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Gene “Genie” Hansen

Rosie the Riveter World War II Home Front Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by
David Dunham
in 2011

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Gene Hansen

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Interview 1: August 11, 2011

Begin Audiofile 1

Dunham: So it's August 11, 2011 and this is David Dunham here with Gene Hansen for the Rosie the Riveter World War II American Home front Oral History Project. It's a mouthful, and we usually start at the beginning, so could you just tell me your full name and date of birth?

1-00:00:17

Hansen: My actual full name is Betty Gene Hansen, it was Davies before I was married, and I was born in 1924, conceived in San Francisco, returned to San Francisco after two months, and lived there my first five years of my life until I moved to Hollywood.

Dunham: Oh, okay, could you tell me a little bit about your family background, your parents—?

1-00:00:42

Hansen: Not a lot to talk about. My mother was a very devoted mother to me, and my father, well, he was something else. He had some problems, and he wasn't around much during my life.

Dunham: Okay.

1-00:00:57

Hansen: Off and on.

Dunham: Did you come down to Hollywood with your mother?

1-00:01:04

Hansen: My mother and I think my father, I don't remember much about it. He was always gone, but we never had a car. I always came to our place in a taxi. I didn't know what a car was until I was over eighteen.

Dunham: Wow. Did you move around a lot or did—

1-00:01:21

Hansen: Yes, we did move around a lot, only as a matter of financial necessity. My mother had a college education, but she majored in music, and that wasn't too much of a money earning occupation, so she took menial jobs and we lived hand to foot, or foot to mouth, or whatever, and we moved around a lot. Whether we couldn't pay the rent, I don't know. We lived with my aunt in Glendale even at one time during the earthquake of '33, I remember that. From there we moved to a rest home where my mother took on a job of feeding these people and taking care of them, and we had to leave there because we found out they were a little bit on the insane side, and she made \$5.00 a month and room and board.

Dunham: Well, of course, this is during the Depression, so it's especially understandable—

1-00:02:11

Hansen: It sure was, right, so we had a, I had a very frugal childhood. That's why I appreciate everything I have now.

Dunham: Did you have any siblings?

1-00:02:24

Hansen: No, I was the only child.

Dunham: Do you have any particular memories of school and—

1-00:02:33

Hansen: In Hollywood I went to an elementary school named Laurel, and I went to another school on Sunset Boulevard, I can't remember the name of that one. Then I went to junior high school, I was a jitterbug queen in junior high school. Then I went to John Marshall High School and graduated there on February 4th. I was eighteen on February 7th. This was in 1942, and I got married on March 1st.

Dunham: Oh, wow. So how did you meet your husband?

1-00:03:07

Hansen: I met him through a cousin that lived next door, and he was a fisherman, so he wasn't really readily available as my boyfriend, so I had a couple of spares from high school, but he was my love of my life, and he would come up to take me out to the movie, and I'd have to wake him up to go home because he was so tired from his fishing trips that he took as a fisherman.

Dunham: Starting early in the day. So you graduated just after the U.S. had entered the war. Do you remember when you first heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor?

1-00:03:41

Hansen: I was visiting with my cousin I think at the time, and we heard it on the radio, so that was pretty scary, and then my husband-to-be talked to me about getting married and we thought well, we should get married before he entered the service, which he did enter the service as a Seabee. That was shortly after we were married, six months actually, and then he left for thirty-eight months. During that time I was in the shipyard working.

Dunham: Yeah, and how did you come to work at California Shipbuilding Corporation?

1-00:04:16

Hansen: Probably through he was working there before he went in the service as a warehouseman, and I just heard about it and went over and applied.

Dunham: So what did you apply as?

1-00:04:27

Hansen:

Well, I had clerical background, so I went into this place called Plant Protection, and I made a whole forty-nine cents an hour until I learned the Electrical Union was hiring people as expeditors. So I went out to the docks and talked to somebody, and they said well, go join the union and you can work for us as an expeditor. So I went over to Wilmington and paid my money and walked back to the shipyard and went to work for a dollar twenty an hour.

Dunham:

Did you have to get any special training, or—?

1-00:04:59

Hansen:

Nothing.

Dunham:

No.

1-00:05:04

Hansen:

As I said in my Rosie the Riveter letter, I was initiated by they sent me out on the outfitting docks to get a bucket of amps, and I couldn't find a bucket of amps, so that was my initiation.

Dunham:

So how did it go from there, how did you—?

1-00:05:17

Hansen:

It was wonderful. I worked for a group of wonderful men, sometimes their language got a little hairy, colorful, so we had a little kitty that I formed there with money to go in it when they swore. We used that money to buy lunch the last day we were open, so—

Dunham:

Okay.

1-00:05:37

Hansen:

We had a nice relationship, and we all walked out of there the end of the war together.

Dunham:

So you had the same crew all through because this was in '42 that you late '42?

1-00:05:47

Hansen:

Forty-two to '45 until the end of the war, at the shipyard on Terminal Island.

Dunham:

What exactly were you doing there? What was a typical day on the job like for you?

1-00:05:58

Hansen:

These people were in the outfitting docks, and when the ship is ready it went from the ways to the outfitting docks, and when it was finished there, it went out on a trial run. If there were parts needed, they would send me out to find them.

Dunham:

Okay.

1-00:06:12

Hansen: And I had a wagon, and sometimes I would go on board some of the ships, and if no one was looking, I would take a part and bring it back, and they were so proud me.

Dunham: So did you have to be expert at knowing all the parts, or did you just—?

1-00:06:28

Hansen: I didn't really know them too well. All I remember now is the salt water evaporator.

Dunham: What kind of ships were you building?

1-00:06:38

Hansen: Liberty Ships. There's one stationed over in San Pedro right now that I think was in our docks when I was working there, Elaine Victory. And they take tours.

Dunham: Were there multiple shifts?

1-00:06:55

Hansen: Oh, yes.

Dunham: What shift were you on?

1-00:06:58

Hansen: Oh, I wasn't on a ship.

Dunham: A shift—

1-00:07:00

Hansen: Oh, shift, I was on day shift until I decided that I thought swing shift would be more fun, and I went on swing shift and I didn't like it because nobody was working. They were all partying. So I went back on days.

Dunham: What was, if you don't mind my asking, what was the nature of the partying?

1-00:07:23

Hansen: Just acquaintances getting together.

Dunham: So there was some romantic—?

1-00:07:26

Hansen: Yes, a little hanky panky going on. I didn't want any part of that. I was trying to be loyal to my husband. I didn't want to write a Dear John. I had some temptations, true.

Dunham: So how long did you work the swing shift?

1-00:07:40

Hansen: Oh, a very short time, I don't even know, two or three months, I don't remember.

Dunham: What safety measures were in place, and were there any accidents that you know of?

1-00:07:54

Hansen: I can't recall, no, I just know that I had a '37 Ford that I wrote about in my notes that I would drive out there when it was running, and I remember going over that bridge in the Terminal Island and damaging my hood, not the hood, but the grill, and during World War II you couldn't get another grill, so they patched it up with chicken wire, so I'm driving a car with chicken wire. That was the only thing I knew as far as an accident.

Dunham: Okay, so just a personal, well, that reminds me you had in your story about how you originally got to work, a carpool—

1-00:08:33

Hansen: That was before I got my car, right, the big black hearse.

Dunham: Can you tell us about that?

1-00:08:37

Hansen: Yes, it was fun. This fellow charged two dollars a person, and he would take us to the shipyard. He would pull up in front of the house and inside the hearse it was all empty except for the benches on either side, and he would take ten of us every day. That's how we got to the shipyard.

Dunham: Wow. What about housing? Was it hard to find—?

1-00:09:01

Hansen: No, I lived with a girl that owned her home and another girl, and through living together like that I formed a lasting friendship with my dear friend, who passed away, but through our friendship I was able to contact my husband, and she was able to contact her husband, and they got together. He was in the Army and my husband was in the Seabees, and they got to meet overseas in the South Pacific.

Dunham: Oh, that's neat.

1-00:09:30

Hansen: Yeah.

Dunham: Now was this the friend you had kind of a little story about your lunchtime walks?

1-00:09:33

Hansen:

Right, that was my friend Jenny, and we would walk down through the docks and they would whistle and comment, and nothing was sacred in those days, and we wore what they called slacks, not capris, and they'd whistle and say, let's see what was it, I forget. Something so packed, so frilly—

Dunham:

Was it a cigarette slogan?

1-00:10:03

Hansen:

Yeah, it was a Lucky Strike slogan, so round, so firm, so fully packed. And then, we didn't care.

Dunham:

You took that as a compliment—

1-00:10:13

Hansen:

Didn't bother us.

Dunham:

Did any other women have issues with that kind of thing where it did get to be a problem, or—?

1-00:10:20

Hansen:

If they did, I don't know. I don't recall that.

Dunham:

How about aside from sort of good natured teasing, was there any bigger issues men had with working around women?

1-00:10:33

Hansen:

Well, one of them had a crush on me.

Dunham:

Okay.

1-00:10:36

Hansen:

Got to be pretty serious.

Dunham:

Oh.

1-00:10:39

Hansen:

It didn't develop into anything because I wouldn't allow it. He was married and had a family, and he was a lead man in the electrical shack. Yup, I remember his name, too, but I'm not going to say it.

Dunham:

Sure, sure. How did you handle that?

1-00:10:54

Hansen:

Well, I was flattered, and yet I knew it couldn't amount of anything, I was a married woman. I loved my husband. I wrote him every day.

Dunham:

Were there many others who maybe did give in to temptation?

1-00:11:08

Hansen: I'm sure, I'm sure. I knew of a couple.

Dunham: Were there ever any problems of oh, I don't know, situations like where any women got pregnant or something along those lines?

1-00:11:19

Hansen: Oh, I don't recall that. No, I don't recall any of that.

Dunham: Yeah, okay. What about the makeup of the workforce as a whole, were there many people who had come from out of state and—?

1-00:11:31

Hansen: Yes, we called them Okies and Arkies, and they were labeled Okies and Arkies.

Dunham: Okay, and how did they fit in?

1-00:11:42

Hansen: They filled the bill. They came out because there were jobs available, and they came from the farms and many of them settled out here.

Dunham: Were there various ethnicities as well, or within those groups?

1-00:11:56

Hansen: I don't recall that much. I don't recall that much, no.

Dunham: Predominantly white—

1-00:12:01

Hansen: Right, right. Yeah, it was a huge shipyard. There were several shipyards around, but this was one of the biggest ones. The cranes are still standing out there. I guess they haul metal over to China or somewhere.

Dunham: Did you ever get to ride in a Liberty Ship?

1-00:12:21

Hansen: Yes.

Dunham: What was—?

1-00:12:19

Hansen: I was so pleased. I was so pleased because I was a war bride. They invited myself and two or three other women, and we launched a boat, christened it, and we got to ride I forget the name of the boat, the ship, and it was so much fun. It took us to Catalina, and we had lunch which was really a treat, and at that time I smoked. They gave us little packs of cigarettes, which was another treat, and we felt very honored. My picture was on the front of the Cal Ship Log, which I don't have anymore, and I'm so sorry because that was their magazine they put out. I'd like to see it.

Dunham: Yeah, do you remember what you ate that day?

1-00:13:08

Hansen: No.

Dunham: But it was definitely a special meal for the wartime.

1-00:13:06

Hansen: It was meat, it was meat.

Dunham: Well, speaking of that, what are your memories of rationing?

1-00:13:17

Hansen: Oh, my goodness, oh, good memories. My girlfriend that lived with me, she was from North Carolina, and she and I would use our ration stamps to get in line when we see a line, we didn't know what they were selling, but we got in line and used our stamps for either silk hose or maybe shoes, I think, or butter, can't remember now all the things we had, I know gasoline was rationed. I still have my coupons from that.

Dunham: Oh, you do.

1-00:13:49

Hansen: But we lived very frugally. We did eat out occasionally down in Long Beach at the Olympic Café, but it was always so crowded we'd have to stand behind someone and watch every bite they took in order to take their seat. That was a little uncomfortable, and then the same thing happened when we were sitting there. A lot of people ate out. It wasn't very expensive, so—

Dunham: What did you eat in a typical day at the shipyards or for lunch do you remember?

1-00:14:21

Hansen: I don't remember what I ate. I took my lunch. Oh, I know what I had for dessert, we would buy Hostess Chocolate Cupcakes and hollow out the middle and put peanut butter in the middle.

Dunham: Oh.

1-00:14:34

Hansen: I can remember that, yeah.

Dunham: You were ahead of your time like Reese's, right? Did you have lunchtime concerts of any kind, music?

1-00:14:49

Hansen: Oh, we had entertainers from the movie industry all the time, but they were promoting the war bonds. We had movie stars, all the famous movie stars.

Dunham: Do you remember any in particular?

1-00:14:59

Hansen: Rita Hayworth was there, and Linda somebody, I forget what her name was. We had men, we had I don't think we had Frank Sinatra, but we had I don't even remember the names of the men.

Dunham: Sure, sure.

1-00:15:12

Hansen: But they would get on the platform, and they would push the war bonds so everybody would buy them, and I had taken out twenty dollars a month from my paycheck to buy war bonds. So that was a help to us later.

Dunham: Did you have any kind of health care, or other benefits in that job do you recall?

1-00:15:35

Hansen: I do not remember. I know that through a lady friend I had a lot of headaches, and she told me I had to have my tonsils out when I was eighteen. I went to this strange place and had my tonsils out, and the doctor was not very nice to me, got a little bit fresh. The next morning I said I want to go home, so my car was outside, I had a car then, and I drove my car back to where I was staying with my in-laws in Long Beach and the car broke down. I'm in the middle of Broadway in Long Beach with my robe and slippers on, and my tonsils were removed and I was not doing too well. Then I got home and hemorrhaged.

Dunham: Oh, my goodness.

1-00:16:24

Hansen: It wasn't a very good experience, and that was the only, but I had no insurance that I remembered.

Dunham: Did you have to go to the hospital after that, or how did you recover?

1-00:16:36

Hansen: No, my good girlfriend I lived with thought she was being helpful, and she put a hot pack on my throat, which is not helpful when you're bleeding. So it didn't make it any better.

Dunham: So it took you a while to recover from that I suppose.

1-00:16:52

Hansen: I think I had Navy insurance because my husband was in the Navy then, so I must have had through the Navy.

Dunham: Okay, so you had had to after the doctor got fresh with you, you literally rushed out of there in your robe?

1-00:17:04

Hansen: The next morning, yeah, I couldn't do much that night. I left that next morning. Later on I heard that he was arrested.

Dunham: But you hadn't reported anything.

1-00:17:18

Hansen: No, no. I didn't know any better.

Dunham: Arrested on a similar type of—?

1-00:17:21

Hansen: I don't know what it was, I remember reading about it in the paper and I thought, "Well, he got his dues."

Dunham: Yeah. Let's see, well, I guess related to that, were there women working at the shipyards who had young children and do you know how they handled that if so?

1-00:17:39

Hansen: No, I don't remember working with any women that had children at that time, no.

Dunham: Well, what was social life like? I know your husband was away, but was there a lot going on, or did you—?

1-00:17:54

Hansen: I bowled in a bowling league, what was called the Rainbow Pier in Long Beach, it's not there anymore. There was a bowling alley there, and I belonged to a league through the shipyard. I wasn't a good bowler, but it was fun. My girlfriend would go with me and she would walk down on what used to be called the Pike, and that was an amusement center like Santa Monica, and she would play the games to win cigarettes.

Dunham: Oh, my. That was the prize?

1-00:18:22

Hansen: That was the prize, so she'd come back and say, "I got a pack of cigarettes." It might have lasted us a week, when they were gone, then we smoked a pipe.

Dunham: Okay.

1-00:18:30

Hansen: Somehow we got a hold of some tobacco, just tobacco, and we got a pipe and we smoked that.

Dunham: Now had you started smoking before working in the shipyards?

1-00:18:39

Hansen: Yes, I did.

Dunham: Yes, okay, in the early days, okay. Well, let me see, what else kind of just changed during the war years because you had been down here in Southern California already, did you observe, what kind of changes did you sort of see?

1-00:19:01

Hansen: The only change I could see was the beautiful beach down in Long Beach was filled with all kinds of Army equipment and vehicles and whatever they call that stuff, great big round things to detect airplanes, and you couldn't go in there. Lots of places were restricted because we were vulnerable, and at one time I was staying with my in-laws before we were married actually, and there was a big reign of shrapnel coming over the whole sky of Long Beach that night, and the next day or two people could still find the pieces. Nobody would identify where it came from. It was really a mystery. It was scary.

Dunham: So that was in early '42?

1-00:19:49

Hansen: No, that was probably '43 maybe, no, it was '42 yeah, before I was married. It was actually right after the war started, but I wasn't married, no. Yeah, it was scary, and they did spot some submarines off the coast there, but they didn't capture them.

Dunham: Had you known of any Japanese or German or Italian Americans and any who were incarcerated?

1-00:20:21

Hansen: Oh, my, oh, did I. In my high school there must have been thirty percent of the students were Japanese, and then, of course, when the war started they all had to leave. They were all excellent students. They would go to the school in the day and then after they got home they would get on a bus and go to the Japanese School, very intelligent. It was really sad, and then, of course, some of my other friends that I knew went into the service, and that was the last we heard of them. It was a sad time.

Dunham: Yeah, and remind me the city of your high school again?

1-00:21:05

Hansen: It was in Los Angeles, John Marshall High School

Dunham: John Marshall High School, okay, in Los Angeles.

1-00:21:10

Hansen: Named after a judge, a Superior Court Judge.

Dunham: What kinds of music did you listen to during those years do you recall?

1-00:21:19

Hansen: Just the popular music, the popular music—

Dunham: Did you go to the movies?

1-00:21:24

Hansen: Probably for ten cents. I didn't have a lot of money, but we did go to the movies at the Vista Theater for ten cents, spent five cents for the candy.

Dunham: Were you saving some of your money or was just getting by with what you made at the shipyards?

1-00:21:39

Hansen: No, I didn't. Oh, in the shipyard all I did was save the war money. I regret that I did not go to college during those years. I felt really bad that I didn't take some time to go to the junior college, which I did go later on after my husband came home, but nothing that did me any good, a little Spanish here and there.

Dunham: Okay, oh, I think you mentioned in your story also that one time you participated in a ship launch—?

1-00:22:14

Hansen: That's the one that I told you about earlier.

Dunham: Oh, so that was the ship you got to ride on.

1-00:22:16

Hansen: I was thinking it might have been the Lane Victory, the one that's stationed over in San Pedro because that name is so familiar to me. And I'd love to go see it.

Dunham: Well, how did you feel I guess when the shipyard did close?

1-00:22:49

Hansen: It was a very exciting day when we left because we were all so uplifted with the end of the war and knowing my husband was going to come home soon was such a thrill because I'd only seen him once in the thirty-eight months when he came home on leave. I was in the movie theater the day he came home watching John Wayne in *The Fighting Seabees*. My husband was a Seabee—

Dunham: Right.

1-00:23:14

Hansen: And I was in this theater with tears running down my face because all I could think about was him, and here he was home and left a note on a matchbook in my doorstep. I was living in Belmont Shore at the time with another girlfriend.

Dunham: So you weren't sad about leaving the job at the shipyards then—?

1-00:23:40

Hansen: No, no, I wasn't. I was so elated.

Dunham: Were there any that were do you know, was it difficult in terms of losing a job?

1-00:23:46

Hansen: Well, probably, they probably had to find work, I don't know. I just separated totally from everybody then. I only had my girlfriend that I lived with, and I didn't have any relations with any of those other people too much outside of the work.

Dunham: So your girlfriend was also married to someone coming home?

1-00:24:02

Hansen: Yes, she was married to the Army fellow that my husband met overseas.

Dunham: Do you remember where you were, so we can get ahead a little bit, but on VE Day or VJ Day?

1-00:24:17

Hansen: Probably celebrating my father-in-law's birthday because that was his birthday, August 14th was it? September 2nd was my husband's birthday, and I think that was the day that MacArthur was on the ship Missouri and signed the end of the war treaty? We were on that ship. We went to visit it years later before it went into soap suds or whatever they call it. Dry dock, I don't know what they call it.

Dunham: Yeah, and the shipyards closed a little before your husband returned, or was—?

1-00:24:57

Hansen: Right, yeah, I was home, not working. I was collecting unemployment.

Dunham: Oh, okay, that's right you had a little story about your celebration, you guys had a—

1-00:25:09

Hansen: So when he came home he had a serious tooth problem, but he wouldn't stay in long enough to get it fixed. He wanted to get out right then, terminal leave pay he got, so he took his money, I pooled what money I had from my unemployment, and we took off to Laguna Beach and had a little honeymoon there until we ran out of money. Then we drove back to Long Beach, and I collected my unemployment insurance, I think I had to get in the mail where I was living, then went back again and celebrated some more, spent all the money, never thought about the future, just spent the money.

Dunham: Okay, so what did you do when you had to come back to reality?

1-00:25:53

Hansen: Well, let's see, what did my husband do? He went to work with a friend at a place, and it was a very unhealthy job, so he quit there, and I was taking part

time jobs, no, I worked in the newspaper office in Long Beach, the Press Telegram Building. That's right, I went to work there in the telephone directory company, and he just floundered around for a while, and then he went back in the service after he got out. He went back as a station keeper at Los Alamitos Naval Air Station.

Dunham: Oh, okay.

1-00:26:29

Hansen: Because it was security, and it's the best thing that ever happened because, of course, I get my medicine free at Camp Pendleton, I get to use the Commissary, I have a little bit of an income from what he saved, and it's well paid off. My insurance is covered, so twenty years in the service really helped me a lot.

Dunham: Yeah, well, that's terrific.

1-00:26:57

Hansen: As he said, he gave the best years of his wife to the Navy.[laughter]

Dunham: Yeah, well, let me ask, maybe I could ask a little more detail about your back at the shipyards kind of because we don't know a lot about the shipyards down here and—

1-00:27:08

Hansen: A long way back, it was a long time ago.

Dunham: Okay, well, it's all right if you don't recall, but I'm just trying to because you did work there for three and a half years, three years?

1-00:27:20

Hansen: All the time he was gone.

Dunham: Yeah, and so your, I know you said you would go and scavenge around and gather the tools that your—

1-00:27:28

Hansen: Yeah.

Dunham: And so was that the majority of your job, or—?

1-00:27:29

Hansen: That was my job once I left the forty-nine cent job and went to the dollar twenty job. That was my whole time there at the shipyard.

Dunham: Okay, and then your co-workers what they did was actually use the tools to—?

1-00:27:43

Hansen: To outfit the ship so that they could take it and launch it.

Dunham: Okay, okay, and were you the only woman in that group?

1-00:27:48

Hansen: Yes, I was.

Dunham: Okay, and how many of you were there?

1-00:27:52

Hansen: There were about eight or ten men, lead man and foreman. The foreman made a dollar forty-eight an hour and the lead man made a dollar thirty-seven. I remember that. I became really good friends with one of them, Nick Katnich was his name, and even after the war ended my husband and I went to visit him.

Dunham: Your girlfriend that you lived with, what did she do?

1-00:28:17

Hansen: She came to live with us in the rental place where we first moved together because her husband was still in the service, and she was there with us a while. Then from there my husband and I bought our first home with the money that he had saved from poker in the service and I had saved from the war bonds, and we put \$1,200 down, and we got a \$9,200 house.

Dunham: Did he also get something from the GI Bill do you know?

1-00:28:45

Hansen: He could have taken advantage of it, but he wouldn't do it.

Dunham: Oh, really?

1-00:28:50

Hansen: He didn't go to school. I always tried to get him to go, but he didn't want to.

Dunham: Okay.

1-00:28:55

Hansen: He was a fisherman. He wanted to go fishing, that's what we did, we went a lot.

Dunham: Yeah, okay, and where were you living then after, where did you buy your home?

1-00:29:07

Hansen: We bought it in Compton, California in a very nice area which now is not very nice, and it has a bad reputation, but we lived in a very nice part of Compton and lived there until, well, we lived there about twelve years. Our children went to school there and about the time they went into junior high, we moved to Huntington Beach, California.

Dunham: Oh, okay.

1-00:29:28

Hansen: That drew us over to there because we had been going to a square dance club in Huntington Beach and we thought, “Hey, why don’t we just sell our house and move over there?” So we did.

Dunham: Okay, that makes sense. Yeah, my mom and grandparents lived in Compton briefly around that time, I think in the mid to late ‘40s, yeah.

1-00:29:46

Hansen: Did they? Who was that?

Dunham: My mom and grandmother and grandfather—

1-00:29:52

Hansen: Oh, you remember where they lived?

Dunham: I don’t know very well, it was a brief time that they were in Compton, and then they were up to Benicia, and then they were in San Francisco in the Hunters Point. My father worked around there, or grandfather I should say, excuse me—

1-00:30:04

Hansen: Grandfather, huh? Is he still living?

Dunham: No, he passed some time ago. My grandmother, she is, yeah, and then they lived in Burlingame for many years after that, but that’s where my mom mostly grew up, but she was in a lot of different places when she was young.

1-00:30:22

Hansen: Ah.

Dunham: Now, well, is there anything else you would like to share about your experiences in the shipyards and during the war years, highlights—?

1-00:30:30

Hansen: No, It’s going back so far, I’m lucky to remember what I do.

Dunham: Well, you do a lot still so—

1-00:30:41

Hansen: A long time ago.

Dunham: May I just ask, just in reflecting back on the war and how it fits into the story in your life, is there just anything else in particular or any other perspective you have on the work you did those years, and—?

1-00:31:00

Hansen: No, I just know that I learned to work with a lot of people, and put up with a lot of raucous conversations, and it just kind of went in one ear and out the other. I’m not a swearing person.

Dunham: You didn't take on that—?

1-00:31:13

Hansen: No, I didn't thank goodness.

Dunham: Did your husband have those tendencies, too?

1-00:31:19

Hansen: Well, in the Navy twenty years, he did. He had a few little choice words.

Dunham: Okay.

1-00:31:27

Hansen: When he was driving especially.

Dunham: Yeah, well—

1-00:31:35

Hansen: There's so many things that I could probably tell you, I just can't think of them all right now.

Dunham: Let's see if I can jog your memory with any other last things for—

1-00:31:46

Hansen: Okay, jog all you want, it comes out good.

Dunham: You started to say a little bit about kind of what you wore to work, but I guess a couple questions on that. Were there any particular fashion changes during the war, and what in particular did you wear?

1-00:32:02

Hansen: No, we just wore slacks, lots of slacks.

Dunham: It was simple in that regard.

1-00:32:07

Hansen: Don't remember much about my wardrobe in those days.

Dunham: Okay.

1-00:32:10

Hansen: I have more now than I've ever had in my life. Buy clothes.

Dunham: Now, I didn't ask about what your mother did during the war years, but did she continue to—?

1-00:32:24

Hansen: My mother worked for Highland Blood Laboratories in Hollywood. She had a very good job there, and she eventually passed away, and I think she might have had what they now call AIDS. Now she did not drink, but she worked

with raw blood all the time, and this was a laboratory where strange people would come in and donate their blood for twenty dollars.

Dunham: Okay.

1-00:32:52

Hansen: People off the streets, and there was a blood plasma lab, and I think when she died I think that might have been what, they hadn't detected AIDS in those days and she died in '72. But that's what she had.

Dunham: Interesting. Was she able ever to return to her music at all, or did she play—?

1-00:33:09

Hansen: She didn't play the piano anymore. We didn't own a piano, not moving around like we did.

Dunham: Yeah, must have been a challenge. Did you develop a love of music, too, or—?

1-00:33:19

Hansen: Only radio.

Dunham: And dancing, you square dancing and—

1-00:33:25

Hansen: Oh, I like to dance, yeah. I used to love to dance, and, of course, I married a man that didn't like to dance, so I had to really trick him into the square dance group.

Dunham: You did.

1-00:33:31

Hansen: And he loved it after he got in there, and I was so surprised.

Dunham: How did you trick him into that?

1-00:33:36

Hansen: Oh, I just told him that I had to have a partner in order to go to this club, and I didn't want to go alone, and would you please just go with me, and he did, and he liked it.

Dunham: Yeah, yeah, during the war years while he was away, did you engage just in social dancing then?

1-00:33:50

Hansen: My girlfriend and I would go, I remember doing this, someplace in Wilmington, yeah, it was crazy. I think they had alcoholic beverages that you had to take, and then they furnished the sodas, and we went there and we would dance with people, and I remember doing that. That was about it.

Dunham: Well, I think [railroad sounds]

1-00:34:17
Hansen: That's the Amtrak.

Dunham: Well, if you don't have anything else you'd like to add today, I think that was very nice, a brief interview, but here in the park, and yeah, so I think we can call it a day then.

1-00:34:40
Hansen: Well, thank you.

Dunham: Thank you so much.

1-00:34:41
Hansen: —needed about present day?

Dunham: I think that, well, would you like to update anymore? Yeah, why don't you just tell us a little bit about, I know you had sixty-one wonderful years with your husband?

1-00:34:50
Hansen: Yes, this is true, and as soon as he passed away, I decided I'd make a move, and I moved into a mobile home down near the ocean, and last year I was the queen of the park.

Dunham: Oh, really, congratulations.

1-00:35:04
Hansen: Someone else drove my little convertible Mustang, and I was sitting in the back with my Queen of Lakeshore Gardens Manor, and it was fun, it was run.

Dunham: Wonderful.

1-00:35:11
Hansen: And I also work every year from March through May at the flower fields at Carlsbad.

Dunham: Oh, you do, so you're quite a flower expert.

1-00:35:23
Hansen: Oh, yes, you heard of the flower fields?

Dunham: No, I don't know, I'm sorry.

1-00:35:25
Hansen: Well, people come from all over the world to see these.

Dunham: Wow.

1-00:35:27

Hansen: Its fifty-two acres of blooming that start in March, and you heard of Huell Howser?

Dunham: Yes, oh, yes—

1-00:35:38

Hansen: He has it on, he has an ancient video that shows the field in full bloom in March, so these poor people spend their money to this at the flower fields in March, and there's just a few little dots of color everywhere.

Dunham: They're early.

1-00:35:51

Hansen: And they, "Where's the flowers?" But they get in full bloom, and it's just spectacular.

Dunham: And what do you do there?

1-00:35:57

Hansen: I'm in customer service, and I greet the people or say goodbye to them and talk to them or take their pictures, and—

Dunham: Yeah, well, I'm sure you're great at that.

1-00:36:05

Hansen: I love it.

Dunham: And you now have a great, great grandchild?

1-00:36:06

Hansen: Yes, she'll be two in October.

Dunham: Wow, congratulations.

1-00:36:13

Hansen: Five generations of us.

Dunham: Wow, that's amazing. Well, you've done well. Thank you, so much for sharing your stories with us. We really appreciate it.

[End of Interview]

Narrator Addendum

Sometimes in 1945 I decided I should have a car since I'd been driving a friend's without a license. A used car lot in Long Beach was happy to sell me a 1947 Ford – only later to find out the “new” battery had been freshly painted and the “new” tires were also shiny black. So during several trips to San Diego with my girlfriend when the car stalled, we would see a U.S. Service member. Offer him a ride going north if they would give us a push – never had a problem doing this during W.W.II.

Following end of war in September 1945, husband Duffy and I resided in Long Beach where we had two daughters – from there we bought our first home in Compton for 9200 money we had saved from War Bonds and Duffy's poker winnings when in service. While there 10 years I found part-time jobs that didn't interfere with the two girls' school hours. To do this I would take the bus and get off, walking to several business within reach – found two jobs – later worked for an office where I took dictation from several businesses – my shortest job was for an ambulance company where I gave notice after 3 days – very unethical operation. A move to Huntington Beach in early 60's where we were active for 10 years in the Guns & Garters Square Dance Club. In 1969 I became employed with the Huntington Beach City School District, eventually becoming secretary to principal to principal at Sowers Middle School. Retired in 1980 with husband and off to Mexico where we lived 6 months of ever year – San Carlos on the mainland – about 850 miles from home. Fishing was the drawing card there and I learned to can tuna – and I still do for the Oceanside Senior Anglers, a club which I have been secretary for 9 years. I volunteer at the Carlsbad Visitor Center weekly, enjoy friends here at the mobile home park wehre I moved in 2003 after husband passed. Do swim aerobics 3 times a week, crochet some, cook my dinner every night (unless am lucky to go out). My biggest love is for the family – the two daughters, five grandchildren, six great grandchildren and one GREAT GREAT granddaughter.

Forgot that for past 18 years I have worked in Customer Service at the world famous Flower Fields of Carlsbad – hope to continue many more years. (52 acres) of blooming ranunculus from March – May each year.

It's been a good life and I hope to continue enjoying it for many more years.