



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
Oral History Collection

OH111: MINNESOTA'S GREATEST GENERATION ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Home Front in Western Minnesota Oral History Interviews

OVERVIEW OF THE RECORDS

- Creator:** Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project: The Home Front in Western Minnesota.
- Title:** Oral history interviews of the Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project: The Home Front in Western Minnesota.
- Dates:** 1973-1980.
- Quantity:** 19 sound cassettes; 12 transcripts in 12 folders
- Location:** See Detailed Description section for locations.

HISTORY OF THE MINNESOTA'S GREATEST GENERATION PROJECT

Thousands of Minnesotans lived through the era of World War II. Many served their country through direct participation in the armed forces. Others contributed to the nation's war effort through work in war-related industries. And still others remember the reality of life during wartime, from the rationing of everything from sugar to gasoline, to the scarcity of items like home appliances and nylon stockings.

The memories of these people, veterans and civilians alike, are an important piece of American history. Their lives, whether marked by bravery on the front lines in war or simple endurance of daily life at home and work, shaped a generation and the nation for years after the war officially ended.

The Minnesota's Greatest Generation project ensures the preservation of those memories and provides compelling documentation of this transforming period in American history.

SCOPE AND CONTENTS OF THE RECORDS

This project chronicles the lives of those who lived through the era of World War II, primarily on the home front in western Minnesota. Some of the subjects discussed include the Great Depression years, the effect of the war on rural communities, involvement in the Rural Electrification Administration [REA], the draft and military

service, increase in women's employment during the war, rationing and shortages, black market, war bond drives, health care and medical services during and after the war, economic prosperity during the war, general attitudes toward the war and President Franklin Roosevelt, patriotism, and post-war attitudes and adjustments, particularly feelings toward the Soviet Union and the readjustment of veterans to a post-war society.

The interviewers are Steve Vatndal, David Ripley, Tami Wiese, Janet Oian, Charles Mylan Bollinger, Patrick Moore, and LaDona Conrads.

ADDITIONAL PHYSICAL FORMS

The original sound cassettes are housed at the University of Minnesota—Moorhead, Moorhead, Minnesota, and the University of Minnesota—Morris, Morris, Minnesota.

INDEX TERMS

This collection is indexed under the following headings in the catalog of the Minnesota Historical Society. Researchers desiring materials about related topics, persons or places should search the catalog using these headings.

Topics:

- Depressions—1929—Minnesota.
- Draft—Minnesota.
- Farm life—Minnesota.
- Nurses—Minnesota—Interviews.
- Prisoners of war—Minnesota.
- Rationing—Minnesota.
- Rural credit—Minnesota.
- Rural electrification—Minnesota.
- Veterans—Services for—Minnesota.
- Women air pilots—Minnesota—Interviews.
- Women—Employment—Minnesota.
- Women farmers—Minnesota—Interviews.
- World War, 1939-1945—Health aspects—Minnesota.
- World War, 1939-1945—Prisoners and prisons, America.
- World War, 1939-1945—Public opinion—Minnesota.
- World War, 1939-1945—Veterans—Minnesota—Interviews.
- World War, 1939-1945—War work—Minnesota.
- World War, 1939-1945—Women—Minnesota.

Places:

- Soviet Union—Foreign relations—United States.

Persons:

- Bauer, Jacob, interviewee.
- Bollinger, Charles Mylan, interviewer.
- Bremness, Dina, interviewee.

Conrads, LaDona, interviewer.
 Erenberg, Betty Jane Hanson, interviewee.
 Ernst, William, interviewee.
 Larkin, William P., interviewee.
 Magloughlin, Nancy, interviewee.
 Moen, Norman, interviewee.
 Moore, Patrick, interviewer.
 Oian, Janet, interviewer.
 Ripley, David, interviewer.
 Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945.
 Rosten, Ruth Storlie, interviewee.
 Shervey, George M., interviewee.
 Sletto, Josephine, interviewee.
 Sprung, Faith Evers, interviewee.
 Sprung, William, interviewee.
 Vatndal, Steve, interviewer.
 Warren, Murray, interviewee.
 Wiese, Tami, interviewer.

Organizations:

Civilian Pilot Training Program (U. S.).
 Minnesota Farm Bureau Federation.
 United States. Army Air Forces. Air Transport Command.
 United States. Army. Signal Corps.
 United States. Rural Electrification Administration.
 United States. Selective Service System.
 Women Airforce Service Pilots (U. S.).

Types of Documents:

Interviews.
 Oral histories.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Preferred Citation:

[Indicate the cited transcript and page or sound recording here]. Minnesota's
 Greatest Generation Oral History Project: The Home Front in Western Minnesota.
 Oral History Interviews of the Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History
 Project: The Home Front in Western Minnesota. Minnesota Historical Society.
See the Chicago Manual of Style for additional examples.

Accession Information:

Accession number(s): AV2007.25

Processing Information:

Processed by: Oral History Office
 Catalog ID No.: 6555717

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE COLLECTION

Note to Researchers: To request materials, please note the format (sound recording or transcript) and location shown below.

Sound recordings. 19 cassettes.

Location

OH111.1	Bauer, Jacob, July 23, 1980. 2 cassettes.
OH111.2	Bremness, Dina, August 25, 1980. 2 cassettes.
OH111.3	<i>[No cassette]</i>
OH111.4	Ernst, William H., July 11, 1980. 2 cassettes.
OH111.5	Larkin, William P., August 19, 1980.
OH111.6	Magloughlin, Nancy, June 22, 1977.
OH111.7	Moen, Norman, June 24, 1977. 2 cassettes.
OH111.8	Rosten, Ruth Storlie, August 15, 1980.
OH111.9	Shervey, George M., June 28, 1980. 3 cassettes.
OH111.10	Sletto, Josephine, August 4, 1980. 2 cassettes.
OH111.11	Sprung, William and Faith Evers Sprung, December 27, 1973.
OH111.12	Warren, Murray, July 12, 1977. 2 cassettes.

Transcripts. 12 folders.

Location

OH111.1	Bauer, Jacob, July 23, 1980.
OH111.2	Bremness, Dina, August 25, 1980.
OH111.3	Erenberg, B. J., November 2, 1979.
OH111.4	Ernst, William H., July 11, 1980.
OH111.5	Larkin, William P., August 19, 1980.
OH111.6	Magloughlin, Nancy, June 22, 1977.
OH111.7	Moen, Norman, June 24, 1977.
OH111.8	Rosten, Ruth Storlie, August 15, 1980.
OH111.9	Shervey, George M., June 28, 1980.
OH111.10	Sletto, Josephine, August 4, 1980.
OH111.11	Sprung, William and Faith Evers Sprung, December 27, 1973.
OH111.12	Warren, Murray, July 12, 1977.

OH 111.3

INTERVIEW: Erenberg, B. J.
YEAR: 1979

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: B. J. Erenberg
DATE: November 2, 1979
PLACE: Erenberg residence, Benson, MN
INTERVIEWER: David Ripley

PROJECT SERIES: Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project
The Home Front in Western Minnesota

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: B. J. [Betty Jane] Hanson Erenberg wanted to become a pilot since she was a small child. After a brief attendance at the University of North Dakota-Grand Forks, she entered the Civilian Pilot Training Program [CPT]. She attended ground school at the West Central Branch, University of Minnesota-Morris, beginning flight instruction there in June 1941. She earned her pilot's license and, in 1943, shortly before she turned 21, joined the Women Airforce Service Pilots [WASP] for 30 weeks of training in Sweetwater, Texas. She graduated from Avenger Field Army Air Force Training Detachment on April 13, 1944. Her first assignment was Ferrying Division, Air Transport Command, Newcastle Army Air Base, Wilmington, Delaware. She ferried new planes from factory to embarkation points, aircraft to the Brownsville, Texas aircraft graveyard, and evacuated fields during hurricane alerts. She eventually transferred into engineering text flying, slow timing new aircraft and testing rebuilt aircraft, and remained in WASP service until it was disbanded in December 1944.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Her experiences in the CPT, WASP training, work in the Ferry Command, experiences working with different aircraft, and basic experience as one of the few women pilots during the war.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: Not available

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: Not available

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 30 pages

ACCESSION NUMBER: AV 2007.25.12

OH 111.6

INTERVIEW: Magloughlin, Nancy
YEAR: 1977

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Nancy Magloughlin
DATE: June 22, 1977
PLACE: St. Ansgar Hospital, Moorhead, MN
INTERVIEWER: Janet Oian

PROJECT SERIES: Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project
 The Home Front in Western Minnesota

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Nancy Magloughlin was born in 1901 in Dale, Minnesota, the daughter of Swedish immigrants. She attended country school in Hitterdal, went to Moorhead to finish eighth grade, and later took a business course. She married in 1927 in Moorhead.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Her attitude toward the war, experience in school during the war, her nephew being drafted, sources of news and information during the time, rationing and stamp system, returning soldiers' attitude to war, events during the war in the Red River Valley, the effect on business, and a prisoner of war camp in the area.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: **User copy:** 1 60-minute cassette
 Original: 1 60-minute cassette
 (AT University of MN-Moorhead)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 51 minutes

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 15 pages

ACCESSION NUMBER: AV 2007.25.5

OH 111.7

INTERVIEW: Moen, Norman
YEAR: 1977

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Norman Moen
DATE: June 24, 1977
PLACE: Moen home, Crookston, MN
INTERVIEWER: Charles Bollinger

PROJECT SERIES: Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project
The Home Front in Western Minnesota

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Norman Moen was born in Polk County, Minnesota. His father was born and raised in the United States; his mother emigrated from Norway. He attended country school at Hurdle and married in 1949 in Crookston. Before he left for military service, he was engaged in farming. After his return, he became a meat cutter.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Description of his life during the war, particularly being drafted into the Army, leaving home, training to be a tank driver, fighting in Europe, his attitude toward the war, and what he knew about the home front.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: **User copy:** 2 60-minute cassettes
 Original: 2 60-minute cassettes
 (At University of MN-Moorhead)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 79 minutes

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 27 pages

ACCESSION NUMBER: AV 2007.25.6

OH 111.8

INTERVIEW: Rosten, Ruth Storlie
YEAR: 1980

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Ruth Storlie Rosten
DATE: August 15, 1980
PLACE: Rosten home, Glenwood, MN
INTERVIEWER: David Ripley

PROJECT SERIES: Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project
The Home Front in Western Minnesota

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Ruth Storlie Rosten was born in Spring Grove, Minnesota in 1894. Her parents were native-born Americans who farmed in that small southern Minnesota community. Her husband died of cancer in 1939, leaving her with three sons. The two eldest sons entered military service in 1942. Her youngest son was left to help her farm the family's 117 acres. Rosten is now retired.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Farming during the Great Depression and war, repurchase of her farm following her husband's death, rural credit and how it works, farming with her 14-year old son, burden of being a serviceman's mother, problems with rationing, attending auxiliary meetings, farm organizations, and scrap drive and bond sales.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: **User copy:** 1 60-minute cassette
Original: 1 60-minute cassette
(At University of MN-Morris)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 60 minute

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 18 pages

ACCESSION NUMBER: AV 2007.25.7

OH 111.9

INTERVIEW: Shervey, George M.
YEAR: 1980

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: George M. Shervey
DATE: June 28, 1980
PLACE: Elbow Lake, MN
INTERVIEWER: Charles Bollinger

PROJECT SERIES: Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project
The Home Front in Western Minnesota

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: George M. Shervey was born on a farm near Barrett, Minnesota in 1904. He was involved in farm implement sales from 1924 until his retirement in 1972. He was active in civic and community affairs in Barrett and Elbow Lake. He also served as president of the Grant County Historical Society for many years.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Personal and community experiences during the war, sources and quality of news, patriotism during the pre-war period, the Great Depression, his business activities and service as the Chief of the Barrett Fire Department during the war, rationing; black market operations, the draft and rural labor, farming and increase in employment of women during the war, mobilization by scrap drives and conserving fuel, government bonds, information gathering and general attitudes toward the government, and post-war reaction.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: **User copy:** 3 60-minute cassettes
 Original: 3 60-minute cassettes
 (AT University of MN-Morris)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 175 minutes

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 43 pages

ACCESSION NUMBER: AV 2007.25.8

OH 111.10

INTERVIEW: Sletto, Josephine
YEAR: 1980

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Josephine Sletto
DATE: August 4, 1980
PLACE: Sletto home, Lake Mary, MN
INTERVIEWER: Patrick Moore

PROJECT SERIES: Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project
The Home Front in Western Minnesota

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Josephine Sletto was born on a farm near Keens, North Dakota in 1916, the daughter of Norwegian immigrant parents who later moved to Minnesota. She spent the early years of her life working on the family farm before commencing an extensive secretarial career with many different employers. She married in 1948.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Her work as the Chief Clerk for the Douglas County Selective Service Office during the war, organization and operation of the local draft board, the Selective Service System, how the war affected her personally and the Alexandria community as a whole, war bond drives, black market, rubber shortage, rationing problems, gas rationing, community attitude toward President Roosevelt, post-war attitudes toward the Soviet Union, and her marriage and employment activities following the war.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: **User copy:** 2 60-minute cassettes
 Original: 2 60-minute cassettes
 (At University of MN-Morris)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 85 minutes

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 43 pages

ACCESSION NUMBER: AV 2007.25.9

OH 111.11

INTERVIEW: Sprung, William and
Faith Evers Sprung
YEAR: 1973

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: William Sprung and Faith Evers Sprung
DATE: December 27, 1973
PLACE: Sprung residence, Ortonville, MN.
INTERVIEWER: LaDona Conrads

PROJECT SERIES: Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project
The Home Front in Western Minnesota

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Faith E. Sprung was born in 1911 on a farm in Big Stone County, Minnesota. She finished high school and had one year teacher training at Aberdeen, South Dakota. William Sprung was born in Steamboat Rock, Iowa in 1908. He moved to South Dakota at the age of nine and spent most of his life there on a farm. He attended a rural school. They were married in 1936.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: The Great Depression and its effects, a prisoner of war camp in Ortonville, rationing and its effects, people's reaction to the war, and both shortages of some supplies and prosperity during the war.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW:

SOUND RECORDINGS: **User copy:** 1 60-minute cassette
 Original: 1 60-minute cassette
 (At University of MN-Moorhead)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 45 minutes

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 22 pages

ACCESSION NUMBER: AV 2007.25.10

OH 111.12

INTERVIEW: Warren, Murray
YEAR: 1977

MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

NAME: Murray Warren
DATE: July 12, 1977
PLACE: Warren home, Crookston, MN
INTERVIEWER: Charles Mylan Bollinger

PROJECT SERIES: Minnesota's Greatest Generation Oral History Project
The Home Front in Western Minnesota

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION: Murray Warren was born in Park Rapids, Minnesota in 1924. His mother and father were both of English descent. He started grade school in Park Rapids; then transferred to the school in Nevis, Minnesota. He married in 1947 and moved to Crookston. He joined the Army after graduating from high school and served as a Signal Corpsman.

SUBJECTS DISCUSSED: Experience on the home front and in Burma, China, and British India; his service as a Signal Corpsman; comparison of the contemporary era with the World War II era; and mention of services provided for returning soldiers.

COMMENTS ON INTERVIEW: Third tape is missing.

SOUND RECORDINGS: **User copy:** 2 60-minute cassettes
 Original: 3 60-minute cassettes
 (At University of MN-Moorhead;
 Third tape is missing)

LENGTH OF INTERVIEW: 126 minutes

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: none

TRANSCRIPT: 31 pages

ACCESSION NUMBER: AV 2007.25.11