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Lucille Jane Madsen

Rosie the Riveter

World War II American Home Front Oral History Project

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Interviews conducted by  
Sam Redman  
in 2011

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Lucille Madsen



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Interview 1: April 4, 2011  
Begin Audiofile 1

Redman: Today is April 4, 2011, and this is Sam Redman. This is my first tape today in Walnut Creek with Lucille. I'd like to begin by asking you for your full name.

1-00:00:20  
Madsen: You want the middle name also? Lucille Jane Madsen.

Redman: How do you spell your last name?

1-00:00:26  
Madsen: M A D S E N.

Redman: First of all I'd like to ask you about your childhood, where you're from originally.

1-00:00:36  
Madsen: Born in Oakland, California. If you know Oakland, it's by the Highland Hospital. It was country in those days. I was born in 1913.

Redman: Tell me about what that means. It was country back in those days, I've heard—

1-00:01:04  
Madsen: Well, that means that we had chickens and rabbits and cows and gardens and fruit trees, and the whole works. And my mother had cows so they staked them out on this property and up across the street from us, and—

Redman: So your parents had farm animals.

1-00:01:21  
Madsen: My father bought that land. They came out of West Oakland, and he wanted to buy property to leave to his children.

Redman: Were your parents originally from West Oakland?

1-00:01:36  
Madsen: Well, originally my father was born in San Leandro, and my mother was born in Monterey, and my mother's side of the family goes back to 1777 here in California. Father Serra baptized one of my ancestors in 1777.

Redman: So quite some California history.

1-00:01:58  
Madsen: A lot of California in me.

Redman: How about your father's side; they're a little more recent, or—

1-00:02:07

Madsen: No, his mother was born in Portugal and came to California and married her husband, and they lived in Portugal. My father was born in San Leandro, as I said.

Redman: You would have come of age then in the 1920s in Oakland when things were still like this; things were a little more open, there were fewer people, more farm animals certainly than there are in Oakland nowadays.

1-00:02:39

Madsen: Yeah, right, you just wouldn't know it was the same place. Then my father started a moving and storage business so he had a, he built a big barn, a big building to store furniture, and then he had on another section of the property he built shops to repair the trucks, and my brothers worked on the trucks.

Redman: How many siblings did you have?

1-00:03:05

Madsen: There were eight of us all together. I'm number seven. I have one brother left.

Redman: Were those split between boys and girls?

1-00:03:16

Madsen: Four of each, they split them evenly.

Redman: You can hardly plan that; that's pretty amazing. The Great Depression would have started when you were in your teens, is that correct?

1-00:03:33

Madsen: It started, yeah; '29 was the big crash.

Redman: How about before that when you were, say, in elementary school? What was your life like?

1-00:03:40

Madsen: It was different then, I mean you didn't have a dress for every day in the week, things like that, so the Depression I guess didn't hit us that hard because with eight children they didn't have very much to spread around.

Redman: So even before the Great Depression your family—

1-00:04:12

Madsen: Right, so we were I wouldn't say poor because we had enough to eat, we had a home, we had everything, but you had to be careful what you did.

Redman: And your father's primary income then eventually came from the storage and fixing—

1-00:04:30

Madsen: Yes, then from there he wanted to buy more property there, but he wasn't able to do it, so then he went out to Dublin, California and opened the first gasoline station in Dublin, California. So that was his income there then.

Redman: And your mother had the immense responsibility of—

1-00:04:57

Madsen: Of raising the children.

Redman: Can you tell me a little bit about what elementary school was like for you? Do you remember how you got to school each day?

1-00:05:08

Madsen: I walked there. From East 31<sup>st</sup> Street up to what was that street? We went up Spruce Street to, oh, it was Hopkins in those days, which is MacArthur Boulevard now. To McChesney Grammar School.

Redman: What were your teachers like? Were they fairly strict or were they pretty lenient and friendly?

1-00:05:32

Madsen: They scared me I know. I was a timid soul.

Redman: Maybe they might not have scared some of your brothers and sisters, or were they all sort of—

1-00:05:42

Madsen: Well, they had the whole string of them ahead of me, so—

Redman: I suppose. So was your reputation then already sort of in place by the time you would arrive in a grade, they'd already seen six of your siblings.

1-00:05:54

Madsen: They knew the family well.

Redman: How were your siblings in school generally? Were they—?

1-00:06:00

Madsen: Well, the older ones I didn't pay any attention to I guess, but my younger brother, he was smarter than I was all through school. He as the smart one, and I was the dumb one.

Redman: What were some of your impressions of the other children that you met at school? What were the other children like?

1-00:06:23

Madsen: Well, it was really nice because I had a really nice girlfriend. She was from Pennsylvania, first foreigner—

Redman: The first person you'd met who was from outside of California.

1-00:06:35

Madsen: Yes, the first person that was from out of the state. But she got to be my best girlfriend.

Redman: What was her name?

1-00:06:43

Madsen: Annetta Drew.

Redman: I like that name. Tell me about the start of the Great Depression in 1929. My understanding is that the market crashed in October, but it might not have been until a little later that people really felt it.

1-00:07:00

Madsen: Yeah, in '31 it was bad.

Redman: Tell me how that manifested itself in your day-to-day life. What changed in your life say around 1931?

1-00:07:13

Madsen: Let me think. It was the Depression, things were bad, it was hard to get things and—

Redman: Does it seem like a lot of people were out of work?

1-00:07:23

Madsen: Yeah, oh, yeah. There was food lines and everything, men begging for jobs and couldn't get them. The women, of course, never even thought about going out to try to get one. There was no place for women at that time.

Redman: So your impression was that even if a woman wanted a job in the Depression, they would—

1-00:07:47

Madsen: I think she would have had a hard time, unless she had a super education I'm thinking.

Redman: What about your own parents? Did they talk about how hard things may have been around the table, or was that something that was not talked about?

1-00:08:07

Madsen: Well, you see, my father was in Dublin, and my mother was at home in Oakland with us, so when he would come home, most of the time he was coming home to ask my brothers that were working to help with paying taxes, and that's the big thing I remember, a big hassle, and Papa says you have to do it.

Redman: So the other siblings would be expected to contribute to the household.

1-00:08:30

Madsen: Yeah, and they paid board and room. The girls paid I think \$10 a week, and the boys paid \$20 a week.

Redman: Starting at a certain age?

1-00:08:42

Madsen: Yes, when they went out and got a job. Now my sisters were working at Mazda Lamp Works in Oakland.

Redman: You have to tell me what that is, I have to confess.

1-00:08:55

Madsen: Well, they were making light bulbs I guess. Or something, they were doing with that.

Redman: Something related to lamps, I see. So then what was your first job?

1-00:09:09

Madsen: My very first job?

Redman: Your very first job.

1-00:09:11

Madsen: During the Depression in the sixth grade in McChesney School I had the job of cleaning and setting up the teachers' lunch room. I think I got \$60 a month, which was immense.

Redman: Would a special student be designated to get that job?

1-00:09:34

Madsen: Yeah, yeah, and I guess they knew I needed it or something. I got the job along with a couple of others, and we'd set up the teachers' lunch room. Then they'd have their lunch, and then we'd go in after school and clean it all up. It usually took me until about 5:00 o'clock before I'd get out of there.

Redman: Can you tell me a bit about what your parents were like as people? Do you remember anything in particular about their personalities?

1-00:10:08

Madsen: Oh, my. My mother loved to go to the theater and things like that. She had a sister in San Francisco, the Chichizola. My aunt and uncle were very wealthy, so she would take my mother a lot of times and take her to the plays and things, and she loved that, and music. We all loved music; now that I think back when you ask about siblings, everybody played an instrument. My father was in a band before he was married.

Redman: What type of music had he played? Do you know what type of music?

1-00:10:46

Madsen: Like Souza, what's his—?

Redman: Sure, like marches and—

1-00:10:50

Madsen: Marches and things like that. He loved—who was the big—? Caruso. He loved Caruso. We had a phonograph, and he had all of Caruso's records. So we used to sit—that was our entertainment—we'd sit and listen to those records. Then when they got older my one brother played the saxophone, and the other the drums, and my sister played the piano, so lots of times that would be our entertainment. We'd all get in the living room, and they'd play, and then we'd all sing.

Redman: You'd all sing as a family.

1-00:11:26

Madsen: Yes, and that was really fun. The two younger ones, my folks and my brother, that was a fun time for us. I can't speak for the rest. That was a wonderful time.

Redman: A time where you could spend with the family.

1-00:11:43

Madsen: Yes, and my mother was a very caring mother.

Redman: Was she also musical?

1-00:11:47

Madsen: She loved to sing and all of that, and she was interested and wanted the kids to have music. I took six years of classical piano.

Redman: How are your piano skills now? Can you still play?

1-00:12:01

Madsen: Oh, no. I was always too timid, and when I wanted to take jazz piano. The teacher scared the living daylight out of me. So I backed out of everything, and that's my one regret.

Redman: But you did learn to play classical piano?

1-00:12:21

Madsen: Yes.

Redman: Then thought about playing jazz piano.

1-00:12:24

Madsen: Right. But things were slim, and it cost money to take lessons. My older sister offered to pay for my lessons, but I chickened out.

Redman: That's a pretty nice gesture of an older sister to offer to pay for—

1-00:12:40

Madsen: Oh, she used to make my clothes, and she did beautiful embroidery work, so she'd embroider the clothes and then make the clothes.

Redman: At a certain point did the older siblings become somewhat like parents?

1-00:12:55

Madsen: Yes, well, at the dinner table where there's three girls on one side and three boys on the other side, and my brother and I had a little side table, and we used to watch the food go around and hope there was enough to come over to our little table, and my mother always used to say, "Don't worry, don't worry. I saved some for you." She'd always have something extra or special for us.

Redman: She'd make sure that the youngest get—

1-00:13:25

Madsen: But the working people had to get fed first. But it was fun around the dinner table. That's the really nice thing when you said sibling that's what I thought about because it was fun. They'd go to see movies, and then they would have vaudeville acts.

Redman: Either before or after the movie.

1-00:13:46

Madsen: Yeah, it was after the movie. Like Jack Benny came through Oakland. All those stars; they were on a circuit. There was this one brother could mimic these different people, and so he'd have us in hysterics at dinner time.

Redman: So you might not have been able at a young age to go see the vaudeville acts, but your brother would—

1-00:14:14

Madsen: Not then, yeah. He would bring the stories home, and we'd wait for his stories after he'd seen them. It's funny, but my older sister and my middle brother, we used to call them Grandma and Grandpa because they were so stern. The other ones why they were helpful and then these other two were funny.

Redman: So different siblings would take on slightly different personalities.

1-00:14:52

Madsen: My oldest brother would help me with my homework, and he was great. After I graduated from Oakland High, he paid for designing lessons. I was good at sewing. In fact, my grandmother was the seamstress of Oakland in her time. She was very talented. So, where was I going with this?

Redman: Oh, go ahead. We can get back to high school in just a moment, and that will maybe give you a moment to recall where you were going with that. But I would like to ask about music, one more question. Did everyone in the family play different musical instruments, or was it mainly piano and singing, or—?

1-00:15:49

Madsen: And the clarinet and saxophone. And drums. They had a little group that used to go around. Then one of the brothers had wound up in an orchestra that played at the Lexington Hotel in Oakland. That was quite a hotel in those days. He worked as an automobile mechanic in the daytime, and he'd come home and scrub his hands and get all the grease out of his fingernails and then go and play in the orchestra at night, with his tux.

Redman: Was it a white tuxedo, or black tuxedo?

1-00:16:35

Madsen: I think it was black, as I remember.

Redman: Did your parents have any feelings about jazz music when you wanted—?

1-00:16:46

Madsen: Oh, no, they were just happy about music.

Redman: So it wasn't analogous to say later on some people might have had some feelings about rock and roll—

1-00:17:01

Madsen: Yeah, yeah.

Redman: But for jazz they were open for all kinds—

1-00:17:04

Madsen: Oh, yes.

Redman: Tell me about high school, what your life was like in high school. You had mentioned that one of your siblings had maybe paid for you to get designing lessons?

1-00:17:17

Madsen: Oh that was my older brother, Harold.

Redman: This was after high school?

1-00:17:21

Madsen: Yes, well all through school, and this is Depression again, I had to make my own clothes. So I made my clothes in the sewing class, and my brother would give me the money to buy the material, my oldest brother. Then I'd make my dress and everything, so I took a business course plus this home economics second, what do you call it, course or something. So I was trying to prepare

myself either way, but when I graduated from high school you couldn't get a job.

Redman: Do you recall what year you graduated from high school?

1-00:18:01

Madsen: In '32. It was right smack in the middle of the Depression.

Redman: You graduated during some tough times.

1-00:18:12

Madsen: Yes, and the first job I got after that was and lucky to get it, was a job as a salesgirl in Kress' dime store.

Redman: Can you spell that for me?

1-00:18:26

Madsen: K R E S S.

Redman: Where was that?

1-00:18:29

Madsen: In 14<sup>th</sup> and Broadway.

Redman: Okay, so still in Oakland.

1-00:18:32

Madsen: In Oakland.

Redman: So what was that like, being at the dime store?

1-00:18:32

Madsen: Well, I had one day a week. Saturday, if I was lucky.

Redman: That was the only work you could get, okay.

1-00:18:42

Madsen: That was good. That was good. The only reason I got that was because this brother that was in the orchestra, he had a girlfriend that worked there, and she got me the job. I had a little pull. Then I worked at that when I was going to designing school in San Francisco.

Redman: I see. Let's go back to designing school, so you were taking these classes in San Francisco?

1-00:19:10

Madsen: Yes.

Redman: What were those like?

1-00:19:17

Madsen: It was very interesting, and I loved it. We'd made our own patterns there and learned to drape the figures and all that, and then she'd send us out lunch time to go around all the fashionable stores in San Francisco and sketch anything that was in the windows, and sketch this design, and then come back to class and make the pattern.

Redman: What was it like to be in a class like this and to maybe have a very limited income from the sounds of it, and to feel lucky that you had a limited income?

1-00:19:54

Madsen: Oh, yeah.

Redman: But then going around to these fashionable places and drawing—

1-00:19:59

Madsen: Very impressive.

Redman: So you got to see sort of this other side?

1-00:20:05

Madsen: Oh, yes, but it was fun taking the boat over across the bay, and we walked from the Ferry Building up to the St. Francis Hotel. The school was two blocks above the St. Francis Hotel, and we walked back.

Redman: So you recall the Golden Gate before the Golden Gate Bridge was there, is that correct? Do you have sort of a vision of what the Golden Gate looked like before the Golden Gate Bridge?

1-00:20:28

Madsen: Just open, without any bridge there. But we crossed the bay from the foot of Oakland over to San Francisco to the Ferry Building.

Redman: What was downtown San Francisco like in those days?

1-00:20:44

Madsen: Well, to me it was a big city. Oakland was—they called it the bedroom of San Francisco.

Redman: San Francisco was *the* city.

1-00:20:54

Madsen: Oh, yes, that was—you went to the City. You didn't go to San Francisco; everybody said, "I'm going to the City."

Redman: And they knew what that meant.

1-00:21:00

Madsen: Yes.

Redman: Tell me about what it may have felt like then to get off the ferry, and all of these people are around—

1-00:21:08

Madsen: Oh, yes, it was wonderful. Even just to ride the ferry, to watch these women that had jobs. They were dressed to the nines, and hats and gloves the whole works, and we used to just watch them and envy them. Then we got off and into the Ferry Building with all this commotion and excitement, and then we started our hike up to the school.

Redman: Your goal in taking these classes was then to get a job in design to design clothing in particular?

1-00:21:45

Madsen: Yes, and just getting into the clothing industry any way I could. Because that was what I had a talent for.

Redman: At the time there were a number of garment places in San Francisco, is that correct?

1-00:21:53

Madsen: I'm sure there were, yes.

Redman: Were you more interested in women's fashion as opposed to men's?

1-00:22:02

Madsen: Oh, yes.

Redman: Going and seeing these sorts of glamorous dresses, then; that's the type of thing you wanted to get into?

1-00:22:09

Madsen: Yes. Even in high school I made dresses with—and I think that's really unbelievable for a kid, and the way you did them in those days. There were bound buttonholes; they weren't just these sloppy things that are in the clothes today.

Redman: So the clothing you would take a little more time and care.

1-00:22:31

Madsen: Oh, yes, and everything was done just perfectly. My grandmother—I used to be so proud when I'd bring it home from school and show her. "Look, Grandma. I made this dress." And she would just have this face on her, stern, and she'd turn it inside out. She wanted to see how I'd finished the inside. Then if that was perfect, then I was fine.

Redman: So you were proud of it, but she would check it.

1-00:22:59

Madsen: Yes, oh, would she check me.

Redman: That must have given you a pretty good skill, then, to have all of that practice in high school and then training on in that—

1-00:23:09

Madsen: Yes.

Redman: So is that what you did for work, then, when you finished these classes?

1-00:23:16

Madsen: No.

Redman: No, you found some other work.

1-00:23:17

Madsen: Because at the same time when I was still in high school and even before, I met my husband when I was fourteen years old. Then he realized he was eight years older than I was, so he realized I was too much of a kid, so he said, “See you later.”

Redman: So you had some growing up to do.

1-00:23:41

Madsen: So when I was seventeen I started going with him, and we got married when I was nineteen. I had this dime store job. I was so proud of it and so glad that I had it, that they would just hire me week by week. So when the boss came up to me and she said, “Lucille, I want you to work next Saturday,” I said, “Oh,” just like I was so appreciative. And all of a sudden I thought, “Oop, I can’t. I’m going to elope to Reno.” [laughs]

Redman: You had other plans.

1-00:24:12

Madsen: Yeah, I had other plans so I had to turn her down. So then I didn’t work at all any more after that until the war started.

Redman: But you did elope to Reno.

1-00:24:21

Madsen: Yup, I did.

Redman: What was your husband’s name?

1-00:24:25

Madsen: Chris Madsen.

Redman: Now let’s talk about December of 1941, and Pearl Harbor happened.

1-00:24:40

Madsen: Yeah.

Redman: It's a Sunday. Do you remember—?

1-00:24:43

Madsen: What I was doing?

Redman: Yeah.

1-00:24:44

Madsen: Distinctly.

Redman: Can you tell me about that?

1-00:24:48

Madsen: Well, we were going up to my husband's best friend's. He was crazy about horses, so he had a stable up in the redwoods; what do you call that?

Redman: Redwood Forests?

1-00:25:03

Madsen: Redwood Canyon. So we were going to go up to see him, and we were just in the garage getting in the car, and this flash came over the radio that Japan had attacked us. We just couldn't believe it. So we were on our way up there, and by the time we got to him he hadn't heard the news either, so it was just spreading like wildfire then; the papers came out. The boys were yelling, "Extra, extra," war had begun, and all that.

Redman: I'll ask you about your reaction in a moment, but do you remember your husband's reaction?

1-00:25:51

Madsen: Oh, we were all just shocked.

Redman: All just totally surprised.

1-00:25:55

Madsen: Oh, yeah. Not a clue, we just, "Oh, my God, what's going to happen?" And, of course, they thought that they were going to attack the Pacific Coast, also.

Redman: So was there a little fear then—?

1-00:26:10

Madsen: Oh, there was a big fear that way.

Redman: So right away some of that fear set in.

1-00:26:15

Madsen: Right.

Redman: Now, let me ask about the Japanese in California at that time. Did you know any Japanese—?

1-00:26:26

Madsen: No, I didn't know any Japanese families then. They sort of stayed to themselves, and different nationalities sort of grouped to themselves. But we never had any bad feelings about them or anything. Things came out after the war started.

Redman: Let me step back one moment and ask about religion. Did you grow up attending a church service with your family?

1-00:27:05

Madsen: We grew up attending church regularly. But not with my parents because my mother was home cooking Sunday dinner. And my father was either here or there or the other place, but she saw that all us little ones got to church.

Redman: Did she send you to a specific church?

1-00:27:27

Madsen: Well, we had to go to the church in Dimond, in that part of Oakland. That was the church as Catholics that we were assigned to.

Redman: Okay, so it was a Catholic church, so that tradition had continued—

1-00:27:40

Madsen: From both sides, yes.

Redman: I would like to ask one more question about the Depression before we go into the war years. I want to ask about social life or night life when there's so little money I suspect that you weren't going out to—

1-00:28:02

Madsen: This is talking about the Depression years?

Redman: During the Depression I suspect you weren't going out and buying—

1-00:28:07

Madsen: There was little going out. Again, it was if you got together with a group, it was, "I'll bring this and you bring that," and we'd get together and have a party.

Redman: Less than going to a restaurant or—

1-00:28:21

Madsen: We didn't have the money to do that.

Redman: Let's talk about how your life changed then when the war started. Did you start looking for work right away?

1-00:28:33

Madsen: Not right away, but we were conscious of the fact that I'd better do something, and I guess all of 1942 we must have been just thinking about it or waiting to

see what was going to happen. Then in early '43, the draft was from eighteen to forty-five at that time, and my husband was still fairly young. Then they got it down to forty, aging to forty, and then aging to thirty-eight, so when it was getting close, we thought well, we better see if we could get me a job, so I started at Safeway stores in the tabulation department as a card puller.

Redman: Tell me what a card puller does.

1-00:29:35

Madsen: Yes, this is going to be hard to do. I was telling my daughter about it last night. You wore an apron, and they had pockets in them. Then the girl on the keypunch machine would punch these cards with information, and then on the top you had the companies like Del Monte, Dole, Campbells, da-da and all the different company names. And then when you get these cards, you'd pull so many cards of—it was coming from the warehouse, they needed so many cans of peaches or so many crates of this or so many of this, that, and we'd pull the cards, and then they'd take them and by company tabulate them. Does that make sense?

Redman: Yes, so you were the computer and—

1-00:30:24

Madsen: I was, like we were laughing last night, I was a human sorting machine.

Redman: Was it all women who worked with you?

1-00:30:30

Madsen: Yeah, oh, yeah. All the men were going.

Redman: Already by that time.

1-00:30:44

Madsen: While I was there, this was a no-brainer job, and I was looking to get ahead a little bit, so I asked to learn the keypunch machine. Well, that was just a typewriter like it is now, and I was good at typing, so you'd choose that, and then they would punch the card. So then I wound up being a keypunch operator. That was still at Safeway.

Redman: But this was a step up in level.

1-00:31:17

Madsen: A step up for me, yes.

Redman: How about in terms of pay? Was there a pay increase or—?

1-00:31:22

Madsen: No, you had to work for, you were lucky to have a job. It was the war effort, and you didn't demand; there was no demanding. After coming out of the Depression you didn't have that kind of an attitude anyway.

Redman: So tell me about—let's say in 1943, so in 1943 you were working at Safeway, is that correct?

1-00:31:42

Madsen: Yeah, in the early part of '43 I'd say. It was a very small installation. Remington Rand had the installation. *It* was a company that Safeway hired to do this, the tabulating section. So they came around and said they needed keypunch operators at the shipyards, and would I be willing to go? So I said, "Yes," because I knew it was a better job.

Redman: So this was at Moore Dry Dock.

1-00:32:12

Madsen: Moore Dry Dock, so that was in the latter part of '43 that I went down there.

Redman: So your decision to learn how to do the tabulating was then a good decision—

1-00:32:29

Madsen: Oh, yeah. All along the way it helped me. So then I started at the shipyards at sixty-six cents an hour.

Redman: I was about to ask you how much you made at Safeway.

1-00:32:45

Madsen: Must have been less than that.

Redman: So sixty-six cents an hour felt like a lot.

1-00:32:51

Madsen: Well, it was fine with me.

Redman: Let me step back and ask you a question about going back to high school and elementary school, had you always liked math, mathematics?

1-00:33:04

Madsen: No. Very poor in it. If it wasn't for my oldest brother I don't think I'd have made it.

Redman: Well, I can sympathize with that.

1-00:33:09

Madsen: He sat down patiently with me every night. I was not good at math.

Redman: Okay, so then how did tabulation end up being—?

1-00:33:23

Madsen: Just evolved I guess. It fascinated me.

Redman: So eventually the numbers and the organization. What about it fascinated you?

1-00:33:35

Madsen: I don't know. I guess the machine and the ability to do it well, and I had confidence because I was always uncomfortable, I didn't think ever think I was good enough. Then I felt like I was doing something.

Redman: Then suddenly you had a full time job and—

1-00:33:55

Madsen: And a husband that kept saying, "Yes, you can. Yes, you can."

Redman: Tell me about that. So by this time you were working with a number of women at Safeway and then later at the docks, so I'll get into that and the shipyards, but your husband encouraged you to find that full-time employment.

1-00:34:15

Madsen: Yes, well, he helped me get the job because he worked there. He worked in the food industry.

Redman: Do you think that most of the women that you worked with were encouraged by their husbands to find work, or was it like before?

1-00:34:33

Madsen: Most of them were single. I was the youngest one and married. Yeah, they needed jobs. It was a very small installation; maybe there were six girls, very small. That was why I was anxious to get out of there and get to where I could learn some more.

Redman: Learn some more and move on to a bigger type of place.

1-00:34:58

Madsen: Yes.

Redman: So then the shipyards—

1-00:35:04

Madsen: In the food industry we were dealing with the foods and tabulating that. The shipyards was the warehouse where all the parts that went into a ship.

Redman: So about 150,000 combined people came in to the Bay Area either for Kaiser or for the Moore Dry Docks or for some—

1-00:35:24

Madsen: Richmond.

Redman: Richmond, in particular. So tell me about this new job and this new experience. You must have been working with a lot of different people.

1-00:35:44

Madsen: Well, of course, all the blacks came from the South. Kaiser brought them all out, and some of them were very nice and some of them were ugly. Like just as an example, I was walking to work one day and just minding my own business going down the sidewalk, and they just came about six or eight abreast, and I had to step off the curb and go around them. Just devilment kind of things I guess.

Redman: I'd like to ask if there are sort of moments you recall where people may not have gotten along.

1-00:36:21

Madsen: Yes. Well, they had a different attitude.

Redman: In particular you found that it was people from the South that were having some trouble adjusting maybe or were they—?

1-00:36:31

Madsen: Yeah, right, that's what I think it was, yes. It was probably the first time that they saw this freedom, this openness that they had. But I hate to say those things, but that's the way it was if you want to know.

Redman: I know there were a lot of people who may have come from places like Arkansas and Oklahoma who might have been maybe, some of that Southern influence, but then people from Iowa and Minnesota came as well.

1-00:37:05

Madsen: Well, see, that's the thing of it. All the boys in California were going; they were all going to the war. They were all being drafted.

Redman: So it felt to you like mostly it was an influx of women, there were more women now—

1-00:37:23

Madsen: Right, and that's where Rosie the Riveter was. Working on the ships. Then every time they'd get a ship completed the movie stars used to come up from Hollywood. And have a big to do, and they'd take it out on this shakedown cruise or something. There'd be a big celebration. We'd stop and go out and watch it.

Redman: So you remember watching some of these launchings, is that correct?

1-00:37:50

Madsen: Yeah.

Redman: Let's get to that in just a moment. I'd like to ask a couple of other questions about when you first arrived at this job at the dry-docks. Where were you living in terms of your housing at that time?

1-00:38:10

Madsen: Nineteen forty-three we were living in Seminary Avenue.

Redman: I can barely remember the street that I live on now, so I'm impressed with—

1-00:38:19

Madsen: Seminary Avenue, and it was about two blocks up from East 14<sup>th</sup> Street. It was a nice little Spanish-type building with the apartments, and we had a one-room apartment. You pulled the bed down out of the wall. That was your bedroom, living room.

Redman: Was that hard to find? Was it hard to find even that apartment?

1-00:38:49

Madsen: Well, it wasn't for us because my husband had lived there with his brother in one apartment. Well, as soon as one opened up, we took it. So, we paid \$30 a month, and that was high. Because when the Depression hit, he got cut down to sixty-six cents an hour. So at one point we tried to look for a cheaper place. We found one for five dollars cheaper, and were going to take it. By the time I got home after looking at it and came back in my cute little apartment—

Redman: Did you cry at all?

1-00:39:24

Madsen: I cried floods of tears. I said, "Please, Chris, can you get us our deposit back, which was five dollars. So he went back and talked to the fellow, and he gave us our deposit back, which was pretty nice.

Redman: So you were pretty stable tenants then for—

1-00:39:47

Madsen: Oh, yeah, we stayed there until '35 I guess.

Redman: Okay, because I know right around—I'm sorry, did you, say, '45 you stayed there at that place until '45, until the end of the war?

1-00:40:06

Madsen: Oh, I'm jumping again from, we were in '43, right?

Redman: Yeah.

1-00:40:15

Madsen: Yeah, we stayed there until after the war I guess, yeah. Well, wait; I have to back up. We were married in '33, and then in '38 we built our Oakland house on an FHA loan. I paid \$3,000 for it.

Redman: During the New Deal there were all sorts of agencies that popped up, like the WPA—

1-00:40:51

Madsen: Yeah.

Redman: The Civilian Conservation Corps. Then called the alphabet agencies. Did you have any family or friends that worked for that, or you were sort of aware of these—?

1-00:41:02

Madsen: I think everybody that wanted to eat, somebody was on the WPA. My sister's husband, most of my sisters' husbands were on—but see, my brothers had some mechanics, and they kept their jobs, but the others didn't have any—

Redman: Particular skills?

1-00:41:27

Madsen: Right. So they were out digging ditches. And glad to get it. Both my sisters had to go to—well, one of them had a job, but the other one had to go to work when he went on WPA, so she went down and worked in the office of the WPA. I babysat her kids so she could go to work.

Redman: So that people could go to the WPA office.

1-00:41:56

Madsen: Yeah. My sister was secretary to the top boss of Montgomery Wards, that big building in Oakland. I think she made \$16 a week. So things were rough. You didn't go night clubbing or bar hopping or to the race track.

Redman: Right, that's one of the things that I was going to ask about then in terms of in your experience between '42 and '45, there are so many questions, but I'd like to ask how, did you make it back into downtown San Francisco at all during that time for one reason or another?

1-00:42:44

Madsen: No, I can't remember. For fun, I don't think we did because the money wasn't there. What we did do during the war years when we were both home, we'd go, we'd save our gas coupons and then go up to the Russian River and buy a tent, housing they'd had the wooden floor. Housekeeping tent, I think they called them, for \$2.50, and we could get into the dance for ten cents. Then they marked your hand if you went out and come back in, so my husband said to me one night, "Don't wash your hand. We can get in for free tomorrow night."

Redman: Tomorrow, but that was an—

1-00:43:39

Madsen: And lay on the beach all day. And eat hot dogs and hamburgers.

Redman: Okay, that was an inexpensive—

1-00:43:44

Madsen: Yeah, that was our fun. But there again it was fun because going to the dances they had the main bands going through there.

Redman: Really, okay, so bands that you were more familiar with—

1-00:44:00

Madsen: I'll never forget Fred McMurray was in one of the bands. He was really outstanding, and he was so nice, but it was good music, good dance music. We danced all of our married life.

Redman: Would there be more like jazz or swing type of music?

1-00:44:23

Madsen: As the war got on, yeah, the swings, yeah. We were all swinging.

Redman: Let's talk about when you arrived at the dry-docks, can you tell me about, this might be something that would be challenging for someone to remember, did you have any sort of a health care plan, because at Kaiser one of the things that was innovative is that they had a health care plan, but other places might not have had a health care plan.

1-00:44:51

Madsen: I don't think so. I've got the old stubs in there. I've got the old pay stubs from both Moore Dry Dock and food administration.

Redman: One of the things we have at the Bancroft Library is a ration booklet, okay? And inside on the cover, it's a tan cover, and you'd write your name and your age, but then inside there are all these little coupons, and they're blue almost like little post stamps, and on the stamps they have pictures of let's say an American flag, or a tank, or one thing or another. My understanding is that these would correspond to things like shoes or rubber, or butter or meat, but how could you tell—?

1-00:45:41

Madsen: It was not easy, and really I don't remember it that well. I know we had the ration books, and I know we had to take them every place we went.

Redman: So you would go to the butcher, let's say.

1-00:45:59

Madsen: Yeah, and if you had meat that day, it was something news and word got out before there'd be a line. You'd get there and you'd line up to buy your meat.

Redman: Is there anything that was particularly— you'd mentioned meat, and—

1-00:46:13

Madsen: Coffee.

Redman: Coffee was hard, okay.

1-00:46:18

Madsen: All the food and clothing and shoes—

Redman: Now I understand nylons in particular—

1-00:46:23

Madsen: Oh, there was no nylons; they were silk stockings. Boy, you'd better take care of those.

Redman: Because you'd only get two a year or something like that.

1-00:46:33

Madsen: Yeah, and if you had a run up here, you could use a little nail polish and stop the run. But it was down here where it showed; you had a little gadget, and you'd weave it back together.

Redman: So you would care for those—

1-00:46:46

Madsen: Oh, you'd better believe it.

Redman: Because everybody wore them.

1-00:46:47

Madsen: Yeah, that was all there was; there was no nylon. You never heard about a nylon until after the war.

Redman: And the idea of wearing a dress with no nylons or stockings—

1-00:47:01

Madsen: You just did it.

Redman: One of the things that I was sort of driving at and wanted to ask you about was how clothing might have changed during the war because many of these women who were working as Rosies bought their first pair of Levi's jeans.

1-00:47:21

Madsen: Yes.

Redman: Or something like that, or they'd have overalls or coveralls.

1-00:47:23

Madsen: Sure.

Redman: And they might change back into working, a business woman's outfit.

1-00:47:32

Madsen: That's when women then started wearing—even my first pair, they didn't call them pants or jeans or anything; they were pajamas. But they were cute, like

beach—cute tops and matched, I have one with lightning going down here, going down here. And the bottoms were about yea wide.

Redman: I see, but the pants were a new—

1-00:47:54

Madsen: Then there was fashionable and women could wear pants. And that progressed from there.

Redman: So the next thing I'd like to ask either between Safeway or in your experience at the docks, was there—?

1-00:48:15

Madsen: That was a better installation, and it was just up to snuff. Remington Rand had just put that one in, so everything was new and good. Many a night I worked until 8:00 or 9:00 o'clock because they'd say, "Can you work two more hours? Can you work two more hours?"

Redman: Were they doing multiple shifts at that time, or was it one shift that maybe there'd be overtime, do you recall?

1-00:48:38

Madsen: I think they shut down later at night like that. I don't remember the tabulating department going around the clock.

Redman: Can you describe for me what the tabulating department looked like? If I were to walk into it for the first time during the middle of a busy day, what would I see?

1-00:49:04

Madsen: Well, you see again, I was in the keypunch department, so we were in a room by ourselves, and I think the tabulating was down behind us, so I didn't pay much mind to that. I was here, I got to work and I want things to do as fast as I could. All day long.

Redman: Was it mostly women or men?

1-00:49:26

Madsen: Oh, yeah.

Redman: Was it all women?

1-00:49:27

Madsen: All women. The only man was maybe the head one or the boss over the whole unit, or somebody from Remington Rand. Then, you see, as that year went on, toward the end of that year was when Remington Rand came again and said that they were opening a new installation in Berkeley and would I consider going out there? So two or three of us left Moore Dry Dock and went out there.

Redman: So Remington Rand—

1-00:50:02

Madsen: Was the company that sells the machine.

Redman: Okay, so they—?

1-00:50:08

Madsen: Opened an installation for the War Food Administration.

Redman: So did your paycheck come from Remington Rand? Would they say—?

1-00:50:21

Madsen: It came from the War Food Administration. I've got those, too, I can show you—

## Begin Audiofile 2

Redman: My name is Sam Redman, and we're back here today with Lucille Madsen. Today is April 4, 2011, and this is our second tape. During the break you were telling me about your husband's experience with a deferment.

2-00:00:23

Madsen: Yeah, well, this is the back of '43, I guess, when his number was called, when we thought he was going to be called, and his company kept saying, "Don't worry, we've put in for a deferment for you." So we thought he was going to just get skipped, and then all of a sudden he heard from the draft board that his number was called, so he went down and took care of that, and then they got the word that—he said the company would get a deferment, and he said, "We haven't heard anything about it." So then he waited a little while, and then he got word to come, that the check point where they were going to pick them up that day would take them. I went with him because I was crying my eyes out.

I went to wave him goodbye, and when he was out there we went to up to the man and said, "Had the deferment come through? The company said they were asking for a deferment for me." And he said, "No, no, line up to get on the bus." So he lined up, and just as he'd go to step on the bus, they called, "Chris Madsen," and he said, "Yup, here." They thought it was his turn to go on, and they said, "Your deferment came through." I went, "Whoooo!"

Redman: Talk about the nick of time, right? That's about as close as you can come to being drafted. One of the things I wanted to ask about, at both the Safeway and at the shipyards, is was there any hanky panky between the men and the women?

2-00:02:13

Madsen: Well, there weren't that many men around.

- Redman: There weren't that many. There was a song; it was popular in that day that was they're either all too old or too young.
- 2-00:02:21  
Madsen: Yeah, right, right. Yeah, I remember that song. I don't remember the name of it now.
- Redman: Then there was also a tune of "Don't be an Absentee," and then a "Rosie the Riveter" song.
- 2-00:02:36  
Madsen: Yeah. What did you ask me?
- Redman: Oh, sorry, hanky panky, if there was—?
- 2-00:02:45  
Madsen: I wasn't familiar with any of that. Maybe I was just being married and focused on what I was doing.
- Redman: So you didn't hear—?
- 2-00:02:55  
Madsen: Oh, I'm sure it was going on. But I wasn't, either of those places, I wasn't aware of it.
- Redman: Okay, and then the last question I'll ask about that is whether or not there were any sort of rumors or people would say that someone was what we would today call a person who was homosexual. Were there any people who were attracted to people of the same sex; was that talked about at all?
- 2-00:03:28  
Madsen: Not at all. I don't remember at all. I remember more in high school, we had a gym teacher that the kids all made fun of. But not as in work.
- Redman: Let me ask about patriotism. At both the Safeway, you had mentioned that you considered your job at Safeway part of the war effort.
- 2-00:03:57  
Madsen: Yes.
- Redman: Then certainly later at the shipyards.
- 2-00:04:00  
Madsen: Because we were in the food industry again. It was getting the food to the stores and to the people and all that.
- Redman: Tell me about finding work then at the WFA office in Berkeley. So that office was responsible for tabulating, you had mentioned—

2-00:04:20

Madsen: Well, what they would do, the men would go down and recruit the Mexican nationals to come up to harvest the crops because all of our boys were going overseas.

Redman: Right, and many of the Japanese—

2-00:04:37

Madsen: Were gone. They had sent them away.

Redman: Let me ask about that quickly. Did that sort of enter into your mind at the time, or—?

2-00:04:51

Madsen: No, I have to speak only for myself. I was aware that they were put some place, and I thought at the time it was a good idea because at that time, you couldn't trust them. As you know in Hawaii they said they were taking pictures, pictures; they always had cameras going around taking pictures, so I thought at least that scare, that whatever is out of the way. But I personally—maybe I was just stupid, but I didn't realize that the government had taken their property and all that. I didn't learn that until later.

Redman: Did some of your feelings then eventually change a little bit or—?

2-00:05:35

Madsen: Oh, yeah, well, I had nothing against them. They were living here and doing a good job and—

Redman: But the vacuum created by their leaving and the American soldiers leaving, you needed to workers to come up from Mexico.

2-00:05:51

Madsen: Yes, and my mother's cousin, he was in the Merchant Marine, and he was going to make his last trip before he retired, and we went down to see him off. And he said, "I just hate to make this trip." This is in '41. He said, "Something's going to happen." He just had this feeling, and he said, "I just hate it," and sure enough, he got there just in time for the bombing of Japan and all the ships on the way too. He wound up in a prison camp for five years in Japan.

Redman: Would you say that that was the majority of your job was in tabulating the payroll for Mexican nationals who had come to California?

2-00:06:45

Madsen: All the payrolls from all the offices from all over the United States came in to Berkeley.

Redman: From all of the United States?

2-00:06:53

Madsen: Yes Well, I guess, yeah, because that was the main office. Then they would go through another department first. The payrolls were this size.

Redman: So they were quite large.

2-00:07:05

Madsen: Yes, and they'd go through and take off information, and then get them, prepare them. Maybe they were a mess, I don't know, maybe they did them by farms or something, before they got to us so that the girls could do the keypunching off of them. They were these big sheets that you had to turn over and get all this, and it was hysterical some of the things you'd see on those payroll sheets.

Redman: Why is that?

2-00:07:31

Madsen: Well—

Redman: What were some of the things that you remember?

2-00:07:35

Madsen: Well, Jésus got drunk last night. He got taken to jail or got in a fight, it's just crazy things that they would write on there, and we'd be in the keypunch room and all of a sudden start to laugh, and they would all shut the machines off and we'd have a laugh—

Redman: Like, "What happened this time?"

2-00:07:55

Madsen: Yes, it was just comical things.

Redman: Okay, but I mean some of the things that you expect from people who had a little money and were farm laborers and—

2-00:08:04

Madsen: Again, they were like the blacks the first time they had this freedom, I guess.

Redman: My next question was going to be about both race and racism. Did you see some of those racial tensions continue later on, or did things start to smooth out a little bit would you say towards the—?

2-00:08:31

Madsen: Well, see, after I left the shipyards I wasn't aware of that any more. We had a black girl working in our office. She was nice. There again there was a little funny incident because she was married to a black man, but she was almost white, and he would never come to work to pick her up. She had to walk three or four blocks when they'd pick her up. That was her doing. It wasn't our doing.

Redman: So they were worried about even the appearance of—

2-00:08:59

Madsen: Yes. That was her doing.

Redman: So your job at the shipyards was in particular to track parts, the parts of the ship you said?

2-00:09:22

Madsen: Yeah, the parts that went into a ship, yeah. The nuts and bolts that went into it.

Redman: So everything down to the nuts and bolts, and the panels and—

2-00:09:33

Madsen: Stuff.

Redman: And “stuff,” okay. So my understanding of putting together a ship is that it’s like a giant complicated puzzle and that people are moving around all the time putting together these puzzle pieces, so all of those things would have to be tracked. Now in workers, do you know if they would check out their tools for the day?

2-00:09:56

Madsen: I have no idea. See, we were completely separated. They were over there and Rosie was doing her job over there, and I was across the street in another whole section.

Redman: Were you in a completely separate building?

2-00:10:08

Madsen: Yes.

Redman: I know some people got some feeling for how the ship was being put together, and other people might have just been working on one component of the ship and they had no idea what the rest of other people did—

2-00:10:27

Madsen: Probably not, because you went and did your job.

Redman: In a similar sort of fashion you were working across the street.

2-00:10:33

Madsen: Right, and I was doing my job which was taking care of the—

Redman: Did you ever get to see the inside of where the shipyards were being—?

2-00:10:44

Madsen: No, because, see, I’d go to work early in the morning, and I stayed—a lot of times I’d work a couple hours overtime, and I wanted to go home. Then it was

streetcar. You walk up to where you could get a streetcar and then transfer to East Oakland. So I just wanted to get home.

Redman: Tell me a little bit about what those launchings were like. You'd mentioned celebrities would come up from Hollywood. Was this an event that you would go to with friends, and there was a lot of fanfare is my understanding?

2-00:11:25

Madsen: A lot of fanfare, but I think it was mostly the Moore Dry Dock people. I wasn't aware that it was open to just the public coming down to see that. I think it was just, "Oh, we finished another ship," and everybody came down to see it take off.

Redman: And there would be a little bit of a celebration.

2-00:11:43

Madsen: Oh, yeah. The whole bit.

Redman: As the war went on and as you shifted jobs, my understanding is the economy started to change even during the war, that people then had a little more spending money.

2-00:12:04

Madsen: Yes, but you couldn't get anything.

Redman: So there's this—

2-00:12:09

Madsen: There was still a Depression.

Redman: The sort of the traditional story is that it leads to a boom, then right after the war.

2-00:12:18

Madsen: After the war, that's right.

Redman: So you feel like that's a correct assumption?

2-00:12:12

Madsen: Yes, because you might have had a little more money to do something with, but everything was rationed. Everything went to the war effort.

Redman: So it's not like you could get a new sewing machine.

2-00:12:35

Madsen: Oh, no.

Redman: One more incident I'd like to ask you about in particular before—well, first of all, were you a part of a union at all in the shipyards?

2-00:12:49

Madsen: No.

Redman: Did you have any impressions of the unions? You just knew that there were unions at the shipyards?

2-00:12:57

Madsen: Oh, my husband was a union man.

Redman: What union, do you recall what union he was in?

2-00:13:02

Madsen: The Mechanics Union. He started out as a mechanic there, and he wound up foreman of the three shops they had. They had one in Palo Alto, one in San Francisco, and one in Richmond. He took care of all that. Well, I'll leave this until you get to it. I know you're coming to—

Redman: The end of the war and the—

2-00:13:27

Madsen: Well, the food, you said you were interested in food.

Redman: Sure, I'll ask one last question before we get to food. The last question I'll ask prior to the end of the war, in 1944 there was a massive explosion in Port Chicago.

2-00:13:47

Madsen: Yeah. I remember it well.

Redman: Tell me about that.

2-00:13:49

Madsen: Well, all I know it was a big boom.

Redman: Did you feel it in Berkeley?

2-00:13:52

Madsen: Yes.

Redman: Because I've heard from some people that you could feel it in Berkeley, the windows shattered—

2-00:14:02

Madsen: Oh, it was bad.

Redman: Did it feel like an earthquake or did it—?

2-00:14:07

Madsen: That's what we thought at first.

Redman: So you maybe didn't think, "Hey, this was an explosion somewhere." But it felt like an earthquake.

2-00:14:09

Madsen: Yeah, no, well, we knew something bad happened. Of course, immediately then you think the war, the Japs did get through because there were so many scares, and we had the blackout curtains and the wardens used to come around and make sure that they didn't see any lights coming out of the house.

Redman: Poking through and they'd knock on your door and—

2-00:14:34

Madsen: Yes, when those sirens go off, why they were scary. That's why I, back to the Japanese, I didn't know that their property was being taken away from them. I just thought they were putting them over here to keep us safe. But there were scares. They were trying to get to the West Coast, but they never made it through.

Redman: So the Port Chicago incident then, felt like this earthquake or an explosion or something, and you thought—

2-00:15:07

Madsen: It was big.

Redman: And you thought maybe the—

2-00:15:14

Madsen: Maybe the Japs had come through.

Redman: Do you recall were you at work at that time or—?

2-00:15:16

Madsen: No, I was home. I don't remember why I was off.

Redman: Was there anyone home with you at that time, or—?

2-00:15:28

Madsen: As I can remember it, it must have been early evening or something because I think Chris was there with me. When we heard it. We thought, "Oh, what is that?"

Redman: My understanding is that you turn on the radio, maybe, and then there weren't any reports for a couple of days.

2-00:15:47

Madsen: I know.

Redman: Did you hear anything else about the event as sort of a follow-up?

2-00:15:54

Madsen:

Oh, there were stories, but that I just did put out of my mind. It was just an explosion, but let's see, I do remember there were so many men killed there. No I don't think I can remember. But I do remember the incident. Shook everybody up.

Redman:

Both physically and emotionally it sounds like, okay.

2-00:16:23

Madsen:

Yeah.

Redman:

I'd like to ask about food. We talked a little bit about rationing, but I'm interested in because you, both in Safeway and then your own experience during the war, your food, the food that you would have been eating was rationed.

2-00:16:40

Madsen:

Right.

Redman:

Then when you eventually worked for the War Food Administration Office in Berkeley, part of your responsibility was making sure that the operation of getting food out of the field into the grocery store function—

2-00:16:56

Madsen:

Well, we were keeping records on these Mexican nationals because the Mexican government wanted 10 percent of their earnings sent home so that they didn't go home broke. So that's what we were taking care of. We had nothing to do with the food. It was taking care of the records of what they earned, take 10 percent out and give back to the Mexican government to hold for them.

Redman:

I see, so then they, the workers, the laborers, would get that money when they arrived at home.

2-00:17:31

Madsen:

When they got home.

Redman:

The idea was that they wouldn't just spend all of it in California or wherever else.

2-00:17:36

Madsen:

The smart move. If they could, they sent money home to their wives, too. The wives held it for them.

Redman:

So did you see any of that happen as well in terms of the financial records that you could see, or the tabulations that you could see, that maybe people were sending money home, or would you just see that ten percent would be given to the Mexican government, and then the rest was paid to this individual.

2-00:18:01

Madsen: Yeah, right, right.

Redman: So did you get the sense that the farms were uniformly these large operations that you were working with, or were there larger and smaller farms?

2-00:18:15

Madsen: Well, any farm, anybody that was doing food.

Redman: So fruits, vegetables, everything.

2-00:18:18

Madsen: Everything, and when during the war when gas was scarce, so my husband, I guess he'd hear from the truck drivers when they'd come back, that certain ranch needed people maybe to go to Sebastopol and pick apples, or go somewhere else and pick other fruit, and then two or three of them would get in the car and go and spend the day up there, and then they'd get to bring a crate of food home.

Redman: People would get paid—

2-00:18:58

Madsen: With food. That was a war effort, and they were willing to do that, give their time.

Redman: So people might supplement these other laborers that were brought in from Mexico.

2-00:19:16

Madsen: Yeah, but food would be dying on the trees or on the grounds. In fact, later on sometimes they'd just say come down and take the fruit because it's going to waste.

Redman: Wow, so there was a real shortage of labor to pick that.

2-00:19:30

Madsen: Yeah, oh, yeah. So I remember one time my husband and I went down, up here somewhere, to pick strawberries. We got to bring them home, and I made strawberry jam.

Redman: Wow, and that must have been a treat.

2-00:19:48

Madsen: Then when we'd bring the food home I'd put up all the food and we even made pickles and pickled relish and everything. That we did in the Depression, too.

Redman: So that was something you were used to in some sense.

2-00:20:06

Madsen: Yeah, people did that. Just like somebody mentioned about knitting. Well, if you knitted, you did more knitting during the war.

Redman: Do you think some of those traditions helped people? Were they a little more prepared for the struggle of the war?

2-00:20:24

Madsen: I think so. I think so.

Redman: So it wasn't a huge sacrifice that you couldn't have a washing machine because you'd maybe up to that point owned a washing machine.

2-00:20:34

Madsen: Well, at that point we were in our Oakland house and were raising Doberman Pinschers. My beautiful dog had two litters, and one bought me a washing machine, and the other litter bought me a dining room set, that dining room set.

Redman: The next question I'd like to ask is about the end of the war. So V-E Day and V-J Day, do you remember either of those announcing that the Germans had surrendered and then the Japanese had surrendered?

2-00:21:11

Madsen: Yeah. Oh, everybody went crazy, just went crazy. Everybody was hugging everybody else.

Redman: Did you go out in Oakland or Berkeley, or do you remember?

2-00:21:22

Madsen: I guess I was in Berkeley, I think.

Redman: Now what was Berkeley like during World War II? Is there any way you would describe it as different from Oakland, the transitions that Oakland went through?

2-00:21:30

Madsen: Yeah, it was a nice little city, smaller of course. I was telling Lois last night about when I worked at Berkeley I had to walk from East 31<sup>st</sup> Street up past East 34<sup>th</sup> Street to Hopkins, which is now MacArthur Boulevard, and get a bus to go down to Telegraph Avenue to get the street car to go out to Shattuck Avenue, way out as far as you could go, to almost a block from University Avenue. We'd stand at the bus stop, and sometimes the bus would come and everything would be fine, and if it did, as you got down by Broadway by Kaiser's new hospital, the bus driver would say, "Kaiser's Butcher House." Everybody would get out that wanted that stop, but we all used to be hysterical, and we would just wait for them to say it.

But then here would be a bunch of people waiting for the bus and no bus would come. This happened often, the bus would break down. Well, people would drive by in their cars, and they'd know what happened. So they'd open their front window and say, "You need a ride? How far as you going?" And if you tell them, they'd say, "Jump in; I'll give you a ride." Never thought of any harm or anything; people just did that. Many a time I had to do that because there was no bus coming, and I had to get to work.

Redman: Certainly. So you remember Berkeley as a friendly place at that time?

2-00:23:19

Madsen: Yeah, and a nice, pretty town. This building where we were was just two blocks below Shattuck Avenue off of University Avenue and about four or five stories high. We were up on the top floor. As you worked you could look all over the whole Bay Area.

Redman: That must have been wonderful.

2-00:23:37

Madsen: It was beautiful, beautiful place to work.

Redman: Then at the end of the war there, sorry in 1946—

2-00:23:48

Madsen: That's when I was closing the installation. See, because how that started out, Remington Rand, as I said, opened this new installation for the World Food Administration, and then after a certain time they brought in a man to run it, and he'd had a lot of experience in tabulating. So Mr. Ferguson came in and ran the installation, but there was a turnover because these girls would come from all over the country following their boyfriends or their husband until they shipped out or whatever.

Redman: So in particular, to places like the Oakland Army Base or Treasure Island, or—

2-00:24:28

Madsen: Yeah, so either they would—the girls that wanted steady jobs as soon as something came up, because we knew this was just a wartime job, so the girls that were looking but knew they had to work, they would leave and Remington Rand would help them find permanent work. So there was this turnover. Then these other girls, sometimes their husbands would come home. Then they'd leave, then move.

So it was constant turnover, and so then when it got nearer the end of the war, in '45 I guess, early '45, or somewhere maybe late '44, my boss said to me, he said, "Why, I'm going to look for another job. This is going to give out." So he said, "I'll train you, and you take over for me when I go." So we did that, and I gradually moved up. I had a government rating of a four at that time, and

this person, Personnel Director, he didn't want me to get that. He wanted me to go no more than a five rating in the government. One man started with a twelve rating—the man had started with a nine rating—and he wanted me to do it for a five rating. I said, “No way.” So we fought for it, and both of my big bosses fought for it for me. I finally wound up with a seven rating.

Redman: So it was a clear instance of sexism where—

2-00:26:15

Madsen: You got a lot of it in that place. That's where you got the, I'd say, not sexual harassment, but harassment. This person would just bedevil me all the time.

Redman: This was one individual in particular?

2-00:26:31

Madsen: Yeah, yeah.

Redman: So they would make nasty comments—

2-00:26:34

Madsen: Of course, there was all kinds of skullduggery going on with the girls that I worked with. Husbands, boyfriends, and what have you.

Redman: So there might be more sexual harassment—

2-00:26:46

Madsen: Right.

Redman: More at that facility than at the shipyards or at—

2-00:26:51

Madsen: I wasn't aware of it at the other two.

Redman: I was curious of this idea of this being a wartime job. So you knew that this was going to be a wartime job.

2-00:27:03

Madsen: Right.

Redman: But did you think that eventually you could transition into some other form of a job?

2-00:27:09

Madsen: They wanted me to go to Sacramento, and they said, “Oh, Lucille, you've got to come; you've got to come.” And they're opening another new installation. But I'd had it by that time, and I wanted to have a family, and so on my last one, it says in there, it says, “wants to stay home for a while.” They were trying to talk me into staying in it somehow, and I—no, I don't regret it because I'd got so much more; my life has been so great since then. But had I

stayed in it, kept in it, when I went back to work to help her through college, I could have gone back in that—.

But I didn't want to. I had to go to San Francisco, and I didn't want to travel all that way. So I got a job as a sales lady at Capwells, and it was supposed to be twenty hours a week. But guess what. Lucille wound up working forty hours a week.

Redman: Eventually when you were maybe how old, did you go back into the work force? You took a little time—

2-00:28:18

Madsen: Well, that was '44, and it was in the sixties; she graduated from the high school in '64, '65. Then she was in college, and then I said, "We're both going to go down at get jobs." You can get jobs in the summer time, so we both went down and applied and we got jobs. Then she went away to college and the mama kept working.

Redman: That's a great story. So now how many, may I ask how many children you have?

2-00:28:45

Madsen: Just one.

Redman: And that was following the war.

2-00:28:52

Madsen: Right. She was born in '48. But in the meantime, I was ready with this other story. You talk about ration books, we bought war bonds. But we had a little folder, folded over three times, and you could buy a stamp with maybe it was fifty cents a stamp, and you could buy how many stamps you wanted, and then when you filled that book up, it was worth \$18.50, but if you kept it to maturity, then they gave you the bond, and if you held the bond to maturity, it was \$25.00. So on all my paychecks it shows where I had a bond taken out of my money all the time.

Redman: So did you do say like fifty cents out of each paycheck to add up to—

2-00:29:33

Madsen: No, I bought a bond with it. When I got out to Berkeley, besides taking it out of my paycheck, I used to go up and just put my whole paycheck in the bank to save it because in those days to pay off your house was something, and we wanted to pay off this big \$3,000 loan.

Redman: Three thousand dollars is quite a sum at that time, but now it's kind of funny that—

2-00:30:06

Madsen: So I just went up and immediately deposited my check.

Redman: So were you just more or less living on your husband's wages and then saving your—

2-00:30:14

Madsen: Yeah, we were living on it before. We lived on it in the Depression. We lived on it before, so why was that going to—?

Redman: I should take personal finance notes from you.

2-00:30:24

Madsen: Why was I going to blow this money? I mean, when you came through the Depression you had this whole other attitude, not like the kids today. There's more coming off the tree or something.

Redman: One of the things I wanted to ask was in 1946 there was a general strike of all of the unions in Oakland that was—

2-00:30:46

Madsen: In San Francisco, too.

Redman: In San Francisco, too? Okay, and that was like a few days long, and it basically shut down the city.

2-00:30:55

Madsen: The whole thing, yeah.

Redman: Can you tell me anything about that? What that was like, anything about it.

2-00:30:58

Madsen: I remember I was really scared because Chris had to go down there; the union made you appear. I would just wait for him to get home from that.

Redman: You were worried that it would turn into violence and riots, yeah, okay.

2-00:31:12

Madsen: Meanness, yes.

Redman: Did he ever pass along to you what sort of things he experienced at the Oakland general strike? So he was required to go down there by the union.

2-00:31:24

Madsen: Yes, if you're a good, loyal union member, you went.

Redman: Did he tell you what that was like at all or—?

2-00:31:33

Madsen: Well, I don't remember any specific things, but then he didn't like it any more than I liked it.

Redman: So he saw it was part of his—

2-00:31:40

Madsen: But he had to do it. They were out for better wages, and coming through the Depression and the war, it was time somebody got something.

Redman: Tell me then a little bit about what your post war life was like. You started paying off this house in Oakland, is that correct?

2-00:32:04

Madsen: Yes. That was another funny story because when I went down to pay off the FHA loan at the bank, they didn't believe me that, "Where did you borrow this money? You can't borrow money to pay this off." They gave me a real hard time, and I said, "I didn't borrow it at all. I saved it, I worked, and I saved it." So I had to prove to them that I had it in American Trust Bank in Berkeley. I was going to get it out of there to pay off the home.

Redman: They didn't believe that you weren't out—

2-00:32:34

Madsen: Well, they thought I was getting another person to loan it to me.

Redman: Tell me about how Oakland changed after the war.

2-00:32:49

Madsen: Well, that's was the sad part of it because when she started school in Bella Vista, that's when they closed the Richmond shipyards and they all moved back to Oakland. The schools had to double up, double sessions, had one group going in the morning, another school going in the afternoon, and the boys, the colored boys got really bad. They were beating up on—they beat her up, or tried to beat up her girlfriend in sixth grade one time, and that's when my husband says, "We're getting out of here." So we rented our Oakland house and moved to Orinda for \$20,000, rented the Oakland house for \$109. That paid the payments on the Orinda house.

Redman: So you hung on to the Oakland house and rented it out and then purchased another—

2-00:33:46

Madsen: Because my mother still lived there. The whole family was still living in that. I guess I failed to tell you about this property originally that my father bought. He wanted the lot for each child. In West Oakland back in his time, the lots were twenty-five foot lots, twenty-five feet wide, so he thought he had enough property, but when it came to our time, it was forty-foot lots, so luckily two of my older brothers, two sisters were already married, and one lived in Hayward and one lived in Berkeley. So the rest of us got the forty-foot lots, and we paid in so much to make them even.

That's where we lived, all in a row like that, on East 31<sup>st</sup> Street. So when she started school I used to walk her over to school because I didn't drive in those days, and up one hill and down the other over to 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue to Bella Vista

School, and then that's when I say when things got nasty with this double session and this influx from Richmond into our town.

Redman: Is your impression was that a lot of people after the Kaiser Shipyards shut down in Richmond, they moved there.

2-00:35:06

Madsen: Oakland absolutely changed.

Redman: Suddenly there was a lot of racial tension.

2-00:35:12

Madsen: Oh, yes.

Redman: And a lot of people who were suddenly out of work. The final question I'd like to ask is I'd like to just ask you to look back on World War II in your life and, what sort of things do you think about when you look back at your life during World War II? What are some of the big recollections sort of tying all of these things together? What sorts of things stand out in your mind most?

2-00:35:43

Madsen: Well, as I say, it was bad, you had to be careful, but I don't know we were just doing our thing. I was working and felt I was doing my part. Chris was working, and we had our fun times of getting together with groups of friends. It was a good time. It was a bad time as far as the war was concerned, but I mean me personally I think it was fun, we were together and everything was fine.

Redman: We talked about a lot of topics today, so yeah, I really appreciate it.

2-00:36:38

Madsen: I could go on and on I think.

Redman: Excellent. Well, wonderful. Well, thank you so much for sitting down and agreeing to do this. I really appreciate it.

2-00:36:46

Madsen: Was it all right?

Redman: Yes, if you were a student, I'd give you an A.

[End of Interview]