I don’t know.” So he got the map out. Here’s Chicago. Here’s California. Here’s New York. And I thought: how will I ever get to New York to get on a ship to go home. Never thought to go that far, you know. So I wouldn’t go. That was so stupid of me. Now that I’m in California, I think I should have done that years ago, but I didn’t.

SKINNER: What was it like getting to know him again here in the United States? Was that an adjustment?
HARTMAN: No, no, it was pretty easy. I remember that we were pulling into a place called Indiana, but it was all steel mills and slow coming back, and we were driving through and he said, “Well honey, here we are, home, this is it,” and I looked and saw all this depressive place, and I said “I want to go home.” [Laughs] Then we got home to his house.

SKINNER: You said you had first lived with your in-laws and his mother had a hard time accepting the marriage. How about other people? Did you find it easy to make friends?

HARTMAN: No. I didn’t. I was really lonely there, because they both worked, my mother-in-law and father-in-law. And we were in apartments, it wasn’t a house, like I had been used to. It was apartments and I didn’t know anybody. And he’d been away and didn’t know anybody, and his family didn’t really have friends around there because they worked all the time. So, I was pretty young when I came and went to Chicago.

SKINNER: Do you feel that you were well received by the American public?

HARTMAN: Yes, yes until this day, yes. They kid with me a lot, they think I have a sense of humor and I have some wonderful friends. They think that I’m the “cat’s pajamas.” [Laughs]

SKINNER: What did your husband do for work?

HARTMAN: He had an insurance agency.

SKINNER: So he worked full-time, and when you came here, did you stay at home?

HARTMAN: Yes. And then I had a child after I got here.
SKINNER: Yes, how long before you got pregnant with your first child.

HARTMAN: It was a year and a half.

SKINNER: Was that first year and a half hard?

HARTMAN: Yes, it was.

SKINNER: Did you consider going back at times?

HARTMAN: After I had the baby?

SKINNER: Before.

HARTMAN: No. I was, no I’d loved to come back, but I won’t. I mean, I was very loyal. I didn’t want to leave him, you know, as much as I wanted to go back because I was homesick. But I knew that I had a wonderful husband. Once I had Pam, and she was born in ’47, things got a lot better then. So, I went home a couple of times with Pam, just Pam and I, when she was young.

SKINNER: How did you travel?

HARTMAN: We took the train to New York and then on the Queen Mary or the Queen Elizabeth. And for awhile there, he wasn’t working and things, because I was so unhappy, he stayed home with me quite a lot, which he shouldn’t have, and I realize that I made a mistake and should have said, “You’ve got to go to work.” So, things got a little rough money-wise, but I wanted to go home, so he says, “You’ll go home” and I think he went to some kind of loan company, I forget the name of the loan company, and he borrowed the money for my fare to go home.
SKINNER: How long would you stay back at home at a time?

HARTMAN: I’d stay a month or two.

SKINNER: Was it hard to come back?

HARTMAN: It was. Yeah, in a way. Yeah. Nobody wanted me to really leave, but I did. I had to.

SKINNER: How often were you able to go home?

HARTMAN: My first trip was in . . . my mother came in ‘47 when I had the baby. And then my Brian came. She couldn’t believe I was leaving him. [Laughs] So then I went home in ‘49. That was my first trip back in ‘49.

SKINNER: And were you to continue going back after ‘49?

HARTMAN: Yes, I think I went in ‘50, ‘51. And then my mom and dad decided to come to live in America. With my help, you know. So, the only thing, my sister and brother in England, so they were going to come too. My brother, he had to go, he was called up during, I don’t know what war it was. But anyway, he only joined up so he had done his time, so he went into the army, and he met my sister-in-law, his wife, and she didn’t want to leave home, so they never came. And my brother-in-law he came, to Chicago, and he was a carpenter, and I don’t know if you have ever lived in the Midwest, but the humidity and the heat is unbearable, and he was up on the roofs, putting roofs on, and he was dying up there. It was very hard on him. And my sister was at home with three boys, and things were not
going too good for her, so he went home. He actually immigrated, but he went home.

SKINNER: So your sister and her family made a go at coming here.

HARTMAN: No, no.

SKINNER: Just him?

HARTMAN: And he went home. Just my mom and dad were here.

SKINNER: Did you brother-in-law . . .

HARTMAN: He came to try it out, and then sent for my sister and the boys. He went back to talk to them, and in the meantime, his best friend had bought a pub so he said that you’ve got to come into this business.

So my mother and dad was here. My dad was probably 55 when he came and that takes a lot of courage. And my mom was probably about 49. They sold everything up, sold the house up and everything, and came. So, they lived with us for awhile. And my dad got a job. My mom got a job.

SKINNER: What did they do for work?

HARTMAN: My mother worked as an elevator operator. That’s when they used to pull the gates, so she wore white gloves and a uniform. It was in a hotel. She did that. My dad it was a little harder for him. He could always work with his hands. Anyway, my husband knew somebody in the railroad, so he said, “Do you think you can get my father-in-law a job?” He said, “Well, we do have temps and that. How old is your dad?” “55.” “Okay, we’ll give it a try.” He got him a job and he was doing okay in that, but he
worked nights and it used get down to 15 below zero and poor daddy, he was doing the freight . . . he didn’t work with the very desirable people, you know, they were working there probably to buy their liquor and booze. He used to tell us the stories, he got an education there I’m telling you, like he had never seen nor heard before. But he stuck it out, until he retired from the railroad. And my mom did, and she worked, and then he wanted to see America. So they were going to take a trip and they got as far as Arkansas and they called me up and said, “Guess what?” And I said, “What?” “We bought a house.” I said, “What? Where?” They bought this house in Arkansas. That was my father’s desire to own his own home and he did that. So a comfort Englishmen, with their English accents, in Arkansas . . . They used to come up to Chicago quite a bit and we would go down there, we had some good times. They lived near a wonderful lake, Brady Lake, used to go camping out there. So we had some good times.

SKINNER: What year did you say they immigrated here?

HARTMAN: 1954

SKINNER: That was a big deal for them to come here, when your father owned his own business.

HARTMAN: I’ll tell you what, that was really going down. They were changing to smokeless [inaudible], so coal was really gone.
SKINNER: That’s the foresight you said your father always had, to know where things were headed.

HARTMAN: Common sense.

[End Tape 2, Side A]

[Begin Tape 2, Side B]

[Inaudible question]

HARTMAN: ‘50. No ‘49.

SKINNER: So you became a citizen in ‘49?

HARTMAN: Yes.

SKINNER: Right after you came here?

HARTMAN: Yes. And my mom and dad became citizens. My dad said that his only regret was that he was not a younger man when he came to the States.

SKINNER: So he was glad that he made the decision to come?

HARTMAN: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SKINNER: How did your mother adapt?

HARTMAN: She was the one that wanted to come, because she used to come and visit me without my dad most of the time. And she said to him, “I want to go to America to live.” He said, “It’s a big decision. I tell you, if I go, I will not come back. If we sell out and go, we cannot come back.” So, she accepted that. He always says that he’s gotten [inaudible] in making the decision. [Laughs]
SKINNER: How did your expectations of what your life would be like in the U.S., meet the reality when you were here with your husband, before your parents came? Was it different then you thought it would be?

HARTMAN: Um. Yes, I was disappointed in some things, I think. I found the sense of humor entirely different from English sense of humor, and I think I always thought Americans really have to work hard to have a good time it seems. Whereas, we never seem to. One thing that I noticed that I like is that men pitched in to help women with the children and things, and in England you never saw that. You do today, but years ago, they never helped their wives with the children. They did their days work. That was it. I think Americans really help their wives a lot more.

SKINNER: So, was your husband willing help around the house and children?

HARTMAN: Oh yes. Yeah, very good. And so was my son-in-law was a very good dad. I don’t know what it was like in those days here, but in growing up, it was much more of a man’s world, than a women’s, over there. I mean, they worked hard and they expected that they should have their social life, whether it was going to play darts or going to football games, or going to the pub or whatever. I didn’t like in England was the class distinction and I thought it was really wonderful when I came here, that there wasn’t that class distinction. Yeah, there was a lot of that in England, even on the trains, there was first class and third class, and on the ships, and if you had an accent over there, you was different. It isn’t that bad now, I notice it
isn’t as bad now. I really liked it here that everybody was kinda on the same level.

SKINNER: Do you feel like you brought any cultural influences with you to the United States, such as cooking, or . . . ?

HARTMAN: I should be saying gardening, but I’m not really a good gardener. [Laughs] Cause there are wonderful gardens over there, just wonderful, and people love to garden. Well that’s their hobby. They don’t do as much as we do, maybe not so now, but it is used to be a man’s weekend hobby after work was his gardening. Now the social life is much better over here than there. I feel like I can’t say exactly what culture I brought, but people enjoy me and I have a wonderful family and they think I am wonderful, and they call everyday, maybe to see if I am still alive and kicking, but they are a wonderful family, really, and I am so happy with my family.

SKINNER: Besides your daughter Pam, do you have any other children?

HARTMAN: Yes, then I have Richard, then I had Valerie, and then I had Laurel.

SKINNER: Do you know when each was born? I know Pam was ’47.

HARTMAN: Richard was ’53, and Valerie was ’55, and Laurel was ’60. That was a combination for 10 years, I had three in a short time.

SKINNER: Even after your parents moved here, did you maintain contact with your brother and sister?

HARTMAN: Oh, very close. I go there every other year to see them and they come here the other years.
SKINNER: How about friends. Did you maintain contact with friends in England?

HARTMAN: Not with my school friends. No, no. Don’t forget in those days, we didn’t have telephones, so we didn’t correspond very much at all. So, I would really love to see some of them, and even my theatrical friends. When I first came over, I used to go back and see them, but I’ve lost contact with them.

SKINNER: What do you miss most about England today?

HARTMAN: The people.

SKINNER: Did you know of any other war brides and did you keep in touch with them in the United States?

HARTMAN: The only ones, there are quite a few in the Daughters of the British Empire. And there’s one that I talk to. Oh no, there are two, I know two, Vivian. And there’s ones that came over later with their husbands. We had a good group going, but they got older, and it’s too bad, that it’s kinda phasing out. The ones that are in it now are younger and have come over for business reasons and are working and things.

SKINNER: When you were in Chicago, did you know of anyone else in the same situation as you were?

HARTMAN: No, I didn’t any other war brides. And I was used to family, but he was an only child, so he had no sisters and brothers and family around.

SKINNER: That must have been a big adjustment.

HARTMAN: Yes it was.
SKINNER: It sounds like even growing up as a child, you always had family around you.

HARTMAN: There was always family there for me. Yeah.

SKINNER: When did your husband pass away?


SKINNER: So after he passed, were your parents still alive and living in Arkansas?

HARTMAN: No. Let’s see. We got them to come out here, my father got very sick and my mother had surgery, so we went to Arkansas and brought them back here. And my mother she left California and so did my dad, cause the times they visited. Then my dad passed away 6 months after they moved here.

SKINNER: So, you and your husband had at some point moved from Chicago to California?

HARTMAN: No.

SKINNER: So, you were living in Chicago when he passed?

HARTMAN: Yes. And then did you move to California by yourself?

HARTMAN: Pam was teaching in California and she said, “Mom, you know you’ve got to start a new life, and so why don’t you come to California.” Cause my husband and I had planned to coming out, that was our plan to come out with Pam and bring the kids. So I had three teenagers at home when he died and Pam was out here. That was hard, having a 14-year-old just starting high school, and I said we were going to move to California.
They went through hard times, because he was very sick for quite a few years. It was very hard. Anyway, he died in '74 and in December of '74 we were on the road to California.

I sold the house. I had never done any thing like that before, he took care of everything. I didn’t write checks. He used to say to me, “Kat, don’t you think you had better start,” and I would say “No, no I didn’t want to hear it,” because I didn’t want to listen to that and I should have. That was silly. Anyway, so I sold the house and came to California and Pam had found us. I said, “Get us a good school district.” Which she did, Cupertino, and she found an apartment and I don’t know how she found it, it was in a four-plex, because I had no job, I had no husband, and I had three teenagers. Who was going to rent. Most people said “No, no, no” and this one lady she said, “I like you and I am going to take a chance with your mother and stuff.” So, we got the place. I didn’t have very much money when I came, just one policy left, because he had life insurance, but he had to turn them in, in those days, he had cancer, and he had a lot of hospital bills to cover.

Anyway, I came and moved in this place, and I had to find a house for the kids. So I got a realtor and I said that I had to buy a house and I had about $38,000. She took me to some homes, and I couldn’t believe the price of houses in California. So she asked whether I had ever thought of buying a four-plex or duplex and living in one. I said, “What’s a
fourplex or a duplex?” . . . Anyway, she took me to some of these and she took me to a fourplex, and said, “Look this one has three bedrooms and the other three have two bedrooms. You can live with the children and the rents would nearly cover your mortgage.” I didn’t sleep for, I didn’t know if I was doing the right thing. Anyway, I did it, and it worked out wonderfully for me for my retirement, cause I sold it.

SKINNER: So did you ever have to go to work?

HARTMAN: Oh yes, I worked. I went to Manpower and got a job, and they sent me to different places, and I had. [Laughs] You know, getting on the 101, it was in Silicon Valley. A lot of places wanted to keep me, be a wafer maker or, and then I went as a receptionist most of the time. And so I got quite a bit of experience, and I used to run hotel reservations for people who would come into Silicon Valley to train, and I could have had a nice career, but decided not to. I did work, I worked at Bullocks, do you remember Bullocks in Valco, Stevensons Creek?

SKINNER: No.

HARTMAN: I was a hairdresser when I was growing up, and when I had the kids and they were in school, I went to hairdressing school and got my certificate for that. So, I used to style the wigs in Bullocks. So the millinery, the hats, and the wigs and things. I made a very wonderful friend there. I still keep in touch with her, she’s in Las Vegas now. What other jobs. Then I
worked at the Emporium in the credit department, so I have done quite a few jobs.

SKINNER: So even when you were in Chicago, you did work?

HARTMAN: Yes, I had to, yes when he was sick, in retail. After I first came over, I had Pam and my neighbor said she knew I was lonely, so she said, “Why don’t you get a part-time job and I’ll take care of Pam.” She was like a sister to me. She was wonderful. Evelyn. And so I said, okay, so I worked at Marshall Fields, which was one of the top, you had to wear all black with the white cuffs and collar. Seventy-five cents an hour. And I worked in the better handbags, the lizard skin, crocodile handbags, and when I would get paid, that was it, I would have it all spent before I got home. But it did help me, it helped me to go out to work.

SKINNER: So between having a child and having a part-time job, did that really help you feel more a part of the culture here in the United States?

HARTMAN: Yes, it really did.

SKINNER: When reflecting on the past 60 years, do you feel that you made the right decision to come to the United States?

HARTMAN: Oh yes, yes, yes. I did. I love the United States.

SKINNER: How did meet your current husband.

HARTMAN: I’m not married. He’s my partner.

SKINNER: Did you meet him when you were living over the hill?

HARTMAN: No, here. Dancing.
SKINNER: Dancing?

HARTMAN: At Pasatiempo. I was going to exercise class, and so there were a couple of ladies there, one was from Australia, one lived here, and they said, “Why don’t you come out with us? We go out on Fridays dancing.” And I said, “Oh, I don’t know.” Anyway, I went, and actually this friend of mine that I went with, she knew George, and she introduced me to him, and I thought fine, you know. And anyway, they were just friends, there was nothing between them, so although she didn’t talk to me for a long time after I started dating him. So we met dancing, and we made friends with this wonderful group. Now, we meet once a month and we have the birthdays and we have parties, and instead of giving gifts, we put five dollars each in a card, and we get these really funny cards, I mean, oh gosh, and we have a good laugh with the cards. And then we go out for lunch or something like that we try and find little gifts. That works out well. We met dancing and so we’re a pretty close group.

SKINNER: That’s wonderful. How long ago did you meet George?

HARTMAN: That was about 1994. I took care of my mother when she was sick and then we got together, and he’d love to get married, but I don’t know, for some reason, I don’t want to.

SKINNER: What memories do you cherish most about your experience as a war bride?

HARTMAN: What part?
SKINNER: Any part you cherish the most, when you reflect back on this whole journey you’ve been on.

HARTMAN: Yeah, I’ve been on a long journey. 83 years old. What do I cherish most? Each day, I think. I really enjoy each day. As I say, I think that I’ve have a very, very good life. I think I am lucky. I’ve got wonderful family and I just love my mom and dad so much, my sister and brother, and I’ve been very lucky and fortunate. There’s been a lot of upheavals, but on the whole. I’ve met a wonderful man. How it all happened, just going to a dance one night, in another city, another town, I happened to be in. So, I kinda believe in fate, a little bit.

SKINNER: Is that an aspect of Maurice’s character that he was bold, just in the fact that he cut in on that dance?

HARTMAN: Was he bold? Well, yes, yeah, I would say that he was not aggressive, but he would stick up for me. I was very kinda naïve when I came. I don’t know about dumb, but I was naïve, so I didn’t want to do something, and he would say, “I’ll do it for you.” And it’s amazing what you can do when you have to do it, cause I was really taken care of, kinda babied, and even George does that quite a bit. And I think that I have always needed and wanted someone like this.

It’s amazing, now I’ve wished I had the wisdom that I have now, when I was younger. I was quite shy. But I’m not anymore. If I say to the kids, that I am shy, they will say, “Mom, you’re not shy. You’ll talk to
anybody.” Which I do now. When I first came over, I would sit on the park bench, and a lady might sit next to me, and I would think that I wish I could talk and stuff. I might say, “Good morning,” and she’d say “Good morning,” and that was the end of it. Now, I can make conversation. Most English people are like that. Whether it’s the shyness, or being inhibited, I don’t know. But this generation changed now, I’ve noticed when I go over. Yeah, it’s a new generation. When I was growing up, “you mustn’t be rude, you mustn’t do this, you mustn’t answer back, you mustn’t,” and that’s one thing that I have tried to instill in all my kids is good manners. Good manners don’t cost anything. And you’d be surprised how many people remark on that too. “Oh, you’ve got such nice manners.” A lot of Americans, unfortunately, do not have good manners. They’re rude. Especially, working in retail, [inaudible].

SKINNER: Is there anything else you would like to add?

HARTMAN: You mean about my life?

SKINNER: Yes.

HARTMAN: I don’t think so. I think I’ve had a very good life, a wonderful life. I wish everyone could be as fortunate as I have been. I say that I’m kinda a fatalist, that things happened. I don’t know if things are really planned for you, I don’t know, it’s funny sometimes. I don’t think there’s really anything else to say.
SKINNER: It sounds like you’ve had an amazing journey, and I greatly appreciate you meeting me for this interview. I want to thank you very much.

HARTMAN: I’ve enjoyed talking to you. If I’ve left anything out, or want to know anymore, get back with me, and I will do that for you. I’m sure there’s still lots of things. Not thinking about things, you kinda do forget little things.

SKINNER: You have a great memory. Definitely.

HARTMAN: Yes, not bad I guess, for my age.

SKINNER: Thank you very much.

HARTMAN: You’re welcome Courtney.

[End Tape 2, Side B]
APPENDIX G

Ruth Smith Interview
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

M.A. Thesis Project
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Interview

with

Ruth Smith

December 11, 2009
Santa Cruz, California

By Courtney Belville Skinner
California State University, Sacramento
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

Interview History for Oral History of
Ruth Smith

Interviewer’s Name: Courtney Belville Skinner

Interview Date and Location: The interview was conducted on December 11, 2009, at Mrs. Smith’s home in Santa Cruz, California.

Interviewee’s Country of Origin: Czechoslovakia

Context Notes: Mrs. Smith is a Czechoslovakian World War II war bride. The interview was recorded on audiocassette tapes and a digital recording device. The digital recording is missing Skinner’s introduction to the interview because she forgot to turn on the digital recording device until after she asked the first question. The audiocassette recording and transcript contain the entire interview. Courtney Belville Skinner preformed the interview transcription. Minor editing of the interview was done to remove false starts. The transcript was not sent back to the interviewee.

Tapes and Interview Records: The original audiocassette tape recording, CD copy of the audio files, and full transcript of the interview are held at the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
SKINNER: This is Courtney Skinner. I’m with Ruth Smith at her home in Santa Cruz, California. It is December 11, 2009. I will be interviewing Ruth about her experiences as a Czechoslovakian World War II war bride. This is Tape 1, Side A.

Okay, Ruth, so let’s begin talking a little bit about your background. Where were you born and when?

SMITH: I was born in Prague, Czechoslovakia. 16 July 1922.

SKINNER: Great. And what part of Czechoslovakia was that?

SMITH: Prague, at that time, was the capital of the country.

SKINNER: And tell me about your mother. When and where was she born?

SMITH: She was born in a little town outside of Prague, also in the Czech Republic. It’s the Republic today.

SKINNER: And how about your father?

SMITH: My father was born in Prague.

SKINNER: And do you know roughly what years they might have been born?

SMITH: My mother was born in 1905, I believe. My father was probably 1900.

SKINNER: And did you have any siblings?

SMITH: Yes, I had brother. He was two years younger.

SKINNER: And what was his name?

SMITH: His name was Marcel (phonetic).
SKINNER: And what was your relationship like with him?

SMITH: Oh, we just loved each other. We were just the two of us. We were fighting, but we loved each other.

SKINNER: So tell me about Prague. What was it like there, when you grew up?

SMITH: It was a beautiful city. Very democratic and very free. Free of religion . . . race. Really ideal place to live at that time.

SKINNER: And what’s the geography like there? Is it mountainous?

SMITH: Prague is in the heart of Czech country. In the middle.

SKINNER: So it’s flat land?

SMITH: Well, the country is never really that flat. There are hills and lakes. Interesting. It’s really not what you would say flat, no.

SKINNER: And how did your parents earn a living?

SMITH: My father inherited his business from my grandfather. And the business was manufacturing furniture.

SKINNER: And what did your mother do?

SMITH: She was taking care of kids. In those days, mothers did not work unless you were very poor and you had to earn living. But that was not case with my mother.

SKINNER: So what was a typical day in the life of your mother? What would she do throughout the day?

SMITH: Well, first she went shopping for the food, because you go shopping every day of the week since there was no refrigeration. So everything has to be
brought from the store that day when it was cooked and consumed. So that was part of her day, go shopping. And then she’d prepare the food. Rest of the time, she met with her sisters or brothers that were living very close, and we had afternoon tea. And then that was the end of the day. She used to go to the spa also, twice a week. Didn’t do much sport, at that time women were not really very athletic. They were homebodies. My mother was one of them. [Laughs]

SKINNER: And your father, what was his business week like?

SMITH: Well, he was mainly taking care of the factory. So five days a week. They didn’t work on Saturday or Sunday.

SKINNER: And what kind of relationship did you have with your father?

SMITH: Very good. I had very good relationship with both of them.

SKINNER: Did your father help out much with the children?

SMITH: No, that was my mother’s side. No, he loved us, but as far as taking care of us, she did all that.

SKINNER: And where did you attend school?

SMITH: Where? Right there in Prague, in my section of the city.

SKINNER: And what is the education system like there? How many years do children attend school?

SMITH: Well, first we have the grammar school, that’s five years. Then we have, like you would call high school, and that’s four years. And after that, you can decide whether you want to go further or whether you just want to go
into some kind of trade. In case you go to a trade school, you still have to
go to school even though you choose not to further your education, but
you still have to go into a trade school.

SKINNER: So what was the highest level of education you received?

SMITH: I have one year of English college, where we learned English from the
very beginning. And two years of business school that was taught in
German. So at the end of my three-year education, I was fluent in both
languages: English and German.

SKINNER: So did language always interest you?

SMITH: Oh yes. It was a big part of our nation, because the nation was small and
the language was difficult for any foreigner to either understand or speak.
So in order of us to get around the world, so to speak, we simply had to
learn other languages.

SKINNER: So did have ambitions of someday leaving Czechoslovakia, so that could
use these languages that you learned?

SMITH: Well, for some reason I always had an eye that I might be leaving, even
though I was just a kid. That’s the way people were at the time.

SKINNER: Did your parents encourage you to achieve that higher education?

SMITH: Oh, yeah. They were very much for me.

SKINNER: When you reflect upon your early years, what did you enjoy most about
your childhood in Czechoslovakia?
SMITH: Well, we lived in the city, and for two months we used to go for vacation on my uncle’s farm outside. And we just loved it there. We used to pick blueberries and mushrooms. And there was a beautiful river, very clear, very clean. And we used to go swimming in there. And that was a big part of my childhood, those vacations.

SKINNER: And what city was this, where your uncle lived?

SMITH: It was just a small village. I don’t even remember the name right now.

SKINNER: And was this your mother’s brother or your father’s brother?

SMITH: That was my mother’s brother, my mother’s side.

SKINNER: And what was his name?

SMITH: Joseph.

SKINNER: So let’s begin talking about your experiences in Czechoslovakia around the time that World War II was getting started. So can you describe what was going on politically where you lived? What politics . . . Was Germany starting to encroach on Czechoslovakia?

SMITH: It started with the Sudetenland that Hitler just cut off from Czechoslovakia. And that was the start of the bad feelings.

SKINNER: And where is Prague in relation to the Sudetenland?

SMITH: Well, it was kind of brewing for a while. And finally it happened. It didn’t happen overnight. It just took a few months or a couple years, I don’t exactly know. But Hitler was the one that caused Sudetenland to be cut off.
SKINNER: So how did you and your family feel about that?

SMITH: Terrible, of course. We all did. When I was a teenager at that time, we had like what they were calling paid vacation with German family, where I could practice my German. And we were all friends.

SKINNER: Just to be clear, Prague is separate from where Sudetenland was?

SMITH: Oh yes. Sudetenland, was mainly north . . .

SKINNER: Northwestern?

SMITH: Northwestern, yes.

SKINNER: So did that faction of Sudetenland going under German control, affect your everyday life?

SMITH: Well, not really.

SKINNER: Did you have fears that the Germans could start imposing . . .

SMITH: Oh yes, at that time, it was getting very unstable situation. And there was, naturally, not such a happy feeling anymore.

SKINNER: So eventually Czechoslovakia was divided into three parts, the Protectorate of Bohemia and . . .

SMITH: That was done after the First World War. It was Bohemia, Moravia, and Slovakia. And so that existed up until the Russians came.

SKINNER: So once Great Britain declared war on Germany, after Germany had invaded Poland, was there much difference in what you were experiencing once the war was really on?
SMITH: Yes, we knew there was war going on. And unfortunately, Hitler came very strong and especially with the Jewish population. A lot of our friends were put in the concentration camps, because of being Jewish. Also, if you were part Jewish or married to a Jewish person, you had to wear a Star of David on your clothes. And that was very difficult times.

SKINNER: So you were aware of what was happening the Jews?

SMITH: Oh yes, how much. Aware, absolutely. And actually, the non-Jewish people were put in the concentration camp for very minor offenses. Like the black market started with food, because the food started to get very scarce. If a farmer killed a pig and somebody reported him, the farmer went to concentration camp because he’d killed his own pig and didn’t report it.

SKINNER: So at this time then, Germany had a level of control over the entire country.

SMITH: Oh, yes, absolutely.

SKINNER: So he had, at one point, taken over the Sudetenland, but he still maintained control over all of what was still Czechoslovakia?

SMITH: Yes, definitely. They used to call it Protectorate.

SKINNER: From what you just told me about . . . The man killed his own pig, and didn’t report it. Tell me how that made you and family feel. Did you very concerned that you might misstep somewhere along the way?
SMITH: Oh, yes, sure. Everybody was afraid of everything. You weren’t sure of anything. It was a very uncertain time of life.

SKINNER: Now you obviously saw that the Jews were being taken off and put in concentration camps, did you know to the extent of what the Germans were doing to the Jews?

SMITH: Not completely, because they wouldn’t let us know, naturally. We knew it was a bad life, and we knew that they had those ovens where they were burning. We knew about that because of listening to the broadcasts overseas, which was very, very, very dangerous to listen to. If you were caught listening to like BBC, you were immediately taken away and put in a concentration camp yourself. So very few news trickled through, but it did come eventually.

SKINNER: So the Germans were controlling all the media Czechoslovakia?

SMITH: Oh yes, radio. Radio at that time, we didn’t have television.

SKINNER: So you had a sense that when your Jewish friends were being rounded up, they might never come back?

SMITH: Right, yeah.

SKINNER: So did you experience wartime rationing or shortages?

SMITH: Oh, yes. We were heavily rationed, heavily. We didn’t get hardly anything. And there was lots of food that was not rationed, but it was not available. Like you couldn’t find to buy garlic. Or onions were terribly
short. Numerous things you take for granted, they were not rationed, but they were not available.

SKINNER: Do you remember some things you went without? How about clothing and things like that?

SMITH: Oh, clothing, that was the same thing. The stores were empty.

SKINNER: How would you describe your social life during this time?

SMITH: Well, we tried the best we could, you know. At that time, what we had . . .
dancing lessons for teenagers, and I loved it. They were teaching you regular social dance and social life.

SKINNER: Now how old were around this time when you were taking the dance lessons?

SMITH: Probably fourteen or fifteen, something like that.

SKINNER: Were you allowed to date?

SMITH: Uh, no.

SKINNER: And did you live with your parents?

SMITH: Yes.

SKINNER: Did your parents kind of keep a strict eye on you?

SMITH: Oh, yes, definitely.

SKINNER: Was that common at that time, parents guarded their children?

SMITH: Oh yes, that was not unusual.

SKINNER: At that time, what was a common age for a girl to be married?
SMITH: Well, during the war, not too many people were getting married. Because they were afraid of what the future will bring. Usually, I would say it was at least twenty, twenty-one, something like that. Not really like they do here.

SKINNER: And were these arranged marriages, or were these things the children were allowed to choose on their own?

SMITH: They were choosing their own, yes.

SKINNER: So your parents, they chose their own spouse?

SMITH: Yes.

SKINNER: Now during wartime, did women take up any jobs or roles in support of the war effort?

SMITH: No, you had to go wherever the government tells you to. So whether you had a choice or not, you had to go to work.

SKINNER: And so did you know women taking on some jobs?

SMITH: Did I know some women? No, I don’t think I do.

SKINNER: Because you were younger.

SMITH: Yeah.

SKINNER: Was your mother still able to stay home?

SMITH: Yes.

SKINNER: So, since Czechoslovakia was primarily under German control during the war, and was eventually liberated by the Soviet troops, how did you meet an American? [Laughs]
SMITH: Well, it’s a love story. This was after the war, naturally. My brother belonged to a sport club, which included basketball. And he played basketball. And the club invited some American troops to come over to Prague and play exhibition games.

SKINNER: Great. Now what year was this?

SMITH: This was 1946.

SKINNER: Would you say this was shortly after the end of the war? I guess, within a year.

SMITH: Yeah.

SKINNER: So this was a sport club. So did you go to one of these games?

SMITH: Yes, I went to one of those games and . . . this whole team was there almost a whole week. At the end of the games, they had a great big ball. And this was during the time, when they call this Fasching during the year . . . I can’t think of it. Well, anyway, it was in January, and it was one of those big celebrations, and they had a great big ball: dance, and band, and everything. And my brother introduced to me to this man, and he looked at me and I looked at him, and wow. We connected right then and there.

SKINNER: So had your brother been playing basketball with him?

SMITH: At that time he wasn’t. He was just with the team, coaching, and taking part of it. But at that time, my husband did play. He was the captain of the team.
SKINNER: So upon meeting him, what differences did you find between him as an American to the Czechoslovakian men you’d known growing up?

SMITH: Gosh, that’s difficult to answer.

SKINNER: Were there personality differences between Americans and Czechoslovakians?

SMITH: I assume there were. I guess they were, after the war, happy-go-lucky people. We were still pretty well reserved. We were afraid something might happen, and it did happen later on with the communists.

SKINNER: So, as a Czechoslovakian woman was it okay for you to be interacting with an American?

SMITH: Oh yes, there was no restrictions.

SKINNER: And by the public, that wouldn’t be seen as a bad idea?

SMITH: What?

SKINNER: Would the public have viewed that as not a good idea, or was that perfectly fine at that point?

SMITH: It was okay.

SKINNER: In your mind, what did you imagine the United States was like?

SMITH: I really didn’t have much idea about the United States.

SKINNER: Had you heard anything growing up, of what the United States was like?

SMITH: Not much, no.

SKINNER: So prior to meeting your husband had you dated many Czechoslovakian men?
SMITH: Yes, I did.

SKINNER: Had you ever dated a German?

SMITH: No.

SKINNER: So just talking about your husband before you met him, what branch of the service was he in?

SMITH: He was in the Air Force.

SKINNER: And what was his name?

SMITH: John. [Laughs]

SKINNER: I know I asked you that earlier, just for the record. So John Smith . . .

SMITH: I was being teased about that for all these years. [Laughs]

SKINNER: Very American name.

SMITH: Very much so.

SKINNER: How old was he when you met him?

SMITH: He was about, I think, something like twenty-eight.

SKINNER: And where was he from?

SMITH: He was from California.

SKINNER: Did he grow up here in Santa Cruz?

SMITH: No, he grew up actually . . . He went to Nevada for schooling. Then we went to Idaho to stay with his uncle, and he was teaching there too.

SKINNER: What was he teaching?

SMITH: Beats me.

SKINNER: Do you know how he ended up in the service? Did he enlist voluntarily?
SMITH: I think so.

SKINNER: So after the end of the war, he joined this basketball team. Was the basketball team the U.S. military basketball team?

SMITH: Oh, yes.

SKINNER: Did he continue to serve to in the Air Force, and he did this in his spare time? Or how did that work? Was it a paid job?

SMITH: Well, he went to the states and got discharged and he knew some people in the right places, and he got a civilian job with the government, and so he come back to Europe, and we got married.

SKINNER: So tell me about that first night, it was at the ball where you first met?

SMITH: Yes.

SKINNER: Obviously, you were impressed by him.

SMITH: Yeah. [Laughs]

SKINNER: So what was that evening like?

SMITH: Well, we danced and we talked and my brother practically disappeared after awhile. At first, we were all sitting together, and he didn’t have a date with him for some unknown reason. So he was all by himself and I was by myself, I didn’t have any escort either, so here we are.

SKINNER: Okay, I’m going to turn the tape before it runs out.

[End Tape 1, Side A]

[Begin Tape 1, Side B]
SKINNER: So after that first evening where you met at the ball and danced and talked, where did you go on dates after that?

SMITH: Well, he went back to Germany, and that was that. But he did come back.

SKINNER: So he went back to Germany . . . Was this at the end of the week that you met you him?

SMITH: Yes.

SKINNER: So it was there for a week playing basketball . . .

SMITH: Yeah.

SKINNER: Okay, that was the end of the week. You met him that night and he left the next day?

SMITH: He left probably, I imagine, the next day.

SKINNER: So what was he doing in Germany?

SMITH: He was in the service, so whatever they told him to do.

SKINNER: So he was playing basketball, but also fulfilling jobs for the military.

SMITH: Yes.

SKINNER: So tell me about when he came back. How long did that take?

SMITH: Oh, it didn’t take very long. No, a couple weeks. And then the visits were more often.

SKINNER: Was he stationed in Germany?

SMITH: Oh, yes.

SKINNER: Do you know where he was stationed?
SMITH: I’m not sure that I know exactly where he was stationed at that time. But they were being transferred back and forth. Frankfurt was one of the places, and Wiesbaden was another place.

SKINNER: And what was the second place you mentioned?

SMITH: Wiesbaden?

SKINNER: Do you know how to spell that?

SMITH: W-i-[e]-s-b-a-d-e-n.

SKINNER: Thank you. So he returned. Were you surprised that he’d returned again to come see you?

SMITH: No, I more or less expected it. [Laughs]

SKINNER: So what did your parents think of him? Did they approve?

SMITH: Well, at that time, my father was already dead. He died at the end of the war, 1945. So it was just mother, myself and my brother. I was very strong-headed. I wanted that man. Period. [Laughs]

SKINNER: So then how did your mother feel about it?

SMITH: Oh, she loved him, yeah. He was very likeable person. And so did my brother. They were like brothers, and my husband didn’t have any siblings. So my brother was like his brother. It was just perfect.

SKINNER: So what about him specifically made you fall in love with him?

SMITH: I don’t know, it was just nature, I guess. Or physical attraction.

SKINNER: So did he eventually propose to you?

SMITH: Oh, yes. Very much so.
SKINNER: And what happened?

SMITH: Well, what happened? We got married.

SKINNER: Well, you know how in the United States the man gets on one knee and there’s the big proposal. Did you just discuss the idea of getting married?

SMITH: No, no. We were just sitting in the car, and he held my hand and he said, “How would you like to marry me?” That kind of a thing. He was very casual about everything.

SKINNER: How did you feel when he asked you that?

SMITH: I said, “Sure, yeah.”

SKINNER: At that time, did you think you would move to the U.S. to be with him?

SMITH: Well, at that time, my mother was kind of apprehensive about the whole thing. She knew if I married him, she would lose me. So there was some tense moments before we solved the problem.

SKINNER: Did she try to persuade you not to . . .

SMITH: Well, she mainly said that I come from a good family, and yet I don’t know anything about him, you know. We don’t know where he come from and what was he doing in the states. It just simply scared her, thinking that he might not be the right person for me.

SKINNER: How did you eventually persuade her?

SMITH: Just kept on insisting.

SKINNER: During the period where you were dating him, what did he tell you about his life in the United States?
SMITH: There was not much he was telling me. Mainly where he went to school and where he grew up. Actually, he was born in Redding, California, and went to school in Nevada. He liked teaching. He was very good teacher, obviously. Other than that, we had lot of conversation about Europe, more than United States.

SKINNER: About your upbringing or just about where you’d like to go in Europe?

SMITH: What is that?

SKINNER: Did your conversations about Europe . . . Did it have to do with your upbringing in Czechoslovakia or did it have to do with maybe his travels, or where you’d like to travel to in Europe?

SMITH: I guess he wanted to travel around, yeah.

SKINNER: So what was it about him that gave you enough confidence to consider marrying him, and potentially moving to the United States?

SMITH: Well, it was just a shot in the dark, let’s put it that way.

SKINNER: Did you feel that if it didn’t work out you’d be able to return home?

SMITH: I don’t think I wanted to do that, even if it didn’t turn out well. There was some pride in me. I just felt I made my choice, and that’s it, good or bad.

SKINNER: So you decided to get married? Where did you acquire your wedding gown?

SMITH: We were married in Prague and we had a civil ceremony. And after that we went to Germany.

SKINNER: Were clothing and materials and fabric much more available at this point?
SMITH: Yes, uh-huh.

SKINNER: Who attended your civil ceremony?

SMITH: My brother and friends and relatives. Lots of people did.

SKINNER: Did your mother?

SMITH: Oh, yes.

SKINNER: So I guess she eventually agreed to this?

SMITH: Oh, she didn’t have much choice really.

SKINNER: So did you go on a honeymoon?

SMITH: Not really, we went to Germany, and I guess that was our honeymoon then.

SKINNER: So you went to live in Germany because that’s where he was stationed.

SMITH: Um-hum.

SKINNER: What was it for you like living there?

SMITH: There?

SKINNER: What was it like living there?

SMITH: Oh, I enjoyed it, because by that time I was among Americans. So I start getting all acquainted about life in the States, American way of doing things. I really, thoroughly enjoyed it.

SKINNER: Did you know of other any Czechoslovakian women who had married Americans?

SMITH: Not off hand, no.

SKINNER: So you were one of a few?
SMITH: Must have.

SKINNER: Okay, so now we’ll talk about your immigration to the United States. You were living with your husband in Germany. So when did you guys eventually come back to the United States?

SMITH: Well, when he got an offer to come to the States for the same job he was doing in Germany. He was in education field. So he accepted the offer, and I went through the procedures in the Consulate or whatever it was, and one day we got on the plane and there we came. We went on a military transport.

SKINNER: So you flew . . . I imagine you took connecting flights, but you flew from Czechoslovakia to the United States?

SMITH: No, no. We flew from Germany.

SKINNER: I'm sorry. That’s right.

SMITH: From Germany we flew over Iceland. We stopped there for about four hours. From Iceland we flew to, I think it was, Springfield, Massachusetts. That’s where we landed.

SKINNER: Did you say goodbye to your family and friends prior to leaving?

SMITH: Oh yeah, I had to.

SKINNER: So did you make a return trip to Czechoslovakia?

SMITH: Yeah, I made a trip.

SKINNER: And how did that go?

SMITH: It went okay.
SKINNER: Was that hard for your mother?

SMITH: Probably. She wouldn’t let me know, but it was hard on all of us.

SKINNER: So you said you landed in Springfield, Massachusetts. Where did you and your husband live?

SMITH: Well, we lived on Long Island. We took a bus to New York and we stayed with a friend of ours in New York City. She had an apartment, and her husband at that time was in Korea or something. So we stayed with her a couple days, and then we found a place on Long Island. At that time it really was not a big problem to find a rental. So that’s where we were.

SKINNER: And what were some of your first impressions of the United States?

SMITH: Well, I practically knew part of it already by associating with the Americans in Germany. See we lived there like seven years before we came to the States.

SKINNER: I guess I didn’t clarify that. Wow, that’s a long time. So tell me what year it was that you flew here?

SMITH: ’55. So actually I was not a war bride as such, as per say. But I was considered one. Cause war brides were the ones that were shipped by the hundreds.

SKINNER: One thing I forgot to ask was, do you remember the date you were married?

SMITH: It was October.

SKINNER: Okay, October . . . Do you know what year?
SMITH: ’47.

SKINNER: That’s good enough. October of ’47. Okay, so then you came to the U.S. in 1955. So like you said, you spent 6 or 7 years in Germany. So you had become somewhat acculturated to what Americans are like. Was it difficult at first adjusting to actually being in the United States?

SMITH: No, not at all. And funny thing, when we first rented the apartment, it was Jewish family. And they were just like my family; they were so nice.

SKINNER: So what about your husband’s family? Where did your in-laws live?

SMITH: Well, he didn’t have father anymore. His father died at a young age of forty-six. His mother lived here by that time, here in Santa Cruz. And he had an uncle and aunt living in Idaho, and that was just about it. He didn’t have cousins, and didn’t have siblings, didn’t have brother or sister. So it was a very small family.

SKINNER: When did you meet his mother for the first time?

SMITH: Gosh, I think that’s when we went . . . We brought one of the vehicles everybody was looking at saying “What is that?” And that was the original Volkswagen. And the man that we rented the house, or the apartment from, when we were ready to go over to California he said, “You mean to tell me that you people are traveling all across the United States in this vehicle?” [Laughs] Yes we did.

SKINNER: So was it a bug or one of the buses?
SMITH: No, it was just a regular Volkswagen. He couldn’t believe we were
making the trip in that little Volkswagen. And had a little dog that was
Fritzy.

SKINNER: What was the name again?

SMITH: Fritzy.

SKINNER: Fritzy?

SMITH: Fritzy. Like Fritz, you know?

SKINNER: Oh, Fritz, uh-huh.

SMITH: So we went from Long Island we traveled across the country to Idaho.
We stayed with his uncle and aunt and that’s where we met his mother.
She was a traveling lady. You gave her a car, and she got behind the
wheel and she went. She was not afraid of distances at all. So she traveled
to Idaho, and we traveled Idaho from New York, and that’s where we met.

SKINNER: And how long after your arrival to the United States was this?

SMITH: Well, that was pretty close to after our arrival. Let’s see, we got here in
’55. It was probably only a year or so that we made the trip. We came
back to New York.

SKINNER: What was his mother’s name?

SMITH: Belle.

SKINNER: Belle?

SMITH: Belle.

SKINNER: B-e-l-l-e?
SMITH: B-e-l-l-e.

SKINNER: And so how did she treat you?

SMITH: Like a mother in law. [Laughs] Don’t forget I stole her one and only child, and a son on top of that. That was a very, very difficult situation at first.

SKINNER: Could you describe that a little bit?

SMITH: Huh?

SKINNER: Could you describe what it was like? The relationship between you and her? What kind of relationship did you and her have?

SMITH: Well, it was not exactly the hottest relationship. It was on the cool side at first. But through the years, we all just bend down a little bit. She was not the most congenial mother-in-law. But other than that, she was good.

SKINNER: Did you feel well received by the American public?

SMITH: Oh, yes. I had no problem.

SKINNER: Did you ever feel discriminated against?

SMITH: No.

SKINNER: Did you get involved in any social groups or clubs?

SMITH: Well, mainly golf clubs.

SKINNER: Was that shortly after your arrival?

SMITH: Oh, well, no. At that time, I was playing golf just on my own, without being a member of any clubs.

SKINNER: Did your husband play golf?

SMITH: Oh, yes. He taught me.
SKINNER: So, did your husband remain in the military long after you came to the United States?

SMITH: He was not in the military. It was association with the military.

SKINNER: So what was he doing here in the States?

SMITH: He was still teaching.

SKINNER: Do you know what he was teaching?

SMITH: College subjects.

SKINNER: And was he teaching this to people in the military . . .

SMITH: To military, yeah.

SKINNER: To the military. So while he was working, did you stay home?

SMITH: No, I really didn’t. When we were on Long Island, I had a job at the Officer’s Club, and I was a Receiving Hostess, so they called me.

SKINNER: So what did you do for that job?

SMITH: Not much except smile, and be nice and take people to the table. Just like they do here. I loved that job. It was really nice.

SKINNER: And in the household, did you take care of all the cooking and cleaning? Or did your husband help out with that?

SMITH: He was not much of a help, to tell you the truth. But he did like to cook chili; that was his favorite chili. And I didn’t do any of that cooking, he did it himself. But other than that, I did most of the cooking and cleaning.

SKINNER: So there was a pretty clear division of labor between you and your husband, even though you did work.
SMITH: Yes.

SKINNER: Did you know of any other Czechoslovakian immigrants in the area?

SMITH: Not here.

SKINNER: So not in Long Island?

SMITH: No.

SKINNER: Did you and your husband have any children?

SMITH: No.

SKINNER: So how would you describe those first years living in the United States?

SMITH: It was great. Just post-war living, you know, it was such a good feeling. There’s no problems. Nobody was having bitterness or . . . I cannot believe that in these years that I’ve been living here, things have changed so much. Because we had no racial problem there. Long Island, okay you were a Jew, you were a Jew. You were Black, you were Black. You were a Pole, you were a Pole. Everything was just fine. Nobody was bickering and fighting and trying to make anything. And that was it.

SKINNER: Was anything difficult for you to adapt to?

SMITH: No, I don’t think so.

SKINNER: Did you correspond much with your family and friends back home?

SMITH: Oh yes, I did. And I sent them packages, too. Because at that time, the Communists took over already, and they had problem with rationing. They didn’t have rationing, but they didn’t have the supplies of materials and food and stuff like that. I was supporting my family.
SKINNER: So what kind of things would you send over?

SMITH: Anything, you know. Food that wouldn’t spoil. Clothing. There was a company in New York, and they were mailing the packages for you already. So all you did was send them so much money for a package, and they delivered the package.

SKINNER: Were you concerned about your family?

SMITH: Yes, I was, sure.

SKINNER: Were you ever able to return home to visit?

SMITH: Oh well, yes. We went there several times, my husband and I, before the Communists and after the Communists. I was there by myself one time, and they almost held me there. Because I was supposed to report to the police, and I had no idea that I had to do that. And when I was leaving, all of a sudden they said, “Well, you’re not going anywhere.” I said, “What do you mean?” He said, “Where’s your police report?” I said, “I don’t have any.” And they said, “Well, we’ll have to keep you here.” I said, “No you don’t.” Yeah, I finally talked myself out of it. But it was a very touchy moment, very scary. Because they really meant it.

SKINNER: Do you remember what year your first trip back was?

SMITH: I really don’t. I think, probably ’55, after I received the citizenship. . . . That’s why I got out of that situation, because I said, “You can’t hold me here, I’m an American citizen and I’ll let my husband know, and he’s going to take care.” Anyway, I think it was 1959.
SKINNER: So how soon after coming to the United States did you pursue American citizenship?

SMITH: How did I pursue?

SKINNER: How soon?

SMITH: Because I was married to American citizen, I think it took only two years. Other than that, it takes five years.

SKINNER: So you did it right away?

SMITH: Oh, yes. Because by that time, I lost my citizenship. I would have been stateless.

SKINNER: What cultural influences did you bring with you from Czechoslovakia?

SMITH: You ask me a hard question. I can’t tell you.

SKINNER: Did you cook some of the meals that you used to have growing up?

SMITH: Oh, yes. I still do.

SKINNER: And so, I don’t know, are there certain type traditional Czechoslovakian meals that you prepare?

SMITH: Um-hum.

SKINNER: Do you know what some of them are called?

SMITH: What?

SKINNER: What are some of them called?

SMITH: Svickova.

SKINNER: How do you spell that?

SMITH: Oh gosh. Let me right it down. Here?
SKINNER: Yeah, sure.

SMITH: That’s “V.”

SKINNER: Uh-huh. And what kind of meal is it?

SMITH: That’s was it is, it’s like a sauerbraten in German.

SKINNER: A sauerbraten. Any others?

SMITH: Goose, we used to prepare goose on Christmas. On Christmas day, that was our favorite, or duck. And sweet sour cabbage and dumplings. And whole bunch of stuff. I’m still cooking sometimes. Not all the time, but every once in awhile.

SKINNER: Okay, I’ll stop this tape and start up another one.

[End Tape 1, Side B]

[Begin Tape 2, Side A]

SKINNER: You were just telling me about some of the traditional Czechoslovakian foods you prepare. How about any family or holiday traditions you brought here with you to the United States.

SMITH: Well, speaking of Christmas, we did not dress our Christmas tree until Christmas Eve, because the trees were real, they were fresh, and we couldn’t bring them inside earlier because they would get all dried up. And so we brought the trees inside on Christmas Eve morning, and then we dressed it. And we had regular collections that you bought in the stores, with real candy that was wrapped in all kinds of wrappings. With that, was already included the loops where you hung it on the tree. So it
was all decorated with the real thing. We did have few decorations that we bought on a Christmas market that was held on a week before Christmas, or two weeks. I think it was two weeks. Like the candles and the candle holders. We put regular real candles on the tree. And that was another reason why we didn’t dress the tree earlier. So on Christmas Eve, that’s when we light the candles. And even had sparklers on the tree. And do you know, there was strangest thing, from all these years that I remember having regular little candles on our trees lit up, you never had any fire or any problems. I just never remember hearing any fire engine.

SKINNER: So did you carry some of those traditions over here?

SMITH: Oh, yes. I don’t put my tree up until . . . All these years, I do the same thing even if I have an artificial tree, I still wait till the . . .

SKINNER: So your husband was willing to adapt his traditions to these things?

SMITH: Whatever I said, “Um-hum, yeah” he nodded.

SKINNER: Well that’s nice.

SMITH: He never objected to anything that I would do.

SKINNER: So while living in the United States, what did you miss most about Czechoslovakia?

SMITH: I missed lot of things, really. I can’t put a finger on one particular thing what I’m missing, but I do miss the country which is beautiful. And I do miss some of the food that is very well prepared now. Of course during the war, we ate what we had available. Now it’s very good. Those trips
that I made over there, I never had a bad meal. It was just delicious.

Czechs are very good cooks.

SKINNER: So tell me about your brother. How did his life continue on after you left?

SMITH: Well, after that . . . for a short time, the factory was closed during Hitler, and he was in forced labor. He had to go and work in a factory. And after the war, he and my uncle reopened, because my father was dead by then. They reopened the factory, and he was taking care of the business. We also had a shop along with the factory, and he took care of that until the Communists came and they shut it down again. Lost everything, and put him to drive a truck. It was awful. By then, I was already in Germany, not in the States. But it was a really terrible thing.

SKINNER: Did he ever get married?

SMITH: Oh yes, he was married. They didn’t have any children. He died two years ago.

SKINNER: How about your mother? How did her life continue after you left?

SMITH: Well, she was more or less carrying on all by herself, taking care of my brother as long as he was not married. And after he got married, then she was there by herself, like I am right now.

SKINNER: And considering the conditions with the factory being closed, how did your mother support herself?
SMITH: She did have some kind of social security that she was getting from the state. And of course, I was supporting her at the time. She came to visit us three times. Yeah, twice when we lived in Kansas City.

SKINNER: So how long did you live in Long Island before you lived in Kansas City?

SMITH: We didn’t go to Kansas City immediately. We went from Long Island, for two years we were in Oklahoma, and from Oklahoma we went to Kansas City. And from Kansas City, this was our final trip.

SKINNER: So tell me about your mother’s visits to Kansas City.

SMITH: Oh she loved it here. Twice she was in Kansas City, and once she was here.

SKINNER: Was there ever a possibility that she could live here permanently with you?

SMITH: Ah, she wouldn’t want to. I suggested that and she cried and she said, “Don’t take my country away from me.” Because at that time, she was already in her years, so she didn’t want to die here.

SKINNER: How long would your mother stay at a time?

SMITH: About three months.

SKINNER: So what was that like for you having your mother around?

SMITH: Oh, I just took care of her. We went on trips and we had good time.

SKINNER: Did your brother ever come and visit?
SMITH: Yes, several times. I tell you, we were from 1959 till 1985 or something like that, all these years we were practically supporting airlines. We were back and forth, and back and forth, especially after the Communists left.

SKINNER: So just an estimation, how many trips do you think you’ve taken back to Czechoslovakia or the Czech Republic?

SMITH: Probably, about six trips. Are you going to end?

SKINNER: Yes, I just have these few questions left. You’re doing great. Thank you.

When did your husband pass away?

SMITH: Ten years ago, in September. This year was ten years.

SKINNER: And did you ever consider moving back after his passing?

SMITH: No, I never did. I loved the country and I miss a lot of things, I still do, but I never want to move there. I’m just Americanized Annie. [Laughs]

SKINNER: You showed me that picture of you and your husband skiing together, what kind of things did you two enjoy doing together?

SMITH: Oh, we did everything together. We played bridge, we skied, we played golf. And he was not much of a swimmer, but when we came here to Santa Cruz I said I’ve got to have some swimming, so we joined this club here, Madrona . . .

SKINNER: La Madrona?

SMITH: Uh-huh. And I forced him to go in the pool and swim, and he did that. He did that.

SKINNER: What year did you move to Santa Cruz?
SMITH: ’79.

SKINNER: So reflecting upon the past sixty years or so, do you feel you made the right decision coming to the United States?

SMITH: Oh, yes, definitely. I never regretted that.

SKINNER: What memories do you cherish most about you and your husband’s life together?

SMITH: Oh there’s so many, I couldn’t begin to tell you one or the other. Just too many fond memories. We had a very nice and happy marriage. Because we did a lot of things together. We were never separated. When we came here he volunteered . . . he was teaching here, volunteering first in the Boys Club and then also in jail. Yeah, he was active here. He was a natural born teacher. He taught me how to play golf, we played tennis. See we were active.

SKINNER: Is there anything you’d like to add?

SMITH: I think that’s enough. You got an earful here.

SKINNER: Well, thank you, Ruth. I do appreciate you meeting me for the interview, and I think you’ve had a fascinating life.

SMITH: Well, I did the best I could.

SKINNER: One thing I just wanted to reflect upon was you said when you decided to marry him that it wasn’t even going to be a thought in your mind that you’d someday go back. You felt steadfast in your decision, and it sure is wonderful that it turned out so well.
SMITH: Yes, yes, it did. I still miss him terribly.

SKINNER: Well, thank you very much.

SMITH: You’re most welcome.

SKINNER: Alright.

SMITH: I took a lot of your time.

[End Tape 2, Side A]
APPENDIX H

Edith Haslam Interview
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

M.A. Thesis Project
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Interview

with

Edith Haslam

December 13, 2009
Scotts Valley, California

By Courtney Belville Skinner
California State University, Sacramento
Interviewer’s Name: Courtney Belville Skinner

Interview Date and Location: The interview was conducted on December 13, 2009, at Mrs. Haslam’s home in Scotts Valley, California.

Interviewee’s Country of Origin: England

Context Notes: Mrs. Haslam is an English World War II war bride. Haslam is Skinner’s maternal grandmother. At times throughout the interview, the interviewee refers to “your grandfather” or “your mother,” and this is because of relationship shared between Haslam and Skinner. The extended length of the interview is also attributed to this familial relationship. Skinner instructed Haslam to go more in depth on topics than she would have suggested otherwise, particularly in regard to the interviewee’s early years. The interview was recorded on audiostream tapes and a digital recording device. The interview was stopped a couple times for the interviewee to answer the phone and to take an extended break from interviewing.

Tapes and Interview Records: The original audiostream tape recording the interview and a CD copy of the audio files are held at the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

Interview Finding Guide for Oral History of Edith Haslam

[Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]

[Tape 3, Side A]

[Tape 3, Side B]

[Tape 4, Side A]

[Tape 4, Side B]

[Tape 5, Side A]
Living in Santa Cruz after the war – a English war bride acquaintance in Santa Cruz – keeping in touch with other war bride friends – keeping contact with family in England – return trips to England – working at Haslam Cleaners once the children were in school – Haslam Cleaners flooded in the 1950s – moved business to Soquel Avenue – debt and hard work – final reflections
APPENDIX I

Nina Edillo Interview
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

M.A. Thesis Project
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Interview

with

Nina Edillo

December 16, 2009
San Jose, California

By Courtney Belville Skinner
California State University, Sacramento
Interview History for Oral History of
Nina Edillo

Interviewer’s Name: Courtney Belville Skinner

Interview Date and Location: The interview was conducted on December 16, 2009, at Mrs. Edillo’s home in San Jose, California.

Interviewee’s Country of Origin: The Philippines

Context Notes: Mrs. Edillo is a Filipino World War II war bride. The interview was recorded on audiocassette tapes and a digital recording device. The transcript was not sent back to the interviewee.

Tapes and Interview Records: The original audiocassette tape recording of the interview and a CD copy of the audio files are held at the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

Interview Finding Guide for Oral History of Nina Edillo

[Tape 1, Side A]

[Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]
Language in the home – American citizenship – Nick’s passing -- involvement in World War II War Brides Association
APPENDIX J

Francesca Stewart Interview
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

M.A. Thesis Project
California State University, Sacramento

Oral History Interview

with

Francesca Stewart

December 19, 2009
San Jose, California

By Courtney Belville Skinner
California State University, Sacramento
Interview History for Oral History of Francesca Stewart

Interviewer’s Name: Courtney Belville Skinner

Interview Date and Location: The interview was conducted on December 19, 2009, at Mrs. Stewart’s home in San Jose, California.

Interviewee’s Country of Origin: Italy

Context Notes: Mrs. Stewart is an Italian World War II war bride. The interview was recorded on audiocassette tapes and a digital recording device. The interviewee retains a very strong Italian accent, which makes it difficult to understand what she is saying at times. The audio quality of the audiocassette recording is very poor. Table noises are magnified, making it extremely difficult to hear what is being said. The digital recording is somewhat better. The interviewee’s husband and daughter were sitting in the adjoining room during the interview. At times, the daughter interjects with helpful clarification to a question. Near the end of the interview, the interviewee’s husband joins the interview. The transcript was not sent back to the interviewee.

Tapes and Interview Records: The original audiocassette tape recording of the interview and a CD copy of the audio files are held at the Department of Special Collections and University Archives at California State University, Sacramento.
QuickTime™ and a decompressor are needed to see this picture.
Journey of Love: Oral Histories of World War II War Brides

Interview Finding Guide for Oral History of
Francesca Stewart

[Tape 1, Side A]
Family background – early life in Naples, Italy – father was an Italian naval commander – Mussolini petitioned father to serve during the war – father resigned, remaining loyal to the king – aristocratic family life – domestic help – family background – education at Naples University – adjusting to life in the United States without domestic help – a year in Cairo with domestic help and service – Spain – arrived in New York by airplane – difficult adjustment to life in the United States – American citizenship – effects of wartime – black market survival – family home was bombed and destroyed – displaced and looking for a place to live – apartment living

[Tape 1, Side B]

[Tape 2, Side A]

[Tape 2, Side B]
Positive reflections upon the immigration experience
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


**Articles**


“War Brides Begin Arriving in the U.S.” *Life*. 18 February 1946.

**Interviews**


**Online Sources**


**Other Sources**

United States Congress. 79th Congress, 1st session, 28 December 1945.