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Berkeley, California

Evangeline Buell

Rosie the Riveter

WWII Home Front Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by  
Robin Li  
in 2011

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Evangeline Buell

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Also available in The Bancroft Library, Evangeline Buell’s memoir *Twenty-five Chickens and a Pig for a Bride*.

Interview 1: June 10, 2011

Begin Audiofile 1

1-00:00:00

Li: This is Robin Li speaking with Evangeline Buell on June 10, 2011 in Berkeley, California as part of the Rosie the Riveter National Park Service Project. Thank you so much for participating in this project.

1-00:00:17

Buell: Oh, you're very welcome.

Li: Before we start out I wanted to mention the two books that are additional resources for future scholars, the history entitled *Filipinos in the East Bay* in which you participated as a co-author for the Images of America series published in 2008 to your memoir *Twenty-five Chickens and a Pig for a Bride: Growing up in a Filipino Immigrant Family*, published in 2006. Both these books are so rich in images and stories and provoked a lot of ideas and questions for me, so hopefully today we can add to that history and add to those books.

To begin with can you tell me your full name and date of birth?

1-00:00:55

Buell: Evangeline Canonizado Buell, and people call me Vangie for short, yes.

Li: What was your date of birth?

1-00:01:05

Buell: August 28, 1932.

Li: Where were you born?

1-00:01:10

Buell: San Pedro, California.

Li: You talk about in your book the multi-racial background of your family. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

1-00:01:26

Buell: Yes. My grandfather was African American, and he had three children in the Philippines, so my mother is half Filipino and half African American, and my father is Filipino, and, of course, many of the Filipinos were mixed with Spanish and Chinese, and he was a mixture of that.

Li: Did you grow up with a sense of being part American and with a sense of African American heritage?

1-00:01:56

Buell: I grew up mostly with the feeling of being Filipino because I was raised mostly by Filipinos because my grandfather died when I was four years old,

so I didn't really learn a lot of the African American except in school. Then I had that experience in West Oakland because it was a mixed community of African Americans, Chinese, Mexican, and we were the only Filipinos in that area at the time that I was growing up. So at any rate, my family was made up of mostly Filipinos from different parts of the Philippines, and when they came over here they were isolated from their country. So most of them had to learn to speak Tagalog here, so I was raised by an Ilocano father and my mother, who was raised in the Philippines, spoke Tagalog and English, and my step grandmother spoke Kapampangan, so I had that kind of mixture. Then my uncle was Cebuano, so these were all different cultures, Philippine cultures. So that's what I grew up with, that mixture.

Li: So did you learn all those different languages?

1-00:03:28

Buell: I learned some of the words, especially the bad ones. We all had to learn those, but I did learn Tagalog, Tagalog was my first language as a young girl, and then I lost it as I was growing up here.

Li: What do you remember as the most important way in which you learned about your culture? Was it through food, or through music, stories, or dance?

1-00:03:55

Buell: Everything, because my family was very much into the culture and wanted us to learn it and to learn about our heritage. It was very important to them especially since they came over here and were isolated, and they couldn't go back to the Philippines because of all kinds of circumstances, mostly because of the war, when the war broke out. It was very important to them to make sure that we learned our culture, so we learned it through food, through music, through dance, and through the stories.

Li: So what were your aspirations as a young girl, did you have a dream of what your life would be like, what kind of person you would be, what occupation you might have, or would you have an occupation?

1-00:04:53

Buell: Well, my father, of course, was very much into education, so he wanted to be sure that we were educated and had that opportunity here, which they did not. I can remember when I was a young girl, I was about oh, maybe fourteen, I wanted to do a part-time job because I wanted to earn some extra money. I took this job as a domestic, and my father was extremely angry about that because he did not want us to have that image because he felt that there was more that we could do other than just being a domestic. You have to remember there was so much discrimination at that time, and those were the only jobs that Asians and people of color could do or were forced to do, really because the other professional jobs were not open to them. My father wanted us to work towards having those other jobs open to us, so he wanted us to have an image of being educated, so he said you should be a secretary, you

should be a teacher, you should be all these other things, but not domestic work and not even as a waitress. However, he didn't look down on those jobs; it was just that he wanted us to have a different image of ourselves. I remember I had to give up the job, but then I sneaked on Saturdays and took another one, and he didn't know about it, and he found out.

Li: What felt important to you to have a job at that age?

1-00:06:34

Buell: Well, most of my friends were working, and the ones that I hung out with were Mexican, Spanish, Chinese, so forth, but the Mexican and Spanish kids and the Portuguese got jobs as ushers in the theater, so I went with them to see if I could get a job because they did have openings. But they wouldn't hire me, and I didn't realize until later it was because of discrimination. They wanted only white-looking ushers regardless of whether they're Mexican or Portuguese. But I was Filipino, and I was dark, and they didn't want to me to you know. I learned from that, so that's why I took these jobs or a job that was domestic work, housekeeping, because the other job was just not open to me. My father said, "Go be a usher like so and so," like Viola or our friends, but I would go to the employment office every week because I would hear of openings, and people would tell me there was openings, but they said I couldn't get the job, so—

Li: I was thinking for a lot of Filipino men who enlisted. They were immediately put in as houseboys or basically working in domestic work for the military.

1-00:08:05

Buell: Right, right.

Li: You mentioned that your father—

1-00:08:07

Buell: He was in the Navy.

Li: He was in the Navy but he was assigned to do that kind of work.

1-00:08:12

Buell: He was, yes. He was a steward first, and then he became a cook because he really enjoyed that, and he was a cook for Admiral Nimitz on the ship. But one day he heard my dad playing his horn, and Admiral Nimitz was quite a musician, a lover of very fine music. When he heard my dad, he said, "I'm going to lose a great cook, but I'm going to send you to a special music school in the Navy because I think you really need to do this as just part of your career here in the Navy." So he was transferred to Pensacola where he went to a music school.

Li: Wow. So would he tell you stories at a young age about his life in the military? Did you know about this as a young girl about what work he was doing in the Navy?

1-00:09:14

Buell: Well, he was in the Navy from 1917 and then I think he took a leave of absence around 1936, and he worked as a cook in a restaurant, not as a cook, but as a server or helper. He would help the chefs, and he worked in the restaurant down in Oakland for a while. Then he went back into the Navy around maybe '39, '40, somewhere in there.

Li: Just before the war.

1-00:09:48

Buell: Yes, just before the war because they called them back.

Li: Oh, okay.

1-00:09:52

Buell: So he went back. So at any rate, he worked in the restaurant during those years when he was not in the Navy. When he retired from the Navy, he worked in the Naval Supply, not supply, but Mare Island in Vallejo.

Li: What did it mean to you to have a father in the military, did it—?

1-00:10:15

Buell: We were all very proud because in those days we were very patriotic, especially because of the war. And also he had more of an education, and we felt very proud of that, especially my family. He was very much into making sure that we were okay at school. He would go to all of our activities at school and encouraged us to complete our education.

Li: Wow.

1-00:10:51

Buell: My father was very Americanized in comparison to a lot of the other Filipinos here.

Li: Did he instill a sense of patriotism in you about America, or was it more about being Filipino—?

1-00:11:04

Buell: Both, both. He wanted us to be very American, which is why he did not speak Tagalog to me because he wanted to speak English, yes. He was in the American Navy so he became very Americanized, and especially being a classical musician as well as a jazz musician. So he wanted us to learn that, which was very American. Especially the jazz and blues, and he would take us to hear all of the great performers of that music at that time.

Li: Oh, wow.

1-00:11:41

Buell: Such as Sarah Vaughn, Billie Holiday, he was very much into who's the great trumpet player? Louis Armstrong.

Li: So you saw all those people—?

1-00:12:02

Buell: I saw all of them in person, yes. Lionel Hampton, Cab Callaway, and I felt like I was being dragged to all these musicals, and I'm glad I was because I learned a lot.

Li: So it sounds like he had a real vision for all of the things in the world he wanted you to have access to and experience.

1-00:12:23

Buell: Yes, right.

Li: So did it ever seem that being a girl was, did you have as much access to education and experiences as a young girl as you think you would have if you'd been a son? Was there any—?

1-00:12:39

Buell: Well, at my high school, unfortunately, because of the discrimination at that time, the children of color were not taught—well, in the English classes we were taught how to wash clothes and use the dryers and the special machines because they felt that that was the kind of work we were going to go into. There was nothing going to be open to us, and so they didn't teach English, just a few courses in English. But they concentrated on the domestic work. Some of the teachers were so much against it that they took some of us aside and tutored us so that I could get into college. They would work with us after school.

Li: Wow.

1-00:13:32

Buell: I remember taking literature courses, grammar, and so forth so that we could pass the test for college. They did this on their own time.

Li: Were the other students participating in this extra work Filipino, or Mexican, or—?

1-00:13:50

Buell: Well, the ones in that class were the kids that they thought could go to college, so there was about twelve of us that they tutored, maybe more. But they were Chinese, blacks, and I was the only Filipino, Mexican, and I think let's see, did I say Chinese?

Li: Yes

1-00:14:20

Buell: Yes.

Li: So did you have a sense of shared identity with these other people of color?

1-00:14:23

Buell: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, I certainly did, especially when we would exchange food. Oh, I learned so much about fabulous food from all these different families and the kids, and we would trade off. They'd come to my house, or we'd go to their house. I had fabulous Mexican food, Portuguese food, Chinese, Italian. You name it, we had it. It was just wonderful. Yes, we would exchange food as well as music, and that's how I got involved in doing folk music because I learned a lot of Mexican folk songs at the time, and I did a lot of the dancing in school. Even in the home economics class and the cooking classes the teachers concentrated on the different kinds of food like tortillas. We learned to make tortillas in our class. They learned about pansit from me, so yes.

Li: So was your neighborhood pretty diverse?

1-00:15:29

Buell: Yes. I can tell you that the whole block was Czechoslovakian, Italian, Mexican, Chinese, Japanese, what else, African American, and that we were the only Filipino family.

Li: But you all functioned as a neighborhood—?

1-00:15:49

Buell: Oh, yes, we did. Especially during the war, we all took care of each other, and especially during the blackouts, yeah.

Li: So did you have a sense of fear or apprehension during the war that—?

1-00:16:09

Buell: Oh, yes, very scary and especially when the blackouts, when the sirens sounded, and we all had to just run for the—especially at night—run for the shades, pull down the shades, turn off all the lights, turn off your gas because [technical interference]. Yes, it was scary because of the air raid drills and especially when the sirens sounded and we'd have to rush to go, like I said, pull down the curtains, turn off all the lights. And then in school, when they had the air raid drills we had to run and get under the tables and put our hands, cover our heads with our hands under the tables because we were all afraid of the bombs, bombing.

Li: Wow.

1-00:17:05

Buell: I remember when we were on the road driving from the country to get home, there would be an air raid drill and all of the cars had to stop on the road. The police would come up to us, tell us to turn off our headlights because there was an air raid. It was real scary when we were kids.

Li: A lot of Americans I think imagined World War II happening far away. I think people felt vulnerable on the West Coast.

1-00:17:39

Buell: On the West Coast, we certainly felt very vulnerable.

Li: Do you remember Pearl Harbor? Do you remember—?

1-00:17:45

Buell: Yes, I do.

Li: How did you hear about it?

1-00:17:46

Buell: Because it was on the radio, and I think I was about nine years old, and I remember that being very, very scary. My grandmother and her husband—I called him uncle, that was her second husband—I remember them discussing it as we were listening to President Roosevelt announce it, that we were at war, yes. So it was scary, that my dad would have to go, and they mentioned that, and that he would no longer be with us for a long time, that he would have to go to war. They were afraid for his safety, and so we felt scared that we would lose my dad, yeah.

Li: Had your family been following the Japanese invasion of China, or the war in the Pacific before Pearl Harbor? Were you aware—?

1-00:18:45

Buell: Not so much, no, not until it broke, not until the war broke out. I think my father was very aware because he was called back early.

Li: Right.

1-00:18:55

Buell: Before the war.

Li: So he had a sense—

1-00:18:56

Buell: Oh, yeah, he knew.

Li: So did Pearl Harbor change what it felt like to be Filipino?

1-00:19:11

Buell: No, but change was here, just everything that was going on here, for instance, because they took away the Japanese. Then we really felt it because people didn't recognize one Asian from another, all Asians were alike, and therefore we were Japanese. So we had to wear buttons that said, "I am a loyal Filipino American." If we didn't wear those buttons, we were discriminated against. Everywhere we'd go people would stop us and say, "You belong in prison along with the other Japanese."

Li: Where did the buttons come from?

1-00:19:54

Buell: I don't remember, and I can't find one. I have searched through my family's stuff, but we've moved from time to time, so they're gone. But I remember what they looked like. I drew it out one day for my book, but I can remember that we would go to places like Chinatown to buy rice, and we were served inferior rice because they thought we were Japanese.

Li: So do you remember the Japanese in your neighborhood having to leave?

1-00:20:22

Buell: Yes, I watched them go, and my grandmother did, too. We were friends with a lot of the families there on the block, and there was a Japanese grocery store on the corner. My grandmother became very close friends with them, and I can remember when the buses came to take them away, we stood there crying on the corner as they were loading the buses. I was teary eyed, and my grandmother, she just wept.

Li: Children—

1-00:20:54

Buell: Yeah, we were all weeping there as they left. So that was scary and also very, very sad, and to see the kids go, my friends, and we knew it was sad, we knew that they were not coming back. There was just that dread because they were so sad, yeah. I learned one story at that time was that a Filipino friend, man, was married to a Japanese woman, and she had to go to camp, and he wouldn't let her go without him. He went with her, and I still cry about that, but he said, "I'm not going to let you go alone." So he went into the camp, and he was imprisoned all those years with her, yeah. So that was one of the stories.

Li: What happened to their homes and the store and, what happened to their home and their store and—

1-00:21:55

Buell: They lost it all, many of them lost it. When they returned, they returned around 1946, around that time. Some of them got back their property because people saved it for them and hung on to them for them, and these were Americans that did that, and so did some of the Filipinos in the valleys and on

the farms. They saved it for them, their property. But many of them did not get their property back, especially homes here in the city, in the urban cities. But I worked for the Consumers Coop of Berkeley, and that store was the very first grocery outlet to hire the Japanese who were released from the internment camps. They were the first to hire them.

Li: Did you notice the change when the Japanese came back?

1-00:22:51

Buell: Yes, tremendous change, bitterness, but quiet, quiet bitterness. They couldn't talk about it, and many of them did not talk about it until many years later. Then it finally came out, and you could see books now and so forth about the experience. But I remember many of them couldn't handle that part of the experience, because they were kids.

Li: Yeah.

1-00:23:19

Buell: And their parents had just terrible experiences. They wouldn't speak of it because of the pride and saving face. But now, of course, they do.

Li: Did it make you feel different about the government seeing that happen?

1-00:23:32

Buell: Oh, yes, as an adult, yes, but not as a kid. Who would know that it was the government, we just knew that it was war and that they were supposed to be spies, but how did I know whether they were spies or not?

Li: Yes.

1-00:23:46

Buell: I didn't even understand that, what that term spy meant. When you were a kid you just didn't.

Li: Yeah.

1-00:23:55

Buell: But then we learned, of course, later when I was a young girl about the Holocaust, yeah. So that was also a major tragedy for us, too, to learn about that. It was just horrific because we had a lot of Jewish friends.

Li: So when did you learn about that? What did you learn that was going on?

-00:24:16

Buell: Maybe when I was about—I was a teenager, maybe seventeen?

Li: So after the war.

1-00:24:18

Buell: After the war pretty much, yes.

Li: What block was it that you lived on?

1-00:24:26

Buell: Magnolia.

Li: Magnolia? What were the cross streets, like what sort of bounded the neighborhood?

1-00:24:32

Buell: Twelfth Street.

Li: What bounded the neighborhood, what sort of neighborhood, what were the cross streets?

1-00:24:40

Buell: Oh, Twelfth Street, Twelfth and Tenth, and it was called West Oakland.

Li: How long did your family stay in that area?

1-00:24:50

Buell: Oh, let's see, when they first came in 1920s until they died in the 1960s.

Li: Wow.

1-00:25:01

Buell: I mean they moved from Magnolia to Adeline Street, but it's still within a couple of blocks, so from the twenties to the sixties when they died, late sixties.

Li: Oh. I wanted to ask you, you talk about your mother's mental illness in the book.

1-00:25:15

Buell: Yes.

Li: How did your neighbors and community react to her illness?

1-00:25:24

Buell: Okay. I'm trying to think about our Italian neighbors. You know, I just don't remember that—

Li: You were young.

1-00:25:39

Buell: I was so young, and so was my sister. All I remember was my mother's actions at the time and how she treated us, overdressing us, putting on layers and layers of clothes in the heat, and I didn't understand why I needed it. I remember trying to fight it off, and she would just insist that we wear all these clothes, and she dragged us all over, yeah, all over the streets with heavy clothes on.

Li: It seems like your grandparents were so welcoming.

1-00:26:19

Buell: Oh, yes, we were very lucky, very very lucky. This was my step grandmother. She was my grandfather's second wife.

Li: So not a blood relation.

1-00:26:28

Buell: Not a blood relation, no. Her husband, her new husband at the time, too, they were only married a year when they both accepted taking us.

Li: Wow, wow. It sounds like you brought them a lot of joy, though, the—

1-00:26:43

Buell: Oh, yes, we did, yeah. They did for us, too. They were just so very loving, very caring, and all their friends were too. The Filipinos at that time was just like the village, taking care of one another.

Li: Yeah.

1-00:26:59

Buell: And that's what they did with us. The kids were really precious to them because there weren't that many.

Li: Yeah.

1-00:27:07

Buell: When I was here I think the Bay Area had about 3,000 Filipinos when I was growing up, and they were scattered all over, yeah.

Li: Can you talk about your grandparents hosting the laborers who'd come up from the farms?

1-00:27:27

Buell: Oh, yes.

Li: How would they network and communicate with the Filipinos who were spread out in these rural areas, how would they know—?

1-00:27:36

Buell: Well, because they would send somebody up and say that so and so is going to be coming, and they'd send a letter, or they'd send a postcard or whatever and say that we are coming, and we're going to go to. So they would know that at certain times of the year that they're going to move this way to go to Seattle and to Alaska to the fisheries to work, so they kind of knew that that would be the time that they would come. Otherwise, they would just ring the doorbell. There was no way of calling because we didn't have a telephone at the time. We did later, but they would just ring the doorbell, and we were always ready

for them to move in, yeah, as they were traveling because they were not allowed in hotels and restaurants.

Li: Wow.

1-00:28:24

Buell: So many of the Filipino families here—not just in West Oakland, but in North Oakland and East Oakland—opened their homes to them.

Li: This was going on before the war as well.

1-00:28:37

Buell: Right, that's right.

Li: Because during the Depression did you—?

1-00:28:41

Buell: Oh, yes, the same thing, very much so. Again, it's just ringing your doorbell. We were used to having people just drop in, just that was the norm because we didn't have telephones.

Li: Did you have a sense of the Depression going on, that there—?

1-00:28:56

Buell: Oh, yes, I certainly did because we were forced to eat margarine, and I don't know if you remember—no, you wouldn't—but they used this little yellow coloring things to put in those, what I call a cup of lard, and you mixed it. Oh, it was terrible. I still won't eat margarine to this day. But yes, my father, who was in the Navy then, he was stationed right here at Yerba Buena, and he would bring home butter. He would fill his duffle bag full of food and would bring it home to the family so that we could eat. And we stood in bread lines; we stood in many bread lines. I remember in the Depression my mother standing in line for fruit, vegetables, and we ate tons of oatmeal. I remember that. I couldn't eat oatmeal for a long time, yeah. I can now. And cans of sardines because that was plentiful, and we would get that. Then I was sent to catechism to Catholic school and after school programs there, and the nuns would have loaves of bread for us to take home, stuff like that. There would be special programs that the kids would have that the schools put on during the holidays so that we would have presents to take home like for Christmas, and Christmas parties. But they were the ones that put those on.

Li: How important were the churches at that time?

1-00:30:36

Buell: Very important, especially the Filipino church. We had one here in Oakland. It was very unusual, but the reason we had a Filipino church was because the pastors were not allowed to practice or preach in any of the other Protestant churches because of the prejudice. They were not allowed to worship in the Protestant churches, so they formed their own church, and it was just called

the Filipino Methodist Church. Besides just being a church for the Methodists, it was also a cultural center for the Filipinos, and that's where we learned how to do our dances, where the families got together, the parents enforced the program so that we would learn our culture. So they would have Filipino dinners, they would cook for us, they show us how to cook the stuff, they made sure that we learned all the dances, the musicians, the women who were fabulous musicians, where they were the ones that choreographed the dances and the music. I learned a lot on the piano from them to do that, and we would have programs every Sunday. So I would have to go to mass on Sunday morning at a Catholic church, and then at 11:00 o'clock we'd go to the Filipino church, but it was mainly to learn the cultural stuff, yeah.

Li: Do you have a sense why? Because some communities when they experience racism really enforce assimilation, be very American, don't speak your native language.

1-00:32:19

Buell: Right, that's what they did to us.

Li: Oh, but it seems that for Filipinos their response was not to assimilate, but instead to work extremely hard to reinforce the culture.

1-00:32:31

Buell: Right, but they did assimilate to a certain extent. Certainly my dad did. My uncle did to a certain extent. When we were in high school and I would bring home my homework as well as some of my tests, my uncle read those books. And he sat with us every night doing that homework and making sure that we would do it right, but he was learning too because he couldn't go to high school; he never did go to high school. But he was very bright, and he could read, and so he learned social studies from me, history, and we would all learn it together, so they did try to assimilate. My uncle especially did because he wanted to vote, and he wanted to take part, especially voting. He really wanted to be an American in many ways, but they also retained their language and the culture, the food, at the same time. My grandmother did not assimilate very much. She didn't learn English that well, and she couldn't read or write, so it was not easy for her to assimilate. But they did encourage the kids to do so, yeah.

Li: So did you do much translating for your grandmother?

1-00:33:43

Buell: Oh, yes, all the time, and also for all the other Filipino laborers who came in to town. We helped them, I did a lot of their papers for them, I did the translating, and did some writing for them so that they could send letters home, yes. I helped my grandmother learn how to get her citizenship papers, so oh, yes. And the other Filipinos who needed to do that, too, we helped them.

Li: Wow. Was there a sense—?

1-00:34:19

Buell: We were their social services.

Li: Was there much talk about politics, like what was—?

1-00:34:24

Buell: Oh, yes, especially being Democrats, and so that's why I'm a Democrat to this day because they pushed that.

Li: Oh.

1-00:34:33

Buell: My uncle, as I said, was, I would say, bright and self-educated, and my father was self-educated, too. So they were really into the politics, they did read the newspapers, and they kept up, and they were very much Roosevelt fans at the time.

Li: Were you aware there were the Zoot Suit Riots in LA, and there was some anti-Filipino violence going on?

1-00:34:59

Buell: Not until later, not until I was an adult, and especially the ones that happened in Watsonville. However, when we did go into the countryside—because we did that a lot—that was part of our growing up; we were very aware that there were altercations happening between the whites and the Filipinos on the farmlands and in the small towns. Well, the fact that my grandmother was when she was knifed—I don't know if you read that chapter—we certainly understood that there were a lot of discrimination and altercations between the whites and the Filipinos, especially in these gambling towns.

Li: Right, well you said that the police didn't search for the man who had stabbed her, that they didn't take it seriously.

1-00:35:53

Buell: Oh, no, they wouldn't. In those days they didn't care what happened to the Asians or blacks. You had to defend yourself, and if not, they'd just go after you. If you did anything like marry a white woman, they go after you, so why would they care about whether you killed one another or not? That's fine for them, they didn't have to do the killing. That was their attitude.

Li: Oh, so there was fear from the war, but then also fear from—

1-00:36:25

Buell: From your own, yeah, right.

Li: From your own fellow citizens. Can you talk a little bit about going to work on the farms with the laborers?

1-00:36:36

Buell:

Oh, yes. Oh, gosh, that was hard work. My grandmother felt that it was very important to help the Filipino farm workers because they felt that they weren't getting their rights in terms of, well, employment rights. They didn't have—well, they were just treated as more or less second class citizens. So she felt that they needed help, and so it was important for her to take us on weekends during the summer to help them pick the vegetables, work on the farms so that they could earn a living because they were not earning a decent living by themselves. So just to pick a huge cart of tomatoes was twenty-five cents a box; that's what they earned. So you can imagine, yeah—so we would go and pick tomatoes or whatever vegetables we needed to pick during the harvest time so that they would make some kind of a decent salary.

Li:

So you'd go and volunteer your time—

1-00:37:54

Buell:

Yes, my grandmother, we all did, the whole family. We were there to volunteer our time and to help them. And the farm workers were just fabulous to us. They would cook, they had their own plot of land that they kind of sneaked around the corporation, farm land, they had their own little piece of property there where they planted the Filipino vegetables and corn and so forth, and enough so that we could take boxes and boxes of them home, crates of asparagus, tomatoes. We had fabulous fruit and vegetables from them that we would take home and that we ate during the war.

Li:

There were so few Filipino children. Did you feel special, or—?

1-00:38:44

Buell:

We certainly did, yes, we did because they treated us in such a special way. Like when we would go to the farms my grandmother would say, "Now, speak Tagalog." Because they wanted to hear the kids speak Tagalog, so we would speak Tagalog, and the Filipino men were just so happy because they had a semblance of family life with us there. So they not only cooked for us, they made sure that we got vegetables and so forth to take home, or they'd kill a pig for us, or chickens. They wanted to know about our homework, what kind of work were we doing, and how important it was to continue with our education. They were just so wonderful to us, it was like a village. They would give us their hard earned money, yeah. They would give us fifty cents, that's two great big, yeah, and that's why my grandmother said, "Pick some more. Get up, don't go to sleep."

Li:

Was there much communication with family in the Philippines?

1-00:39:54

Buell:

Not at that time because of the war. You couldn't get through.

Li:

So you sort of felt like you were all here together—

1-00:40:01

Buell: That's right, and we had to support each other, one another. We had to learn to keep what semblance of Filipino customs and food alive, yeah. So it was through us that they kept their Filipino values and customs. But what happened, though, was that when they stuck to all these different customs and to the way that they had left the Philippines at that time in the twenties, and, of course, it changed in the sixties. They were no longer like that, like it was here in the twenties because they couldn't change with it.

Li: Yeah.

1-00:40:47

Buell: So they were kind of old fashioned in so many ways. Like, for instance, we couldn't date, we had to have chaperones. That just—oh, can you imagine going to the movies with my father at age seventeen and the boy sitting next to me thinking, "This is a drag."

Li: Did you have a sense that you would ever go back and live in the Philippines?

1-00:41:07

Buell: No.

Li: No.

1-00:41:09

Buell: No, like my grandmother, they were poor. They did not have the money to even go back. They kept saying they wanted to go back, and they missed—my grandmother was very lonely for her family, and to go back, but she never did. Many of them didn't go back.

Li: Did she work outside the home at all prior to the war?

1-00:41:34

Buell: No, no.

Li: How did she learn about the jobs?

1-00:41:38

Buell: From a friend of hers who was working there. You know why they hired the Filipino women? To work in the hulls of the ships to do the welding because Filipino women were smaller than the Caucasian women, and they didn't fit underneath there. So that's the reason that they were hired.

Li: Yeah.

1-00:42:00

Buell: So all these young very, very petite Filipino women—not that my grandmother was very petite, but she certainly was a lot smaller than the

Caucasian women who were working on the ships, and so she was able to fit underneath there.

Li: So a friend told her about—

1-00:42:18

Buell: They told her about the job, and she thought that would be great. She wanted to work. She wanted to get outside of the house. And when she told my uncle that she was going to go to work, he said, “Who’s going to take care of the kids?” She said, “You are.” So they divided up the chores, where he would take care of us at night and she during the day because she went to work at 3:00 o’clock, and there was another Filipino woman who would come in and take care of us during the odd hours that they weren’t around. She would cook before she left, she’d cook all of the food, have everything prepared so that when he came home all he had to do was cook the rice, and everything else was done. So he just had to heat it up.

Li: So did you get the sense that she looked forward to going to the—?

1-00:43:14

Buell: Oh, yes. Oh, yes, she wanted to go, and every day she was just—I don’t know, and it was hard work, but it was something that she felt very proud of, especially because it was very patriotic. See, the whole country was very patriotic at that time. We had to buy defense stamps; we bought the war stamps—

Li: War bonds?

1-00:43:41

Buell: Yeah, war bonds, and war stamps, and we were saving all our little dimes to do that and paste the stamps in a book. We would collect things like tin foil out of cigarette packs for recycling, and we’d take it in to be recycled for the war. My grandmother would help us do that, so she felt proud to take part like everybody else in the neighborhood and all around her.

Then, I guess we also were all on rationing, so that food stamps were very important in terms of buying meat, any of our groceries, sugar, butter. All of that were rationed, including shoes, leather. But the whole country was just caught up, and especially our neighborhood, in working on the war effort. For instance, when the people worked and they weren’t home, say they had hung their clothes because we didn’t have washers or dryers, they hung their clothes on the line. And if it rained, the neighbors would come and take down your clothes for you so that they wouldn’t get wet. Things like that. So we all helped each other in that way, and that was kind of part of that war effort, yeah.

Li: So anything you could do for anyone else was a part of being patriotic.

1-00:45:19

Buell: Right, right.

Li: Because the way you described the work your mother did, it sounds scary to be going into small spaces and—

1-00:45:27

Buell: Yes, yes.

Li: But she didn't have any apprehension about—

1-00:45:31

Buell: No, she didn't. She was very proud to be welding, to be a welder, yeah.

Li: So were most of the women in her work area Filipino then?

1-00:45:39

Buell: I don't think they were all Filipino, there were about maybe three or four, and they would help one another. For instance, since my grandmother couldn't read or write, this was an easy job for her because she didn't have to read anything, and if something did come up like a rule that she didn't understand or couldn't read, they would read it for her. Or she would take it home, and my uncle would interpret it for her, or I would.

Li: Did she talk about how the white women in the factory would treat her? Was there any racism at—?

1-00:46:17

Buell: She never talked about that. I don't remember. I don't think so because the women were mostly black and Asian who worked in the shipyards, and so I think she was probably in a mixture of women, not just white.

Li: Did she make friends at work?

1-00:46:39

Buell: She had friends, yes. Yes, she did, so that was another—because they had their lunches, and they would get together and eat so there was some camaraderie there. There was a social life for her, too.

Li: Would those women ever come to visit at the house?

1-00:46:54

Buell: Oh, yes. Manang Nene, Manang Oping. Yeah, they all came to the house. Manang—oh, what was her first name? Manang Marina.

Li: What did it mean for your family financially to have your mother working at the shipyards?

1-00:47:12

Buell: Oh, it meant a lot because, as I said, they were not rich, they were very poor, so this meant that she could get a new stove, and I remember her talking about that, “Oh, now we can afford a new stove,” because she loved to cook, and also a phonograph. I remember that phonograph. Oh, my gosh, music was so important. I remember them dancing to the music, we’d turn it on every night when she was home. The nights that they were home, we all played music. I played the piano, the violin, and my sister did the same, and we sang. If my father was around, he’d play his cornet. That’s his cornet there on the piano, yeah. He brought that here in 1917.

Li: So did your family life, it obviously changed when your mother went to work, but did it feel like a positive change for your family to have her—?

1-00:48:13

Buell: Oh, yes, because my uncle spoiled us. We were happy she was gone to work. She was the disciplinarian in the family, and my uncle was just easy going, “Yeah, you want popcorn? Sure. You want a quart of ice cream each? Yes.” So we had all those little treats, but, of course, he would go gamble, and he’d take us to the movies, and he’d sit us in the movies and, of course, we loved it. Then he would go down to Oakland and gamble, and we would be in the movies, and then he’d come and pick us up as soon as the movies were over, and it was a school night. Then one day my grandmother saw the popcorn on the table, she said, “Where’ve you been?” She knew that we had the leftover popcorn, and she scolded my uncle. She said, “You know it’s a school night? What are you doing gambling anyway?”

Li: Did you see your grandmother differently, seeing her go out to work in the shipyards, did it—?

1-00:49:08

Buell: Oh, I was proud of her, I remember feeling very proud of her. I was about eleven or twelve because I watched her dress, she would wear her overalls, she’d put on her bandana and then her welding cap, and the shield, and carry that, and then we would help her make her lunch in the pail, and that looked so good.

Li: Did it make you want to have a job when you got older?

1-00:49:32

Buell: Oh, yes, definitely. Oh, yeah, I felt, yeah, she was quite a role model at that time for me. Yeah, I wanted to go to work. I didn’t know about shipyards, but I didn’t know whether it was hard. I knew later how hard that work was, yeah.

Li: Yeah, so did you ever go to work with your mother or—?

1-00:49:49

Buell: Oh, no. They wouldn’t let us because they had to have identification card, oh, there was a lot of security just for them to go into the shipyards.

Li: So you never needed to go to the child care centers that were a part of the shipyards?

1-00:50:03

Buell: Oh, no. No, they didn't believe in it. They took their kids everywhere they went, so that's why my uncle took care of us. They believed in either you stay and take care of them, or you have someone in the family who would watch over them. Whenever we'd go to parties or dances with them, they took the kids, and we would sleep on the chairs or whatever was around, but they didn't have babysitters for their kids. Not the custom at the time.

Li: So who were your friends during this time during the war years?

1-00:50:46

Buell: Oh, I had so many friends. I can still remember some of the names: Draga, Novak, Juanita, but one was Basque. I had Chinese friends, I had Mexican friends, I had all of black friends, just a big mixture.

Li: What kinds of things would you guys do for fun?

1-00:51:10

Buell: Oh, oh, we'd dance. There was a lot of after-school dancing. We learned all of the different—like, for instance, we learned how to do the hula, we learned African dance, we had an African dance teacher. We would go to different houses to cook, so like next door the Italian family and their two daughters worked with us on how to do raviolis. We watched them with the big tables, with all of the indentations for the decoration for the ravioli, and you roll the dough into it, cut it, yeah, and I watched them make the sauces. So, yeah, we had a lot of—and then we would go after school, there was big construction going on in Oakland at the time, the Peralta Village. We would run over there and play all kinds of things, we'd make up games like Perils of Nyoka, and we were in the midst of construction with all the mud. But that was the jungle as far as we were concerned.

But lots of things like that, and the whole neighborhood would do that. We would go outside, and someday I'm going to do a children's book on this, where we would play hide'n seek and a form of baseball, the whole block of kids, and we would play out there until six o'clock or seven o'clock. And we would learn all these games, the clapping of the hand games, the jump roping. I miss seeing that, the kids don't do that today. It's all television and high tech stuff, and I think they're missing out because there's a certain kind of social impact there that's important for, I think, your growing up and becoming self-confident and all that.

Li: When you were running around town playing, were there places you knew you shouldn't go because it wouldn't be safe for a group of kids like you to be—?

1-00:53:22

Buell: Oh, yes. We had to be home at a certain time for sure, and we'd play out until at night, and the whole block was safe because the parents were all in the houses. And the houses were right next to each other, so we were safe there. We didn't go outside of that block. But during the day when we would go and play, like on Saturdays at where they were doing the construction, we had to just be careful that we don't step in something that we would get hurt on or fall. That was our safety concern.

Li: So you didn't need to worry about racism or not being welcome in—?

1-00:53:59

Buell: Not within this neighborhood, no. But we would outside, just go just a few miles, and then we had to be protected from racism. Then my uncle—they were very aware, and they tried to keep that away from us. Just to give you example, when we went to this hospital, when we took my grandmother when she was stabbed, I remember that's when I really got the taste of that there was a lot of prejudice, was when my uncle told us to lock the doors, do not show our faces, and he wasn't sure whether they were going to be served or not. So that's when he sort of let go that there was something that we would not be accepted.

Li: How old were you at that time?

1-00:54:50

Buell: Maybe ten or twelve, something like that.

Li: It seems like there's so much with harmony in sharing with children of other ethnicities, did you see that changing as you all got older, entered high school or junior high school, people become more segregated, or—?

1-00:55:09

Buell: Well, yes, because I left West Oakland when I was about eighteen, seventeen—yes, it changed. I'm just showing you a small part here of what this wonderful group of mixture here, but there was also the other side of it, too, where there was a lot of kids who were on welfare, who didn't go to school, cut school, got into a lot of trouble, lot of juvenile delinquency, a lot of drugs, and stealing, you name it. But I was not part of that group. There was something that I just was not attracted to it. So I was more attracted to the kids who did all the other kind of play and playing on the streets with one another, jump roping and so forth. But that was when I was a lot younger. It was in the teenage years that I saw a lot of the other stuff that was going on in the high schools. There were all kinds of fights between Mexicans and blacks, the zoot suiters against this part of the teenagers. So yeah, there was a lot of that, too.

Li: Was it hard to see that changed?

1-00:56:32

Buell: It's still there. It's still there. It's unfortunate, but I know that there are still a lot of those problems and especially at McClymonds [High School], yeah. Those terrible drug problems are there, and the welfare. Young girls getting pregnant, I don't think there's as much of that today, but there was certainly plenty of that then, and I left West Oakland because of that. I did not want to be part of that. Although I liked all the other parts of it, but the other was too overwhelming.

Li: So did you go to junior high school and high school in West Oakland?

1-00:57:11

Buell: Yes, and all in one school. I went to Cole School in grammar school, and then I went to McClymonds for the seventh, eighth, ninth, tenth, eleventh, twelfth grade, all in one school. They had middle school there, as well as high school.

Li: Were there any teachers of color in that school?

1-00:57:34

Buell: Yes, in grammar school, yes, I did have a black teacher. Her daughter lives up the block from me and discovered that I was her mother's student. The other thing I did was I went back to Cole School when I retired from work and worked at Cole School and mentored students there when I retired.

Li: So you went back to—?

1-00:58:06

Buell: I went back to work.

Li: So did you, it sounds like either being involved in collecting tin and seeing your grandmother go to work increased your sense of patriotism during the war. Did you feel more American as the war went on, did you sense of being an American—?

1-00:58:26

Buell: Oh, yes, I certainly did. Yes.

Li: What did the end of the war mean for you?

1-00:58:35

Buell: My dad coming home. That was absolutely important. I felt abandoned when they took my mother away, and I felt abandoned when he left, even though I was with my grandmother, but you remember I didn't know her. She [my mother] was a stranger to me, and so was my uncle. So I had to learn to know who they are, and so at the time I was left there I just felt abandoned.

## Begin Audiofile 2:

Li: This is Robin Li speaking with Evangeline Buell, Tape 2, part of the Rosie the Riveter National Park Service Project. So at the end of the last tape I was asking you about the end of the war, and you were telling me about your father coming home.

2-00:00:13

Buell: Yes, that was just wonderful, exhilarating, and so important because I wanted to be sure that my dad recognized me because I had grown up. I was already what, thirteen or so, and I said, “Will he remember me? I look so different, like grown up now.” I remember my grandmother dressing us up and waiting for him, and he got out of the cab, and we all greeted him. Yeah, that was so important, and it meant that my father was going to come and live with us. My grandmother bought a house with two flats, an upstairs and a downstairs because she wanted to be sure that we would have a place to live when my dad came home.

So we moved from her house upstairs down to the flat with my dad, so it was just the three of us that lived downstairs, but still my grandmother was able to take care of us and keep an eye on us from upstairs. So at age thirteen I felt so grown up and very proud to have my dad home after the war, so that I could be the mother of the house more or less or the lady of the house, whatever you wanted to call it at that time. But my grandmother had taught us how to cook, and so I was going to cook for my dad and so forth. But he did most of the cooking, but we did the simple cooking for him because he would go to work, and I would come home after school and start the dinner, things like that. But at any rate, I had looked forward right after the war to living with my dad. That was what so important, that he was home and he was safe.

Li: Had you corresponded with him much during the war?

2-00:01:58

Buell: Oh, yes, we did. He was quite a writer also, and had beautiful penmanship—that was another thing that he forced us to do. He wanted to watch how our penmanship was going to change because he wanted it to get better and better, and it did. I really love to write, so I even do a little calligraphy. But at any rate he would look forward to our letters, and we would look forward to his. But in those days they censored the letters, so we would get this very thin paper and with a lot of the words cut out so it looked like paper dolls.

Li: Oh, they literally cut out—

2-00:02:38

Buell: They actually cut out the words, yeah. So they were censored. They were censored because he couldn't say where he was or anything that looked like, that sounded like where he was.

Li: So you had no idea where he was—

2-00:02:50

Buell: No, we didn't have any idea.

Li: But since he was leading a band as part of—at this point?

2-00:02:58

Buell: Yes, he orchestrated the band, yes.

Li: After the war he talked about his experiences. Was he primarily doing entertaining troops abroad, is that was his—?

2-00:03:06

Buell: No, no, no. The battleships had bands, so they were entertaining themselves actually, but they used the bands for all kinds of programs. So he orchestrated it and led the bands.

Li: So the ship would be in combat—

2-00:03:29

Buell: Right.

Li: And he would be—

2-00:03:30

Buell: Oh, he would work, too, besides—

Li: Besides being—?

2-00:03:34

Buell: Oh, yeah, yeah. He had to swab the decks, he said.

Li: Oh, and were the other musicians mostly Filipino, the other band members?

2-00:03:39

Buell: There were some, yes, but mostly Caucasian. Yeah, I have the pictures of them. With him and the band, and with all the other sailors.

Li: They would all follow him—

2-00:03:54

Buell: Oh, yeah, because he would, as I said, he did the transposing for all the instruments for the music.

Li: So when did you hear that the war had ended, do you remember?

2-00:04:03

Buell: That it had ended?

Li: Yeah.

2-00:04:06

Buell: Oh, my God, it was on the radio. Everybody was elated, the whole town, the whole country. You couldn't miss it, just could not miss it, even as, and at school, oh my gosh, yes, there were no more air raid drills.

Li: Was there a celebration, do you remember?

2-00:04:22

Buell: Oh, yes, all over the place.

Li: Yeah.

2-00:04:23

Buell: People jumping for joy everywhere, San Francisco, here in Oakland.

Li: Yeah.

2-00:04:29

Buell: And our family, too, we just got caught up in it.

Li: Oh, and how long did you have to wait for your father to come home after the war ended?

2-00:04:38

Buell: I can't remember, but it was a while, took a while.

Li: Oh, no —

2-00:04:40

Buell: Oh, yes because that anticipation was just so great.

Li: Oh, and for your grandmother, how did she feel about the war ending and her work ending?

2-00:04:53

Buell: Oh, she was very sad about not being able to go back to work. She was also very glad that the war ended, too. But you know what she did? She and a friend opened up a restaurant in Chinatown, so she had work because she was a fabulous cook. And so was my dad, and my uncle, all three of them were incredible cooks. They cooked for a lot of the community events and especially other Filipino family community events. They took part in the cooking of the food. So my grandmother and this friend opened up a restaurant in Oakland, and I would go there after school and work with them, like help with the dishes and maybe some of the cooking, but they did most of the cooking. So she was glad to be working, yeah, again.

Li: So she didn't want to go back to being a housewife—

2-00:05:55

Buell: Well, she had to because it didn't work, as most businesses in those days. They just didn't have enough people that wanted to eat Filipino food because most people cooked it at home. Filipino food was not the in thing at that time. So she had to go back to being a housewife again, but she cooked at home. What happened was that my uncle and his co-workers and my father, there were about six or eight of them who worked in Mare Island, and they would drive to my grandma's home after work, and she would cook their dinner, so she had a—she didn't board them, but she did have them for dinner every night, so she was paid to do that.

Li: Yes.

2-00:06:47

Buell: So that was her work.

Li: When your father returned from the war, did he talk about his experiences with you?

2-00:06:56

Buell: About—?

Li: Did your father talk about the war?

2-00:06:57

Buell: Oh yes. He certainly did. Yes, he talked about skirmishes that they went through and almost being bombed, torpedoed. He talked about all the different islands he was on, and, of course, playing in the bands, yeah, and the danger that he went through. But also, how much he enjoyed working on the ships with the fellow sailors.

Li: Yeah, because there's some stories of racism experienced by Filipino soldiers—

2-00:07:36

Buell: Oh, yes, he had a lot of it. He talked about having been stripped to look for his tail, and that kind of thing because they thought Filipinos were monkeys and had tails.

Li: Did he feel like that changed as the war went on, that there was a—?

2-00:07:55

Buell: That did, yeah, that changed, yes, but not the racism.

Li: Not the racism.

2-00:07:58

Buell: No, that was there.

Li: Oh, and did he seem different to you after the war? Did his personality change or his sort of world view change, or did he seem the same?

2-00:08:18

Buell: He seemed the same to me. He may have changed, I'm trying to think. No, I don't, he may have changed, but I wouldn't know.

Li: You didn't know, yeah.

2-00:08:31

Buell: Because he was just so loving to us, and he was very supportive and made sure that he would go to all of our—he was so proud to have the two girls, my sister and me, that he would go to all of our school functions, to the point that I'd get embarrassed that he was the first one in the front row. So he remained that way to me, so—

Li: Oh. I know there were housing shortages and employment issues in the Bay Area after the war. Do you remember that? Any sort of difficulty after the war?

2-00:09:15

Buell: I was able to find jobs easily after the war. I was hired by Capwell's, the department store, to sell lamps, for instance. And yet before that I couldn't even work in a movie theater as an usher. Then I noticed that there were more women of color being ushers, yes. So there was some changes there.

Li: It was easier for you to find work after the war?

2-00:09:41

Buell: This was after the war, yeah.

Li: So when did you leave your parents' house? When did you move out on your own?

2-00:09:49

Buell: Oh, early on about 1950.

Li: Okay. Was it important for you to be a woman with a job, to work?

2-00:10:03

Buell: Was it important me to—?

Li: To work, versus just sort of getting married and settling—?

2-00:10:07

Buell: Oh, yes, yes. Even when I did get married, I wanted to work, and I did. Then I went back to school because I married early. I married at age nineteen.

Li: Yeah.

2-00:10:18

Buell: I married my professor.

Li:

Oh, but you continued to work after you were married?

2-00:10:23

Buell: Oh, yeah, yeah, well, not when the babies were born. After that I did.

Li:

Was that common for other women—?

2-00:10:30

Buell: Yes, if you weren't married by the time you were twenty you were an old maid. That was the way it was in those days, that was the norm.

Li:

Did most of the women continue to work after they married or—?

2-00:10:42

Buell: I was one of the few because I just wanted to work, and I wanted to continue my education, yeah. Because I remember when raising my daughters I was one of the few working mothers at that time.

Li:

When you reflect on this, the war years, is there a moment or experience that sticks out in your head as being particularly memorable, or when someone mentions World War II, one image or one experience that comes to mind, that encapsulates that era for you?

2-00:11:30

Buell: Yes, my feet are not as good as they should be because of not being able to get proper shoes because of the rationing. My feet were growing fast, and I had to change shoes very often because of the growth of my feet, and so I would always have holes in the bottom of my shoes, and I was wearing the wrong size, too small, yeah. So that was memorable because my feet hurt all the time.

Li:

A very physical reminder—

2-00:12:09

Buell: Yeah, that was a physical reminder. I guess I still think about this as the Filipino man who went to the camp with his wife, and I think that's the part that hurts the most. But having that happen to the Japanese I think is the most memorable in my mind when I think about it because it was right in my neighborhood, it was right in my face. To see the people taken away, and we weren't. Why not, how come we didn't go?

Li:

Did you worry that they might come for you at some point, that they might—?

2-00:12:48

Buell: Well, yes, my grandmother did. She didn't know what was going on and why. Why were the Japanese taken away? Why were her friends taken away? She

said they didn't have anything to do with the war. So that was probably the most memorable.

Li: Yeah. When students are taught about the World War II home front experience, what do you think is the most important thing for them to understand about what the war was like for people at home?

2-00:13:22

Buell: What was the—?

Li: What's the most important thing for them to understand about what the war was like, what the war time experience for people at home?

2-00:13:34

Buell: What was it important for them to understand?

Li: Yes, for students who are taught today about that time?

2-00:13:40

Buell: Yes, well, it was a war that I think that had to be fought because of the fascism. Oh, that to me was just horrendous, and I guess that's another memorable thing, too, about the war, that when you think about World War II, and I knew a lot of the guys who came back because my first husband was in that fight in Germany, and when they went into the camps there and opened them up and freed a lot of the Jews, I would want students to understand that we cannot have that kind of thing happen again. I think that for them to understand is that we really need to have peace.

When I became a folk singer, I tried to sing, and I was against the war in the sixties. I still believe in peaceful ways of handling conflicts, confrontation; there is a way. I don't think that we need to do what we're doing, even today with Iraq and Afghanistan and so forth. And yet we haven't learned those lessons about how do we achieve peace without having to kill. I even knew a lot of the people later who were conscientious objectors, they were very close friends of mine, who did not go to war in the Second World War, and I had to understand why they didn't when everybody else was so patriotic.

Li: Yes.

2-00:15:10

Buell: But they were patriotic in their own way.

Li: So your first husband was a veteran of World War II?

2-00:15:21

Buell: Yes, both of them, my first two husbands.

Li: So did they share with you stories about the war?

2-00:15:27

Buell:

Oh, yes, they certainly did. My first husband was injured and had a part of his leg taken away by shells, and my second husband worked in the Pacific Ocean, too, for a long period, right near where my dad was. This is interesting: when my father was working in the restaurants here in the thirties before the war started, my second husband was in the same restaurant working with him. They were friends. My late husband was eighteen years older than I, and he knew me when I was eight years old. He met me when I was eight years old because my dad took me to the restaurant. Well, and I met him, and his name was Robert, but I called him Bob.

Well, many years later when he dated me we were dating for at least six weeks or so, and he finally asked me what my maiden name was, and I told him, and he almost fainted. He says, "You're not Stanley's daughter are you?" And I said, "Yes." And we both just were shocked, he said, "My God, I knew you when you were a baby." He said, "I'm robbing the cradle, damn it." So that was quite a story.

But they were in World War II together, so they experienced a lot of the same things because they were on the different islands.

Li:

So it seems like the war was a really defining experience for you in many ways.

2-00:17:01

Buell:

Yeah, and Bob had duty in the Philippines during the war, yeah. [Narrator addendum: Bob's brother, Danny Elkins, was in the Army and died in the March of Bataan in the Philippines. Bob visited his grave in Manila before returning home in 1946.]

Li:

I wanted to ask you because I know that music and song was an important part of how culture was for you and how you expressed your politics as you grew older. You mentioned you might have some lyrics to share.

2-00:17:25

Buell:

Oh, okay. I do. Well, one of the songs that I did and dedicated to my immigrant family and to all immigrants during the sixties and seventies, because I thought it was important, was the song that Woody Guthrie wrote, and that is "This Land Is Your Land," and I'm sure you've heard that. That was the song that I sang to dedicate to the immigrants because I wanted them to feel that since they were here, this is their land, too. When I went to the Philippines in 1996, and I was up in the remote area of the northern region with the indigenous tribes, I sang that song with my guitar. And you know, they sang it with me, and they knew every word. I said, "Oh, my gosh, this is incredible." The reason they did is because they were feeling that same thing about their land because they didn't want the government to take over all the different rice fields, they wanted to keep it the same and not have

overdevelopment there, and so they felt this was their land, and they sang that song with me. We were all dripping with tears.

So it was very meaningful, and the Oakland Museum at this time has a diorama of me, and part of that diorama is my writing of the song, "This Land Is Your Land," because they did this display of me in terms of the folk music, as well as my interracial marriages. So "This Land Is Your Land," is there with my hootenanny record. But I'll read that one because I can't sing it right now.

"This land is your land, this land is my land, from California to the New York Island, from the Redwood forest to the Gulf Stream waters, this land was made for you and me. As I went walking that ribbon of highway I saw above me that endless skyway. I saw below me that golden valley. This land was made for you and me. I roamed and rambled, and I followed my footsteps to the sparkling sands of the diamond deserts, and all around me a voice was singing, this land was made for you and me. When the sun comes shining, then I was strolling, and the wheat fields waving and the dust clouds rolling, a voice was chanting as the fog was lifting, this land was made for you and me."

Li: Thank you very much for talking with me today. Is there anything that we didn't talk about that you wanted to share?

2-00:20:40

Buell: Yes, I want to just share that I have a beautiful family. I have a very wonderful supportive husband, Bill Buell, and I have three wonderful daughters. They're really wonderful people and very close friends of mine besides being my daughters. I have two lovely granddaughters, both in their twenties, and a grandson in his thirties and a granddaughter-in-law who's just a beautiful mother to my great grandson Zachary, who's now two and a half. So thank you.

Li: Thank you.

[End of Interview]

Also available in The Bancroft Library, Evangeline Buell's memoir *Twenty-five Chickens and a Pig for a Bride*.