

INTERVIEW WITH VIOLET BEARD

Q: How old were you when the war started?

A: I was a senior in high school, I was seventeen years old.

Q: What were your feelings about people from the surrounding communities leaving for the war?

A: We hated to see everybody go, because they were just from our age group. We really hated to see them go. I did not have any brothers in the war, but a lot of them were friends.

Q: How many of your friends went to fight in the war?

A: Oh, a lot, it seemed like all of them went. There was hardly any boys left in school. It seemed like there wasn't any boys around.

Q: How were the food rations set up?

A: We had a food ration board and they gave you stamps, kind of like a coupon book. You could not get things like meat, coffee, and sugar. Oh, you couldn't get sugar at all. Everybody saved his or her rations for sugar. You got so many stamps for however many people you had in your family. If you lost your stamp book you had to go and reapply again, it was kind of hard to get it back again. But you got along if you used molasses instead of sugar. We lived on a farm where we had the milk, eggs, and meat, so we weren't affected like the people who had to buy it all the time. You just didn't go to the grocery store and buy the things you wanted to. I can remember candy; we could not have candy. I don't remember things like soda pop, I don't even remember soda pops at home so we didn't miss that.

Q: What were some of the things you went without?

A: We couldn't get pantyhose, or gasoline. Gasoline was sort of like food, you had coupons or you could get so many gallons. I believe they kept record of it some way or another. You really watched your miles, you didn't go anywhere you didn't need to. I think about hose and cosmetics more than anything else. It just seemed like everything was just put aside you did with what you had. You didn't just expect to go out and buy a new dress or anything like that. You used your money for things you had to have. I remember waiting in lines for hose. My Aunt Florence told me once that she had seen a line at a drugstore and she decided to get into it. She wasn't for sure what it was for but whenever you saw a line you got into it. When she got up to the front she realized it was for pantyhose, so she got into the line again to get a pair for my mother. And when you got a pair of hose you took good care of them.

Q: What did you use instead of hose?

A: Well, us young girls used face makeup on our legs, it looked just like real hose, you just didn't want to get caught in the rain.

Q: What changes occurred in your school?

A: I don't remember too much, like I say I was a senior that year. The war started in December and I graduated in May. The only thing I kind of remember is some of the boys leaving for the service.

Q: Do you remember anything about the Victory Tax?

A: I remember there was one, and nobody liked it really well. Everybody was willing to do something for the war though, they were willing to pay even though they didn't want to.

Q: Did you think we should have been involved in the war?

A: No, I don't think any war is good, I don't think anybody should have to fight.

Q: What financial changes did your family have to make?

A: Well, we didn't have very much money to start with so it didn't change very much. We just had to stretch our dollars to get what we needed with what we had. I always said we were poor but I didn't know we were poor. We had plenty to eat and a place to sleep and a family that loved us, what more could you ask for? We didn't expect to have 2 or 3 dresses and go to the beauty parlor all the time. Kids back then didn't have cars or anything like that.

Q: Did you ever want to do anything to help in the war?

A: Yes I went home one time and told my mom I was going to join the WAVES, and She said "Oh, no you are not." So I didn't question her. I did work at the selective service office and that was the place where they sent the boys off from, so I think that I was very much involved. My husband however was classified as a 2C (farmer) because of his heart condition, so he couldn't go. He said he would have rather been classified as a farmer than a 4F, because that meant that he was unable to go because of his condition. The boys were sent to war in the order they registered, the last person to register was put in the back of the file. WAVES were women who did work for the Navy and the WACs did work for the army core, they did things such as paperwork and first aid.

Q: What was your lifestyle like during the war?

A: Well, I had a job at the selective service office and my sister had a job at the public assistance office. Our hours were not the same as our daddy's hours and like I said we were watching our gas, so my sister and I got an apartment in town, and maybe it was an excuse to get out on our own but we really didn't have a way to get back and forth, so we stayed in town. We didn't have a car so if we went anywhere we walked or rode bikes. Our activities included a dance called the Knights of Columbus that happened once a month. It was what was called a round dance, it was social dancing and square dancing; girls would dance with girls because there weren't very many boys to dance with. Then we joined a club called Real Youth. It was a group of people who were too old for 4-H, the ages were between 15-25. We gathered together once a month and did different things, we often went to children's homes and a lot of different places. The group was made up of us girls and the boys who were farmers, we also got together with Clark County. That was our life at that time, and of course we went to church on Sunday's.

Q: Did you know anyone who died in the war?

A: Yes, my sister was engaged to a boy, he was in the Mediterranean on a Mantary boat and it went down. She didn't give up on him for a long time. I knew more people who were killed in the war also.

Q: What were your feelings when you heard the war was over?

A: I didn't know it until later because I was in a Real Youth camp in Bloomington Ill. We didn't really hear about it until we were headed home out of the woods. I always felt bad that I missed all the shouting, but it sure was a relief it was over, even though I knew my job was going to be over, but that was all right I was still young and I knew I could find another job.

Q: What was the one thing you will always remember from the war?

A: There was good and bad times, the good times were when someone wrote home and said they were going to come home for a few days, those are the days we cherished. I remember all the boys walking around in their uniforms, their family was so proud of them. There was also a lot of sadness, you learn to appreciate the fact that they were not fighting in your country and blowing up everything you had.

By: Tasha Beard, Bryan Reed,
Trena Kiger, and Tanecia Myles