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Ralph Anderson

Rosie the Riveter WWII Home Front Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by
Samuel J. Redman
in 2011

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Ralph Anderson

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Interview #1 August 29, 2011
Begin Audio File 1

Redman: My name is Sam Redman, and today is August 29, 2011, and I'm sitting down today in Oakland with Ralph Anderson. Can you state for me your full name and your date of birth?

1-00:00:20

Anderson: Ralph Edward Anderson, and my birth date is November 14, 1927.

Redman: We'll just situate ourselves a little bit in time here; you were a pretty young child when the Great Depression hit, so you would have probably been only about three years old when the big Stock Market crash is that correct?

1-00:00:42

Anderson: Yes.

Redman: Were you born in California?

1-00:00:44

Anderson: Right here in Oakland.

Redman: Can you maybe share what some of your earliest recollections are—about Kindergarten age or around that time—some of your earliest memories?

1-00:01:02

Anderson: We had a very nice grammar school, very close to my home. I remember going to taking my naps on the floor in the kindergarten class.

Redman: Let me ask you a little bit about your parents. Were they from California as well?

1-00:01:22

Anderson: My mother was born here in Oakland. My father was born in North Carolina.

Redman: Tell me a little bit about your father then; how did he end up in California?

1-00:01:36

Anderson: He probably came out here for his health. He had a tobacco farm down in North Carolina, and I think as a young man he had some congestion problems. So he came out here and was here probably as a painter during the twenties. My mother and father's first date was going to Aimee Semple's tent meeting in Oakland probably about 1924.

Redman: I was going to ask how they met. Amy Semple was—?

1-00:02:18

Anderson: She's an evangelist. She was a big time evangelist back then, I don't know whether you've heard of her or not.

Redman: Well, in that era I know it was common for evangelists to travel around the United States, and then they'd maybe set up a tent and do a big service.

1-00:02:35

Anderson: Yes.

Redman: So that's how your parents met, was that—?

1-00:02:37

Anderson: Well, that was their first date.

Redman: Did they tell you anything about that?

1-00:02:42

Anderson: Oh, yes. There was a huge tent meeting, and then she was a very famous evangelist, and the tent was right there at—do you know Oakland at all?

Redman: Yeah, sure.

1-00:02:52

Anderson: Do you know where 26th and Broadway is, there's a big church there?

Redman: Yes, okay.

1-00:02:57

Anderson: Well, that church will have—that's where we used to go. That's where my wife and I were married. But on the other corner where the church is, is where the tent was because that was all vacant ground. My grandmother's home was right there on 26th Street about a half a block from the church, and so that's where they were married in the twenties.

Redman: What denomination were they?

1-00:03:21

Anderson: Presbyterian.

Redman: You grew up attending church as a young child, so there was a strong faith in your family?

1-00:03:33

Anderson: Oh, yes, I was one of those little boys that got gold stars for getting his Bible verse every Sunday, so I got a gold star for remembering my Bible verse.

Redman: So your mother's side had been in Oakland for some time. Do you know by any chance the story of how that side of the family ended up in California?

1-00:04:01

Anderson: I know my grandfather was born in San Francisco.

Redman: So he had been in San Francisco for quite some time.

1-00:04:13

Anderson: Yes.

Redman: Do you know what he did for work, or—?

1-00:04:13

Anderson: He worked for the Southern Pacific. He was a conductor.

Redman: So maybe a job opportunity for the railroad is what brought him out here, but—?

1-00:04:23

Anderson: I don't know.

Redman: Let's talk a little bit about your childhood. We've sort of got your parents' relationship set up; they met at this revival meeting in Oakland.

1-00:04:39

Anderson: Well, that was their first date. I guess they were probably both attending church at the same church, and so anyway, they went out.

Redman: Do you know how much later you came along, so—?

1-00:04:51

Anderson: Probably a couple years after they were married.

Redman: And did you have any siblings?

1-00:04:57

Anderson: I have a younger brother. He was born in 1933. He's five and a half years younger than I am.

Redman: In the late thirties and early 1940s when you were likely in grammar school, middle school and high school, I understand that was a time of transition between one-room school house models of education where there would be one teacher and all of the different grades in that teacher, towards to more modern and in some cases structured educational system. Can you tell me a little bit about the story of your education in those years, going to grammar school and middle school?

1-00:05:48

Anderson: There was no middle school for me. The war had just started, and the grammar school was—we had sixth grade there, and then when I got to the seventh grade we also had a seventh grade. This was when the war had just started, and all of a sudden all the Japanese kids that were in the school with us were gone. But the grammar school was just great.

Redman: So let's talk about grammar school a little before the war. Can you describe for me the other students, would you consider a diverse school, or did the other kids have pretty similar backgrounds to your own at that time?

1-00:06:37

Anderson: I think we were all pretty much the same. It was from the same neighborhood. The only time we had an influx of change was in the seventh grade when they incorporated a few other kids from another grammar school, and they were Japanese. We didn't have any Japanese in our neighborhood. I don't remember any black students in the grammar school at all. In the fifth, sixth and seventh grade we used to have these wonderful weekly assemblies. We had this one little Jewish kid that like to play Walter Winchell to start off the assembly, and "good morning, ships at sea" and all the—he was really good. They had a music program, and I played the violin at that time. So I was part of the weekly, play a violin solo, and kids used to call me Jascha. So anyway, I was pretty good.

Redman: So there was some diversity in terms of the students as far as their backgrounds, it sounds like?

1-00:07:56

Anderson: Some, yes.

Redman: But perhaps less certainly than today. So most of the students were middle-class white families sort of like yourself?

1-00:08:08

Anderson: Yes. It was kind of a mixed neighborhood because it wasn't too far away from what they called Haddon Hill, where Mr. Kaiser lived. He had a kind of an upscale house. So there was quite a division. In other words, in that section there were no telephone poles; it was just higher above Lake Merritt, and looked down on—in other words, they were on a little higher ground and had larger homes. But these kids all came to the same schools.

Redman: How about Kaiser before the war? My understanding is that he had already made quite an extensive fortune in the auto industry.

1-00:08:51

Anderson: No, no, no. His automobile came after the war. [Kaiser made automobiles from 1945-1953.]

Redman: That came after the war, okay, but was he already a wealthy—?

1-00:09:10

Anderson: He made money in construction. He was involved in the building of what's it, Shasta Dam, and, of course, Boulder Dam. But he had Ordway's, this Ordway Building in Oakland next to the Kaiser Building. Mr. Ordway was Mr. Kaiser's right hand man, kind of a low key fellow, but he and Mr. Kaiser went down to Cuba, I think, in the twenties and, or early thirties and were making roads down there. Mr. Ordway said, "Well, we just put a 12 x 12 behind a couple of donkeys and dragged this thing through the jungle and made roads for the Cuban people." So that was his experience with—

Redman: So was his reputation already sort of established in Oakland, do you think, even prior to the war. Is that your sense?

1-00:10:05

Anderson: I think the President came out to his home at one time. But very secretly. He knew how to get—I guess he and Roosevelt got along very well. He was able to get monies and knew how to build ships, had a very competent group of engineers surrounded around him, so he was able to do just wonders as far as building these ships very fast.

Redman: Pretty transformative, pretty important story.

1-00:10:42

Anderson: Have you ever been in the Kaiser Building down there? Looked at the photographs and read under the captions of the different photographs in the building down there? He knew how to get things done. He knew how to get the money to get it done. He had Kaiser Industries, Kaiser Steel, Kaiser Aluminum. The only thing that's left is the hospital. His kids just kind of diddled away the money. It's too bad.

Redman: You grew up during the time of the Great Depression. My guess is that by the time you'd come to awareness as far as growing up as a kid, you were probably in the midst of the era of the New Deal alphabet agencies, so things like the WPA, the CCC and the NYA, or the National Youth Administration. These were active programs when you were probably a pretty young kid.

1-00:11:46

Anderson: Yes.

Redman: I'm wondering if you had any impressions of those programs and what their sort of impact and legacy was in this area.

1-00:11:55

Anderson: Well, my impression was what we got from the *Oakland Tribune*, and the *Oakland Tribune* was pretty staunch conservative Republican. And he was just very critical of all this kind of stuff, and—

Redman: What were some of the criticisms of these different types of programs?

1-00:12:18

Anderson: Government meddling, government, just too much government, but the private business wasn't doing anything. But my father didn't like what Mr. Roosevelt was doing, and he was trying to run a business, and it was kind of a struggle. Because he was a painting contractor.

One of my earliest recollections of my father was when he started his business in 1933 as a youngster. We had a Model T Ford, and he put this extension ladder on top of the Model T. It looked like a teeter-totter going down the road.

Redman: It's not exactly what you think of as like a working truck.

1-00:13:00

Anderson: No, but he was a good businessman, and the office was on the kitchen table. He and my mother would put together painting estimates in the evening after he'd been working all day. It's amazing what they did, but, of course, there was not a lot of—too much regulation as far as no OSHA or anything like that. But he ran a—he didn't ask men to do anything that he wouldn't do himself.

Redman: So he would hire a few employees.

1-00:13:31

Anderson: Yeah, I guess by the time the war started he had about eight employees, which was a big deal because he was just running it out of the garage. He just had one truck to get the ladders and equipment to the different jobs, but the men would just show up.

Redman: Would his painting contracts occasionally compete or overlap with WPA-type programs?

1-00:14:07

Anderson: No, no. This was all residential, mostly residential repaint. I think during the war he got some industrial contracts with doing things for some different plants around here, but—

Redman: But that's the New Deal agency; his sort of impression was that these were sort of government programs that could compete with private businesses, so that—?

1-00:14:28

Anderson: I don't think they were competing with private businesses. All this stuff down here in Montclair Park was all done by the WPA, and the theater up there where they have the wood minister, that was all WPA. It was great for putting people to work. But I don't—

Redman: But your father was maybe at times a little more critical of the Roosevelt's—

1-00:14:56

Anderson: Because he just wasn't too thrilled with all the money that was being spent. But it did put people to work because my father was involved with the CCC, and they certainly impressed me because some of my sergeants that I had in the Army were CCC veterans. These Southern kids that didn't have any—there's no money after the Civil War, and the education system in the South was a disaster, I guess, and these sergeants had a lot of smarts. And they got their smarts, some of them, from the CCC and working with people and doing things in the forests or whatever they did.

Redman: That is really interesting to hear because one of the things that I've heard from people is that the Army ran some of the CCC. It's still a government program, but it was the barracks and things like that were administered by the Army, so I could see how some of those experiences would carry into—

1-00:16:01

Anderson: I don't know about that, but it was good for us to have had a program like that to train people to do things because that's one of the reasons we were so successful, I think, in the war because we had resourceful people that could do things that you didn't have to have your sergeant tell you what to do all the time. These kids had some street smarts, or something, or war smarts or something. Because, well, I get a little of that from the history books that I read.

Redman: You'd mentioned that when some of these schools came together some Japanese-American families moved into your area. Can you talk about that a little bit?

1-00:16:47

Anderson: It wasn't that many; there was probably maybe about ten that came in. But when the war started there was no junior high. My wife went to a junior high over at Westlake, which was in another part of the city, but the kids that came from Franklin School came into Cleveland School for the seventh grade, so they had quite a little walk. They weren't just a couple of blocks away, but probably had ten or twelve blocks to walk to get to our school. But this was just for the seventh grade. So there was no change in the neighborhood.

Redman: So the kids came in from another neighborhood.

1-00:17:46

Anderson: Yes.

Redman: Was it about ten to twelve families, or ten to twelve students, would you say?

1-00:17:49

Anderson: Ten to twelve students, yeah.

Redman: Did you have any sorts of impressions of them when they came to the school as far any—?

1-00:17:57

Anderson: That's always kind of strange when the new kids come in. You don't know them or you don't—because you've gotten all the way from kindergarten on through. Most of the kids stayed in the same school unless a few moved away or something. A few moved in, but I didn't interact that much with the new kids, so—

Redman: I'd like to situate you in time here. Let's pretend we're in, say, about 1940, so a year before Pearl Harbor, you're probably a pretty young guy by this point.

1-00:18:36

Anderson: I was about thirteen.

Redman: I'm curious about what other kids at age thirteen might have known about what was going on in Europe at this time. I'm guessing that there was probably some talk about Hitler and the Nazis, but also maybe about how the US was building ships, planes and tanks for Britain, and there's a lot of talk in the history books about isolationism at this point. These sorts of vocal calls that the United States should stay out of the war as long as possible. As a thirteen-year-old kid did you have any sort of impressions on the coming of war?

1-00:19:25

Anderson: It seems so far away. But like I said this little Jewish kid, he would talk about "Attention Mr. and Mrs. North America and all the ships at sea," the impersonating Walter Winchell. Walter Winchell realized, I think, what was going on and was trying to make people more aware, to get people, Americans, a little more concerned about what was going on in Europe. But it wasn't working that way too much in my house.

Redman: That wasn't maybe dinner-time talk with—?

1-00:19:55

Anderson: A little bit, I don't remember; ask me the question again.

Redman: Sure. I'm just curious if your parents may have talked about what was going on in Europe even before the bombing of Pearl Harbor, or maybe if they were concerned at all with what was going on in the Pacific with the Japanese in, say, 1940. Or was that something that it just sort of got lost in sort of everyday dinner table conversation?

1-00:20:30

Anderson: I don't remember my parents talking too much about it, but I remember getting these bubble gum cards, and it shocked about little pictures of what was happening in Nanking. What the Japanese were doing to the Chinese. And then I remember another one from when the Italians invaded Ethiopia, and here's Haile Selassie out there on his horse and his sword trying to charge the tanks that were coming in from Italy, and Mussolini's tanks. Anyway—

Redman: That must have made an impression as a kid.

1-00:21:09

Anderson: Well, it did. I think I still have bubble gum cards.

Redman: Oh, those are definitely keepsakes. Then in 1940 were you and kids your age doing things like listening to the radio?

1-00:21:26

Anderson: Listened to Grand Old Opry.

Redman: Tell me a little bit about that, yes.

1-00:21:30

Anderson: Oh, that was fun because my parents would sometimes go out on Saturday night, and I don't know where my brother was; I guess I was supposed to be taking care of him. But I liked to listen to the Grand Old Opry, Minnie Pearl, and some of the other characters that were on the show at that time.

Redman: What did your parents do for fun? Would they ever go into San Francisco, or would they spend time going out in Oakland, or were they more homebodies?

1-00:22:03

Anderson: They were very active in the church, and there was what they called a Schooner Club for young adults that had children, and young married adults. So there was a wonderful couples club that as connected with the church. They would have potluck dinners. I remember going to other people's houses, and they'd put us to sleep in somebody's bedroom, and they would have talk or play cards after they had their potluck dinner.

Redman: So there were opportunities for them to get together with other families in the church when you were a young kid.

1-00:22:41

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Redman: Do you remember were there talks about tough economic times or about people "making do" or struggling, getting by? Or were those things that maybe at social events you wouldn't talk about as much?

1-00:23:03

Anderson: No, I remember as a kid occasionally somebody would come around to the back door and, "Can I have a piece of pie?" It was sad. They weren't out on the street like when you go to Powell Street in San Francisco now people out there with their cup, shake it in front of you as you walk by.

Redman: But people instead would maybe come up to your home and ask for a little something. What were your parents—I know a lot of people had different reactions to that, so how did your parents react to that when someone asked?

1-00:23:35

Anderson: My mother gave them the pie. She appreciated what they were going through. I remember as a youngster I was a traffic boy, so there was a nice intersection close to the school and the streetcar would come down Park Boulevard. It was fun to stop the street car to let the kids—I'd blow my whistle, and I think I put a sign out, and the other guy'd put his sign out, so they stopped traffic on both sides of the street. But there was on that side of Park Boulevard—not the

developed side—there was a hobo jungle in there. It was scary; you didn't know. There were guys living in there and cooking their coffee over a fire, a little flame, eating out of tin cans and stuff.

Redman: Did you have any sort of impression at that age—?

1-00:24:41

Anderson: I didn't interact with them, either. It was just overgrown and dense.

Redman: I'm trying to put myself in the mindset of a thirteen-year-old or fourteen-year-old boy at that time, and I was wondering, did you have any sort of thoughts on those two different types of things, someone actually coming up to your house and asking for a little help, and seeing a group of people living out in the streets or out in the open struggling to get by? As a fourteen-year-old kid did you have any sort of thoughts on that as part of this Depression—?

1-00:25:21

Anderson: No. Not me, I was kind of unconscious about what was going on. Plus there was a lot of distraction because they had the World's Fair over there in 1939 and 1940, and I could go over there, get a quarter, and get on the Key System train, go over there and walk around and go in the fun house, and it was great.

Redman: Yes, let's talk about that, so a lot of kids went over to the World's Fair a number of times.

1-00:25:54

Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Redman: Yeah, did you go multiple times?

1-00:25:56

Anderson: Oh, yes, different things from the different parts of the fair, the Heinz pickle from the Heinz people and some other kind of a badge for somebody else. They always give these little coins away, and it was supposed to be wonderful, the cars of the future were, it was great.

Redman: Do you remember exhibits of people from different parts of the globe, maybe was there something like a Japanese pavilion or a Chinese pavilion, or were there Native American exhibits, exhibits of anthropology or anything along those lines, do recall anything like that?

1-00:26:35

Anderson: It was probably there, but I don't remember.

Redman: That's fine; I know this was a long time ago. The next two questions that I'd like to ask are actually from this same time period, and talking about the World's Fair at Treasure Island is a good segue. Two new bridges were constructed around the same era, the Golden Gate Bridge and the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge.

1-00:27:05

Anderson: That's right.

Redman: Both of those bridges had an enormous impact on the Bay Area, but I'd like to hear, do you recall both of those bridges being constructed?

1-00:27:14

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Redman: Do you recall what it looked like before those bridges had gone in, can you picture the Golden Gate before there was a Golden Gate Bridge there by any chance, or was that a little early?

1-00:27:28

Anderson: No, no, I remember. It was wide open, and then you saw the progress of the bridge as it came across, and it was fantastic to see this.

Redman: What made it so fantastic? What made such a big impression?

1-00:27:44

Anderson: Well, it was just, it was so huge; it was big. Years ago I went over there with some painting contractor. I was a painting contractor also. I thought I was going to get to go up one of the towers, but it's just a two man thing and there was about thirty of us, so they said, "No, you can't do that." But it would have been wonderful to go up there and see this thing.

Redman: But as these two bridges are being constructed, the Bay Bridge is maybe less iconic in terms versus the Golden Gate Bridge. But for those of us that live in the Bay Area we use the Bay Bridge all the time.

1-00:28:34

Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Redman: A lot of people do use the Golden Gate Bridge to be sure, but it's in some sense more of an icon and a symbol, and then you've got this real working bridge that millions and millions of people cross between the East Bay and San Francisco. I'm wondering, in the 1930s was it clear how these bridges were going to be used even as a kid? Were you aware of how this was going to change transportation in the Bay Area?

1-00:29:00

Anderson: Well, it was going to be wonderful. I didn't realize that the ferries wouldn't be there anymore, but to go across the bridge on the Key System train—the whole lower deck was trucks and trains—that worked out great. I thought that was a good system, and to go across the bridge for a quarter. Everyone was impressed, and pretty soon the bridge was going to be paid for, and you wouldn't have to pay anything.

Redman: That's not quite how it ended up working out, right? Yes, but tell me about how it might have felt different to go across the bay on a ferry. I use the expression of maybe having the water splash up on your face, but people say, "Oh, no, no; the weather was protected in the ferry." But driving over seems a bit of a different experience going over the bridge versus taking a ferry. Can you tell me how those things were, can you maybe compare those experiences for me a little bit?

1-00:30:12

Anderson: Well, a lot of times I shared—paid a little more attention on the ferry, but they had these machines; you put money in, you try to grab something from the, so I was playing with those on the ferry.

Redman: Sure, but there were things to entertain—

1-00:30:28

Anderson: Oh, yes, all kinds of food service and everything like that. It was a wonderful way to commute back and forth, I guess, if you were an older person working over there. But I always remember as a kid when the bridge first opened up, we hated coming back to Oakland because the mud flats down there just stank. Oh, it was terrible. But then you always saw the big Sherman-Williams-paint-pouring-over-the-globe sign, the SWP, Sherwin-Williams Paint.

Redman: A big sign in Oakland.

1-00:31:03

Anderson: Oh, it was huge. One of those twinkly bulb things.

Redman: So you could see that on the ferry coming back, or on the bridge.

1-00:31:12

Anderson: We could see it, if you came back, from the car. Because after you got off the bridge, you would go into the mud-flat area where the road was.

Redman: Right.

1-00:31:25

Anderson: But that's where the paint factory was there in Emeryville.

Redman: Now, today when I drive over the bridge, I'm sorry I suspect you didn't realize you were going to do an interview about bridges. [laughs]

1-00:31:36

Anderson: No, that's all right.

Redman: When I drive over going from the Oakland side over to San Francisco, there's this beautiful view of the bay and downtown, and you can see Alcatraz and on a good day the Golden Gate Bridge. It's a pretty spectacular view, but you're

elevated, and I suspect the view coming in from the ferry would have been in some sense even more spectacular because you're not driving, it's slower—

1-00:32:06

Anderson: Oh, yeah, it's a lot slower. It's fun to take the ferry now and go to San Francisco and go under the bridge. Then you see what a majestic structure it is. Especially the San Francisco side because that's where the big towers are and the loopy cables and everything. The Oakland side is more utilitarian. And a cantilever structure is not as grand as the big loopy cables on the San Francisco side.

Redman: Last question about the Bay Bridge. You've no doubt seen the east span structures going up now that are supposed to be open in the next few years. Can you compare for me—?

1-00:32:51

Anderson: I hope it's in my lifetime.

Redman: Some of these projects take a little longer than—

1-00:32:58

Anderson: Yes, because they built that thing for what, less than fifty million dollars, and it's a staggering amount of money being built, it's just patch this thing up and make it go again. Everything has to come from China now. But it's interesting to see how these huge tubes that they're putting up to make the bridge—

Redman: So the construction methods have clearly changed. They're bringing over materials from China, it takes weeks to ship things over; they're sort of on this gigantic scale that even—

1-00:33:30

Anderson: I can't understand why we can't do it here in this country, but evidently it's cheaper to have them do it.

Redman: But are there other ways that you can maybe compare seeing the original bridge go up in the thirties versus seeing the construction that's going on today?

1-00:33:54

Anderson: I can appreciate; I see these old photographs and see what was involved with these men walking up and down on this structure and the way they had to do it. It's amazing what was done by people at that time. I don't think you can get guys to do that now.

Redman: Do you think part of it was that during in the midst of the Great Depression people were ready for work and they were willing to climb to the top of these? Do you think that played a role in that?

1-00:34:26

Anderson: Yes, these guys were fearless, and you're working for not too much money a day, and doing this horrendous work. But people were working, and they were happy to have a job. It's a different time. We're different people.

Redman: I think about the West Coast and sort of the icons of the West Coast—you've got the Hollywood sign in LA, and in Seattle the Space Needle—but San Francisco is in many ways just sort of associated with the Golden Gate Bridge, this beautiful suspension bridge. Did you have any idea when that was being constructed and if you're looking at it, that that would become such an important symbol for the San Francisco Bay Area, or was it clear that this was a huge iconic project?

1-00:35:24

Anderson: I didn't realize it, no, but San Francisco was "the City." You went to San Francisco; it was big time. They had the opera; they had the ballet, and the symphony. And it was classy. The City Hall they have over there is one of the finest buildings in the country. Oakland is a great place to live. I don't know whether I'd like to live in San Francisco, but I like to live in sunny Oakland.

Redman: Where it's ten degrees warmer. So now I'd like to return to the war. I'd like to ask you what you recall about December 7, 1941, or the day that Pearl Harbor was attacked. Can you recall the day?

1-00:36:14

Anderson: Absolutely.

Redman: Tell me about that.

1-00:36:17

Anderson: We'd just come home from church, and I went to my friend's house across the street. We read the newspapers on the living room floor, spread them out because he took a different paper; I think they took the Hearst paper, and we were taking the *Tribune*. Different funnies. All of a sudden Mr. Fisher has the radio on, and they're bombing Pearl Harbor. "What?" I was absolutely dumbstruck. I couldn't believe that something like this would happen. But it did.

Redman: Then was it immediately clear to you at that age; you would have been maybe fifteen by this time?

1-00:37:06

Anderson: No, twenty-seven. I was probably fourteen. Yes, I had just turned fourteen November, and this was December 7, so I had turned fourteen.

Redman: So for a lot of people a little older, it might have been more obvious how their lives would change. Say you're an eighteen-year-old college student; it becomes a little more clear that your life has changed. But at fourteen did you have sort of an awareness of this big world event, a world war was going to

change Oakland, it was going to change the Bay Area, it was going to change the United States? Was that clear that that was going to happen at that time?

1-00:37:52

Anderson: Not to me, no.

Redman: What were some of your thoughts, just from your—?

1-00:37:56

Anderson: Well, I can see as a youngster how things changed when they started building all these ships and all this big influx of people to come and build the ships. My Sunday school teacher was—somebody told me it was his idea to bring all these people from the South out here to work in the shipyards, and so that changed Oakland tremendously.

Redman: Right, so in particular, Henry Kaiser loads up buses and sends them through the South, so you're saying that your Sunday school teacher, that was possibly his idea for—?

1-00:38:37

Anderson: Yes.

Redman: So then they bring busloads of people—

1-00:38:44

Anderson: I don't know how they brought them out here. They must have brought them out here in, I think, the train or buses. You can't bring people with their paraphernalia, their belongings, on a bus very well.

Redman: So people arrive, and they're from a very different background. Many of them had been picking cotton in the South, quite literally, and a lot of people had less access to education, lower literacy rates, and they get jobs at the shipyards. But there aren't enough places to house them.

1-00:39:25

Anderson: Right.

Redman: Can you talk about how Oakland was changing at that time both in terms of race, and then also about how housing was extraordinarily difficult to find?

1-00:39:38

Anderson: My father's paint shop was in a location not far from Oakland High, and he bought an old house in the forties, a little old Victorian house. It had garages in the back, and he built more garages, and so he kept his truck there and his ladders and buckets and paints and things like that. But the house had a huge attic, and he was renting the house, and one of the renters was very enterprising, and so he put mattresses in the attic. My dad didn't know how many people were up there. But this was in walking distance to probably the Moore Dry Dock.

Redman: Moore Dry-docks, okay, yeah.

1-00:40:26

Anderson: So I don't how many were up in this attic, but that's what—

Redman: So it was one of the tenants had taken the attic and sort of cleared it out and just put mattresses up there, and then he started sort of double dipping.

1-00:40:46

Anderson: Oh, yeah. I don't know what he did for a job. Well, I don't believe—probably he could have been a couple of bucks a night to sleep and, I don't know, they probably could get a shower, some other place.

Redman: What did your dad do when he found out about this?

1-00:41:13

Anderson: I don't remember what he did. He didn't hit anybody over the head; he didn't tell me a lot about it. He just found out about it.

Redman: I'd like to turn back for a moment to the Executive Order, so Executive Order 9066, which is Roosevelt's executive order that orders the Japanese to war relocation camps. We'd talked about how your school there had been a small, a modest number of Japanese students that had moved in prior to the war, so those presumably those students were then brought away, or they disappeared.

1-00:42:00

Anderson: They were just gone. I didn't know where they'd went. I didn't realize what primitive conditions they were forced into. We did have a Japanese gardener that worked in the neighborhood, and my father gave him \$5.00 for this wonderful cast-iron mower that he had. So as a youngster I was able to cut grass for around fifty cents an hour because a lot of these men that were doing Japanese gardener work were gone.

Redman: I'd like to ask if you could talk a little bit more about your dad getting the lawn mower. My understanding is that people were ordered to leave, and they were literally told, "You can bring one briefcase of, or one small bag worth of things," so people had to sell and get rid of a lot of things. This was your family gardener?

1-00:43:06

Anderson: No, no.

Redman: He was just in the neighborhood?

1-00:43:09

Anderson: Yes. I guess he came to my dad to sell the lawnmower. I don't know, I don't remember whose lawn he was mowing. There were some lawns that were nicer than ours, and like I say this Haddon Hill area had bigger homes and

bigger yards and bigger lawns, so he may have come from, maybe worked up there.

Redman: It wasn't as though he handed over his client list.

1-00:43:38

Anderson: Oh, no.

Redman: Just the lawn mower.

1-00:43:41

Anderson: Yes.

Redman: We'll get back to that. During the war itself you started in high school a little bit of a business then to mow lawns and make a little bit of money for yourself, is that correct?

1-00:43:59

Anderson: Yeah.

Redman: Can you tell me a little bit about how that would work, even just the basics of—?

1-00:44:05

Anderson: Well, you just try to be a nice boy. I worked in the butcher shop also on a Saturday and would clean chickens and do things around, scrub the blocks; they have these steel brushes that you had to scrape the butcher block with the wooden thing. I don't know whether you've ever seen those or not. They had to be scrubbed clean. I would do things like that and wipe out the showcase with ammonia on a rag and try to get the grease off the window and just about asphyxiate myself because of the ammonia on the rag.

It was good to be able to work and to have the money. I saved a little money, and then one summer the YMCA put together a camp to go up to Loomis into Auburn because there was no Japanese to pick the fruit anymore. This was 1943, so I went up there and spent the summer, slept outside behind the Auburn High School. There were a whole bunch of boys and girls; the boys went to one high school area, and the girls in another. But we worked—I worked in the packing shed up there with the box boy, and we'd shoot the boxes down, after the man makes the box, down the slide in the packing, the pears and stuff down in the packing shed—

Redman: I want to get back to the butcher shop in just a minute, but given both of those experiences of mowing the lawn and then going with the YMCA out to a camp where you were picking fruit in '43, I'm curious if, because you had said that when the Japanese were taken out of the school, you had no idea what kind of conditions that they were subjected to.

1-00:46:14

Anderson: Nothing.

Redman: So was this talked about at all, that the Japanese were away at camps and then that's what brought this need for, this is sort of something that—?

1-00:46:25

Anderson: No, just the Japanese were, I guess, I don't know how much of an impact they had on the fruit packing industry, but we were there filling a void because they took us up there. Some of the guys didn't last very long because the guys that had to pick fruit, they were paying them a nickel a lug to pick pears, and these guys lasted about a week. You're supposed to pay for your food that you were eating up there, which was a disaster. We were getting bologna sandwiches for breakfast.

Redman: So it doesn't sound like exactly glamorous work—

1-00:47:14

Anderson: No, about fifty-five cents an hour as a box boy, but it was hot work because they're in the top of the shed, and that's where they were making the boxes. People that could pack pears. These were professional; that's what they did during the summer. These were women that came in and wrapped the pears in little pieces of tissue paper.

Redman: I presume by '43 the US government had started the Bracero Program that brought up visiting Mexican laborers temporarily up to California fields? Did you see any of that by any chance?

1-00:47:50

Anderson: I didn't.

Redman: I'd like to get back to the butcher shop for a minute. Rationing during the war was for some a big concern. For other families it seems like they had more than enough rationing coupons to get what they needed. I understand that meat was rationed during the war.

1-00:48:09

Anderson: Yes.

Redman: Can you tell me a little bit about how that would have worked?

1-00:48:15

Anderson: I guess you got your coupons. My mom kept track of the coupons, and she was able to—we got what we needed. I think we got a lot more food in our country than people who—. But I remember people bringing in cans of grease in coffee cans to—somehow the grease was processed into munitions or something that was needed in the war effort.

Redman: What would people do with those jars? I've heard of this before. Was there a particular place to bring them?

1-00:48:49

Anderson: Yes, you brought it to the butcher shop.

Redman: Then the butcher would hang on to it for you give it to—

1-00:48:57

Anderson: Yeah, he would do something with it. I don't remember who came by to collect it or anything like that. People brought these little coffee cans, one pound coffee cans, full of grease when your bacon fat, or whatever you had—and use it in something for the war effort.

Redman: It seems like people pretty much took for granted that items like meat were rationed, and this was just sort of a part of everyday life during the war. Was there ever any tension at the butcher shop about people not being able to get what they wanted?

1-00:49:31

Anderson: There may have been a little something going on, people maybe paying a little more for something. But I wasn't aware of anything—both butchers that I worked for were pretty nice fellows. I thought they were basically honest people.

Redman: I've heard stories of people because of the number of kids they had or for one reason or another maybe needing more shoe coupons or because they were driving, needing more gas coupons, so potentially trading some coupons, which I guess you weren't supposed to do. But did you see any of that when you were a kid?

1-00:50:09

Anderson: Not really. I was pretty innocent.

Begin Audio File 2

2-00:00:03

Redman: My name is Sam Redman, and this is my second tape today with Ralph Anderson. Today is Monday, August 29, and we're here today in Oakland. We missed an important topic in our first tape. We were talking in between tapes here a little bit about baseball growing up in Oakland in grammar school. I understand the Bay Area was a real hotbed in that era. El Cerrito High School, Albany High School, and a bunch of the high schools in Oakland were producing some pretty fine ball players at that time.

2-00:00:40

Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Redman: Can you tell me a little bit about what it was like to play baseball in that era in this area?

2-00:00:46

Anderson: Well, I was always a fan of the Oakland Oaks; that was the professional team here. We used to do business with, in my painting contracting business, used to do business with the Raimondi s, who had a paint store right here in Oakland. It was Billy Raimondi who was the catcher for the Oakland Oaks. And Jackie Jensen, when he left Cal as a football player and turned pro, turned into a pro baseball player; he played for the Oakland Oaks. Billy Raimondi was the catcher for the Oakland Oaks, and Billy Martin started out then, too, and Casey Stengel was the manager. In grammar school, at Cleveland Grammar School, I had the privilege of playing baseball with Jackie Jensen, and we had some good times playing hardball, and even then he was putting the ball over the fence.

Redman: So it's was pretty clear that he was going to be a great player, okay.

2-00:01:48

Anderson: He was special, yeah.

Redman: What was it like to at that time go to Oakland Oaks games and sort of growing up with that atmosphere of baseball? I'm just curious what the experience was like of going to the games. Would you take a streetcar there or a trolley there?

2-00:02:07

Anderson: We could take the bus or the streetcar, I guess, yeah. It was the bus. Anyway, it was fun. It wasn't a big stadium; I think it held maybe thirteen, fourteen thousand people, and they had these nice wooden things to sit on, and you should get splinters in your bottom if you moved around too much, but once in a while you'd get a ball. I had a friend who was kind of a ball boy, and he—anyway, it was a lot of fun going out to the games.

Redman: Did you have any sort of impressions of not necessarily legal segregation, but in terms of were there different neighborhoods in the East Bay that were segregated by race as far as you recall from that—?

2-00:02:57

Anderson: Well, there was six high schools in Oakland, and they were all white except for one, and that was McClymonds. That was the black high school, and we expected a little, some friction when the kids came to our high school, nothing serious. I don't remember anything serious happening, but there was all the little kind of a tension. But now, it's, of course, completely reversed. There's no white school in Oakland now at this time. It's different having lived here as a youngster and living here now because we're, of course, up here in the hills and the rest of the city is a little—it's not like it was when I was a kid.

Redman: Could you describe for me, as someone who didn't live through some of the tensions, if the black high school came to maybe play a ballgame or something against one of the other high schools, was it just a sense of the separation or the difference, or was there some actual real racial hatred there among some of your fellow students?

2-00:04:25

Anderson: I don't remember a lot of racial hatred, but it's just when people are different they don't seem to get along as well as when everybody's the same. And like you say, some of these kids that come from a different culture totally.

2-00:04:46

Redman: One of the next events that we talked about a little in the interim was the Port Chicago disaster, which your wife had mentioned that she recalled. But what are just some of your basic memories of that, even if you don't recall the actual time of the event, some of your recollections about what happened at Port Chicago in 1944?

2-00:05:15

Anderson: I don't remember. I didn't realize what a disaster it was and how these guys were court martialed and put in prison. I don't remember at that time how I felt about it. But I think in view of what has happened, I think they've tried to alleviate some of the bad things that happened to these people at that time. Didn't President Clinton put out some kind of a pardon for some of these—?

Redman: Yes, and now it's a national park, and it's on its way to becoming an even more robust national park.

Unions played a big role in the Second World War in that Roosevelt made sure that if you were getting a job at a defense industry like a shipyard or an airplane factory, that you would be part of the union. But, on the other hand, I find in a lot of my interviews people not necessarily having any sort of personal relationship with the unions. Instead they just signed up because they needed a job, and this sort of inflated union numbers. Did you get the impression that your parents had any sort of strong feelings about unions? I know your father was a conservative and had some troubles politically with Roosevelt; did he ever talk about unions at all?

2-00:06:46

Anderson: Yeah, we had a union shop. I worked for my father for ten years before he gave me the business. He started his business in 1933, and then as the unions got stronger he joined what they called the Painting and Decorating Contractors of America. That was the contractors that had the relationship with the union. So he had to abide by what the union sent out as far as if you wanted another man and some were good and some were less than best. He had to contend with that, and so that was kind of a heartache for him. Of course, when I went to work for him I had to join, so I joined the union, the Painters Union in 1947 after I got out of the Army. I was only in the Army for

a year. And I started out at Cal, but that summer I joined the union, and I worked for him on and off during the summer as a painter and learned a little bit. I went to the apprentice school for some times in the evening. Of course, to learn all the things that were involved in being a painter.

Redman: So your father maybe had some headaches involved in going through the union protocol, but was he generally in favor of being part of the union and having a semi-active role in—?

2-00:08:26

Anderson: Most of the painting contractors joined, so everybody was on the same playing field—it was a level playing field—and everybody had to pay the going wage, and everybody had to abide by the union rules. We had certain sized brushes that we were supposed to use, and it wasn't until the sixties that we could even—of course, the roller came in about that time, too. We didn't use any spraying, we still don't have any spraying, but anyway, you couldn't do a lot of spraying because that's—in other words, they were spreading the work out. We worked seven hours a day. There was thousands of painters in the Bay Area, lots of them in San Francisco and Oakland, and hundreds of painting contractors. So people were busy, people were working, and this was after the war, and it was a pretty good deal.

Redman: Pretty booming time after—

2-00:09:30

Anderson: Yeah, my wife did not have to go to work. I was able to make enough money as a workingman to live in a city and not have to drive in from Tracy to come to work. We could live in the city and buy a home in the city, and the whole thing is just tipped over.

Redman: That's a really fascinating observation. I want to ask, during the war what sorts of things would you have done for fun? I'm thinking about sort of a young social life as a high-schooler. Did the war disrupt sort of the typical high school social activities, I'm thinking of homecoming events and dances and things of that nature?

2-00:10:19

Anderson: It didn't seem to disrupt me. We went to dances, and this friend Clark Fisher who I mentioned had a Model A, he was a year older than I was. So my wife and I, he would get gas somehow, and he had a rumble seat in his car, and so we'd go to dances over in Larkspur. It was a very cold experience riding in a rumble seat going across the Golden Gate Bridge trying to go to a dance in Larkspur, but we did it. But it was fun.

Redman: How did you meet your wife?

2-00:11:02

Anderson: We were in high school together, but they had a young people's group at the church, too, that we were a part of, and so I was going with other people occasionally. By 1949 we were married.

Redman: At a certain point you guys started to go steady.

2-00:11:27

Anderson: Yeah.

Redman: And that occasionally would involve some of these dances around the Bay Area that you'd go with your friends.

2-00:11:37

Anderson: Well, the high school dances we had were close by. We didn't have to go on the streetcar. I think a couple of times I borrowed my dad's car, and I took somebody. But I remember one of the kids, though. At high school one of my friends was a cheerleader kind of involved in student government, and he got caught siphoning gas out of somebody's car. So that was kind of a comedown, for—of course, it was kind of disappointing that somebody that was supposed to be in a leadership position at the school got caught.

Redman: Doing something like that, yeah. How about people a little bit older, did you have sort of an impression of soldiers stationed in this area, maybe not so obvious because now there's much less of a military presence in the Bay Area, I understand, than during the actual war especially. But even up until a few years ago there was still the Oakland Army Base, which was still very, very active. I understand there were a lot of USO dances and things of that nature, but when people maybe working at the shipyards or people who were on R and R in San Francisco, did they go out and live it up in Oakland or in San Francisco?

2-00:13:04

Anderson: Oh, I'm sure they did, but I wasn't a part of it or wasn't in that scene so to speak. I did have a job over at the Naval Air Station in Alameda. It was the summer of '44. The Sunday school teacher was involved with the Twelfth Naval District, and he got me a job at the Naval Air Station over in Alameda as a helper general minimum. I think I got sixty-five cents an hour over there. But we pulled the copper tubing out of the Grumman Hellcats that came back that were all shot up. After we got the copper tubing out, then they'd melt down the fuselages that had been all shot up, and that was pretty—

Redman: Let's talk about that a little bit. The Grumman Hellcat I associate with the Pacific.

2-00:14:08

Anderson: It's yeah, the Navy—it was based on the aircraft carrier.

Redman: Right, and it can maybe carry one large bomb.

2-00:14:22

Anderson: I don't know what it carried.

Redman:

Occasionally these would come back shot up and beat up—

2-00:14:22

Anderson: We had a whole yard full of them out there, yeah. We'd just go through and systematically pull out what was not going to be melted down.

Redman:

Now, as a kid did you feel any sort of strong emotions about seeing these—?

2-00:14:44

Anderson: It was pretty scary the way they were shot up. You'd hope the guy that got back with his plane—but I did have no way of knowing if they did.

Redman:

But you'd contemplate that on occasion, I imagine.

2-00:14:57

Anderson: Yeah.

Redman:

“Gee, I hope this guy's okay.”

2-00:15:00

Anderson: Yeah, but then that part of the equipment on the plane was this place where the guy had to relieve himself through this little rubber thing, and I can't imagine having to fly a plane and having to take a tinkle at the same time. Anyway, like I say, I was kind of an innocent kid, but I just, it was—

Redman:

I can imagine that would be a pretty eye-opening job as far as seeing what was actually going on.

2-00:15:34

Anderson: Yes.

Redman:

We talked a little bit about social life, and I'm wondering if there are any sort of wartime changes in social life. You talked about your parents prior to the war getting together with other young couples with kids, and I assume maybe they might have gotten out of that group as you got a little older, or—

2-00:15:54

Anderson: No, they stayed with the same group.

Redman:

So were there still sort of casual parties on the weekends or things like that during the war?

2-00:16:05

Anderson: It seemed like it, yes. I remember we had to pull the shades down, had dark shades and my father had a tin hat. He was supposed to be the block warden or something like that. He'd have to go around and do things with a flashlight at night to make sure everything was all right, but it didn't—they did have a

few submarines came in close to the coast, and people got kind of spooked by some of that stuff, but—

Redman: It never became—

2-00:16:42

Anderson: No, not like the East Coast where they were sinking ships right off the coast of New York and New Jersey when the war was first started.

Redman: Let me ask about women. Rosie the Riveter today is such a big iconic symbol, and a lot of that is associated with the shipyards here in the Bay Area.

2-00:17:05

Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Redman: Did the idea of women, many of their mothers presumably or aunts or cousins, going off into the shipyards and getting jobs in heavy labor sometimes for the first time that women had been able to work like that, did that affect the high school girls at all in the way that they were thinking or—?

2-00:17:36

Anderson: Not that I was aware of, no.

Redman: They had maybe thought about this as a temporary wartime job that their aunts were taking or their cousins, or—?

2-00:17:49

Anderson: No, I don't—what the girls were doing didn't, no. I did have a friend that left high school to join the Merchant Marines. The Merchies you didn't have to be eighteen to volunteer, and so he left high school, and those guys were not treated too well. I think they were probably taken advantage of.

Redman: It seems to me that during the war it's pretty obvious statement to say, but there was a lot of patriotism and feelings of unity at the time.

2-00:18:26

Anderson: It was tremendous.

Redman: Can you tell me a little bit about that?

2-00:18:29

Anderson: Every time you had a little extra money, you'd go buy a war bond or buy war stamps so you could get a war bond. It was kind of disappointing to realize what had happened to your money after the war was over and you cashed this thing in and how the value of your money had declined because of the tremendous cost of the war effort. But we won the war, so—. But no, everybody came together. As a kid we'd go around trying to collect scrap rubber and old tires and stuff like this and turn them in. People just came together. It wasn't less than six months after the war started that they weren't

Japanese anymore, they were “Japs.” That’s almost like “nigger.” It’s a very derogatory term. Frank Sinatra was singing about the Japs, and “yap, yap,” and it was really, it was the power of the movies and radio; they just got us cranked up just like that.

Redman: Do you think that that affected people in your neighborhood in the way that they would converse and talk about Japanese people or things like that?

2-00:20:03

Anderson: I think I probably did, yeah. But in spite of everything that happened to the Japanese because of this Jap thing that were there all of a sudden, if they hadn’t gotten them out of town, they may have very well have been lynched like black people were lynched down in the South. I don’t know whether I should say that. But these people were American citizens, and it’s just pathetic that this happened to them.

Redman: I understand that there were a few instances of violence when Japanese people came back from the camps and went back to their homes. Did you ever hear anything about actual violence taking place when people came back?

2-00:20:56

Anderson: Jeez, that’s a long time ago. I don’t remember. They were entitled to everything that they could get, but I don’t know whether—I guess guys that had tremendous war experiences would react like that. I don’t remember.

Redman: I wanted to ask about community groups and civic organizations. I wonder if your parents were particularly active in any particular groups or organizations outside of the church, any other community groups.

2-00:21:28

Anderson: My father was very active in the Painting Contractors Association, and they had wonderful banquets and dinners and the conventions that they went to. Mom and Dad went up and down the whole state.

Redman: You said there were a few hundred just in the Bay Area, contractors—

2-00:21:46

Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Redman: So it was an active group, I can imagine.

2-00:21:48

Anderson: Oh, very active, yeah.

Redman: Let’s talk about the end of war. We talked about hearing about Pearl Harbor. I’m wondering if you recall hearing about the dropping of the atomic weapons, the bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Do you remember hearing the news of that?

2-00:22:09

Anderson: Yes, sort of, not as vividly as—but I didn't realize until I see some of the newsreels about tremendous devastation, but it did end of the war. That's what people say.

Redman: What were your sort of impressions of that at the time?

2-00:22:32

Anderson: Well, I don't have a lot of recollection of that, I just remember that movie of came out about ten years ago that McNamara movie—

Redman: *The Fog of War?*

2-00:22:45

Anderson: *The Fog of War*, yes. He said we probably should have been indicted for war crimes for what we did to the Japanese before even the firebombing, and then the bombs.

Redman: At the time you weren't aware of those; how about either V-E Day or V-J Day? I know there was a lot of celebrating in the streets, things of that nature, do you remember those celebrations? I know in Oakland, but then also in San Francisco, there were some large celebrations.

2-00:23:20

Anderson: I don't know, people were supposed to go downtown on 14th and Broadway to celebrate down there or not. I don't remember what the—

Redman: How about towards the end of the war, and this is another question that I might have to ask someone who was maybe more like your mom in terms of rationing and buying for the family. I'm wondering if there was more spending money for your family towards the end of the war. I know I've talked to some people that said that new appliances finally started to come out, or new cars, because my understanding is that during the war there stopped being a '42 model or a '43 model of new appliances.

2-00:24:07

Anderson: Oh, yeah.

Redman: But then towards the end of the war when some of those restrictions are lifted, some of them start to come back, some not until the end of the war. Do you remember people having a little more spending money in their pockets by the end of the war?

2-00:24:24

Anderson: I'm sure they did, but I don't have any recollections about, we always had what we needed.

Redman: Now some questions about your life after the war. There's a lot here that we can talk about, and I'm hoping that maybe we can just sort of summarize in a

few sentences between the end of the war and the time that you were drafted in March '46. Can you tell me a little bit about how Oakland changed? I know a lot of the shipyards were starting to shut down at the end of the war, and some people were losing their jobs there. Since you've been here both before, during, and then for a few months after the war, I'm wondering if you have some thoughts on how this area was changing.

2-00:25:19

Anderson:

I don't remember too much of a change after World War II. We were married in '49, and it wasn't long after that that the Korean War started, so that seemed like another big war. People had money again because everything was coming out of the Bay Area to go over to Korea. My brother and I worked in a rather inexpensive shoe store in downtown Oakland, and these people came in that hadn't worn shoes, and the biggest thing we had in the store was a 10B. You'd try to force these things—this was women's shoes—and it was a zoo in there on a Saturday. Regular shoe salesmen would have been probably eight or ten guys like my brother and myself who would come in and work on a Saturday and worked on a commission. We were selling five-dollar shoes and you make 7 percent of five dollars, so you had to really move around the store to get fifteen or eighteen bucks for an afternoon's work. But they were all black people.

Redman:

It was a busy, busy time.

2-00:27:01

Anderson:

Yeah, it was busy.

Redman:

So in 1946 I know there was an event called the Oakland General Strike where a number of unions got together and shut down the city for I think three or four days.

2-00:27:13

Anderson:

Probably, yeah.

Redman:

But very few people seem to remember this event, so it seemed like it was maybe a big deal in 1946, but not a lot of people have talked about it since then. Do you happen to remember the Oakland General Strike?

2-00:27:27

Anderson:

I've heard about it, but I was in the service then, so I didn't, and I wouldn't have been a union member at that time, so it probably wouldn't have bothered me one way or the other.

Redman:

Right, so maybe some people that you had worked with might have been involved with it in one way or another, but by this time you were already in the service.

2-00:27:47

Anderson: No, it's interesting about the union thing because a lot of these men that joined the unions in the thirties, it was their religion. Some of the fellows that worked for my father were very staunch union people, and the rules were made because there had been abuses, and so they were trying to uphold the rules that had been established so you— [telephone rings] Excuse me.

Redman: Oh, no problem.

[Brief pause in tape]

When we left off we were talking a little bit about the influx of new people and new workers coming in for the Korean War once that started really moving. I'm curious, so you were discharged from the Army in '47, and then you enrolled at Cal.

2-00:28:42

Anderson: In September of '47.

Redman: What was the atmosphere like at UC Berkeley in September of 1947? What do you remember?

2-00:28:52

Anderson: I don't think they cared whether I was there or not. In high school we had a counselor; they looked after us. But it was just humongous; there was just so much activity out there.

Redman: Sink or swim.

2-00:29:04

Anderson: Yeah, and I just about drowned, but I got through. It was fantastic to be there. I remember this one professor I had, Joel Hildebrand, who was a chemistry professor, and the class was—I don't know; it had five hundred people in the class. It was huge, but to be a little bit away from a great man instead of going to some other institution and be close to a mediocre person, that was wonderful to be part of the University of California. Tennis class, the GI Bill; I got a tennis racquet and—but we were lined up about fifty guys in a tennis court. We hit the ball this way, hit it that way. It was just big.

Redman: Yup, but you did use the GI Bill?

2-00:30:06

Anderson: Oh, yes.

Redman: I understand there was a national version of the GI Bill, but there was also a California version? Can you explain that for me, do you recall how that worked?

2-00:30:15

Anderson: Oh, it was very vivid.

Redman:

So did you have two sets of paperwork or—? Just to clarify that last point, there were two versions of the GI Bill as you understand it, the California state version and then the national version?

2-00:30:45

Anderson: Cal Vet and NGI.

Redman:

Okay, and the GI version you used to pay for school at Cal, is that correct?

2-00:30:52

Anderson: Yes.

Redman:

Okay, and then the California State version, what did you use that, the Cal Vet you called it?

2-00:30:57

Anderson: Cal Vet, yeah.

Redman:

How were you able to use that?

2-00:31:01

Anderson: I used that loan to buy this home.

Redman:

Would you say the GI Bill did a lot for—?

2-00:31:07

Anderson: Tremendous things, one of the finest things the government has ever done. Then you had all these kids that, or young men, at Cal. I was not having any war; I didn't shoot anybody during the war. But these guys would come back, and they were veterans and they had seen a lot of action, and maybe already had their families, and they were more serious students than I was.

Redman:

That seems like that would make a pretty big difference as far as life experience and then what you want to do in college, and just sort of that experience. So you saw a difference between those students that were maybe eighteen-year-olds or nineteen-year-olds versus some of the guys who had gone into the Pacific or Europe.

2-00:31:59

Anderson: Yeah.

Redman:

Just to wrap up, we talked about a lot of things here today. We started off talking about your childhood, and we talked about what your neighborhood was like, your early education. We talked a little bit about the New Deal, and things like the CCC and the WPA. We talked a fair amount about your father's business and your experience there, and also with Japanese Americans, and then we got into the actual war and life during the war. I'm

wondering if you have any final thoughts about World War II in the place of your life as far as those memories that you have from that era.

2-00:32:40

Anderson: My son was married in Luxembourg, the oldest boy, in 1971, and we went to the wedding. I'll never forget the cemetery that they had in Luxembourg because that's where the Ardennes Forest is and beautifully manicured grass and all these white markers all over the lawn. You didn't realize what the expenditure of human life until you see all those graves. It was really something. During the time that we were there we had occasion to go to Verdun and, of course, that's where the big battle was in World War I. War is a terrible thing, and it just kind of hits you right in the tummy when you see things like that. You can see it in the movies and see it on the newsreels, but to see the graves, it's very serious.

Redman: I'd like to thank you so much for sitting down with me today. I really appreciate it. Thank you.

2-00:34:00

Anderson: Thank you.

[End of Interview]