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Elsie Arnold

Rosie the Riveter  
WWII American Home Front Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by  
David Dunham  
in 2014

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Elsie Arnold, 2014

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Interview 1 June 30, 2014  
Audio File 1

01-00:00:06

Dunham: Today is June 30, 2014, and we're here in the lovely home of Elsie Arnold. We're here for the Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front Oral History Project. We usually start at the beginning, so could you just tell me when and where you were born.

01-00:00:27

Arnold: I was born in Baltimore at home, and I was born in 1922. We later moved from the city out to Baltimore County. They bought a home out there, and we lived there until I was beginning high school. The Depression years were beginning to take its toll on the family, although my father worked for the B&O Railroad, and that transportation had just gone downhill at that time. He worked in one of the shops, Montclair shops. That's where the Baltimore stadium is, the baseball stadium is located. He was a welder. So we had transportation. So they decided we would go up to Garrett County, which is extreme western part of the state, beautiful area; it's in the Alleghany Mountains. We eventually moved up there. The reason for moving up there was they were—the Depression was really deeply into their finances, and they had to sell the home. The rental on the properties up there was much less than in the Baltimore area. So we moved up there in, let's see, can't think of—

01-00:02:24

Dunham: Do you know what year you were in school?

01-00:02:25

Arnold: I think I was just beginning high school that year. I should have that date in my mind. I was just beginning high school.

01-00:02:38

Dunham: Thirty-six or seven maybe?

01-00:02:40

Arnold: Yes, yes. So we lived up there. Well, they stayed there. My father, when he retired, they stayed up there.

01-00:02:51

Dunham: Had he lost his job?

01-00:02:52

Arnold: But he had transportation back and forth. When he was called back to work, it was like in the beginning of World War II.

01-00:03:02

Dunham: So he was laid off at the time you moved out there?

01-00:03:04

Arnold: Yes. They called it furloughed. But he still had access to travel during that time.

01-00:03:11

Dunham: By train?

01-00:03:12

Arnold: By train. He'd get a pass for the family, and we could travel back and forth. We didn't do too much of that traveling. We were trying to get settled in up there. But then I finished high school at seventeen.

01-00:03:31

Dunham: Can I ask what it was like for you, that transition from Baltimore?

01-00:03:34

Arnold: Oh, it was rough because moving out to—I had had so many friends through the school years, and we moved out into an area where there was not too much communication with people my age. It was a distance of having to walk back and forth. I didn't mind the walking, but I just didn't have an opportunity until I did get into school to meet up with some friends who lived not too far from me.

01-00:04:13

Dunham: You had moved there maybe in the beginning of the summer or something?

01-00:04:14

Arnold: It was in the spring or during the summer that we moved.

01-00:04:20

Dunham: Did you have siblings?

01-00:04:22

Arnold: I had one brother.

01-00:04:24

Dunham: Older or younger?

01-00:04:24

Arnold: Older. An older brother.

01-00:04:26

Dunham: Was he still in high school or—?

01-00:04:29

Arnold: Yes, he was. He finished up there. When I finished I was seventeen. I stayed home for a year because jobwise you couldn't even apply for anything until you were eighteen.

01-00:04:51

Dunham: What was life like for your mom and dad there when you had moved out there?

01-00:04:54

Arnold:

Well, they enjoyed it but my father, when he was called back to work, it meant he had to leave the family on Sunday, and he boarded close to the Montclair shops. It was an elderly couple who had like opened a small boarding house down near the shops where he worked. He boarded with them through the week and then came home on the weekend.

01-00:05:25

Dunham:

Oh, okay. So that was hard then—

01-00:05:29

Arnold:

Yes.

01-00:05:30

Dunham:

—for him being away so much?

01-00:05:30

Arnold:

Right.

01-00:05:31

Dunham:

Did he do that for several years?

01-00:05:33

Arnold:

Yes, he did, until he retired. But then, of course, he had a lifetime pass. He and my mother both had a lifetime pass.

01-00:05:44

Dunham:

What was life like for your mom when you were growing up?

01-00:05:49

Arnold:

Oh, it was wonderful. Both of my parents, I don't think they finished elementary school, but they educated themselves, and they did a lot of reading. They enjoyed the opera. They enjoyed travel. We did a lot of trips on the railroad. We went to the Chicago World's Fair. That was just prior to us moving up there because they had saved money to make that trip, and that's what we had planned on.

01-00:06:31

Dunham:

What do you remember about that?

01-00:06:32

Arnold:

The Chicago World's Fair? Oh, that was interesting. I do remember, that was my first experience with seeing the making of plastic. They made plastic eggs there and a ball. They could bounce them around. And they showed the whole operation. I don't recall the exact process, but I do recall that part of it. I think it was not PG&E, but it was General Electric. They had a lot of interesting displays where it didn't cost a lot to go in and see what was forthcoming in the years ahead at that fair. Just recently I read in an article in one of the magazines that I get, and they had all the fairs listed and the Chicago World's Fair was the last one. And they mentioned that it was during the Depression years, and there were so few people who attended that. But that was

interesting. We came back from there, and we began the process of getting into the move.

01-00:07:50

Dunham: Did you know any of your grandparents?

01-00:07:55

Arnold: I just knew my one grandfather. My other grandparents died at a young age. He was blind.

01-00:08:06

Dunham: Did he live with you?

01-00:08:08

Arnold: No. He stayed with us off and on, but he died before we even moved.

01-00:08:17

Dunham: What's your family's background in terms of where they came from originally, immigrated from? Do you know?

01-00:08:23

Arnold: Oh, England. Both sides. My ancestors on my mother's side, my grandmother, she was French and English. And my father's people were from England. But, as I said, my parents, they really educated themselves. They liked to read, and they taught us a lot as we were growing up. And my mother would take us, my brother and me, on trips to Philadelphia. We went to Washington. They managed to get tickets. We could sit in and hear Congress debating some of the issues. It was an interesting life that we had growing up.

01-00:09:22

Dunham: What were your impressions of that, seeing Congress debate at that age?

01-00:09:25

Arnold: Well, I was only about seven or eight years of age at the time. I don't recall what they were discussing, but it's interesting to see. The balcony is probably where we sat at that time. When you look at the television today, those buildings are so old over there. And my mother took us down to Luray Caverns. That was another trip she took us on during the summer months.

01-00:10:02

Dunham: What would you do in Philadelphia, and what were your impressions of it?

01-00:10:03

Arnold: Philadelphia we went up to the—where they have the—what do they call it? I can't figure the building.

01-00:10:14

Dunham: Independence Hall?

01-00:10:15

Arnold: Independence Hall, yeah. There was a lot of memorabilia there. They were interested in it, my parents were.

01-00:10:23

Dunham: Well, it's great that you were able to travel, you had the travel pass. But still, during the Depression, having to move there, times were tough. Did your mom—were there things she had to do, food, cooking-wise, or getting jobs herself to make ends meet?

01-00:10:37

Arnold: Women just didn't work at that time, and my father just didn't want her to go out and work. But they had a garden. We had rented a house up there, I think it was ten dollars a month, and it was an old farmhouse. But it was living quarters for us. They had saved enough that they managed to get us through all of that.

01-00:11:10

Dunham: In the year after you finished high school then, what did you do that year?

01-00:11:14

Arnold: I stayed at home and helped my mother. She was not well. She just needed some help. But then we got her through that. She was fine after that. But she had a lot to do. They had a garden every year where they could grow their vegetables.

01-00:11:40

Dunham: What did you grow?

01-00:11:43

Arnold: Tomatoes and corn and string beans. And I helped her with the canning process.

01-00:11:53

Dunham: Did the weather vary much there? From Baltimore to where you were now?

01-00:11:57

Arnold: It's a beautiful area up there. I still go back there. I will have my seventy-fifth high school reunion this year.

01-00:12:07

Dunham: Oh, great. Congratulations.

01-00:12:09

Arnold: And it's just a few people who attend but they have the entire high school who graduated during those years. The old high school opened in 1921, I believe.

01-00:12:28

Dunham: What's it called?

- 01-00:12:29  
Arnold: Oakland High School. I finished there in—let's see, '39 I graduated from high school.
- 01-00:12:43  
Dunham: So once you got started in high school you made friends and got along okay?
- 01-00:12:47  
Arnold: Oh, yes, yes. Everything was fine.
- 01-00:12:49  
Dunham: Did you find the community to be very different?
- 01-00:12:50  
Arnold: Yes, it was very nice. It was a farming district. But people, they helped one another.
- 01-00:13:00  
Dunham: Was it a much different community then from being in Baltimore?
- 01-00:13:06  
Arnold: Oh, yes. Because where we lived in Baltimore County, we had bus service and street cars. We had a bus service that came out to the county into the city where we could get on a street car and go in further into the city of Baltimore for the shopping and so forth. We didn't have any of these malls like at that time.
- 01-00:13:34  
Dunham: Were there any things that you missed from Baltimore?
- 01-00:13:38  
Arnold: I missed most of my school friends and neighborhood friends. But that transition was rough at first but I managed to get through it.
- 01-00:13:50  
Dunham: Yeah, yeah. Did you go to church as a child?
- 01-00:13:54  
Arnold: Yeah, I attended the Methodist church up there. It was a little country church. That particular church is one of the older churches in Garrett County, and it has been moved down to an area in Garrett County. It's called Grantsville. They have a lot of the memorabilia of the old church.
- 01-00:14:23  
Dunham: Was the church an important part of your sort of community?
- 01-00:14:27  
Arnold: Well, they didn't have a lot of activity there. They had ministers who were circuit riders, and they didn't have church every Sunday there. But I'd walk over there.

01-00:14:40  
Dunham: What did you do for fun growing up?

01-00:14:46  
Arnold: Up there I was sort of a teenager. I was just at home most of the time.

01-00:14:55  
Dunham: When you were growing up did you have specific ideas or dreams of what you wanted to do later in life?

01-00:15:06  
Arnold: Yes, I was hoping to attend college, but my parents couldn't afford it. So I decided to stay home for a year and come back to Baltimore and seek some kind of employment, which I did. I think I went to work for an ice cream company that had stores throughout Baltimore.

01-00:15:30  
Dunham: Were you living on your own when you came back to Baltimore?

01-00:15:34  
Arnold: No, I boarded with an aunt and uncle, and they had a fairly large family.

01-00:15:39  
Dunham: This is in '40? You graduated '39?

01-00:15:42  
Arnold: Thirty-nine.

01-00:15:41  
Dunham: Okay, so you took a year.

01-00:15:44  
Arnold: And I came to Baltimore in '40. The boys, of course, were called into the service. At that time I had a couple menial jobs, not much of anything, but I was making like twelve dollars a week at that time.

01-00:16:06  
Dunham: And those were your first jobs?

01-00:16:08  
Arnold: Yes. But, oh, my, what you could do with that money. I mean, I paid like five dollars a week board to my aunt and uncle.

01-00:16:22  
Dunham: What were you doing with that money and having fun as a young women back in Baltimore?

01-00:16:27  
Arnold: Oh, my cousin and I, we'd go to the movies. We could walk to the movies. We would walk out to one of the parks, the city parks.

- 01-00:16:38  
Dunham: Can you describe what going to the movies was like in that day as compared to now?
- 01-00:16:42  
Arnold: Well, we could walk there in the evening. We'd go down to a movie that was about six blocks away from where we lived, and we'd come out of the movies at nine o'clock at night. It was dark. The two of us would walk home together. You wouldn't think of doing that now.
- 01-00:17:03  
Dunham: Did the movies have newsreels or live events at all?
- 01-00:17:06  
Arnold: Yes. The newsreels were always about what was going on in the world. We knew about the beginning of the war in Europe.
- 01-00:17:19  
Dunham: Where were you when you first heard of the Pearl Harbor attack? How did you first hear of it?
- 01-00:17:25  
Arnold: It was on a Sunday morning, December 7, and the President came on the radio. We were at home. We were at my aunt and uncle's home, and they turned the radio on, and that's how we heard about the war.
- 01-00:17:44  
Dunham: Do you remember any changes soon thereafter? How that began to impact you?
- 01-00:17:53  
Arnold: Well, everything changed. You couldn't buy silk hose. There was no nylon hose at that time. That was just one of the impacts, that we had to be very careful with everything that we purchased.
- 01-00:18:13  
Dunham: You had the rationing books.
- 01-00:18:16  
Arnold: Yes, and we had the rationing, the food rationing. Gasoline. And, of course, the boys were all going into the service.
- 01-00:18:27  
Dunham: Was your brother, did he—?
- 01-00:18:31  
Arnold: My brother, he was in the service, too. But he went into the Navy.
- 01-00:18:39  
Dunham: Did he serve overseas then?

01-00:18:43

Arnold:

Yes, yes. And then he was called back. There was something down in the Cuban crisis. He went back in the service for that. He came home from World War II, and then went back in during that. But he's deceased also.

01-00:19:09

Dunham:

I'm sorry. The onset of war, did it affect your mother or father, your dad's job opportunities?

01-00:19:18

Arnold:

Well, my father was called back to work. He was called back to work, and my mother was there by herself. But she would get on the train and come down to visit me. And I went home whenever I could.

01-00:19:38

Dunham:

So how did you first hear about jobs at Glenn L. Martin for women?

01-00:19:42

Arnold:

Oh, that was the beginning of the war. Nineteen forty-one. Glenn L. Martin, well, they put out ads that they needed women to work. One of my friends was in the first group of ladies. There were nineteen ladies in the first group who went to work at Glenn L. Martin. I followed not far behind her. And it was interesting work. I really enjoyed it.

01-00:20:23

Dunham:

So hang on just one second. I just have a little noise I was concerned about. Well, tell me then about how you first applied at Glenn L. Martin. Did you have an interview?

01-00:20:38

Arnold:

Let's see. During World War II they opened offices. The employment agency is downtown, but they opened offices in different locations and neighborhoods and I think I went over to one of the schools. I guess I went to work there in the summer.

01-00:21:13

Dunham:

So summer of '42 probably?

01-00:21:15

Arnold:

No. I think I worked there from '41 to '43.

01-00:21:27

Dunham:

Well, they didn't start hiring before Pearl Harbor, did they?

01-00:21:31

Arnold:

No, no.

01-00:21:32

Dunham:

But right after?

01-00:21:33

Arnold: Yes, shortly after.

01-00:21:34

Dunham: This is December of '41.

01-00:21:34

Arnold: Thereafter, yeah. Glenn L. Martin opened his plant in 1929 at Middle River. All the young fellows, as they graduated from high school, they were interested in air travel, so they wanted to work in an airplane factory. So, of course, when the war came on many of them were drafted into the service, and that's when Glenn L. Martin came up with the idea of hiring women to work in the industry. I heard about it through one of my close friends who I had gone through high school with. She came, and she boarded with another part of my family, another aunt and uncle who lived not too far from where I was located. And she applied for a job. She was in the first group of ladies. So she went to work there, and that gave me the idea to apply. Well, I guess I was about three or four months behind her.

01-00:23:04

Dunham: So what was it like?

01-00:23:06

Arnold: They had a school. It was an old vocational school, and it was in the city. We went there, I think the first group spent about six weeks, I think, learning to use the various tools, the hand tools. Like hand loaders and rivet guns. They accepted just about everybody.

01-00:23:44

Dunham: Was there some kind of exam? Either written or physical exam?

01-00:23:49

Arnold: Oh, yes. You had to have a physical exam. I think that was done at Martin's, I think.

01-00:23:56

Dunham: Oh, a medical exam. But did you have to pass an exam to show you could use the tools at some point?

01-00:24:02

Arnold: Well, they sent everybody to school in the beginning. First couple of classes. They decided then that they didn't need the school. They could teach on the job.

01-00:24:16

Dunham: Did you go to the school, or had that already been—?

01-00:24:20

Arnold: I attended the school. Well, they cut down the time from the six weeks. I attended the school for about three weeks, I think. But you were hired first and then sent to the school.

01-00:24:33  
Dunham: So you were paid already.

01-00:24:34  
Arnold: Yes.

01-00:24:35  
Dunham: You mentioned getting the twelve dollars a week. What was the salary now at Glenn L. Martin?

01-00:24:39  
Arnold: I think we started off at like fifty cents an hour down there.

01-00:24:44  
Dunham: So what did that make a week? That made a little more? How many hours were you working?

01-00:24:50  
Arnold: We were working—

01-00:24:53  
Dunham: Forty or—

01-00:24:54  
Arnold: In the beginning it was like forty hours a week.

01-00:24:56  
Dunham: Okay, so five days a week?

01-00:24:59  
Arnold: Yeah.

01-00:24:59  
Dunham: So about twenty dollars. A significant raise.

01-00:25:03  
Arnold: Yes, right. But eventually we got into the seventies a week and longer hours.

01-00:25:14  
Dunham: As the war ramped up.

01-00:25:15  
Arnold: Yes, yes.

01-00:25:16  
Dunham: So what was it like, your first days on the job? You remember?

01-00:25:19  
Arnold: Well, it was very interesting. I enjoyed it. I really enjoyed that line of work. They taught us how to use a hand motor to drill because most of the work that the ladies worked on, it was the aluminum—I worked on the wing portion of the plane.

01-00:25:53  
Dunham: Was it a specific model of plane, or were there several?

01-00:25:57  
Arnold: We didn't know exactly what we were working on. But you could tell—

01-00:26:00  
Dunham: I know B-26 and A-22s were made.

01-00:26:02  
Arnold: B-26 we worked on, yes. And I can't think of the other.

01-00:26:07  
Dunham: A-22 maybe or there's a—anyway, B-29 later.

01-00:26:13  
Arnold: Yes. But mostly it was the B-26 I think that we worked on.

01-00:26:17  
Dunham: So you were working on the aluminum—

01-00:26:20  
Arnold: Wing portion. That was drilling. I didn't do any riveting, but I did the drilling, hand drilling. Then I progressed to this machine that was suspended from the ceiling. It was on a track. And it was a larger portion of the wing.

01-00:26:47  
Dunham: What were you doing there?

01-00:26:47  
Arnold: Drilling. It was a drilling process also. And it went from there. It was like air pressure.

01-00:26:56  
Dunham: So you're standing or sitting and reaching it?

01-00:26:58  
Arnold: Yeah, sitting and reaching. Standing most of the time.

01-00:27:04  
Dunham: Did you take to this work right away, or were there any—?

01-00:27:05  
Arnold: I enjoyed it. Yes, I did. I liked doing that line of work.

01-00:27:09  
Dunham: In the previous interview you did I know you mentioned that there were some challenges at first, as there would be for any workers probably with limited—

01-00:27:17  
Arnold: Oh, absolutely.

- 01-00:27:18  
Dunham: And tools breaking and stuff.
- 01-00:27:19  
Arnold: Oh, yes. Breaking drills. Every time you turned around someone was going after another drill. We had to go to a tool cage, and you had to take the broken drill. That's how they were recycling at that time. You had to take the broken drill in order to replace it.
- 01-00:27:44  
Dunham: With a number of tools breaking at first and working with this type of machinery, what about injuries? What kind of injuries?
- 01-00:27:53  
Arnold: Oh, I didn't have any injuries.
- 01-00:27:55  
Dunham: But with other folks, how were injuries handled when they did happen?
- 01-00:27:58  
Arnold: They had a first-aid station, and if anyone did sustain any injuries they were sent up to the first aid. They had nurses employed there and a doctor.
- 01-00:28:12  
Dunham: I know you went on to study nursing. What was health care like at that time? Can you talk about maybe pre-war, during the war? What was it like for you and maybe more broadly?
- 01-00:28:24  
Arnold: Well, of course, the only time you saw a doctor was when you were sick. My mother had worked for a doctor, and she had an old manual that this elderly doctor had. I think he worked more with people with rheumatoid arthritis and that sort of thing. But she had been his secretary. We didn't have all the drugs on the market today. But she would refer to this manual and select whatever treatment she could find in there.
- 01-00:29:13  
Dunham: Do you remember what some of those kinds of treatments may have been?
- 01-00:29:16  
Arnold: Well, if we were running a fever she would just put cold compresses to bring the air temperature down, that kind of thing as we were growing up.
- 01-00:29:29  
Dunham: Back to Glenn L. Martin, I know at the shipyards and different places there were a lot of injuries and even deaths during the war years. Do you recall any of those there?
- 01-00:29:41  
Arnold: No, you didn't know about them if you were working there unless it happened to you. I didn't ever have to go to a first-aid.

01-00:29:51  
Dunham: That's good. Did you join a union?

01-00:29:56  
Arnold: No, no. we didn't have the union there at that time. But as we progressed we did get raises, and I think I was making probably \$1.25 when I left there.

01-00:30:17  
Dunham: Which was about two years that you worked there?

01-00:30:16  
Arnold: Yes, yes.

01-00:30:17  
Dunham: Let me ask first, there were a lot of men workers when you first started there, right? Predominantly?

01-00:30:26  
Arnold: Oh, yes. Oh, they were really wonderful. There was no contact.

01-00:30:38  
Dunham: Some places—

01-00:30:38  
Arnold: They didn't resent us at all.

01-00:30:39  
Dunham: Occasionally we've heard of where there was. There were challenges. And also just sort of men and women being in that workplace for the first time, sometimes either dating or maybe not—

01-00:30:51  
Arnold: Well, of course, where I worked there were two men there, and they were both married. We conversed between ourselves, but we were really treated with respect.

01-00:31:09  
Dunham: And were you working the day shift?

01-00:31:11  
Arnold: Yes. Yes.

01-00:31:13  
Dunham: Was there around-the-clock shifts at first, or did that come?

01-00:31:18  
Arnold: No, we were hired to work on the day shift. There was none of this going from one week to the next week you were working, changing shifts. No. At first we were working like from 7:00 in the morning I think till 3:00 or 4:00. We couldn't work more than eight hours at a time, but then they did up the time at a later date.

01-00:31:55

Dunham: What was your boss like?

01-00:31:56

Arnold: He was a very quiet person and very, very calm. He really had the patience with the ladies at breaking the drills. He just said, "Well, take this. You have to go get another drill." And it was replaced one drill at a time.

01-00:32:16

Dunham: You mentioned really enjoying the work. Did some—?

01-00:32:19

Arnold: I did enjoy it because it was something entirely different. From the time I was about eight years of age I wanted to be a nurse and take care of sick people when I grew up. And I thought I would save my money working there at Martin's. I made enough, and I did pay my board. I raised that to my family who were so kind to take me in. But I saved enough money that I thought maybe I could go to one of the hospitals and talk to a director of nurses and get some idea of what would be encountered there moneywise and so forth. So when I did get to the interview the director of nurses told me that there was a nursing program that the government was taking care of, whereby you would enter training, the government paid your tuition, paid for your uniforms, your books, everything. We stayed in a nurse's home at the hospital.

01-00:33:57

Dunham: Didn't have to pay rent then either?

01-00:33:59

Arnold: No, no, no.

01-00:33:59

Dunham: Oh, what a great program.

01-00:34:01

Arnold: The director said to me, "Why don't you save your money and get into that program?" But it was a program whereby when you finished, if the war was not over, you would go into one of the branches of service. Of course, the war was over by the time I finished.

01-00:34:24

Dunham: How long would the military commitment have been? Was it a set amount of time?

01-00:34:28

Arnold: No, there was no set time. But that was for—I agreed to it because that was my idea that I would do that.

01-00:34:40

Dunham: So you had no concerns about—

01-00:34:42

Arnold: No, no.

01-00:34:42

Dunham: —serving in that way? Well, I wanted to talk more about that later, but let's go back to Glenn L. Martin a little bit. What was the sense of the workers there? You're making good money, which is important. You were saving for nursing school. Was there also a sense of patriotism?

01-00:35:02

Arnold: Oh, yes. For instance, one thing they did while I was working there, they camouflaged the roof of the building. It was made to look like a forest, and I know that the doors were kept closed, and they had no air conditioning at that time. They did have electric fans, but you can imagine the number of people working there and the number of fans they needed to try to cool down the place a bit.

01-00:35:46

Dunham: Did you know then or at any time during this time any German Americans or Italian Americans?

01-00:35:36

Arnold: No.

01-00:35:55

Dunham: So you never heard about any being incarcerated or anything like that?

01-00:36:01

Arnold: No, no.

01-00:36:03

Dunham: I think in your previous interview you may have mentioned not German Americans but seeing at one point some German prisoners of war working somewhere in the area.

01-00:36:13

Arnold: Oh, oh, yes. During my training days we had an affiliation at Johns Hopkins. I think we spent four or six months over at Johns Hopkins because the hospital where I trained, we had all women patients. It was called the Hospital for the Women of Maryland. I had an aunt who graduated from nursing there in 1926, and she was working there at the time I was in training. It was my father's sister. During that time at Hopkins they had some of the prisoners from Germany working there in the nurses' home. They were painting. But they stayed within their boundaries. They didn't bother any of us. But we knew they were German, and we knew they were POWs because of their barrier with not speaking English too well.

- 01-00:37:29  
Dunham: Do you remember the feeling around German Americans? Or not German Americans, but Germans, Italians, during the war? Cartoons and that sort of thing? Did you have air raids here? Sirens? Air raid sirens?
- 01-00:37:49  
Arnold: Yes, we did. Yes, we did. And each neighborhood had an air raid warden. I think it was probably from the fire department stations or the police department stations where they would set off this loud—
- 01-00:38:21  
Dunham: Did you have to do something in particular then?
- 01-00:38:27  
Arnold: Oh, well, everybody had to have dark blinds, and the streetlights were—some of the streets still had gas lights so they couldn't extinguish everything completely there because they had no way to relight those. Someone had to come along every evening. They called him a lamp post lighter. And he would come along and light those old street lamps. This was the street where my aunt and uncle lived. So when that would occur, of course, those street lamps were still on.
- 01-00:39:14  
Dunham: But everything else would be—
- 01-00:39:15  
Arnold: Everything was dark around it.
- 01-00:39:17  
Dunham: That must have been interesting to experience.
- 01-00:39:19  
Arnold: Yes. And then up at the end of the street was a cemetery, an old cemetery that had been there for years and years.
- 01-00:39:30  
Dunham: Well, at Glenn L. Martin, as the war went on they ramped up production significantly, right?
- 01-00:39:35  
Arnold: Oh, yes. Yes.
- 01-00:39:36  
Dunham: So that meant they hired a lot more people.
- 01-00:39:38  
Arnold: Oh, yes.
- 01-00:39:39  
Dunham: Initially had people mostly come from local? Basically the Maryland area, or—?

01-00:39:44

Arnold:

I think a lot of them came up from the South. There are still many of them still living here, and they lived down in—Glenn L. Martin built a community down there to house the people who came from out of town. They were little small homes, and they had maybe three or four rooms. People enjoyed living there. Many of them purchased those homes and added to them. And many of those homes are still there.

01-00:40:20

Dunham:

Like back in California there were a lot of really temporary structures that were just torn down after the war. But sounds like these must have been built a little better.

01-00:40:27

Arnold:

They were sturdy little homes. And they had enough ground that they could eventually add on to. That was probably the reason for having the extra space. But they weren't just jammed together one after the other.

01-00:40:43

Dunham:

How was it culturally with all these southerners coming up? How did the locals and the southerners intermingle?

01-00:40:49

Arnold:

Well, we did get along very well with all of them. Even today. Many of them stayed here. There's one lady I know who came, and she boarded with an aunt. But she only worked for a few months. But she's still living in the house down there that she and her husband bought, one of those small ones. Now, she came to work there toward the end of the war.

01-00:41:25

Dunham:

What about racially? What was the mix of workers?

01-00:41:29

Arnold:

I don't recall any black people working. They did eventually take other races in.

01-00:41:42

Dunham:

So do you think that was a deliberate thing at the beginning, or just—?

01-00:41:45

Arnold:

No, no, I don't think so. I think this was close to the end of the war that they eventually—because there are some pictures down there at that museum, the ladies museum where there are some black people.

01-00:42:01

Dunham:

So maybe after '43.

01-00:42:03

Arnold:

Yes. And some of the other places, like Eastern Aircraft, employed black women to work.

- 01-00:42:10  
Dunham: So they may have been more proactive about recruiting. Even back in California Kaiser was very much recruiting folks of all races from the south. So it may have been a slight distinction there. But we'll—
- 01-00:42:27  
Arnold: Like Eastern Aircraft, and I can't recall—there's several places that did employ black people. Of course, Glenn L. Martin was from the south, and I don't know—
- 01-00:42:45  
Dunham: So that may have been a factor. There were black people living in the Baltimore area then, in Maryland. But it was a very different time.
- 01-00:42:54  
Arnold: Oh, absolutely, yes.
- 01-00:42:56  
Dunham: And so things were very separated, it's fair to say?
- 01-00:42:57  
Arnold: Oh, yes, yes.
- 01-00:42:59  
Dunham: Can you describe that a little bit just so sort of have a sense of it for us?
- 01-00:43:01  
Arnold: Racially the black people had their own communities, and they had their own stores. They couldn't go into a restaurant and mingle.
- 01-00:43:19  
Dunham: Did they have their—?
- 01-00:43:19  
Arnold: They had their own restaurants.
- 01-00:43:21  
Dunham: And there were separate drinking fountains and bathrooms and such?
- 01-00:43:23  
Arnold: Yes, yes.
- 01-00:43:24  
Dunham: And just certain places that they just couldn't go I take it?
- 01-00:43:27  
Arnold: Yes.
- 01-00:43:28  
Dunham: But on the buses, there weren't separate places to sit on the bus, that kind of thing? Or do you recall?

- 01-00:43:36  
Arnold: No, I don't recall that. I think they had to sit at the back of the bus.
- 01-00:43:41  
Dunham: By '43 had there already been a significant increase in the number of workers? Did you always work the day shift?
- 01-00:43:59  
Arnold: Oh, yes. There were a number of people, women.
- 01-00:44:04  
Dunham: Sometimes we've heard—because then if you shared work from the day shift to the graveyard to the swing shift, that there might be challenges with what was left behind for you. Did you ever encounter like anything with that?
- 01-00:44:16  
Arnold: No. Because I seem like I kept up with everything that was coming my way at the time. I know at one point, I had to slow up at one point when I was doing the hand drilling. We had a template that was up against the wall, and you put this piece of metal up against the template, and it was marked where you would have to drill with different sized drills. I think I was working so fast on it, and then it went over to a bench, a workbench where any burrs on the metal or aluminum, they would take like a steel wool and smooth out that area. I was working so fast. And the boss came over and he said, "Please slow up," he said. "We can't keep these things going fast enough."
- 01-00:45:21  
Dunham: So you had to slow up a little?
- 01-00:45:23  
Arnold: I was like twenty-five ahead of them. So I did. I slowed up on that.
- 01-00:45:30  
Dunham: Were there other issues of people, some working too fast, some working too slow?
- 01-00:45:36  
Arnold: It was a time when everybody was just anxious to do their job, and they paid attention to what they were doing, and they wanted to get things going.
- 01-00:45:51  
Dunham: Were there events at Martin? Like entertainment, lunchtime things?
- 01-00:45:54  
Arnold: Yes. There was an area that was built—they put some apartment buildings up, one of the construction companies had. And there's one little area where all these homes were built. But the apartments were rented. And I know that was an area where I think one of the presidents, Nixon stayed there at one point.
- 01-00:46:33  
Dunham: Did you have entertainment or anything at the—?

01-00:46:33

Arnold:

See, I couldn't participate. Oh, yes. Families moved up here and the families lived in those little homes. They had softball teams, baseball teams.

01-00:46:55

Dunham:

Women playing in softball teams.

01-00:46:59

Arnold:

Yes. They had a lot of that activity. Mr. Glenn L. Martin was very family oriented, and that's why he wanted the homes to be occupied by families. They all formed their own activities to do, but they did have a clubhouse down there, and they still have the clubhouse that they use for different meetings and so forth.

01-00:47:30

Dunham:

What was the clubhouse used for during the war?

01-00:47:33

Arnold:

Well, the clubhouse—I think they had bowling alleys. There were a lot of activities down there for the families. They had big picnic areas. When you didn't live in the area you couldn't participate in anything like that.

01-00:47:54

Dunham:

So you were commuting—

01-00:47:55

Arnold:

Because we had no transportation to get there.

01-00:47:59

Dunham:

What were you commuting by to work? The train or bus?

01-00:48:02

Arnold:

No. When you applied for a job there and you were accepted, you went out there for an interview, and they assigned a driver to pick you up. We had a young man who I guess was not eligible for the draft. But these were the people that usually stayed there to work.

01-00:48:32

Dunham:

So may have been disabled, 4-H or something, yes.

01-00:48:34

Arnold:

Yes, had a disability of some kind and could not go into the service. But they continued to work there. But in different locations throughout the city there were people who came who needed transportation. Say it was an area where this man drove to get to Martin's. He went right by the street where you lived. So I would meet them down on the corner. We would pay so much a week towards the gas for him to pick us up.

01-00:49:16

Dunham:

Did you have to share your rationing coupons? Did you get gas rationing coupons?

01-00:49:20  
Arnold: No, we didn't get gas rationing coupons. The people who drove the cars. But we paid money, like fifty cents a week to ride to work.

01-00:49:32  
Dunham: What else did you do for fun then when you weren't working, and you had even a little more—well, you were saving money, of course, for school. But still you had some—

01-00:49:42  
Arnold: Well, my cousin and I, we'd go shopping together, and we'd do things like that. We'd go to one of the ice cream parlors.

01-00:49:52  
Dunham: What were the ice cream—?

01-00:49:53  
Arnold: But really, we got home in the evening, we were tired.

01-00:49:57  
Dunham: It was hard work.

01-00:49:58  
Arnold: She was working someplace else. She wasn't working in that. She eventually married. Of course, she married somebody who was in the service, and she moved with him down to Virginia. He was stationed down there for a while. But I enjoyed being with her because we were like sisters.

01-00:50:30  
Dunham: Yeah, that's fun.

01-00:50:30  
Arnold: We were close in age.

01-00:50:31  
Dunham: Were either of you or both of you dating at the time?

01-00:50:34  
Arnold: No. No.

01-00:50:36  
Dunham: Did you go to dances or anything or that kind of—?

01-00:50:39  
Arnold: No, not to—no.

01-00:50:40  
Dunham: Were there soldiers around this area at times and that kind of thing? USO dances?

01-00:50:45  
Arnold: No, most of them were stationed at Fort Mead, which was a distance away.

01-00:50:51  
Dunham: So there weren't a lot of men around then? Young men?

01-00:50:53  
Arnold: I think she was working at a postal telegraph, and I think she met her future husband there.

01-00:51:01  
Dunham: Without meeting him in person?

01-00:51:05  
Arnold: Yeah, but they married after he was in the service. She was married rather young. I didn't get married until I was twenty-five.

01-00:51:17  
Dunham: While you were working at Glenn L. Martin did you see images of the Rosie the Riveter or other images of women?

01-00:51:23  
Arnold: No, no.

01-00:51:25  
Dunham: During that time you didn't see it?

01-00:51:26  
Arnold: That never came about until some years later.

01-00:51:33  
Dunham: So you came home. You were tired. So in the evening did you just listen to the radio, read?

01-00:51:42  
Arnold: Yeah, we would read. Both of us read quite a bit.

01-00:51:45  
Dunham: What kinds of things—?

01-00:51:46  
Arnold: Or we'd go to the movies. There was really no one around to date.

01-00:51:51  
Dunham: That's what I started to say a minute ago. Since if there weren't soldiers around, there weren't young men around, right. So what kinds of things were you reading at the time? Do you recall?

01-00:52:02  
Arnold: I don't recall some of the books that were on the market, but they were nice books. We had libraries. We could go to the library and pick up nice books.

01-00:52:15  
Dunham: What kinds of music did you listen to at that time?

01-00:52:22  
Arnold: It was mostly dance music. Songs from that vintage.

01-00:52:26  
Dunham: The big band type music.

01-00:52:29  
Arnold: Usually on Sunday mornings we'd get up, and one of my cousins—it was before he went in the service. They were brother and sister. The three of us would dance. We turned on the Victrola and put a record on, and we'd dance and have a good time and wake everybody in the family on Saturday mornings.

01-00:52:54  
Dunham: That sounds like a good way to wake up. Did you work the day shift the entire time?

01-00:53:01  
Arnold: Yes, yes.

01-00:53:04  
Dunham: But you said your hours got longer at some point?

01-00:53:07  
Arnold: Yes, they did. Well, I'm wrong about that. When I was in training I worked longer hours.

01-00:53:17  
Dunham: Oh, is when you started nursing training.

01-00:53:22  
Arnold: They had to put them back to eight hours. The government required it.

01-00:53:26  
Dunham: Did they have a time where they added the hours and then the government pushed back?

01-00:53:29  
Arnold: No, no. They couldn't.

01-00:53:30  
Dunham: They started adding—

01-00:53:32  
Arnold: While we were in training we had to work the eight hours. That's when it started at Glenn L. Martin also.

01-00:53:41  
Dunham: I've read as many as 150, 200,000 people came to the Baltimore area during the war years to work at Glenn L. Martin and Eastern and such. Did it feel like it was overpopulated for a time and congested?

01-00:53:55

Arnold:

Well, the area where I lived, people owned their homes; most of them owned their homes. They were row houses. It was in the city. But no, I didn't notice that. You would go into the stores. For instance, there was a Sears store that was close by where we lived. That was about the only store that was close enough that we could go and do shopping, unless we went into the city. And we lived in the city, but it was in the downtown area where the inner harbor and that area is located now. But there was some nice department stores down there. And we would go in and shop.

01-00:54:49

Dunham:

That's one place you would notice where it was more crowded?

01-00:54:53

Arnold:

Yes. Yes, yes. And the streetcars were more crowded and public transportation.

01-00:54:58

Dunham:

You mentioned people owning their homes in the area you lived in. Were more people renting to out-of-towners then? Renting rooms or that kind of thing?

01-00:55:04

Arnold:

No, that was more of an area where some of the older homes in Baltimore, the homes were sold or they were separated. Like they'd be three story homes, and they made apartments for people. They would have to put a kitchen in.

01-00:55:30

Dunham:

They divided them up, yeah.

01-00:55:30

Arnold:

Divided. A separate bath. That was all divided. Where people could bring their families or a couple of people could rent. Like two men would rent a place if they came from the south or someplace else in order to work. They could rent an apartment by the month and live there in these apartments.

01-00:55:58

Dunham:

But you didn't hear or see of people like sleeping in the theaters or the bowling alleys?

01-00:56:02

Arnold:

No.

01-00:56:03

Dunham:

Or even pitching a tent? Because some of that happened. Richmond went from, smaller area, but 20,000 to 120,000 during the war and so it was a tremendous—and they were building houses.

01-00:56:14

Arnold:

Oh, it was a sudden influx.

01-00:56:14  
Dunham: But they couldn't keep up with how fast it was happening.

01-00:56:19  
Arnold: No, I didn't notice any of that.

01-00:56:20  
Dunham: And also a strain on other infrastructure, including like police, and water, that type of thing, right?

01-00:56:26  
Arnold: No, no.

01-00:56:28  
Dunham: We're near the end of this tape so we'll take a little break, and then I'd like to continue on and hear more, if that's okay. I'm going to pause.

Audio File 2

02-00:00:00  
Dunham: I'll just introduce us. This is tape two on June 30, 2014, with Elsie Arnold. I just wanted to maybe ask a couple more questions about your time at Martin before we move on and talk about your nursing studies and career there. You described your enthusiasm for doing that work. First let me ask, was it a tough decision then to leave because the war was still going on, the job was still available?

02-00:00:30  
Arnold: It was not a tough decision because I had—

02-00:00:33  
Dunham: Oh, let me grab that. Sorry. Can you get it, Can?

02-00:00:36  
Fukumoto: Yeah.

02-00:00:37  
Dunham: Thank you. [break in audio] Okay, we're back. So it was a question of whether or not it was a tough decision to leave Martin and pursue your nursing career.

02-00:00:50  
Arnold: No. I had worked there for a couple of years, and I felt that I wanted something that I could rely on later in my life if I wanted to get back into work. I did not want to just be working in an aircraft factory. I knew that when the war was over, when the men were returning, they would be taking over the jobs that we had, although some ladies did stay there. But they lived in the area, too, and it would have been a difficult situation for me transportation-wise. And my dream was really to become a registered nurse.

02-00:01:36

Dunham:

I just wanted to ask, for the women who did continue at Martin after the war, some of them continuing to work in mechanical roles, working with the drills and equipment? Do you know?

02-00:01:49

Arnold:

Well, I think they did. They stayed in those jobs because right now I know there is a fourth-generation Rosie there, working there. From one family that I know of. And there may be more. But they still have women employed down there working on the planes.

02-00:02:11

Dunham:

That's great. So, again, the different jobs you did there, did you have a favorite job at Martin? A favorite equipment or role you were having relative to the planes?

02-00:02:28

Arnold:

No, I enjoyed the work I was doing. I sort of stayed right in that same area the entire time I was there.

02-00:02:36

Dunham:

And did you have any interest in flying? Ever think of being a pilot or anything like that or know any women there that did?

02-00:02:43

Arnold:

No, I didn't really know anyone who was—and I didn't have any great interest in it at that time.

02-00:02:55

Dunham:

Well, looking back on the Martin years especially, is there anything else you wanted to convey about that experience? Yeah.

02-00:03:02

Arnold:

One thing that I did not know was going on. When the planes were completed, they had a group of lady pilots who would take some of the servicemen who needed transportation, they would fly them up to New York or wherever they were going for embarkation overseas. I was not aware of that, but I have recently found out all of this since I've been involved with the Rosies.

02-00:03:40

Dunham:

Were they in the military, or were they civilian? Or do you know?

02-00:03:44

Arnold:

No, they were civilian. In fact, there was something, a program on television about—it was a story that was written about them, and it was not anything personal. It was sort of a storyline with it. But it was all referring to the ladies of World War II who were pilots.

02-00:04:07

Dunham:

Well, there were the WASPs.

- 02-00:04:09  
Arnold: And they have their own pilot group now. They're called the 99s, and they meet out at the Glenn L. Martin company like we do.
- 02-00:04:16  
Dunham: So some of them are still with us then.
- 02-00:04:20  
Arnold: They are still around, yes. And they're up in years, too.
- 02-00:04:26  
Dunham: Sure, they would have to be. Well, we would be interested in potentially talking with them.
- 02-00:04:32  
Arnold: We were invited to one of their district meetings. It was up near Frederick, the airport up in Frederick. That was a couple of years ago. They wanted to hear about how the planes they flew, they wanted to know how they were constructed and so forth.
- 02-00:04:49  
Dunham: Well, anything else about the Martin years while you were there, or anything you heard about after you left of things changing or anything?
- 02-00:04:59  
Arnold: No. I didn't know anything about it until I became involved with the Rosies. But the Rosies were in operation a good while before I joined.
- 02-00:05:10  
Dunham: Let's talk about your transition into nursing studies then. You already mentioned when you went and kind of met with someone at the hospital, found out about the military opportunity.
- 02-00:05:22  
Arnold: Yes, yes.
- 02-00:05:23  
Dunham: So how did you officially sign-up or interview for that? What was that like?
- 02-00:05:27  
Arnold: Well, when I signed up for that interview, then I had to leave a little bit early out at Martin so that I would have time. I don't know how I managed to transition from that other than I know that I had to go for measurements for my uniforms. I went to a factory where they made the nurses' uniforms, student nurses' uniforms, and they also made the graduate uniforms. And that was right in the city, not far from the hospital.
- 02-00:06:08  
Dunham: That reminds me, before we jump there, that I forgot to ask what you wore at Martin.

02-00:06:17

Arnold:

Oh. It was a two piece. It was like a pair of—not coveralls but overalls with the straps. Then you had a blouse, a short-sleeve blouse that matched. It was like a denim type of material. A light denim. Well, it seemed like it was terribly warm because we had no air conditioning at that time. But they provided the uniforms to us, and I think we had three or four that we could—it worked out fine.

02-00:07:01

Dunham:

Other than being hot it was okay? It wasn't too uncomfortable?

02-00:07:04

Arnold:

Yeah.

02-00:07:06

Dunham:

Did any women mind wearing the uniforms?

02-00:07:07

Arnold:

Oh, no, no. Everybody walked in there looking the same, the ladies. With the long, long pants. It was like overalls with the straps over it. Then you could wear the blouse under it. Which, if you were working on machinery, you had to do that because you couldn't take a chance on getting like a loose blouse hooked up on a piece of machinery.

02-00:07:44

Dunham:

Right, right. Be very dangerous. Let me just adjust that microphone. It's brushing—

02-00:07:52

Arnold:

Did you have it? You're not hooked up?

02-00:07:53

Dunham:

It's back on. Yeah. Did you want to ask a question now? Well, some people have talked about how much women's fashion changed during the war years, in part because of wearing different uniforms at work. How did women's fashion change during the war years?

02-00:08:11

Arnold:

Well, at work we wore those overall things. But slacks did not come in at that time. If they did it was strictly for work. We wore dresses and long hose if we were going out somewhere. We dressed up. Even at home you wore a dress or a skirt.

02-00:08:43

Dunham:

You started to describe early in our interview about the nylons and the rationing. So did you do the pin on thing or how did you work around that?

02-00:08:54

Arnold:

You mean to hold them up?

02-00:08:57  
Dunham: Yeah, I guess.

02-00:08:58  
Arnold: You had to wear some sort of a garter belt or something to hold them up.

02-00:09:00  
Dunham: But you did have nylons, or did you run out of nylons because of—?

02-00:09:05  
Arnold: Oh, we didn't have—we weren't wearing nylons. I think nylons came in after the war. Nylon material was made during World War II and it was used for parachutes. And from there, that fabric, the threading, somebody picked up on it, and everything was made of nylon.

02-00:09:37  
Dunham: So you instead were wearing what, then?

02-00:09:42  
Arnold: Silk hose.

02-00:09:43  
Dunham: Silk hose, okay. That's what it was. Sorry, I misunderstood.

02-00:09:46  
Arnold: But when in nurses training we wore the cotton lisle stockings.

02-00:09:55  
Dunham: Tell me about nurses training. How did that go, and what was it like?

02-00:09:59  
Arnold: Well, it was a new challenge. The first six months was our trial period. At the end of six months we received our cap if we were accepted into the full program. And some of the nurses left early because they decided that was not what they wanted to do. But we were put right in the first day that we were in training. We all started off with learning to take care of patients. Learning how to bathe a patient, how to bathe a patient in bed who was bedridden. It was a different ballgame than today. We did everything for the patient. And we learned to make a bed with a patient in it, that kind of thing.

02-00:10:58  
Dunham: So you had dreamed of doing this for a long time.

02-00:11:00  
Arnold: Yes, yes.

02-00:11:02  
Dunham: Had you envisioned all those—?

02-00:11:03  
Arnold: Yeah. It was not too challenging to me because I seemed like I fell right into it. Like we would work in the morning. We'd work along with a nurse who

had been maybe six months ahead of us, a student or maybe a year ahead of us in training. And they sort of helped with the bedside care of teaching us. And then, of course, we had a graduate nurse over us who came around and checked us to see that we were doing things okay.

02-00:11:46

Dunham: And you'd had an aunt who was a nurse and your mom had worked for a doctor.

02-00:11:48

Arnold: Yes.

02-00:11:49

Dunham: Did you have any friends who entered the program the same time as you?

02-00:11:52

Arnold: No. No, I did that all on my own.

02-00:11:55

Dunham: So kind of in a new community then.

02-00:11:58

Arnold: Yes. And I enjoyed every minute of it. We had classroom work that we had to do. Then, of course, I think my first year in training, toward the end of that year, I was put on the schedule to transfer to Hopkins for the period, I don't know, four or six months that we would be over there. We lived in a nurses' home over there that had been a part of the oldest building when Hopkins was built. There was a building that was adjoined to the hospital that the nurses stayed in. That was their nurses' home. During the period of time, they had added on to the hospital, but they had also put up a big—I think it was like a twelve-story building that the nurses who went in training at Hopkins stayed there in that big building which was directly across the street from the hospital. But they had a tunnel that they could walk under the street to get over to the hospital.

02-00:13:25

Dunham: And were you studying something in particular while you were at Hopkins?

02-00:13:28

Arnold: Yes. We went over there to have male medical patients. Then we went to pediatrics and psychiatry. Those three.

02-00:13:44

Dunham: And had you planned to focus in a special area of nursing?

02-00:13:47

Arnold: Not at that time. No. But we were required to have all of these things.

02-00:13:53

Dunham: Everything, yeah.

- 02-00:13:55  
Arnold: Before we could complete our training we had to have a certain number of hours or days or months maybe in these various—.
- 02-00:14:06  
Dunham: While you ultimately didn't become a military nurse, did you meet some at this time who were military nurses?
- 02-00:14:13  
Arnold: No, I didn't at that time because we were all students working in general hospitals.
- 02-00:14:21  
Dunham: Were there any particular challenges that you did face in nursing school?
- 02-00:14:26  
Arnold: No. That was another thing. Like we'd have classes in the morning or we would be working floor duty in the morning. We could only work five days a week, too. We needed to have time off. The government set up all these regulations.
- 02-00:14:52  
Dunham: Oh, so that was restricted. But you worked longer hours than the eight-hour shift. Is that right? Or no?
- 02-00:14:56  
Arnold: No, no.
- 02-00:14:56  
Dunham: Oh, you couldn't?
- 02-00:14:57  
Arnold: No, I'm talking—the longer hours was after I finished training. No, we couldn't do that. We had to stick with the rules. Like I could work extra hours—this was after I was finished and I went back to my hospital to work. And I could stay on duty extra hours if I so desired, if they needed help.
- 02-00:15:28  
Dunham: During this time were you still hanging out with your cousin, or were you kind of living elsewhere now?
- 02-00:15:38  
Arnold: No, she was married, and she moved down south.
- 02-00:15:41  
Dunham: So who were you socializing with at this point?
- 02-00:15:44  
Arnold: I met with other students.
- 02-00:15:46  
Dunham: What were you guys up to when you weren't busy studying?

02-00:15:51

Arnold:

Well, when you weren't studying—I don't know, they had a lot of activity within the nurses' home. And they would have parties and dances for the students. It was a nice thing. And it was a nice location because it was in a residential area. But the hospital—it was a small hospital, and we had a board of lady managers who took an interest in the nurses' home and saw that we had an area where we could—some of the gals liked to play bridge. We could do our own laundry. We had laundry facilities where we could do our own laundry. If you had to have your clothing cleaned, it was only maybe a block away, that you could walk down to this little corner. There was a drugstore down at the corner. You could walk down there. And we weren't far from the downtown area. We could get on a bus and ride downtown.

02-00:17:03

Dunham:

Downtown Baltimore.

02-00:17:05

Arnold:

Which required that we dress like ladies and be like ladies instead of getting on the bus and being boisterous. They had a lot of regulations that you had to—

02-00:17:20

Dunham:

So these are all written regulations that you have to read. Did anyone get in trouble for not quite meeting those rules?

02-00:17:25

Arnold:

No. No. [laughter]

02-00:17:27

Dunham:

But somebody thought that it might happen, I guess.

02-00:17:31

Arnold:

Yes.

02-00:17:31

Dunham:

That they had those rules. All right. Did you ever feel like they were—?

02-00:17:36

Arnold:

One time I stayed at the encouragement of one of the nurses who worked in the Director of Nurses offices, and I stayed with her. A group of us had gone down to one of the—oh, what did they call them? Where the soldiers could come in and dance.

02-00:17:57

Dunham:

USO dances?

02-00:17:58

Arnold:

USO, yeah. They had a USO not far from the hospital. We could get on a bus and ride down there.

02-00:18:07  
Dunham: So what was that like?

02-00:18:09  
Arnold: So that was nice. We'd go down there, and we'd sit and talk to some of these guys and dance with them. You could buy like Cokes. There's no alcohol involved there.

02-00:18:27  
Dunham: Is the drinking age eighteen or twenty-one at this time? Do you recall?

02-00:18:30  
Arnold: It was twenty-one. But it was a real nice thing to do in the evening because the guys were away from home, and we were, too. We could sit in there and talk to them. They enjoyed all of that.

02-00:18:50  
Dunham: Did any of them end up being couples? Any of those meet and marry or otherwise?

02-00:18:55  
Arnold: Well, now, at times when we had dances they would invite the guys from the Naval Academy to come up.

02-00:19:03  
Dunham: Oh, right, the Naval Academy's there.

02-00:19:04  
Arnold: They provided buses, brought them up for our dances, and that was always a very nice affair. They hired a nice dance band for us.

02-00:19:19  
Dunham: Oh, live. So you had live music?

02-00:19:22  
Arnold: Yes, yes.

02-00:19:23  
Dunham: So you're in nursing school for how long?

02-00:19:30  
Arnold: Three years. Then we finished, and then we had to take a state board examination.

02-00:19:35  
Dunham: So the war ends. Now, do you remember—?

02-00:19:39  
Arnold: The war was over in '45. I was on night duty. I didn't know about it until I went over to the dining room for dinner that evening because I had slept all day. I didn't know anything about all the activity that was going on, and some

of the gals were just—as they were off they were dressed and downtown and involved with all—but I couldn't do that.

02-00:20:08

Dunham: You were on shift.

02-00:20:10

Arnold: I had to go back to work that night, so I couldn't get involved in all of the festivities.

02-00:20:14

Dunham: Do you remember the feeling of that time, though, aside from—?

02-00:20:19

Arnold: Oh, it was such a relief. You just wondered why this was going on and on and on. And it was such a relief to know that it was over.

02-00:20:30

Dunham: Yeah. Had you been in correspondence with your brother while he served or any other soldiers?

02-00:20:35

Arnold: Oh, yes. Yes. Yes.

02-00:20:38

Dunham: Did you have any other soldiers that you were connected with at all? Family or friends?

02-00:20:42

Arnold: Yes. I had met my husband. Oh, it was when I lived up in Garrett County. But he was in the military, too.

02-00:20:54

Dunham: So you met in high school. You didn't get—

02-00:20:57

Arnold: But I corresponded with him while I was in training. Because he stopped by to see me before he left to go in the service. That was when I was still working at Martin's. But it was just a friendship thing.

02-00:21:16

Dunham: At that time, yeah.

02-00:21:17

Arnold: But then when he came back from the service he came to see me. Then we started dating. But that was my last year of training.

02-00:21:32

Dunham: So what happened? How did the end of the war affect your family or others? You were, of course, in your training program. But did it have a significant impact on any other folks you knew?

02-00:21:45

Arnold:

No. When I left training—I finished in '47—I was twenty-five years old. And I had been dating my husband, and we decided to get married. I was married before we had our graduation ceremony. We had it at one of the churches close to the hospital. My parents came; both my parents came. My brother was still in the service. He stayed a couple of years extra in the service. It was nice. We had a small wedding up in Garrett County at one of those churches up there.

02-00:21:40

Dunham:

Did you start working as a nurse then?

02-00:22:42

Arnold:

Yes, I did. I had to take my state boards. That was after I finished training, took state boards. Then I began working back at the hospital. Then I went to Hopkins and worked for a couple of years. We moved in closer. We bought a car, and my husband would drop me off in the mornings. Or I could get on a bus and go over to Hopkins to work.

02-00:23:20

Dunham:

Did you work many years as a nurse?

02-00:23:21

Arnold:

I worked there about two years. We needed the extra time in another hospital in order to really—you just felt like you wanted to do something. But get away from all the just women patients. So I went to Hopkins for two years, and I worked on a male surgical floor. I think I worked in an area where they did the brain cases. It was a new experience. But I tried to fill in things that I didn't have complete when I was in training, that I felt like I wanted to get into something else.

02-00:24:08

Dunham:

Then did you return to the women's hospital?

02-00:24:11

Arnold:

Yes, I did eventually return.

02-00:24:13

Dunham:

Did the women's hospital focus on something in particular, or why was it all women?

02-00:24:17

Arnold:

Well, it was just women patients. After many years they built a new hospital out here in Towson. It's called GBMC. And I had been active with my nurses alumni association. I was president of that for ten years. I was active with some of the veterans organizations, the auxiliaries.

02-00:24:47

Dunham:

Did it stay a women's hospital? When did that change?

- 02-00:24:50  
Arnold: No, it's called Greater Baltimore Medical Center.
- 02-00:24:52  
Dunham: How long was it a women's hospital? I was just curious. Up until they built the new facility?
- 02-00:25:00  
Arnold: They'll be out here fifty years in October.
- 02-00:25:05  
Dunham: How long was your nursing career?
- 02-00:25:07  
Arnold: Oh, I went to work for GBMC. My husband died at a very young age.
- 02-00:25:13  
Dunham: Oh, I'm sorry.
- 02-00:25:14  
Arnold: He was only forty-nine. He would have been fifty in April. But he had an aneurism that ruptured and a stroke. He lingered fifteen months with a slow deteriorating brain stem. I just felt like I wanted to get out of nursing at that point. I finally decided I had worked for all that education, and it was kind of senseless. I better make up my mind that I better get back to work. Because after he passed on my children at that time were teenagers. But eventually I went back to work after they—
- 02-00:25:57  
Dunham: When they were born you had stopped and then decided—?
- 02-00:26:01  
Arnold: Yeah, for a short time. But then my husband was there, and I kept up my nursing skills, like working on weekends part-time. I drove in to women's, and I would work alternate weekends so that I could be with the family in between.
- 02-00:26:20  
Dunham: Right, right. And did you take care of him during his—that fifteen months or did you have help?
- 02-00:26:27  
Arnold: No, I couldn't do it. I just couldn't.
- 02-00:26:30  
Dunham: Must have been very hard.
- 02-00:26:30  
Arnold: He ended up in a VA hospital. He worked at that hospital where he passed on.
- 02-00:26:37  
Dunham: What had he done there?

02-00:26:38

Arnold:

He was a finishing carpenter. He kept some of the furniture that was—he built furniture there. I don't know. They had their own plumbing and electrical and carpentry shop. But that's what he enjoyed doing.

02-00:27:00

Dunham:

Then you returned to work full-time after that?

02-00:27:03

Arnold:

Yes, after he—

02-00:27:03

Dunham:

And worked a number of years?

02-00:27:05

Arnold:

Yes. I went to work at GBMC, and I worked there for a number of years. But I did a lot of private duty, too. That was before they brought in all of the units, special units they have today. They had a cardiac unit.

02-00:27:27

Dunham:

What is private duty? Or what was it?

02-00:27:29

Arnold:

Before they had like the cardiac unit and the different areas where they—I can't think of what they call it. Where they take care of very critical patients.

02-00:27:51

Dunham:

Intensive care or something like that?

02-00:27:52

Arnold:

Intensive care. That's what I was trying to think of. The hospital was built before all of that was incorporated. Until they got that in there people would come in and would need private nurses to take care of them because if they had bad hearts the family would want—or the hospital would even suggest it. I did some private duty over there. But then all the special units came in, and I thought, "Well, that's really the ideal place for those patients." So then I went to work for the hospital. I worked in the obstetrical, OB-GYN area.

02-00:28:44

Dunham:

Having had a long view on nursing and the healthcare profession, I'm just curious what your perspective is sort of today on the changes.

02-00:28:53

Arnold:

Today? I think it's a good thing. I think the nurses today are kind of forced to take over a lot of the doctors' jobs. I think they depend too much on the nurses. But it's forced the nursing profession to—these girls have to have college education. Now, the basics that I learned, I mean the basic nursing care, we didn't need all of that special education. But they have to have a college education of at least two years, and then they're selected by the nursing schools, which I guess it's a good thing in some respects. But I haven't been in the hospital as a patient too often, fortunately. But I wonder.

The patients really are—they have a lot to do themselves when they're in there.

02-00:30:05

Dunham: The patients themselves?

02-00:30:06

Arnold: Yeah. They take care of themselves a lot. In some respects.

02-00:30:11

Dunham: Is that because of the kind of the numbers? The patient/nurse ratio?

02-00:30:12

Arnold: The patients aren't kept in the hospital like they were. It's a whole different setup today. I can't criticize it because I think for the patient to get up soon after surgery, that's the way it should happen because it gets them back into their own caring for themselves. Where we used to keep them—they were in the hospital eight and ten days, maybe two, three weeks or more for some of the things today that they're sent home for now. But I enjoyed all my nursing career.

02-00:30:50

Dunham: So you're glad you'd had that dream as a young person?

02-00:30:53

Arnold: Yes, I'm glad I did that.

02-00:30:53

Dunham: And you're glad that you—yeah. Was it specifically to do with your husband's illness that was hard to go back to nursing?

02-00:31:01

Arnold: It was for me in the beginning because the first patient that I—I was called in to see if I would do a private duty case. That patient was just what I had been looking at. And it was hard. I was with that man one afternoon from 3:00 to 11:00, and I went home that night and all I could think about was that. But I had a call early in the morning that he had passed on. It was a blessing that that man had died. He was a young man.

Anyway, that was just my thoughts at that time. I had requested if they wanted me to come in for somebody, not to have that. But that was the situation that was needed.

02-00:31:56

Dunham: That was a very challenging coincidence. Yeah.

02-00:31:57

Arnold: Yeah. It was very challenging.

02-00:32:00

Dunham: I'm glad you were able to return to that. Anything else from that early period or kind of the war period you wanted to share with us? I wanted to ask a little bit about your later involvement with the Rosies.

02-00:32:14

Arnold: Well, no, I can't think of anything.

02-00:32:16

Dunham: Well, if you do feel free anytime to jump in. I know it was only in this century that you got reconnected with the Rosies. Can you tell us a little bit about how that happened?

02-00:32:30

Arnold: Well, when I was moving over here—oh, this was some years ago before that—there was an article that came out in the paper, and then I received something in the mail. [Maryland Senator] Barbara Mikulski had researched—she's one of the senators in Washington, congressmen in Washington today. She's been there for a number of years. But she grew up in the Baltimore area, and all during World War II she knew about all of the people who worked in the defense plants. She said that she felt that all those women who went to work there should be recognized in some way. Then this came out in the newspaper because there were pictures of some of the Rosies. They weren't called Rosies. We weren't called Rosies then.

But a couple of the women who had worked there, they were beginning to organize. So she sent me an invitation. She had a reception down at Martin's in one of the hangers. No, it was at a community college. And I had some of my friends who rode along with me. They had not worked down there. Maybe one of them did. But when I arrived there I had joined so many of these veterans, a couple of these veterans were auxiliary. Here I met these friends that I knew from there who had worked down there. And Barbra Mikulski headed up this reception, and she said, "I think it's time for all you ladies to get together and try to form your own group." Well, they did get together, and they did form their own group. But I didn't get into it because I was working at the time.

02-00:34:46

Dunham: About when was this?

02-00:34:49

Arnold: This was probably, let's see, the eighties. I think it was in the eighties. And they decided to—because I moved over here. I couldn't get into all of that at that time.

02-00:35:10

Dunham: You were busy working and all.

02-00:35:13

Arnold:

Yes, and trying to take care of—so anyway, I finally did. When I stopped working I decided that I would—first of all, I lived in my house for so many years. Then I decided to move over here. Well, I've been here for ten years.

02-00:35:35

Dunham:

When did you retire from nursing?

02-00:35:38

Arnold:

Let's see. I worked for the hospital—let's see, I think I was sixty-two. I'm ninety. Thirty years ago. Yeah. And I worked at GBMC.

02-00:35:54

Dunham:

When did you get back involved with the local Rosie group?

02-00:35:58

Arnold:

Oh, that was right before they had their second national convention here. They had the first one, and they were all downtown at one of the hotels. But when they had the second one I had just moved here. My daughter came down one day—she was helping me with the move and all—and I said to her, "Oh, they're having another Rosie convention." She said, "Oh, that would be nice. Why don't you think about going?" I said, "I'm thinking about it but I'll have to check in with somebody." Well, I did finally get in touch with one of the ladies, and I found out they were going to have it over at the Marriot Hotel, which is right up here in Towson. It's right across from the university.

So I attended that. Some of the group who were on the planning board for the convention, it was divided up, but they invited me to come, they had this get-together at one of the ladies home. So I went over there, and it was very nice. I said, "Sure, I'll be happy to help." So I did get into that.

02-00:37:35

Dunham:

What has it meant to you to reconnect with these folks and reflect back on the war years?

02-00:37:40

Arnold:

Well, I hadn't known any of them from my working days, but most of them did work down at the Glenn L. Martin Company. So it was after that that I was inducted into the president's job and everything just kind of fell into place. But prior to all of that we had our nurses alumni association. I had been president of that for ten years. I was working with the veterans auxiliary. I had presidents jobs in that through the years.

02-00:38:23

Dunham:

Yes. You've had a whole other career after your retirement.

02-00:38:26

Arnold:

So now I'm still president of this Rosie group. We really haven't had any meetings for quite a while.

02-00:38:38  
Dunham:

Before we close I'd just like to ask, reflecting back on the war years and women working at Martin and elsewhere across the country, and men also working on the home front, what do you most want to share with kind of the future generations who will read and listen to this?

02-00:38:55  
Arnold:

I think if you keep yourself busy and occupied—and really after my husband passed and my children were grown, I needed a lot of this activity. And it's nice to connect with people and enjoy your life. And I really have. Right now I can't do much of anything in any of these groups. I don't even get to any of the veterans auxil—but really I have so many friends from those groups that call me on the phone and I converse with them. But the Rosies I do enjoy, and we all manage to get rides at this point. I'm still driving. But I haven't driven my car for a while; it's sitting out front.

But I haven't driven for quite a while because of having these shingles. That just knocks you—and as you get over you don't get over these things as quickly as you do as a younger person.

02-00:40:07  
Dunham:

Do you know if any of your local group have been out to the Rosie the Riveter National Park in Richmond?

02-00:40:15  
Arnold:

I don't think any of us have. In fact, I know we haven't because it really is a big long trip for all of us.

02-00:40:26  
Dunham:

Of course. No, if it hasn't happened yet—

02-00:40:28  
Arnold:

We're older than the ladies who came here.

02-00:40:30  
Dunham:

Well, at least now one and hopefully more of your stories are going to be out at the park, so I really thank you. Unless there's anything else you'd like to add, we can—

02-00:40:41  
Arnold:

Well, I would like to add— [phone ringing] Excuse me.

02-00:40:43  
Dunham:

Go ahead. Oh, go ahead. Go ahead, sorry. One sec. Okay, now we're ready. Go ahead.

02-00:40:51  
Arnold:

No, I think anybody who is in this situation as a young person, and I say in their forties—like I had a problem with getting back into work and so forth. But keep yourself occupied and into things because it really makes a

difference in your life. Don't fold up and sit around and bemoan the fact that you're alone. You don't have to be alone if you always have friends. That's the important thing in life.

02-00:41:20

Dunham:

That's very important advice. Is there anything else specifically about the opportunity that women, and you had getting to do this work you both enjoyed and were serving the country, too, anything else in reflecting that you wanted to share about that, about what impact you think that had on the country, on women?

02-00:41:41

Arnold:

Oh, I think it had a great deal of impact on women in the workforce. Look how many women today are in these big jobs. Like the automobile companies that have women heading them, and there are so many women now over in Washington in government jobs. And it does make a difference.

02-00:42:07

Dunham:

Yeah, yeah. How do you think it impacted your life?

02-00:42:11

Arnold:

Well, I think it made me really realize that you can do anything that you set your mind to do.

02-00:42:22

Dunham:

Well, I think that's a great place to close. I just want to thank you again for your time.

02-00:42:28

Arnold:

I really appreciated this interview. You get different stories from everyone, I'm sure.

02-00:42:35

Dunham:

Absolutely, yeah. And then there's some common threads, too. But the differences are really important, too.

02-00:42:40

Arnold:

Yes, it's wonderful.

02-00:42:40

Dunham:

All right. Well, thank you. I'll pause the tape.

[End of Interview]