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Mary Ann Ceminski

Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,
The National Park Service, and the City of Richmond, California

Interviews conducted by
Esther Ehrlich
in 2003

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Interview with Mary Anne Ceminski

Interviewed by: Esther Ehrlich

Transcriber: Marie "Wycee" de Vera

[Interview #1: June 23, 2003]

[Begin Audio File: Ceminski1 6-23-03]

[audited by Shannon Page, 4-4-05]

1-00:00:02

Ehrlich:

This is an interview with Mary Anne Ceminski in her home in Pinole on Monday, June 23, 2003. Let's start at the beginning, which is, can you tell me where and when you were born?

1-00:00:19

Ceminski:

I was born in a little town of Tiffany, Colorado, which is no longer on the map. It was for many years, but it's the southwestern part of Colorado. I went to school in a little country school until the eighth grade, I believe. Then we moved to Durango by the nearest high school, and I went to school there for two years, ninth and tenth. Then we moved to Silverton, Colorado, and I finished my high school there in 1941.

1-00:01:00

Ehrlich:

And who was in your immediate family?

1-00:01:02

Ceminski:

Oh, we had a large family. We had seven girls and three boys. However, you know, by the time that I came, my older sisters were already out of the house. They were out working, so there was a big span of twenty-six years between my oldest brother and my youngest brother. So I don't believe we ever had all of them at home at one time. I actually would have had thirteen, but three of them died as infants, so there were only ten of us—and out of the ten, we're only five now.

1-00:01:45

Ehrlich:

And were you raised with extended family, too?

1-00:01:49

Ceminski:

Not particularly. My dad worked for the D&RG Railroad for many years, for forty-nine years, so we moved quite often, and this is one reason why I didn't stay too long in one place. When I was small, we lived on a farm for a while. When I started school, he was working, and I was sent to live with the teacher so I could go to school. I boarded with the teacher in my first grade. In the second grade, my dad sent my brother and me to a Catholic boarding school. We were living in a place where there was no school, because he just more or less followed where his work was, so I had a lot of different schools I went to.

1-00:02:43

Ehrlich:

Do you make a connection between your experience getting schooling and your decision to become a schoolteacher?

1-00:02:51

Ceminski:

Well, I think so. Originally I wanted to be a nurse, and my dad was a very wise man. He found me a summer job working in Mercy Hospital. I worked from ten o'clock at night until seven o'clock in the morning for three months, and that changed my mind. I no longer wanted to be a nurse, because that's a bad time to work. People died at that time, during the night, or they were very ill. The nurses used to tease me a lot, and gave me a lot of jobs that ordinarily I shouldn't have had. I was very young, too.

1-00:03:29

Ehrlich:

I'm wondering if you knew your grandparents.

1-00:03:33

Ceminski:

I didn't know my grandparents. My mother's mother passed away when she was very young—a baby, so I didn't get to meet her. I did meet my step-grandmother maybe once when I was about two or three years old, so I really don't remember her very much. I do remember my dad's mother and father. My dad's father I don't remember very much, because he passed away when I was a baby, I guess. But my grandmother I remember very well, and she lived to be in her nineties. She used to spend a lot of time with us. I have very good feelings about my grandmother. She was a real sweet lady.

1-00:04:16

Ehrlich:

What was her background? Where was she from?

1-00:04:21

Ceminski:

You know, I had a cousin that looked into our family tree, and he actually traced it back to Spain, and in Spain is known the name Gallegos, this name is Casa de Gallegos, which is a very important name in history in Spain. And they came to one of the Southern states, and there is where they both intermarried with French people. I have a lot of French blood in me. My dad's mother and father were part French, and so were my mother's parents. Then from there they came to Colorado where I was born.

1-00:05:18

Ehrlich:

And did you have a religious upbringing?

1-00:05:20

Ceminski:

Very much so. I am Roman Catholic, and I had a sister that was a nun, Mercy sister. She passed away in 1989, I had a first cousin who was a priest. He has recently passed away. Sister was also a teacher for forty-nine years.

1-00:05:42

Ehrlich:

In your childhood, what are your memories of your religious training?

1-00:05:49

Ceminski:

I just remember always going to church. My sisters and I thought we were very good singers—we were always in the church choir. We had our own choir. We used to sing on Sundays. My mother was very proud. So I have very good memories about my Catholic upbringing. I married a Catholic man. It was very important for me to marry somebody with my same religion.

1-00:06:24

Ehrlich:

Did your mother work outside the home or was she kept busy enough with all the children?

1-00:06:29

Ceminski:

She was kept very busy with the family, and when we lived on the farm, (which my dad always owned) although he didn't always live there, we lived there for maybe four or five years. Mother worked very hard on the farm and with the family. During the Depression, we had a big garden and we always had plenty to eat. Our garden was so big that we would put out bushels of tomatoes, lettuce, and all kinds of vegetables by the highway, and people would help themselves. All would be gone every evening—whoever drove by would just help themselves.

1-00:07:12

Ehrlich:

For free?

1-00:07:14

Ceminski:

For free. We had so much. We canned a lot, and so actually we were one of the lucky ones I think during the Depression, because we never went hungry, and we had plenty to eat. We had a little schoolhouse that we went to—it was fun. When I think back now, at that time I didn't think it so, I used to hate where we lived; I thought it was terrible. Well, after I got married years later, we went back, and it's beautiful country—

1-00:07:53

Ehrlich:

What do you remember hating about it?

1-00:07:55

Ceminski:

I don't know. I just felt so all alone I guess—like we were deserted, way out, and there was a big world out there that I hadn't seen. My used to communicate with a man who had retired in Escondido, California. He would send him these postcards. I used to look at those pictures and think, "oh, it must be wonderful to live by the ocean,"—never dreaming that I was going to end up living almost my whole life in California almost. You know, really, I moved here when I was nineteen, and I have lived all my life here it seems. But I used to think that was the most wonderful thing, to be able to be by the ocean.

1-00:08:37

Ehrlich:

So tell me how you did end up in California, tell me that story especially since we're particularly interested in the war years.

1-00:08:49

Ceminski:

Yes, I was a freshman in college when the war broke out—World War II. And of course, everybody was trying to—they were going to join the navy or the marines and so forth, and I went to an all-girls college, a Catholic college. I had gotten in on a four-year scholarship to a very good college—at Atchitson, Kansas. It was run by Benedictine Sisters. Since then it has become a—they have both men and women, but at the time it was just a girls school. We had girls from all over the world from twenty-nine, thirty-nine countries, and most of them were scholarship students this made it very tough, because I had to keep a 3.5 to 4.0 average to renew my scholarship, which I did, and I renewed it for the whole four years. We had people from Panama, we had ambassador's children, very wealthy girls. It was a great experience. I was very young, but I'm glad I went because I had to get along with all kinds of people. It was fun. And I had a lot of bad memories. My roommate was from Panama. She went home for Christmas; she and her dad were drowned, she swam out too far—he went to save her, and they both drowned. That was my roommate, so I had to start with another roommate after Christmas.

1-00:10:32

Ehrlich:

For someone so young—

1-00:10:36

Ceminski:

Yes it was, and the thing about it was that we were very close—we got to be very close because we were away from home. You know, I don't remember ever being really lonely, because I was eight hundred miles from home, and I couldn't afford to fly home or go home. I only went home for Christmas and that was it. Some of the girls that had money would go home weekends if they were lonely, and I knew I couldn't do that. There were about eight or ten of us from Colorado that could not do as much as the other people. Some of the other girls had so much money they could go into Kansas City to see *Carmen* and other plays, productions. We didn't have all that money. I remember that for Thanksgiving, the parents in Durango and the parents of the Colorado girls sent us a big Thanksgiving dinner. We had a big party, and we thought that was a lot of fun. Yes, because we couldn't come home. But it was an experience that I think affected my whole lifetime. I got to know people from Puerto Rico, Panama, Canada, from all over the world, and I got along with all of them—I had to get along with all of them. It was probably one of the best things that ever happened to me, going to that college.

1-00:11:53

Ehrlich:

So how did you make the transition from college in Kansas to Richmond, California?

1-00:12:00

Ceminski:

Oh my, that was a transition—the transition to Kansas—you know the way I applied for a job in Kansas, when they told me I could not teach in Colorado because of my age, I just picked out all

the little towns that were close to the Colorado border and I applied by letter. I told them what kind of education and the teaching certificate I had. I was hired in a little town called Bird City, and it was out in the country. They had no running water—electricity we had, but I don't know—we still had the outhouses. Oh, that was an experience, and it was hot. They started in August because of the farming. They get out early in May, or by the end of April so that boys can work on the farm. It was wheat country, and I boarded with the president of the school board and his wife. I guess they all wanted the schoolteacher, because I was going to pay them thirty-five dollars a month. Now let me tell you, I got a hundred and ten dollars a month, but they told me not to tell anybody how much I got because the teachers in the city were only making eighty-five dollars, but I had more education you see. So anyway, I had sixteen children from kindergarten through the eighth grade. I had a couple of eighth graders who were almost as old as I was, but it was fun.

1-00:13:38

Ehrlich:

Do you really mean that when you say almost they were old eighth graders?

1-00:13:40

Ceminski:

Yes, they were old eighth graders, because they didn't go to school that much, you know—so they were sixteen or fifteen—one boy was almost seventeen—

1-00:13:49

Ehrlich:

And you were a very young teacher?

1-00:13:51

Ceminski:

And I was a very young teacher, but you know I got along fine. The older kids helped me with the little ones, and they helped me teach the little ones, then you have eight grades and one teacher, you know. And I understand that I cost that district a lot of money because I went to look at the books, and they had books that have been published in 1930, and so I ordered all brand new books for the school, and all new things. They told me later that I had really spent a lot of money, but I didn't care. [laughs] I got what I wanted.

1-00:14:26

Ehrlich:

It sounds like this was a good background for what you were up against in Richmond, so let's move you from Kansas to Richmond.

1-00:14:36

Ceminski:

Oh yes, from Kansas to Richmond. And then I came to Richmond, okay—I had worked three months in Yard Three.

1-00:14:44

Ehrlich:

What I'd like to know is how did you make the decision—how did you end up in Richmond, California from this little town in Kansas?

1-00:14:51

Ceminski:

Okay, I had two sisters that had come out earlier in the year, and they were both working at the shipyards, so they wanted me to come out and visit. So I waited at home in Silverton until my youngest sister Mabel got out of school. I believe she was a junior and when she got out of school, she and I came to California to visit my two sisters.

1-00:15:17

Ehrlich:

Let me ask how did your sisters know about the jobs in the shipyards in Richmond?

1-00:15:24

Ceminski:

Because of friends they had communicated with, friends from home that had come out to California and happened to be in Richmond. A friend had written to them and said, "you should come out, they are hiring a lot of girls," so they did.

1-00:15:41

Ehrlich:

So it was a word of mouth—passing the word back home.

1-00:15:44

Ceminski:

Word of mouth—and I moved in with my sisters, and we were in a little old house. Later on, we got into the government units. Meanwhile we were living in a two-bedroom house.

1-00:16:00

Ehrlich:

So you came out just to visit, and what happened?

1-00:16:03

Ceminski:

Just to visit—however when I came out here and I saw how busy people were, and I said I don't have a job for the summer. I had been given a contract to sign to teach in Colorado Springs, which is quite a nice city, and it was a good job. It was for teaching, I believe it was third and fourth grade in a nice district in Colorado Springs, but I had not signed the contract. In those days you actually had contracts and I had several weeks to sign it, and I had to sign it before July. Well, when I came out here and I started working at the shipyards, I just applied the first day and got a job right away. I worked where they were hiring people; it was a nice job—that's where Mr. Kaiser came in and all the big shots—

1-00:16:56

Ehrlich:

Tell me a little about that very first day in Richmond, what you remember things looking like and your impression of it.

1-00:17:03

Ceminski:

Well it was a very busy, busy town. There were a lot of movie houses. My youngest sister was too young to work in the shipyard, so she got a job at one of the—I believe it was the [Keva] Theatre, some theatre on Macdonald—I think we had more than one, but anyway she got a job

there and she was only fifteen years old or sixteen I guess. And it was very exciting because there were a lot of service people, we're all young people, and we all worked swing shift, which was 3:30 to 11:30 at night, I believe—I think we got out at 11:30 at night. We worked swing shift so we could sleep late in the morning, and so we all had breakfast together and we all started on the same shift. That was fun because it was exciting. My girls, my sisters were starting to date, you know. It was fun. We used to go to movies a lot. They had a movie house showing movies. People were working all shifts—from graveyard to swing shift and so forth. Richmond was a very busy town—very, very busy, a lot of cafes, restaurants—some nice stores too. I remember some of the stores.

1-00:18:28

Ehrlich:

What do you remember?

1-00:18:29

Ceminski:

I remember Marlene's for one, and I remember Albert's, I believe Albert's department store was on Tenth Street.

1-00:18:36

Ehrlich:

And what did they sell?

1-00:18:39

Ceminski:

Oh that was a department store like Macy's, but it was called Albert's. I remember a couple of dress shops. Marlene's was there for a long time.

1-00:18:48

Ehrlich:

That was a dress shop?

1-00:18:51

Ceminski:

That was a dress shop. That's where I did most of my shopping. It was fun going to San Francisco. We had Playland, which was a lot of fun. We used to go quite often on our days off.

1-00:19:01

Ehrlich:

What was Playland?

1-00:19:03

Ceminski:

Playland—what was Playland—Playland was all kinds of—like a big carnival. It's now part of the Golden Gate Park, and it was by the ocean, and—oh, you never heard of Playland?

1-00:19:21

Ehrlich:

Well, I'd like you to talk about it.

1-00:19:23

Ceminski:

I wish I could remember more—

1-00:19:25

Ehrlich:

That's a good beginning—

1-00:19:27

Ceminski:

It was like a carnival. Just a big carnival. It was all year-round and lots of fun.

1-00:19:38

Ehrlich:

So it sounds like your initial impression of Richmond was very positive.

1-00:19:42

Ceminski:

Oh, it was, it was very positive, and I thought it was fun, and I don't remember—oh, and one thing I must tell you this because this is important. Almost right after the war my sister became a policewoman in Richmond, and that's when they still had the officers at Point Richmond. She's a year younger than I am, and she was one of the girls that was out here. She became a policewoman in Richmond, I got to meet a lot of police officers. When I started teaching I had some very close friends and I taught some of the policemen's children. I got to know them pretty well too. I still remember some of the policemen.

1-00:20:41

Ehrlich:

And this was after the war?

1-00:20:43

Ceminski:

This was after the war too. Yes, she worked—after the shipyards. I believe she went to work at the Ferry Building after I had worked there when they were decommissioning the ships, after the war. I worked at the Ferry Building the second summer after the shipyards while the war was still going on.

1-00:21:09

Ehrlich:

Well I'd love to hear more about the police, but I'd also like to back up a little bit and hear about your getting hired at the shipyard—did you just walk in and get hired the same day?

1-00:21:21

Ceminski:

I can remember going and—I guess the fact that I what was it was equivalent to three years of college behind me, plus the experience of having been a teacher. I had taken several classes on—I knew how to type, take shorthand. I really had the skills, and that's when I became one of the secretaries, one of the clerks working in the front office. I think there were three of us on shift, Ernie was my boss. He was a very good-looking young man, and he used to call me a "little girl"—I don't know why because I didn't think I was that little. But he was probably one of the best bosses I ever had, he really was a very nice man. There's where Henry Kaiser used to come

in other personnel. They were just other people for me, I was not impressed then—I would have been now, you know—but it was just somebody that came in the office.

1-00:22:34

Ehrlich:

What do you remember of Henry Kaiser?

1-00:22:40

Ceminski:

I remember one time somebody told him that I was a schoolteacher, that I was going back to teaching. He came just before I was going to quit, and he said, "You know, that's a very fine idea. He said, "Because this is just war work, and you know it'll be over, and so I think that is a very good choice." I can remember that, and I remember him being very pleasant—I can't quite picture his face anymore. I did for a long time but I can't now. It was a good experience.

1-00:23:22

Ehrlich:

So you were just there for the summer right?

1-00:23:23

Ceminski:

There for the summer—then September I went to teach, now that was—

1-00:23:28

Ehrlich:

Tell me a little more first about the shipyard, what do you actually do there?

1-00:23:31

Ceminski:

Well what I did, I would give them applications, have them fill in the application, help them if they needed help. Then if they got an interview—which some of them did and some of them didn't. I would take them to our boss. Some of them were interviewed. Then if they were hired, I had like a little motor scooter, I would take them to their new job—

1-00:24:01

Ehrlich:

On the motor scooter?

1-00:24:02

Ceminski:

On the motor scooter—it was either to Shipyard One, Two or Three.

1-00:24:05

Ehrlich:

Now were you just hiring women, or women and men?

1-00:24:07

Ceminski:

Mostly men.

1-00:24:11

Ehrlich:

Tell me who the people were, where were they from?

1-00:24:14

Ceminski:

They were from all over. A lot of people were from Oklahoma, Arkansas—not so many from the middle states as the southern states, and I can remember one instance—I'll never forget this instance. This man came in and it seemed like he had probably been burned as a child, but he had almost one-half of his face was gone. He came in to apply for a job. He had a little problem speaking, and I can remember the other two girls wouldn't wait on him because they couldn't stand to see him, so I waited on him and I don't know if he was hired—I can't remember. I thought the way the girls were acting was terrible. I was kind of embarrassed because the man could feel like they were shying away from him, you know, I thought the poor man you has, this happen all the time.

1-00:25:19

Ehrlich:

Do you have any memories of anybody else with disabilities working in the shipyards?

1-00:25:25

Ceminski:

I remember that one, he had a hard time speaking.—I do remember that he had worked for some construction company down south somewhere, and in fact I'm pretty sure he got an interview. No, I don't remember anymore, but I know applicants came in everyday—

1-00:25:53

Ehrlich:

White, black—

1-00:25:55

Ceminski:

Black, everything—every color there was—not the Asians as much, I don't remember that—mostly black and white. And then like I said, then I also had to tell them that there was no opening right now, that they should check in later on and so forth—I had that little job also.

1-00:26:21

Ehrlich:

Do you remember differences in what kinds of jobs blacks and whites would be offered or men and women, or anything like that?

1-00:26:30

Ceminski:

Well you know most of them I really don't remember because I think they put down that they would be welding or whatever was available at that time. My sister that had worked as a welder, that later became a policewoman. As a welder, she was barely five feet tall. And she was very popular because she could get into places to weld where the men could not. She really did a lot of welding on the liberty ships, you know that's what they were making. But I can't remember—I know that I had never seen so many black people because Colorado was a very prejudiced state. We had a lot of prejudice not only for black people but also for Latinos—(they call them spicks).

The porters on the trains that went to Durango were black—they wouldn't even let them rent a room. That was how bad it was, and to some extent it still is. This was a new experience for me. In Kansas I saw a lot—I saw a lot of mixed marriages that I hadn't seen before. They had many black and white marriages, so I'd seen that in Kansas City so that didn't bother me at all; however I had some strange experiences teaching with the black children.

1-00:28:28

Ehrlich:

Let me just—this is in Richmond?

1-00:28:33

Ceminski:

In Richmond—my first year of teaching, I taught second grade. The first day I had sixty-eight children. They were no seats for all of them. They finally got down to forty-eight. We had a hard time getting enough teachers because a lot of the teachers that were hired, if their husbands were transferred they would quit and go with them. There was a big turn over. But anyway I ended up with forty-eight students, and I think the first week I probably would have quit if it hadn't been for a nice lady named Mary Lowden. She was in charge of the new teachers—I can't remember exactly what her job title was. But she would come in and we would rearrange the seats. She would encourage me, saying it was going to get better, it's going to get better—I mean I was overwhelmed.

1-00:29:28

Ehrlich:

So tell me about the little girl you were starting to tell about.

1-00:29:32

Ceminski:

I started to tell you about this little girl who came to school I for two weeks wearing the same little dress. Half the time she didn't wear underwear. When she did, you could tell she'd been wearing it for days. People were so busy making money—mothers and fathers working—Some of them were not taking care of their family the way they should have. I used to tell her, "Tonight can you wash your own clothes?" Do you think you could do that? Well, meanwhile like two days later, into the room this man (who was white) he came in, I could smell the liquor on him—and he said, "I don't want my little girl sitting by that black nigger." That little black boy that was sitting by her was as clean as can be. Well I had to call the office to come and take care of him because the kids were all scared, they didn't know what was happening. And he went on with bad language until the principal came and they took him away you know—and half my class—at least one third of them were black, at least. Most of all the people that I was teaching were families living in the government units. I can't remember but I think we had about eighty teachers—we had so many students, but we had double shifts—I forgot to tell you that.

1-00:31:26

Ehrlich:

Yes, let's see are we pretty much done talking about the shipyard—is there anything else you want to add?

1-00:31:32

Ceminski:

Well, unless you wanted to know more—well see, I really don't have any pictures. I wish I did because it was a very exciting summer, and the job was very interesting. I got to meet a lot of different kinds of people.

1-00:31:52

Ehrlich:

Some people have trouble filling out the application forms?

1-00:31:55

Ceminski:

Oh yes, a lot, and there were some people that actually had to put an X for their name. I don't know exactly how they got here, but you could tell that they were really desperate for a job and they got it. I say oh, there was a job for almost everybody I think—

1-00:32:22

Ehrlich:

That was a question I had—do you remember, did most people get hired?

1-00:32:26

Ceminski:

Yes, I think most people got hired. For one we needed janitors, we needed everything so I remember that almost everybody that I interviewed got hired.

1-00:32:38

Ehrlich:

And did you see a pattern of what types of people got hired for what types of jobs?

1-00:32:44

Ceminski:

No, and I didn't see any type of discrimination either. I think where I was working; it probably depended on what kind of background they had, really. I remember very few that did not get hired, and some might have been hired later on. That I didn't know, but most of them were hired—there were still hiring a lot, and I guess they might have had a big turnover too—now I don't know about that. The people that were dismissed, I had to give them their dismissal checks.

1-00:33:26

Ehrlich:

Why were they dismissed?

1-00:33:30

Ceminski:

Well, some of them because they had to quit for some reason or other, and others because they weren't doing the job they were supposed to be doing, but not very many—I don't remember very many of them. I remember giving them their checks, their last checks. I was only one of three girls so, you know there were three people—

1-00:33:49

Ehrlich:

So they'd hop on the back of the scooter?

1-00:33:52

Ceminski:

No—they had a little side seat, and so I learned to drive a scooter. I gave a wild ride a couple of times. [laughs] I remember one time taking my boss, I took him some place and I stepped on the accelerator instead of the break, and we had a little wild ride that time, but he laughed it off—that was not too dangerous. It was a good experience, but the first year of teaching was very hard—very hard.

1-00:34:20

Ehrlich:

I'd love to hear all about that. Tell me all about it.

1-00:34:31

Ceminski:

Well, first of all we had double session and started 8:30 in the morning until 12:30, and then at one o'clock until 4:30, so we had half hour in between. I had the afternoon shift and of course we were supposed to be there a half hour before school started. The first year I think, I worked two shifts most of the time, because we could get phones and I was living in a government unit. So when my principal needed a teacher, he'd get in his car and he'd go to my apartment and knock on the door and say "Mary Anne I need you for kindergarten this morning." So I'd get up, get dressed in a big hurry and I'd go teach kindergarten in the morning. Then I'd have half an hour then teach my class in the afternoon. I did this very often, at sometimes two or three days at a time. We had such a big turnover, and that's the only way that we could do it. Quite often—

1-00:35:45

Ehrlich:

Such a big turnover of teachers because their husbands might be leaving—

1-00:35:52

Ceminski:

Yes, and they wanted to go with their husbands. Now I was a provisional teacher, so I had to keep going to college. So after teaching two shifts and getting home or going directly to University of California for classes until ten o' clock at night, I would end up grading papers or getting up at four o'clock in the morning to grade the papers for the next day. It was a struggle but I did it, you know—you are young, you can do all that stuff. I mean I even found time and I took classes on Saturday at the University of California. Later on in the summertime I took classes at San Francisco State. But I also took classes at the University of California in the summer. I took a whole session the first year after I started teaching and after the war was over. And I had some really good classes at the University. I had a good experience at the University. I didn't have time for sororities, because I was too busy. But I can remember the first day that I got hired as a teacher, Miss Cameron was the assistant superintendent and Mr. Helms was the superintendent.

1-00:37:31

Ehrlich:

Walter Helms.

1-00:37:32

Ceminski:

Walter Helms—they're both gone. Ms. Cameron would give you a writing test and you had to pass the writing test. This was very important to her. I remember passing it with honors. She was a nice lady. I remember being interviewed by both of them, Mr. Helms and Miss Cameron, and they decided that I was good enough to teach school. I taught there for four and a half years. I became engaged and married while I was there. Then I have to tell you about— We had a principal one year, but I'm not going to mention his name, and he thought instead of sending report cards home that we should hand deliver them and get to know the families. This took a lot of work because you tried to make an appointment—when will you be home, etc. We did this mostly after-school hours. It didn't work very well because we didn't get enough response. I did go on at least fifteen visits. Some of them were very good visits. I would go and get to know the parents. I'm your child's teacher and you know I'm going to bring you her report card, talk a little bit about her work and so forth. Many times the parents wouldn't be home but someone would be there. I went one time to this home. It was an apartment upstairs, and I believe it was on Cutting or off Cutting. Someone said, "Just come in." There was a young girl probably fourteen, thirteen, who was very pregnant. I'm sure she had never been to school. There was a little older girl there that had let me in and she said she was the sister of the one going to school. They had a little goat running around, and I never knew how in the world they could have that goat on the second floor. Did they train it? Did they toilet train it or what—you know it's a little goat. It was a pet goat. You know, the girl that was pregnant had never been to school. I had to report this to the principal. The mother and father were both working I guess the girls were in charge of the house, and that was it. The only one that was going to school was the one that was in my class—the other two were not going to school at all.

1-00:40:39

Ehrlich:

Was there a lot truancy?

1-00:40:41

Ceminski:

I believe there was and probably a lot of it was because people—I don't know why—I remember having a boy come in to the second grade, and he was a black boy. He was large. Because he was large, they put him in the second. And he didn't say a word for two or three weeks. I didn't know whether he could talk at all. Then if the kids were good—and I kept telling them they're doing good—the last half-hour of the week I would let them bring their favorite records. We'd play them on the phonograph. They could dance or do whatever they wanted to. He brought a record and on that Friday, he put this record and did the most wonderful dance! I didn't even know he could sing and or anything. He hadn't said a word to us and from then on that kid was in.

1-00:41:49

Ehrlich:

What do you remember about the music and the dancing?

1-00:41:51

Ceminski:

I remember it was a very—something like a real fast dance—he said he did a jig for me, whatever a jig was, and all the kids just clapped for him and he started talking, but until then he

hadn't said a word. He hadn't had any schooling. I had to teach him just like a regular first grader. Can you imagine trying to do that with forty-eight kids in the room?

1-00:42:23

Ehrlich:

It sounds almost impossible.

1-00:42:24

Ceminski:

It was, it got down to maybe forty-two, and we had no teacher aids like we had many years later. This would have been fine if we could have had some mothers come in to help, you know?

1-00:42:36

Ehrlich:

So tell me how you managed it.

1-00:42:38

Ceminski:

Well, I don't know because I worked really hard at it and I used to spend all my Sundays making fun games for them for phonics—we didn't have that much equipment, flash cards and so on. I used to make my own flashcards. I used to spend Sundays making things that would make it easier for me to teach. They made it and we finally got down to where about thirty-eight kids.

1-00:43:17

Ehrlich:

Did you have different kids everyday?

1-00:43:21

Ceminski:

Well, they were always coming and going—that was another thing. We used to have to keep very strict attendance records—that I remember. At the end of the year, we would make the last day of school usually on a Friday and until all the numbers came out exactly right, we couldn't go home. Sometimes we worked on Saturday because of the attendance. We have to tally all the attendance so it would agree with the records of the state. They don't have to do that anymore.

1-00:44:02

Ehrlich:

Of which child was in which classroom and which days they attended?

1-00:44:05

Ceminski:

Let me tell you what happened though one time. Mister Weaver came early in the morning, and said, "Mary Anne we need you."

1-00:44:13

Ehrlich:

Mister who?

1-00:44:13

Ceminski:

Mr. Weaver, Fred Weaver was my principal at this particular time. He said they need you for kindergarten. Kindergarten was fine, but all I did all morning was count because there was so many of them, and you know—all of a sudden it seemed like one of them was gone, all of a sudden I couldn't find three kids. I got really upset and scared so I called down to the office and I said, "I'm missing three children." There were around thirty-five or forty kindergartners. I couldn't find them and so they started looking. There used to be, on the second floor, shelves—covered shelves all along the hallway. They had hidden in there and closed the doors. You know, if I hadn't reported them they could have suffocated. It was hard. I mean it seems like all morning I was trying to tell them stories and trying to teach them something—all I did was count to make sure I had them all. It was a bad experience—it was kindergarten; I didn't like kindergarten. The other grades were okay and I got to teach different grades.

1-00:45:31

Ehrlich:

Oh you—wait, why did you teach all grades? I thought you were teaching second grade.

1-00:45:35

Ceminski:

I mean—yes but when I was substituting, they called me for whatever grade a teacher was missing.

1-00:45:45

Ehrlich:

Regardless of—

1-00:45:46

Ceminski:

Regardless—

1-00:45:47

Ehrlich:

And have you had training in the other grades—teaching other grade levels?

1-00:45:50

Ceminski:

Well yes. When you have practice teaching you teach all the grades. I took practice teaching in Kansas and then I did practice teaching with my class—I mean I got graded for both. When I did practice teaching for Kansas I did it in every grade through the eighth grade, so I had experience. When I did it in Kansas I had each class for a whole week so if I was teaching a seventh grade I'd have for a whole week and so forth. It was a very good training.

1-00:46:25

Ehrlich:

Kansas was a good background for what you ended up against in Richmond.

1-00:46:27

Ceminski:

Oh yes, because I don't know how I could have managed—I really don't—but I had a lot of encouragement. Ms. Lowden was one of the best people there was. She just kept me going and

kept telling me things this would get better—and they did. I was there for four and a half years or maybe five. When they opened J. O. Ford School I was transferred there. They took teachers from different schools to the new school.

1-00:46:59

Ehrlich:

Tell me a little bit about the other teachers that you taught with at Nystrom.

1-00:47:04

Ceminski:

I still have two friends that I see twice a year that started teaching the same time I did. One of them was three years older than I and she was married—her husband was in the service. One of them was my age and we taught at the same school in Nystrom. We got to be kind of a little group—there were five of us, there were two sisters, another girl, and my best friend Evelyn Hagg, who later went to work in Berkeley. She didn't stay too long, but the others stayed at Nystrom and then they went to different schools. One of the girls was married to a postmaster that went to Washington, D.C. She went to teach there, but we still keep in touch. There were five of us, now there's only three of us. We just met two weeks ago, and we still meet at least once or twice a year. We get along really well. We used to go out together to dinner and go out in the evening sometimes or during the weekend to San Francisco—

1-00:48:08

Ehrlich:

Now where were they from? Were they newcomers too?

1-00:48:11

Ceminski:

Two of them were from Minnesota, two of them were born and raised in Richmond, and one of them was from Berkeley. Three of them were actually from California—the other two were from Minnesota. And then we knew—we had a lot of other teacher friends, a lot of them from—we got teachers from Oklahoma that were close friends. There were two sisters Joy and Esther Smith. I guess there were teachers probably from every—all the different states, but we did have a lot of California born teachers at that time. My friends now that I have were born and raised in California.

1-00:49:00

Ehrlich:

Do you remember there being any tensions between the native-born teachers and the incoming teachers?

1-00:49:13

Ceminski:

No, you know I don't remember, or maybe I wasn't aware of any—maybe there might have been and I wasn't aware of it. I know that there's a certain pride being California born [laughs] you know, and there still is, but I don't remember if there was any discrepancy in the way or treated us or anything. I really don't remember any—there might have been but I wasn't aware of it.

1-00:49:38

Ehrlich:

And were the teachers—what were the racial backgrounds of the teachers?

1-00:49:46

Ceminski:

If I remember we had very few black teachers.

1-00:49:59

Ehrlich:

Do you know if there were any?

1-00:50:02

Ceminski:

Well, I only remember about three out of eighty that first year, and of course, that has increased every year. We have a lot more right now.

1-00:50:13

Ehrlich:

Do you have any sense of what the experience of those three was like—how attitudes towards the other teachers or—

1-00:50:24

Ceminski:

Well no—we had one principal that black, and I remember two black teachers that were special Ed teachers—you know teaching special education children. They were—I think one of them might still be living, I'm not sure—so many of them had passed away, you know. But I remember very few black teachers. I think probably that first year I don't remember but two or three.

1-00:51:08

Ehrlich:

And any other ethnic groups?

1-00:51:15

Ceminski:

Probably me. I was hired as Mary Anne Gallegos, which is a Spanish name, and I don't remember any other Spanish teachers until I got to know people from Helms. They had a couple of Latin-named teachers. I believe I was probably the only one who was Latina in Nystrom—I don't remember any other. Later on I got to know a lot them that were in the rest of the district.

1-00:51:54

Ehrlich:

How about in terms of racial issues between the kids—what do you remember of that? You told the one story about the father and his—

1-00:52:04

Ceminski:

Well I have to—we did have a lot of the N word—the white kids—we had to deal with that, you know, calling little black kids N's.

1-00:52:17

Ehrlich:

And was that all of the white kids, which white kids?

1-00:52:20

Ceminski:

No, the ones from the South mostly. They heard it at home and they would repeat it. I dealt with that all the time. There were words I didn't allow in the classroom. I didn't allow any N-words and I didn't allow the words "shut up." They could not say that to anybody, that was rude, and I had my own little ways of dealing with it. As a rule the kids were very well behaved, I mean you didn't have the problems that you have now—that I had later on. Behavior-wise we didn't have the behavior problems that we have now and had later on. When I retired in 1982, I had a class which was probably the most difficult class I ever had. Half the time if the kids were not in my class who are in juvenile hall—that's how bad it was—is one reason why it was not fun anymore. I felt like a probation officer. It wasn't fun anyway—I would've taught longer—I was only fifty-eight when I retired, but I had thirty-seven years. I probably would have taught longer if it hadn't had such difficult classes towards the end.

1-00:53:39

Ehrlich:

So you really saw things change?

1-00:53:41

Ceminski:

Oh yes, definitely. Oh yes, because at first the kids were well behaved. I would say if you had one discipline problem in the room that was it, nothing like later on. You'd think there'd been more because the people were so busy, but I guess they had had good home training. I don't remember having any really, really bad discipline problems until later on. I had one or two bad ones, at the most.

1-00:54:21

Ehrlich:

Were there any just sort of—I don't mean bad behavior, but just behavior differences between say the kids from the south and the kids born in California, or the kids from Oklahoma and Arkansas?

1-00:54:33

Ceminski:

No, really I can't remember any real differences. All I can remember that—and this is interesting, there was the kids that didn't seem to have very much money, the ones that were more poorly dressed. If they brought lunch to school—which they did—they'd offer me the best—their cake—the best thing I mean they were so unselfish about it, you know really, so it was neat. I mean there were more—they respected you, and they looked up to you, which unfortunately it doesn't happen that much anymore, but I really enjoyed it, it was fun teaching. It really was—it felt like you were teaching and also my principals were good. They stood behind me, you know, if I decided I was going to hold over a child they went along with me. I didn't have any problems with any administrators. I had good rapport with them. I am very artistic—I loved decorating my room. I used to go early and to change my room for every season. It was fun. I enjoyed teaching art. Then too I have a second language; I'm bilingual. So we had a lot of little Mexicans. Some couldn't speak English, so I found it very, wonderful that I knew the language.

1-00:56:26

Ehrlich:

So were you raised speaking Spanish in the house?

1-00:56:29

Ceminski:

I was raised speaking Spanish. I spoke Spanish all the time. My mother never learned English very well; my father spoke it fluently.

1-00:56:36

Ehrlich:

Where was your mother born?

1-00:56:39

Ceminski:

She was born in Colorado, but the Spanish people didn't believe that women needed education, you know. They were just supposed to learn how to cook and take care of babies I guess, so my mother didn't get to go to school very much. They didn't send her to school. My mother would have been very, very good because was very smart. She should've been a lawyer. She could've been a good lawyer. She had a good brain but she lacked the education. My dad was self-educated because he was—I have to tell you this—

1-00:57:19

Ehrlich:

Actually you know what, why don't you hold it cause the tape is about to run out, and we'll start there.

1-00:57:23

Ceminski:

Okay all right—you mean I've been talking that long, oh my gosh. [laughs]

1-00-58:30

Ehrlich:

So this is tape two of our interview with Mary Anne Ceminski, and you were just about to tell a story about your mother in relation to you speaking Spanish in the home.

2-00:00:54

Ceminski:

Yes, we spoke Spanish at home because my mother and dad spoke Spanish all the time, and we spoke Spanish. Now my older brother and sisters, they spoke English to each other and of course I had picked up a few things from them, but actually I knew very little English when I started the first grade. We had no kindergarten. I went directly to first grade and I went when I really was barely five years old I learned English and we didn't have a bilingual teacher; I learned English. This is one reason why I never liked the bilingual idea I felt that if I could learn English by being exposed to it right away that everybody could, but I guess that's not the way to look at it. Later on I will tell you that later on I was drafted to a bilingual program when they found out I had my masters in Spanish and they needed a bilingual teacher. I went to teach bilingual children. But when I went to school, my mother was very, very helpful with my homework and everything else. We had a little Christmas program when I was in the first grade—for all the parents, and I remember that the teacher got up on the stage. She said, You know, we have an amazing little

first grader that has already read five primers." We called them primers then—and so she mentioned my name and I went to the stage and everybody clapped. Well when we got home that night my mother was in question. She said, "I want you to bring one your books to me,"(in Spanish). So I opened the book and I started reading, turned the page, and then she pointed to one word and said, "what is this?"—"I don't know." I had memorized all the stories in the five books. I didn't know how to read a word. My mother started teaching me word by word at home, and that's the way I learned to read in the first grade, but I had—the teacher thought I was wonderful. I knew all the stories by heart. I knew the pages—I'd look at the page, I could read the whole page. I had it in my head, so actually—my mother detected that, nobody else had, and so that was when they were teaching phonics—so phonics was good too because my mother could do that. She could sound off the word for me and help me out. You remember she didn't speak English, but she really helped me to learn to read. From then on then of course I learned, but until that Christmas party I was just memorizing everything that everybody read.

2-00:01:48

Ehrlich:

So you began the story because you were talking about that there were Mexican children in your class. What do you remember about Mexican kids?

2-00:01:57

Ceminski:

Yes, I remember going to teach morning class at Pere School in Richmond that had a lot of Mexican children. I was trying to give directions and I said, "With your pencil I want you to write down," you know. I was going to say write your name at the top or whatever I was giving. Kids just looked at me very, very strange—you know they didn't know, so I went and I said, "Agarra un lapiz," and right away—I told them in Spanish and I repeated in English at the same time. Oh they were so happy that I could speak Spanish. Well, you know, it was just like you're sitting there and someone is speaking—I don't know Turkish or anything, and you don't know what they are talking about, so when I pointed to each word and told them what each word was in Spanish and in English, my Spanish came in handy. [laughs]

2-00:02:55

Ehrlich:

Now were these—this was during the war?

2-00:02:59

Ceminski:

Yes, it was during the war. This was when I was being taken from one school to the other when they needed somebody in the morning. Then they would give me a ride to my class in the afternoon. So Pere was the school very close to Nystrom and quite often I would go from that school to teach my class.

2-00:03:21

Ehrlich:

Where were the Mexican kids from?

2-00:03:24

Ceminski:

Well, all I know they were from Mexico but they were living with relatives, and they were probably living in North Richmond—most of them, or in downtown Richmond—

2-00:03:38

Ehrlich:

Do you think they were from California or do you think they—

2-00:03:41

Ceminski:

I don't know whether they were people who had been fruit picking and then found a place to live—I don't know if they were legal, or if they were born here and raised here, I really don't know—

2-00:03:55

Ehrlich:

And do you remember there being prejudice against the Mexican kids?

2-00:04:00

Ceminski:

That I don't remember. I don't remember that there was and I probably wasn't aware of it if there was because there were a lot of Mexicans.

2-00:04:13

Ehrlich:

What about name-calling in general between the kids? I've heard of different slang terms being used for various different groups—do you have memories of that?

2-00:04:24

Ceminski:

You know they had their own little ways of saying things. I'll never forget one time this little boy came in crying and he told me that somebody had "given him the finger." I myself didn't know what he was talking about when he said he "gave me the finger." I said that's kind of crazy, I said you have a whole bunch of fingers—you don't need any. [laughs] He looked at me like I'm crazy but the sayings that they had—you know calling me out, they still called me out and things like that I wasn't used to hearing but yes, they had fights, the kids. I don't remember that they were racial—just kids you know what I mean?

2-00:05:08

Ehrlich:

What about the kids from Oklahoma and Arkansas being singled out? Any memories of that?

2-00:05:16

Ceminski:

They called each other "Okies."

2-00:05:18

Ehrlich:

Was it derogatory?

2-00:05:20

Ceminski:

It was derogatory—to be called an Okie was derogatory, but there were so many of them from all over. I mean you know, I'll revert back to when I was in Kansas, they had relatives who lived in Oklahoma and they used to say "oh those Okies," you know, like a derogatory term, and I used to think how could they say that when to me Kansas was Okie. [laughs] You know what I mean, because I thought so much more backwards than any place else.

2-00:05:54

Ehrlich:

So the implication was backward—

2-00:05:56

Ceminski:

Backward, yes it was backward. And that was a favorite—to be called an Okie and the N-word—

2-00:06:07

Ehrlich:

So you don't remember anything derogatory in terms of the Mexican kids?

2-00:06:11

Ceminski:

I don't, I really don't remember. I'm sure there were but I can't remember any, and of course now you know we have so many of them—that's forty percent I think of California, so I don't remember really. Later when I taught bilingual classes I will say one thing, it was one of the best classes I had. The parents were so interested in their kids getting a good education. If we were to have a holiday, some parents would come and ask me if there was work that they could do at home during the holidays so they wouldn't get behind. I mean the Mexican parents really were interested in their kids getting a good education. I had probably the best cooperation that I had ever had when I taught the bilingual classes—and it was fun. The only thing I didn't like about it is that I had to make so many reports. We had to qualify for everything. We were always taking and giving tests. We had to give so many tests! I guess so they could find out whether it was worthwhile or not money-wise and so forth.

2-00:07:33

Ehrlich:

What about health issues for the kids, especially when you were teaching second grade?

2-00:07:39

Ceminski:

Well, the health issues that we had, we had one nurse and I think we eventually ended up with two or three school nurses because let me tell you what happened—we had a head lice epidemic when I was teaching second grade, and the nurse would send home notes to buy this particular medicine but they wouldn't do it—

2-00:08:01

Ehrlich:

Why, why wouldn't they?

2-00:08:06

Ceminski:

Well, maybe because they didn't have the time to go pick it up or they didn't have the money, so eventually there were three nurses every morning that were washing these kids' heads.

2-00:08:18

Ehrlich:

Did you say washing or watching?

2-00:08:20

Ceminski:

Washing them and giving them the treatment they should've had at home because they weren't getting it at home. They were sending their kids to school, and we couldn't have them stay home forever. Every morning I would come in to the nurse and say, "look at my hair" because you know if you start thinking about it. You know they jump from one head to the other, especially kids because they play so close—you know they get close to each other. We really had a head lice epidemic. They had to do almost a hundred percent curing at the school. I'd send the kids into the nurse; the ones that were treated—some of them had been treated at home but not everybody, so it got to where they had to take charge more or less. I don't know if they would do that today, but I remember they got nurses to come in from the other districts I don't know where. They came from to help.

2-00:09:20

Ehrlich:

Do you remember any other health issues?

2-00:09:24

Ceminski:

No, not really. I can remember sending home little notes saying you know so and so needs to have a bath or something like that because some of the kids came pretty dirty to school. I'd send little notes home—I never got told not to. I worded them in such a way you know that wouldn't hurt their feelings. Or I would tell the kids themselves, "I know it's hard but you go home and—if you don't have shampoo, use soap and wash your hair." I used to tell them that. And it wasn't that the idea that they didn't have running water, it's just that people were so busy. Probably they had bills, buying clothes food, and I guess you can't blame them. Easy money—they were making a lot of money and that was important, it was number one. Mothers and fathers went to work so the kids were pretty much on their own.

2-00:10:43

Ehrlich:

Do you remember stories of that, of kids sort of fending for themselves beyond the one that you told about the book?

2-00:10:47

Ceminski:

Well, I remember one little girl that I had and it wasn't during the first few years, it was later on and she told me that she would come to school and almost within an hour she'd be asleep. Well it turned out that she had three or four siblings at home, and her mother would work but when she came home she and a lady friend would get together, bring her kids over to their house so that this girl would baby-sit for them. The one in my class was in fourth grade—would baby-sit for

them. The mothers then go out to the bars until two o'clock in the morning. The little girl had to feed the kids dinner, all of them, and so she wasn't getting enough sleep, but mothers were working and having a good time.

2-00:11:44

Ehrlich:

Do you think that that was a very unusual story during the war years or do you think—?

2-00:11:48

Ceminski:

No, it was not during the war years. I don't think this was happening during the war years. I think the people that were coming from other states to work, and they probably had a hard time adjusting the jobs—the requirements of the jobs to the requirements of the family. I imagine that was the biggest part. I don't think it was because they were bad people that didn't care—they just didn't know how to manage their time. It was something so new and there were a lot of distractions. There was a lot of nightlife, a lot of nightlife that you don't have now. I don't know if you know but they used to have a topless bar on Macdonald. They use to call it the Nut Club, n-u-t, and that was open all night long I think—I mean probably until two o'clock in the morning. And there were a lot of different entertainment places that people could go to. I remember that while working at the shipyards we used to get out at eleven thirty and go see a movie afterwards before we came home. We could sleep late in the morning. The town was pretty lively. I mean there was a lot of things going on, and maybe that was one reason why the parents had a hard time establishing good health issues at home—could be. I don't know—I don't know why it was, but cleanliness was something that was wanting a lot. Maybe they weren't used to having a shower or maybe a bath every week. Maybe you know we're not used to having the tub or something like that.

2-00:13:44

Ehrlich:

Do you think were most of the parents of your kids working in the shipyards?

2-00:13:53

Ceminski:

Most of them, yes. I believe I can only remember maybe one family in the second grade where the mother was home, and she happened to be related to me, and I knew them and she didn't work. And that was probably one of the mothers that didn't work—the father was working in the shipyard and he was making good money and she stayed home with the kids. There were some parents that were—the mothers that were staying home but not very many.

2-00:14:33

Ehrlich:

What are your memories of the whole housing situation during the war, where your students lived and where you lived?

2-00:14:37

Ceminski:

Well the housing situation was good. They had I think one, two, and three-bedroom apartments and I don't remember how long I lived in the housing after we moved from San Pablo. We had a

little house in San Pablo that was not our house, we moved in with somebody. So when we got the three of us, my two sisters and myself, we got an apartment.

2-00:14:59

Ehrlich:

Was it war housing?

2-00:15:01

Ceminski:

It was war housing, but after they found out that the three of us were working we didn't qualify, so we had to buy a house or rent. We ended up buying a house on Forty-fifth Street on Florida Avenue in Richmond, which was a three-bedroom home. I can't tell you how much we paid for that house. I remember we bought a house on a Sunday. We went out to rent a house. We ended up buying a house—we had no furniture whatsoever, a three-bedroom home. I remember at the same time Ford Motor Company was still here, and I had a friend who worked there. He knew of a fireman who was being transferred back east was selling all his furniture. We bought all his furniture for two hundred dollars—we had a refrigerator, a stove, two beds, everything, so all of a sudden we have a house full of furniture. If you earned too much money, you couldn't stay, and that's why we moved. I think our payment was forty-nine dollars a month. It was a three-bedroom home. I don't know if it's still there—I'm not sure.

2-00:16:16

Ehrlich:

What about living conditions for other people like your students?

2-00:16:21

Ceminski:

Well you know after the war a lot of people went back home—went back to where they came from, and a lot of them—there were units from many years, the government units for many years, and there were people who stayed and bought homes or rented. There had been a big influx, just the opposite had happened after the war. A lot of people went back home and so our classes went down. A lot of people stayed—a lot of people stayed and are still here, like me.

2-00:17:01

Ehrlich:

Do you have memories of there being a housing crunch during the war where people couldn't find places to live or where it was very difficult?

2-00:17:09

Ceminski:

You know I'm not sure. I'm not sure because I remember we started looking to rent a house and we ended up buying one because somebody had bought this house. We assumed a G.I. and they left. We assumed the G.I. loan, which was a little like a FHA loan. People who had bought homes were selling their homes when they left.

2-00:17:45

Ehrlich:

I've heard stories that during the war, housing was a difficult thing and that people had trouble finding—there were so many people having trouble finding places to live.

2-00:17:57

Ceminski:

I'm sure there was, because like I said, when we came we moved in with this cousin more or less that one of the girls that had been here, and they only had like a two-bedroom apartment because we were just sleeping in the sleeping bags in the front room until we got a place to live. And I'm sure there were a lot of people who were having a hard time if you didn't qualify for housing, but there was a lot of housing. I mean it's all gone now, but it was all the way up to where we lived, and the housing is not even there—you know where Cutting comes to the end of San Pablo. There was a street there called Knott Avenue and there was a whole row of buildings right there—all the way up there. It's not there anymore, but that's where we lived. I'm sure there were a lot of a—probably after the war it was easier to find a place to live because a lot of people sold their home and had them for sale if they had bought them. And people who were very smart bought a lot of houses then were able to make a pretty good living with rentals later on. I know people who did that in Oakland, in different places—not just in Richmond. El Cerrito had a lot of houses, a lot of housing also.

2-00:19:28

Ehrlich:

What about people taking in boarders?

2-00:19:33

Ceminski:

I don't know about that.

2-00:19:34

Ehrlich:

So none of your friends did—

2-00:19:37

Ceminski:

None of my friends did so I really don't know—I'm sure they did. Like I said, two of my best friends were from Berkeley and they had big homes, and I don't remember if they ever took in boarders. They had big homes. I think they're probably still there. No, I don't remember but I'm sure there were people who were renting rooms and so forth, I just don't happen to have met any.

2-00:20:10

Ehrlich:

So talking about buildings I'm wondering what the physical condition of Nystrom was like when you started teaching. I've heard that some of the schools were quite run down.

2-00:20:24

Ceminski:

That was inadequate. They actually—when I started teaching it was only the one building with the rooms downstairs and upstairs. Then they added portables they added maybe ten or twelve more units, like they did at the junior high too—Nystrom was probably one of the oldest buildings.

2-00:20:57

Ehrlich:

Do you remember there being any problems with leaky roofs or bad plumbing or bad lighting?

2-00:21:03

Ceminski:

I don't remember then that the lighting there or the rooms, but when I worked at Montalvin Manor, the rooms—parts of the ceilings would come down—They had the squares, and we had a lot of problems with the building—

2-00:21:23

Ehrlich:

Where and where was that?

2-00:21:24

Ceminski:

In Montalvin Manor School, I taught there for ten years.

2-00:21:27

Ehrlich:

And when was that?

2-00:21:29

Ceminski:

And that was in the seventies, and all the schools around that time were really run down. They needed to be replaced I'm sure and re-furbished. I don't know if they ever did anything to Montalvin—it looks the same, and I'm sure that they had to do something with Nystrom, because that's an old, old building.

2-00:21:48

Ehrlich:

I heard that there was a new building at Nystrom in '43. Do you think that they added units that you were remembering?

2-00:21:55

Ceminski:

Well I know they added units but I don't know if they ever—ever tore down the old building. They might have, but that would be one of the oldest buildings. Pere School was old too. Several of the schools were very old.

2-00:22:12

Ehrlich:

Do you remember the fire at Roosevelt High?

2-00:22:15

Ceminski:

No, I don't. Do you remember what year?

2-00:22:19

Ehrlich:

I think it was in '43.

2-00:22:21

Ceminski:

Oh, well see that was before I came. I came in 1944.

2-00:22:24

Ehrlich:

You got here in '44 so you just missed the fire.

2-00:22:27

Ceminski:

I don't remember that, but I remember—I know I read the papers, but I don't remember reading about it. Well, see we didn't have television—I think we had our first TV in 1949, but I don't remember if we read so much about murders, etc.—I can't remember that.

2-00:22:59

Ehrlich:

Safety issues. Do you remember if you walked alone at night?

2-00:23:03

Ceminski:

You know I wasn't afraid at all to walk alone at night, I used to do a lot of driving at night and—it never mattered.

2-00:23:10

Ehrlich:

So you had a car?

2-00:23:13

Ceminski:

Yes. I bought a car in 1949, and it was very difficult cars to get cars. I happened to know some people that were working at Ford Motors, Ford Motor Company. I knew them very well, and they knew of this car that had been ordered by somebody and then had it transferred, so it was going to come off the line. They knew which car was going to be mine and I got it. And oh, I didn't make very many friends that next day—I took the brand new car to work and people who had been having their name in for months for a car and all of a sudden I got one. But I knew some people at Ford Motors that I used to bowl with. I didn't bowl with them, I kept score for them for quite a while.

2-00:23:54

Ehrlich:

Now how did that come to be—tell us about that.

2-00:23:56

Ceminski:

Well I met a very nice man by the name of Al Brooks. He and his dad worked at Standard Oil for years. He was working at Standard Oil and bowled at the Uptown Bowling Alley, which was on Macdonald. They needed a scorekeeper so I went down there and kept score for his team. I got to know a lot of the men that were working at Ford Motors, and then we started sort of a routine. He and his friends and my sisters started going out to dinners together. We had quite a group of friends—not exactly boyfriends, just friends and we would go to different places to dinner places. That's when I got my car. It was a nice car, I mean I had it for several years—I had it even when I got married. I used to keep score for the leagues. I think I got paid five dollars for keeping score, but I enjoyed doing it. I didn't bowl yet but I've been bowling ever since. I still bowl in two leagues now.

2-00:25:09

Ehrlich:

What are your memories of the Ford Plant?

2-00:25:15

Ceminski:

Ford Plant? I don't remember very much except for the guys that worked there. I knew at least five and of course, I got to know a lot more because they bowled. Some of them that bowled I got to know and we became good friends—some of them I still keep seeing their names once in a while.

2-00:25:39

Ehrlich:

Did you hear stories from them about working at Ford or have an impression of what it was like for them to work at Ford?

2-00:25:45

Ceminski:

No, I didn't.

2-00:25:47

Ehrlich:

They didn't talk about work much?

2-00:25:49

Ceminski:

They didn't talk much about work but see the people that I knew, the ones I knew real well, were working where the cars were at the last finishing stages. They said that when my car was coming out they made sure every bolt was tight and in perfect condition. They knew which one was going to be my car.

2-00:26:16

Ehrlich:

So they found a way to push you to the front of the line?

2-00:26:17

Ceminski:

Yes, they did.

2-00:26:19

Ehrlich:

Were they inspectors?

2-00:26:21

Ceminski:

I don't believe they were. I believe they were just part of the assembly line. I don't remember exactly what their positions were. They had a lot of money—they seemed to get good wages.

2-00:26:36

Ehrlich:

Were they white?

2-00:26:38

Ceminski:

Yes, all of them were white and I kept track of some of them for many years. I think one of them is still—I see his name every once in a while—Paul. Two of them were married, two of them were not married, but that's all right because their wives went along with us when we went out to dinner. We just got a little group together—it was a fun group and we would hang out together after bowling.

2-00:27:07

Ehrlich:

So who bowled against who—it was Standard Oil and Ford?

2-00:27:12

Ceminski:

Well actually it was a whole league like we have a teacher league now. They probably had maybe ten different teams so they bowled against each other.

2-00:27:21

Ehrlich:

Do you have any memory of any of the other teams besides Ford and Standard Oil?

2-00:27:24

Ceminski:

No, I wish I did. I do remember some of the real good bowlers that became well known for winning at all-state level and so forth. I remember their names and I remember what they looked like, but I don't remember too much about the other groups. It was something to do at night—it was fun, but I don't remember exactly what happened when they moved. A lot of them quit their jobs and went to something else—they didn't all go to Milpitas, but it was a nice group. I can't remember how many teams they had but I think they must have had at least ten teams. It should be about forty people.

2-00:28:20

Ehrlich:

So I'm wondering if there are any more memories of Nystrom School before we move on.

2-00:28:31

Ceminski:

I am trying to think—I was there for four and a half years and when one of our favorite principals moved to Mira Vista a lot of teachers moved with him, and I was left. I did not leave but then I was transferred later to J. O. Ford, which was a brand new school, and I went to work at J. O. Ford with Principal Loretta Marks—it was a very nice principal, I liked her. And later on in years later, I found out that she was going to be in Montalvin. I had been at Sheldon for twelve years so I asked to transfer so I could work for her again. She was one of my favorite people.

2-00:29:16

Ehrlich:

I'm wondering when you're at Nystrom how the morale was. It sounds like your morale was pretty good. How was the morale in general among the teachers?

2-00:29:20

Ceminski:

Well, there was a lot of talk about the war and how it was affecting everybody, and of course my best girlfriend—her husband was in the Navy and he had been gone for almost three years without coming home. He was on—this is interesting—he was on a ship that would take supplies to the other ships and all his people on that ship were black. I don't know why they weren't in the fighting lines—I do not know. But they were the soldiers and sailors that carried groceries, food, medical supplies, etc.

2-00:30:08

Ehrlich:

And was your friend's husband black too?

2-00:30:11

Ceminski:

No, he was white. He was a graduate of Berkeley California, University of California—George Hagg.—I remember he was gone for three solid years before coming home one time, and I don't know how many years he was in the Navy because he was later stationed at Treasure Island. He's still living by the way—he and his wife are living and they are in their eighties and they just went on a safari. They do a lot of travelling, and they're great people.

2-00:32:48

Ehrlich:

How did you meet your husband?

2-00:32:52

Ceminski:

I met him while I was going to the University of California, and I thought he was a student because he was going to the same places I went to.—we would go for a swim, fountain and so forth, {right in?} Berkeley. I found out, he was working for Standard Oil, He went to a lot of the classes that I had because I couldn't date, so he went to classes with me—and you know going to the University of California they didn't call roll, so he took a lot of classes with me. [laughs]

2-00:33:24

Ehrlich:

You couldn't date because?

2-00:33:27

Ceminski:

Pardon?

2-00:33:29

Ehrlich:

You said you couldn't date, why?

2-00:33:36

Ceminski:

Oh yes, because I was so busy taking classes—

2-00:33:39

Ehrlich:

Oh, because you were too busy.

2-00:33:42

Ceminski:

Yes, I was so busy that I said, "If you want to go to class with me," then after class we'd go and maybe have a drink or something to eat. So he went to classes with me. He was working Standard Oil regular hours. That's how I met him, I guess, he had been working Standard Oil for maybe two months. He wasn't sure he wanted to stay in California; he wanted to go back to Seattle. I mean that was kind his home but never he went. Actually I married him the next summer, in June.

2-00:34:16

Ehrlich:

So what year was that?

2-00:34:17

Ceminski:

1949—June 25 in 1949.

2-00:34:21

Ehrlich:

So that was after the war?

2-00:34:24

Ceminski:

Yes. I went with him for about a year before I married him. I wanted to get married at Christmastime because that's when I had two weeks vacation, but he said no, we'll have to wait until June. I didn't know, but I found out. He was only twenty years old. He had told me he was twenty-five and I believed him—I was twenty-five. So finally, about February he said, "I really am not twenty-five, I'm only twenty," so in January he became twenty-one. We got married that summer. I was about five years older than he was. Nobody ever knew that because when he was thirty he had gray hair and his hair all turned gray. He was very attractive but nobody ever knew unless I told them. My sisters knew it.

2-00:35:14

Ehrlich:

Tell me a little bit about dating life during the war.

2-00:35:20

Ceminski:

You walk down the street, and they would talk to you, they wanted to meet you, and they want to take you, out to dinner or whatever. You know really it was—easy getting dates—especially dances.

2-00:35:31

Ehrlich:

Were these mostly men in the service?

2-00:35:34

Ceminski:

Men in the service. Usually I met most of my friends going to Sweets in Oakland, I don't know if you've ever heard of Sweets.

2-00:35:46

Ehrlich:

Sweets?

2-00:35:48

Ceminski:

Sweets. They used to have all the name bands come there. I met most of my man friends there.

2-00:35:55

Ehrlich:

So tell us about Sweets.

2-00:35:58

Ceminski:

Sweets was wonderful. It was a place to go dancing. They had all the name bands, like Spike Jones (who had his own band). It was kind of a comedy band—and Bob Crosby, and *all* the swing bands would come to Sweets. And it was a singles' place, you know you met a lot of people—and big bands, all the big bands came here.

2-00:36:34

Ehrlich:

Who were the clientele?

2-00:36:38

Ceminski:

Clientele—people like me, young people and married people who liked to dance, they went also, and people from all over—they'd come from all over. Then there was another place that was very interesting. This was around 1948 to maybe '55, there was a place in Marin county that had nice bands. It was outside, and it was like an orchard but they built a dance floor. A lot of people would go there. That's when we used to take the ferry to Marin County, and that was a very popular place to go.

2-00:37:21

Ehrlich:

Sweets was during the war?

2-00:37:23

Ceminski:

Sweets was during the war.

2-00:37:24

Ehrlich:

And was it mixed in terms racially or was it mostly white?

2-00:37:27

Ceminski:

It was mostly white, not very many—once in a while you would see some black couples but not every many. I think they must have had their own places because I don't remember seeing very many—they were mostly white. I remember mostly white. Then after Sweets—

2-00:37:41

Ehrlich:

Smoking, drinking?

2-00:37:43

Ceminski:

Yes, they had smoking and drinking. You could buy drinks inside. They had a little bar, a wet bar. But they had bouncers. I mean it was kind of a nice place, a nice place to dress up and go dancing.

2-00:38:02

Ehrlich:

Would women go alone?

2-00:38:07

Ceminski:

Yes, but I would say alone I'd see two or three girls together, you know what I mean. I don't know about going strictly alone, but yes women would go alone and you met—you could dance with everyone you know, and if you don't want to dance you could just listen to the music because the music was so good. It was just really good—it was all the big bands and everything. It was a good place to go, and then later on it was the Ali Baba. I always loved to dance, I used to go dancing on Wednesday nights, Friday nights, and Saturday nights during summertime when I had time.

2-00:38:46

Ehrlich:

Where was the Ali Baba?

2-00:38:49

Ceminski:

The Ali Baba was not too far from Lake Merritt, but I can't remember the street. That was a place pretty much like Sweets, but they had their standard band. I mean they had a fifteen-piece swing band and that was—I don't know where people go now but I'm sure there is a place to go. I remember one time going to a place by the lake which was a hotel of some kind—I can't remember the name—and they had a dancehall. It was right by the lake and I think they might still have dances there. Now mostly the dances are at senior centers. I'm sure there's places in San Francisco that I don't know of—there were then too during the war, a lot of places in San Francisco.

2-00:39:48

Ehrlich:

Did people go from Richmond into San Francisco?

2-00:39:50

Ceminski:

Oh, yes.

2-00:39:51

Ehrlich:

How did you get there?

2-00:39:54

Ceminski:

Well, there were the buses, the buses were good, and wasn't there a train that used to go? I believe there was, but I remember taking the buses to San Francisco a lot.

2-00:40:07

Ehrlich:

And you had a car.

2-00:40:08

Ceminski:

I had a car but you know before I had a car, before I got married and before I had a car, we used to take the buses for dates. The sailors would come over and we'd take buses, and there were places in—there was a really nice place in San Francisco called the Avalon. It was a dancehall on Market Street, and they had good bands too—and we'd take the bus. When I worked in San Francisco, I took the bus and it took me only half an hour from Cutting to where I was working, I would walk to the Ferry Building and I didn't think a thing about it, you know—that was before I got married of course when I worked in San Francisco.

2-00:40:56

Ehrlich:

Maybe we should talk about your job at the Ferry Building but before we do that, during the break you had mentioned something that you've forgotten to tell about Henry Kaiser.

2-00:41:05

Ceminski:

Oh, I meant to tell you about his sidekick. He had this—whenever Henry Kaiser came in, he had this man that was maybe his right man, or I don't know what his position was. He was a big man and was Mexican and very intelligent. I mean you could tell by the way he spoke—he had beautiful English. He got to talking to me a lot because he was probably intrigued because of my name Gallegos. I wish I could remember his name. We talked about my working at the shipyards that when I was a schoolteacher, He kept saying, "I'm sure glad that you are not to make this a career. He was encouraging me. He thought that I might want to stick to this job because I would—I could have you know. Instead of going back I could have had the job for a whole year, but I went back in September. He was encouraging me to go back to teaching because it was something that would be my life career and not the kind of work I was doing then. He told me it's just war work and it's going to go away—it's going to be finished.

2-00:42:23

Ehrlich:

This was the sidekick?

2-00:42:25

Ceminski:

The sidekick, yes.

2-00:42:27

Ehrlich:

So he kept an eye out for you?

2-00:42:27

Ceminski:

Yes, he did and he was very—I don't know why, I guess probably because of my Latin name that he got to know me. We had good conversations; I really looked up to him. I got to know him better than Kaiser because Mr. Kaiser would have business talks with my boss.

2-00:42:46

Ehrlich:

How often did you see Henry Kaiser?

2-00:42:48

Ceminski:

Oh, I guess maybe once a month or maybe more than that—maybe once or twice, because I remember at least two or three times.

2-00:42:58

Ehrlich:

And he made an effort to go over and speak with you even though you were just a temporary.

2-00:43:02

Ceminski:

Yes, I was just there, you know—I was just working there, but I can remember him as a person. I can visualize him right now.

2-00:43:09

Ehrlich:

What did he look like?

2-00:43:12

Ceminski:

Well, I mean, let's put it this way—he was not very big but he was chunky, you know kind of, and all I can remember now his having gray hair. That's all I can remember about him. He was pleasant, but the man that was with him was a big man—I wish I could remember his name. I can remember my boss. His name was Ernie. I always wondered what happened to him. I used to think he was so good looking—he was so handsome. Well I wasn't married then, I was looking at all the men. [laughs]

2-00:43:44

Ehrlich:

So do you want to tell us about your job in the Ferry Building?

2-00:43:48

Ceminski:

My job in the Ferry Building was very interesting because—

2-00:43:51

Ehrlich:

Let's place it in time first—

2-00:43:54

Ceminski:

In time, okay this was the summer after I had worked at the shipyards. I taught a whole year and then I went to work in S.F. I applied I got a job at the Ferry Building. I thought I was going to have to take a civil service test, and I was anxious to take the civil service test. I had several courses on how to take the test. But when I went they said because of my college background, I didn't have to take the test [laughs] After I had taken that whole course on how to take that test. So anyway I worked a commander and I wish I could remember his name but I can't. My job was to fill in orders when the ships were due into port, the ships that had been at war—when they would come into port they had to have repair work done; some welding done, some fixing. My job was to make sure that the equipment would be ready for them when they came into port. Therefore, I always knew more or less about how far the ships were out and about when they were due. For this reason I was really, researched I guess the FBI went to Colorado they interviewed my dad, my teachers, about what kind of person I was because of the security deal. I couldn't say anything about my work, what I was doing. They knew what I was doing but I couldn't say anything about the ships or the orders or anything. I met some very nice people while I was working there. They were all San Francisco girls working in the office. We had a great time because we would go out to lunch at different places, go out to dinner at the Omar Kyam and other beautiful places that at the time were popular. I got to meet a lot of people. My job was very interesting. I had some men friends that used to write to me and I would write to them. I couldn't say anything about my job. They would come into port and I knew when their ship was going to be in but I couldn't tell them. I was doing that when the war was over. I was working at the Ferry Building the day that the war was declared over—

2-00:46:53

Ehrlich:

Tell me what you remember of that day.

2-00:46:55

Ceminski:

That was, oh, that was a hectic day. First of all, the bars opened, they couldn't sell liquor except some days, but that day they opened the bar so you could go and buy liquor. The lines would be ten deep at the liquor stores trying to buy liquor to celebrate the end of the war. Market Street was like the Fourth of July or New Years without the firecrackers. It was—oh people were so excited and they were all yelling and screaming. I could hardly wait to come home because I wanted to get away from it. I took the bus home—when I got home my mother and my sister said, "Oh, we're going to see the people in San Francisco," so I was left at home alone. Here I had left San Francisco because I was tired of the noise, but it was exciting. All the people were walking down the street. There was a lot of confetti everywhere.

2-00:47:59

Ehrlich:

Confetti.

2-00:48:01

Ceminski:

Confetti all over the place—it was a mess. The day after I had a friend come to my door and we went to San Francisco and it was chaos. They were cleaning up the big—paper, the mess that people had made the night before, and he was so disgusted. He had just come into port. He said people haven't even been to war and they're the ones that are celebrating you know, and he felt that that wasn't fair—that he should celebrate I guess. I can remember that. I remember this particular person, he had been—he was in the navy, and he asked me if I wanted to go out to dinner—I think it was that following day. And he said but you have to wear black. You know during the war when you went out, you wore a black dress that was the style. So I dressed up and we took a bus. We had dinner with Sonia Henie, Allan Jones, and Rhonda Fleming.

2-00:49:04

Ehrlich:

And tell us who those three people are—

2-00:49:06

Ceminski:

They were movie stars who were performing at one of the theaters in San Francisco, but he didn't tell me who these friends were. They were actually friends of his because he had been a bouncer at Ciros in Hollywood. He knew all these people—so to him they were just anybody else, but of course I was star-struck.

2-00:49:27

Ehrlich:

And tell us who they were, what they did—what kind of performers.

2-00:49:31

Ceminski:

There were very quiet. Sonia Henie—I don't think said two words, and the man that took us out to dinner, he had just gotten married. He was celebrating—he treated all twelve of us to dinner. Some place in San Francisco I haven't been there before or after—very nice. It was this guy that had just gotten married. He was celebrating his marriage—he took us all out to dinner. It was a nice place, it was an Italian place but it was very, very formal—I can't remember what the name of it was. But that was kind of interesting because you know, movie stars were something that I read about and to see them in person. And I can remember one of the girls in the party telling me that she had to go home and change after dinner because we were with them all evening after that. Her name was Adams, Diane Adams and we went to—suite on Nob Hill. She wanted to change her clothes because she had been wearing the same dress all day. And I remember I went into her—it was a beautiful suite, and I went to her bedroom, she opened up the whole wall and she got about—I counted over fifty-nine black dresses! She was very wealthy and I hadn't seen her before. She just asked me to go with her; she didn't want to go alone. I got to meet a lot of wealthy people.

2-00:51:28

Ehrlich:

What is your sense of how things changed after the war?

2-00:51:35

Ceminski:

After the war—well I don't know Richmond became—was very nice at one time, I rarely go down to Richmond now and I do—I know what it's like but it just isn't what it used to be. It's just not as nice a place to go anymore. I'm afraid to go down there by myself because of what you read about—about all the shootings and everything else. We didn't have the drugs then, you know that was the thing—I mean I think this is sad, I mean what has happened to San Pablo and Richmond is sad. The element that is making history about the town is bad. It gives San Pablo and Richmond a bad name.

2-00:52:35

Ehrlich:

So you don't—do you remember violence when you—

2-00:52:38

Ceminski:

No, I don't remember that at all.

2-00:52:45

Ehrlich:

Any stories from your friends the police? I just interrupted you—what do you remember—

2-00:52:50

Ceminski:

Yes, I'm thinking about it. You know I don't remember anything, I really don't. I don't remember anything about violence. It just seems to me like it's getting worse every year, and every year it's sad because I'm sure there are good people there. Some people give it a bad name. Teaching is much harder, much, much harder now.

2-00:53:24

Ehrlich:

You were going to say something about the way Nystrom changed after the war—

2-00:53:28

Ceminski:

Yes it did. Later we didn't have such big classes and we got more help. You know more people from downtown that could help us.

2-00:53:37

Ehrlich:

Do you remember that happening quickly after the war ended or was it a gradual—

2-00:53:41

Ceminski:

It was a gradual change. By the time I left Nystrom we were down to maybe thirty-five children in each class. I was there for almost five years, and this was after the war. So by the time I transferred over to J. O. Ford the classes were between thirty and thirty-five.

2-00:54:04

Ehrlich:

Still double sessions?

2-00:54:06

Ceminski:

No, they went off double sessions. I believe right after I left Nystrom I don't remember teaching all day at Nystrom. There might have been double sessions for about four years, then they went all day. They went to regular sessions. When I went to J. O. Ford it was a regular session—you know regular sessions from eighty thirty until three o'clock. That was a brand new school, J. O. Ford. It was a brand new school, it was fun, it was more stable population. These families probably had never moved from their homes; you know what I mean—much more stable. Of course, Nystrom became more stable also. The people that were gone, the people that stayed there found places to live and kept going to the same schools. It became a more stable place to live and work.

2-00:55:19

Ehrlich:

What about on the streets—did it feel different after the war? Was it less crowded?

2-00:55:25

Ceminski:

Oh, it was less crowded. You didn't see as many service people because during the war you saw service people all over. It became less crowded. It was a gradual thing. It didn't all of a sudden become empty. It just gradually went down to where you could walk down the street and there wouldn't be all these people down the street, and of course, I think the movie theater closed and people probably started going other places for recreation instead of staying around Richmond. Actually it was such a gradual change that you didn't notice it. But by that time I was raising my two girls, I had other interests. I really wasn't too aware of what was happening downtown. I stayed at Sheldon for almost thirteen years. That was a little different, it was living in the suburbs. My husband and I had built two homes. We built one by Don Adams School by the Arlington—the first one, and then we sold that and built out in the valley, which was now expanding the neighborhood. I didn't notice, what was happening to the town because I was involved with my life and my family.

2-00:56:50

Ehrlich:

Is there anything else that—we're about to need to end, I'm wondering if there's anything else that you want to add?

2-00:57:00

Ceminski:

Well, I wanted to add; that I noticed was more even though people came from all the different states, brought their children to school—the children respected the teachers. We were looked up to by the parents. There wasn't this, "don't touch my kid," or "I'm going to sue you." Teaching was just much easier and more fun because we felt that you had the cooperation. During the war, people were so busy but that didn't mean that all of them—there were some parents that were always helpful. There's always a few that were willing to go the extra mile for their kids, but in general, people were too busy.

2-00:57:59

Ehrlich:

I think we need to stop now. I want to thank you so much for this interview.

2-00:58:02

Ceminski:

Well, I hope this helped you kind of get a little light on things, but I'm sorry that I didn't coordinate everything—

2-00:58:10

Ehrlich:

Oh it was wonderful, wonderful. Thank you so much.

2-00:58:13

Ceminski:

You're welcome.