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Gloria Magleby

Rosie the Riveter
World War II Home Front Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by
Javier Arbona
in 2010

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Gloria Magleby

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Interview 1: July 9, 2010
Begin Audiofile 1

Arbona: This is Javier Arbona, and I'm here with Gloria Magleby on July 9, 2010. We're here today for an oral history interview. You were just mentioning that you wanted to start with—

1-00:00:25
Magleby: Coming to California.

Arbona: Coming to California. And that's actually the same thing I had on my outline. So why don't you tell us a little bit about that?

1-00:00:34
Magleby: I will indeed. I was born in Southern Utah. My father was a contractor and we moved around a little bit in Utah, and then ended up in Elko, Nevada, where my father was a contractor and built houses there. Then came 1941. December 7, 1941, and there came the Pearl Harbor debacle. That was a terrible thing to happen. I lost a cousin in that bombing of Pearl Harbor, but it changed our lives, and of course it changed the lives of everybody in America. It's interesting because—I'm just going to throw this in—the number of people killed at Pearl Harbor on that bombing escapade of the Japanese at that time was almost the same number that were killed on 9/11 at New York. That's just plain interesting to me because when it happened, we heard it on the news of course. And it was a Sunday. It was a little scary, very scary, especially when we realized that we had a cousin that was killed, who was in the Navy band at Pearl Harbor.

But that started the move to California. My father found work in California and the entire family came here. Now entire family at that time was only two children, and that was me and my twin brother and my mother and father, although I had four other siblings at the time. But they were older and married and moved their way. But they all ended up in California anyway. So, 1941 was the bombing of Pearl Harbor, and that started the movement of our family to Pittsburg, California. And we said Pittsburg because this is unincorporated area where I live now named Bay Point, but at the time we moved we thought we were coming to Pittsburg. Now it's interesting to look back on it because I say I'm from Bay Point, not Pittsburg. But when we first moved, we moved to Pittsburg.

Arbona: Where did you say you were moving from?

1-00:02:59
Magleby: Elko, Nevada. We only lived in Elko a couple of years, but it was an interesting town. Very interesting, and I'm just going to throw this in. When we ran for election in high school, the one that won the most votes gave the most beer and pretzels away in Elko, Nevada. That was unheard of in my family and life, but even so, while we lived in Elko, it was a lot of fun.

Moving to California was totally different for me. Remember, I was only about fourteen so things didn't dawn me until later. When I look back, it's a lot of fun to look back because as I'm older, I realize that I was going through tremendous history at the time, but didn't realize it at the very moment. My twin brother and I took a bus from Elko to meet my family here. My mother took another bus to Pittsburg to pick us up. We couldn't drive cars a lot because gas was hard to get. You couldn't buy gas; you had to have a coupon, and you could only give gallons at a time. It was important to use that gas expeditiously and not just waste it. Everything we did we tried to find ways and means to get there by bus.

So we got to California and my mother and father bought a house. It wasn't going to be ready until 1943, so for one year we lived in a motel in California, here in Bay Point. That was interesting living because it was no different from a house. Because we had two bedrooms—no, we had one bedroom and used the living room for the other bedroom. We lived for one year in a motel. My twin brother and I took a bus to school at Mt. Diablo High School in Concord. And so that one year, 1942, was one where we lived in a motel.

1943 we moved into this house where are we sitting right now. That means that I've lived in this house since it was built, and that was 1943. That makes it about—what? Sixty seven years, something like that. So here I am, and I just had a birthday, so I am now eighty four years old. And I don't feel older than thirty-nine, Jack Benny [laughter]. It's incredible how time flies, but this is the house that we moved into finally. It was built brand new by the Enes family. It was called Enes tract. All of the houses around here were Enes tract. We moved in, and my father built a little attic room for my brother. Although it's a two bedroom house, my brother had a room, I had a room, and my mother and father had a room. So that's interesting because in 1943 we were in this brand new house. We didn't have much furniture, but we moved in and loved the idea that we had our own house. This is 1943.

Arbona: I want to get back to 1943, but I'm also interested if we could rewind a little and go back to Elko, because you lived there for fourteen years.

1-00:06:42

Magleby: No, two years.

Arbona: Oh, two years. I understood wrong.

1-00:06:46

Magleby: We had moved around in Utah. We left Monroe when we were about eleven years old. Then we moved to American Fork. Everywhere we went it was because my father had work. If he didn't have work, we had to find work—he had to find work. And we moved wherever he found work. So, Monroe is where we were born, for about eleven years, and I say that's where I grew up. Then we moved to American Fork, Utah. Then Salt Lake City, Utah. Then

Elko, Nevada. Then Pittsburg, California. We were used to moving around. We did it quite well. My twin brother and I found friends no matter where we went. We still have those good friends. We still remember and keep good friends. But Elko was just a stopping place, and we didn't spend that much time there. But that's where we were in 1941 when Pearl Harbor was bombed, and that's what brought us to California. Because my father found work in California, and that's how we got to buy a house, because he finally had a job where he got paid, not a job where he gave everything away. He'd build a house and then the wife would come in and say, "Well, could you redo this a little?" He'd say, "Oh, of course I can." So we didn't make money. He was just too good and too kind. But he built some magnificent homes for people, but he wanted it to be just right for the wife especially, because she's the one that lives there most of the time and is there. So we didn't make a lot of money while he was contracting, but finally got a job at Shell Chemical. That's interesting because I also got a job there later on. But 1943 is when we moved into this house.

Now, my twin brother and I went to school Mt. Diablo High School in Concord and that was a magnificent school in those days. It was one of the best in California, accredited. It was one of the best in America. It was such a good school that it was well known to be one of the best—of course in California—and all of California and even wider than that. So we felt honored to be able to go to that school. When we went to school, we took the bus every morning. We loved it there. For the first time in a long time, we had homework. Seemed like we didn't have homework in other towns. But at Mt. Diablo we had homework and we did it every night. We were glad to do it, we were glad to learn. There was an attitude at Mt. Diablo that you were at a special school that you paid honor to that school by doing well, and we did. We tried to do well.

I was very active in the school. As a matter of fact, I loved going to school there so much that I never missed one single day. We went as juniors, and then seniors. As a junior and senior, I didn't miss one day of school because I loved that school, Mt. Diablo High School. And even today, I give honor to that school. It was a place where we truly enjoyed the teachers and enjoyed the curriculum. I learned Spanish for the first time in my life. My twin brother took some—I think he took Latin or maybe a little Spanish, I'm not sure. But later on, as we graduated and when you realize that this is 1943 and 1944, the war is going full blast, World War II. And as we graduated in 1944. Remember, July 1944 was when the big explosion came.

We didn't graduate until June of 1944, and the morning after graduation my twin brother and a bunch of our high school senior boys went in the service because we were at war. Either you got drafted or you decided to join. They decided to join the Navy. A bunch of boys from my class went in the Navy and they took off that morning, the next morning after we graduated for San Diego to be in the Navy, and they certainly were.

But then of course, V-E Day came, and that was shortly after. I can't remember VE Day to be honest with you, because that was 1945, so they were only in the service for a little while and really didn't get into action. They were called to do various things, but the boys I graduated with all came home safe. One of the boys that went in the service early was killed in action. So we knew what it was like to be killed during World War II, having gone through it with one of our classmates. But the boys that went into the service right after graduation, they all survived the war. I don't think any of them got into actual combat of any kind.

Arbona: What was the atmosphere in the high school in that period of the 1940s?

1-00:12:38

Magleby:

Well, remember now, we're fifteen, sixteen, seventeen. We had fun. Despite the war, despite the fact that we couldn't buy cars, we couldn't buy sugar, we couldn't buy shoes, we couldn't buy some clothes. We still had a fabulous time going to school. It was like we existed despite the war. And we laughed and played and had football games and baseball games, and went to the games. We'd collect a coupon for five gallons of gas and go to a ball game. So we didn't really suffer a whole lot. People nowadays say, "You couldn't buy shoes?! You couldn't buy gas?" No, we couldn't. But we had a lot of fun anyway. And we had our senior ball and our senior prom, and we put on plays. We had a great time going to school, truly a great time. I guess it's because you're young and you don't realize that things were that bad.

Because after the bombing of Pearl Harbor the adult people—not us, because we just didn't realize how serious it was—adult people felt like they were coming for America. That the Japanese weren't—that was the *first* bombing in Pearl Harbor, that that was just the first step in them coming to America. So when we got to California, we knew what it was to have air raid wardens. We knew what it was to have our parents go to buildings and identify any aircraft whatsoever, and they would and learned how to identify aircraft. Because we felt confident that the Japanese were coming, and first off it's California, we're right in the line of fire. We had brownouts. We pulled all the drapes. We were checked on. Air raid wardens were checking to making sure there wasn't one single thing that showed light in the house. We were sure that the Japanese were coming to America to bomb us and take over America. And lo and behold, they did not. They didn't come close to America as far as I am aware. And so although we were very aware that they could, they didn't come, and so we were saved in that regard.

But we were very aware that there was a war going on. I had four brothers. All four brothers were in the service and interesting enough, my twin brother was in the Navy, and the next brother up was in the Marine Corps, the next brother up was in the Merchant Marine, the next brother up was in the Army. So we were participating in the war effort for sure. My Marine brother was in Saipan or Saigon. I can't remember what the name of that was, where he spent a lot

of time and actually was in some combat. But we were all part and parcel of World War II. But we didn't mind it. We knew we had to hurry and get things together because we were not anywhere near ready for a war. We didn't concentrate on the Army, the Navy, the Marine Corps. We didn't concentrate on supplies. And all of the sudden everything stopped, and everything turned to the war effort. We couldn't buy a lot of things and we didn't care because it had to go the war, and we were happy to do it.

Arbona: When your brothers left for war, what would a day like that be like?

1-00:16:42

Magleby: It was one of sadness, but we knew it had to be. We straightened our shoulders, even as young people, and said, "Goodbye. Do a good job." There was not a whole lot of mourning because we knew had to be done. We had to go protect our company, and we had to protect it mainly from the Japanese. But remember we had already joined the war in Europe. We were already part of that. My older brother was drafted into the Army, and he was part and parcel of that war. We called it the European War. And now we're involved in another war on the other side of the world. So our family was deeply involved in World War II, both in Europe and in the Pacific. But nobody really mourned a lot about people going to war, because we knew they had to do, and they were proud to. They were delighted to be a part of the fighting force. It wasn't like, "Oh, I got to go to war. How can I get out of this?" Nobody tried to get out. Except conscientious objectors, and they had every right to get out. But as far as going to war, that was just part and parcel of our thinking. You had to go. You didn't argue. You went because it was the right thing to do, and we felt like it was right.

Arbona: When I've read about the period, I've often times heard references, or seen references in books to places like Fort Mason where the soldiers would depart from. Would the family go there the day of the departure?

1-00:18:36

Magleby: No, no. As a matter of fact, I'm going to tell you a story about Pittsburg because Pittsburg had a huge camp. It was built at the time of the bombing of Pearl Harbor. We knew we had to build some camps in a hurry to hold our servicemen. So in Pittsburg it was called Camp Stoneman. That camp held at one time 153,000 troops. It was a huge camp, and they embarked from Camp Stoneman down to the waterfront where the ships would come to take them to World War II. Bear in mind that Pittsburg is not a big time and Camp Stoneman was just off to the side of the town. We all knew Camp Stoneman was there, and we all knew that there were boats waiting for them at the waterfront in Pittsburg. So when we went to Pittsburg and we knew fellas were going to the service, nobody said anything because "loose lips sink ships." That was one of the things we'd always say. Just don't talk about anybody going anywhere. If we went to church, and some servicemen came to church, we didn't mention that there was a chance that they would have to go

to war or when. We just didn't talk about it because we were afraid that maybe there were spies that picking up on things like that. But let me tell you, there were times in Pittsburg when thousands of men left the camp in the middle of the night, walked down Harbor Street—bear in mind that they didn't make one sound—there was nothing to do.

[Phone interruption]

Arbona: We are back from the phone call pause. This is still tape one with Gloria Magleby. You were just telling me a little bit about the fear of spies and the knowledge that if there were soldiers at church or somewhere, you didn't really want to talk about the war.

1-00:20:59

Magleby: We didn't much about anything that was going on at Camp Stoneman because we did not want anybody—we didn't want to be a part of any spying, or as you say, loose lips sink ships. We didn't want to be a part of that. It's interesting to realize that as the men left Camp Stoneman in the middle of the night and walked down Harbor Street, nobody in Pittsburg knew they were doing that. Nobody talked about it because they didn't know it was happening. Here's thousands of men walking down Harbor Street in Pittsburg to the waterfront where there were huge ships docked waiting for them to board and ready to go the Pacific war zone. When you think back on it, it's incredible to believe that night after night that happened. Not just one night, but many, many nights in the middle of the night here are army personnel, soldiers, walking down Pittsburg's streets as quiet s they could without saying one single word, and nobody knew about it and nobody told about it. And if they did know about it, they wouldn't tell about it because it was something we knew we shouldn't talk about. But it was interesting now looking back on it, that's how they got to the ship. They had to walk down the street to get to the boat. And they did. Off they went to the war, some of them never to return because there were lots of deaths in the Pacific, too. Those days are filled with almost, like it didn't happen, when I think back.

When you're young, those things don't count as much. You live your life; like I say, when we went to high school, we had a great time in high school in the middle of the war. We didn't let it stop us from doing much of anything. We saved our money for war bonds or war stamps, and you bought a war stamp every Monday for twenty-five cents, and that was great if you had a quarter. A quarter was big money in those days. We'd buy a war stamp on Mondays and then save them, and eventually you could redeem them. If you bought a war bond, it was more like fifteen dollars, and that was worth about twenty-five dollars before you knew it, or maybe more. If you still had those today, you would be very rich if you had kept them and saved them. That was part and parcel of what we went through during World War II. The war was going strong, but our lives were still going on, too.

Arbona: Tell me a little bit about the stamps, too. If you would get together with friends, you'd go out to do something and spend them where?

1-00:24:11

Magleby: Well, the stamp was a war stamp. You saved them. You didn't spend them. You could redeem them for money, but it was just exactly like today. If you bought a treasury bond you saved it. You didn't go out and spend it. Too many times we felt like we needed the money, so we'd spend them anyway. You know how kids are. If you needed money and you had a dollar in stamps, you collected the dollar because that would buy lots. That would buy a lot of stuff. As a matter of fact, I remember one time when we lived in Salt Lake—

[Phone interruption]

1-00:25:03

Magleby: —interested in history and so on and he and I collaborate on lots of things, but we can talk about it later.

Arbona: Don't let me forget. If there are other people that you know who would be interested in an oral history, we could get contacts.

1-00:25:19

Magleby: He only came here since 1996, so it's not somebody that's older, but nevertheless there are very few that remember all of this left. Very few. My classmates remember, and that's kind of fun. Let me tell you what my classmates do. This is interrupting the story a little bit. Remember we graduated in 1944. The explosion of Port Chicago happened in 1944, so we all remember it. But as a class, we've stayed together pretty much. As for me, I never married. I lived in this house ever since it was built.

I've kept in touch with classmates for these sixty-seven years, and now we meet in the school, in the term of school, like September to June, every month at Mt. Diablo High School. They have an on-campus restaurant called Serendipity. We go over there once a month, and we are in collaboration with the school, the principal, and the faculty. They bring class members of the school, current kids that go to school, to the Serendipity restaurant, and we treat them to lunch. They bring the kids that are kind of on the edge, that could care less about going to school, who could care less about a teacher or learning anything. Then they sit with us and we tell them what it was like going to school during World War II. If we tell them that we couldn't buy shoes, they say, "You couldn't buy shoes?!" They can't believe it. Then we tell them how much we loved school. And before they leave, they put their arms around us—because some of them don't even know what a grandparent is—and we're like their grandparents. It's incredibly interesting to see them as they come in and sit down and say, "Oh, we're going to have lunch with some old fogies. This ought to be fun." And before they leave, they are in the palm of our hands because we love that school so much. They feel it, they know it, and they respect it all the more. The faculty and the principal say, "Please

don't stop coming because this is making a world of difference to some of the kids who used to care less about school."

Our class was, to me, still very important. Although many of us have died—we had only about 102 graduate, and there's maybe thirty or forty of us left—we still get together whenever we can, and we do once a month, during the school year, to enjoy lunch with the kids who go to school now. We tell them what a great school they go to. "If you don't like it, you better because you'll have to speak to us. You'll have to apologize to us." But they love to have lunch with us, and it's a free lunch. We get the Bay Point Chamber of Commerce to supply the money for their lunches, and so it just makes a world of difference because they understand how much we loved school. How much we didn't ever want to miss school.

Now we've reached about 1944 and Camp Stoneman, but we can go on.

Arbona: You mentioning the high school there, even though that came a bit from a detour, I wanted to pause on that for a little bit too and talk about it. The school—I'm curious, when you came to California and went to Mt. Diablo High School, was the school recently built?

1-00:29:21

Magleby: It was an older school.

Arbona: It was older.

1-00:29:20

Magleby: Yes it was. And it was the only one, virtually, in almost all of Contra Costa. There were very few other schools. Richmond had a school. Oakland had a school, but not Contra Costa. Mt. Diablo was where there are about seventeen high schools now. It was the only one. It still wasn't that big. There were maybe 1,700 students in the whole school. Maybe not that many. I'm thinking more like 800 in the whole school because in our class there were a little over a hundred. Although there were bigger classes underneath us; it wasn't a huge school, but it was the only school in the area.

Arbona: In the area.

1-00:30:12

Magleby: And the principal, Ms. Bertha Romaine. They named a building after her. Bertha Romaine was our principal. We were so respectful of her that there is no way in this world that we would ever accost her or call her names. Today kids have a tendency to say anything they want to teachers. We did not. We were very respectful of teachers and especially the principal. We had a dean of girls, Miss [Irma] Bromley, and she also was respected so much. Our coach, Pete Kramer, we would have walked to Missouri for him, or crawled to Missouri if that's possible, because we respected them so much. When I look at our yearbook now, I realize what great faculty members we had. The

Spanish teacher, Ms. Witt. We didn't know she was married. Women didn't get married as teachers in those days. You really weren't supposed to get married, and if you did you better keep it quiet because that wasn't something you do and you might lose your job. But Ms. Witt was married, and we didn't even know it. Married to Mr. Cox. Her name was Mrs. Cox, and we didn't even know it. Knowing her afterward we finally realized she was married the whole time we were going to school.

Arbona: Why was that you couldn't get married or that the teachers were expected not to—?

1-00:31:47

Magleby: I have no idea. I have no idea. It was more of a culture than anything I think. There was no law. It was just something you didn't do. If you were a woman teacher, the last thing you did was get married. That was not right. You shouldn't be married as a woman teacher. The men could be married, but not the women. The men could be married, and we knew that. We thought all the women that were our teachers were not married. Many of them were not married, but some of them were and didn't tell us. But it was kind of fun afterward to realize that was just something the women teachers didn't do, and that's marry. So whatever happened happened.

Arbona: Do you have any recollection of how old she was?

1-00:32:40

Magleby: She was like in her thirties, and she stayed for a long time and taught for a long time and lived for a long time. I was pleased to go to lunch with her many times after I graduated, years and years after I graduated. She lived to be 101 and was sharp as a tack right up to the last. That was our Spanish teacher Irmgard Witt. She was a very, very interesting teacher, and we loved her. But I got to know her even better after graduation.

Arbona: Did she mention something about her marriage?

1-00:33:22

Magleby: Oh, yeah. She said she didn't tell anybody that she was married, but she was. She didn't have children, but she was married. It was interesting to note that I don't know that there were any others that I can think of that were married, but I think there was one other woman that was married. But if you got married, you left school and got married. But you didn't come back and teach. That was a no-no for some strange reason. Things have changed now for sure. They can be married and divorced and married and divorced sixteen times if they want to be, and still come back and teach. But school was important to me growing up, and I'm so grateful for Mt. Diablo High School for the good education that it gave us.

Arbona: You also mentioned that the class sizes were getting bigger and bigger.

1-00:34:19

Magleby: Yes, they were.

Arbona: Was that because of people coming to the state or the area?

1-00:34:22

Magleby: People coming to California because of the war. That's why we called the people from Oklahoma Okies and people from Arkansas Arkies, because lots of them—and you know the stories of people that came during the Dust Bowl and so on. There were jobs in California during World War II. Lots of people from Oklahoma and Arkansas came to California to live and get work. There was some kind of a stigma attached to that, and we called those from Oklahoma Okies and from Arkansas Arkies. It was not a good name. You're a little bit underneath the high-class California people, which was so unfair, so very unfair. But that's what happened. So many from Oklahoma came to California, all over California, not just Northern California. When I think about it now, that was the rudest things we could do, is call somebody an Okie. That meant they couldn't make a living, they had to come here. They never called me that, although I came in World War II. Because I wasn't from Oklahoma. It's a strange story. Strange, strange story.

Arbona: Did you ever identify as coming from somewhere else?

1-00:35:49

Magleby: Well, yes, we all did. But it was different coming from Oklahoma for some reason. I don't know what that was, unless it was because there were a lot of them that came. But they integrated into California, and now you don't even realize that many, many people living next door to you started out in Oklahoma. But that was a stigma attached somehow. I don't know how it came about, and I don't care, but I didn't like it. It's so unfair. Very unfair. But going to school was lots of fun.

Arbona: And you learned Spanish.

1-00:36:28

Magleby: And I learned a little bit of Spanish. We had a lot of fun in her class because she was a very interesting teacher. I had two years of Spanish, and then after we graduated and my brother—I told you my brother went into the service—after that he was called on a mission by our church. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. He was called on a mission to Mexico, and boy, did he learn Spanish fast there. As a matter of fact, he'd rather speak Spanish than English. He could speak it fluently. When he came back from his two year mission to Mexico, he purposely found people who could speak Spanish and related to them. They'd go out and have breakfast together, and their entire conversation would be Spanish. Spanish in California is a second language. It just is. And now we almost print everything in English and Spanish because of the fact that so many Latinos live in California and it's only fair that they have some communication with every community.

I'm very active in this community in Bay Point. As a matter of fact, the thing that I'm noted for here is organizing groups and organizations. I'm good at that, and I enjoy it. So one of the first things I organized—and, by the way, I was elected to the Municipal Advisory Council, which is like the city council, but it's unincorporated, in 1998, and from that time on, I became very active in the community. Before that, I had a job and I worked in my church, but I wasn't active in the community. But in 1998, I became a member of the Municipal Advisory Council [MAC] and it started me on a quest to get more people involved. I was a member of the board of directors on the MAC, as we called it, and in 2003 I was elected as chairman of the board of directors for the Municipal Advisory Council.

And so I felt like I had a little bit of clout, and I thought to myself, "What we need in this community is to revive what was the West Pittsburg pride into the Bay Point pride." We changed the name of West Pittsburg to Bay Point. I was part and parcel of that because I thought it was a good name. I organized the Bay Point Pride. That was simply to keep the community clean and tidy. As a matter of fact, it is now ten years old, since I organized the Bay Point Pride. Having been successful doing that and getting more people involved in cleaning the community, cleaning vacant yards, and then we started a program of yard of the month. You have the prettiest yard, you get a reward. That has been going and been so successful I figured, "Well, lets' see, what else do we need in Bay Point?" And I organized the Bay Point Historical Society. I was the organizer of that because I felt like we needed one. And lo and behold we had one before you know it. Such as today I am interested in history. I am very interested in The Bancroft Library, and that I'll tell you about in a minute. But I organized the Bay Point Historical Society, which is still going strong. People are still coming to it. We have luncheons once a year and talk about the history of Bay Point.

Then I said, "Well, Bay Point's a pretty good-sized town. We should have a chamber of commerce." So I organized the chamber of commerce. Lo and behold, we have now a chamber of commerce, organized in 2003. I did all of this in 2003.

Then in 2004 one more thing I organized was the Bay Point Garden Club. I said, "Every community needs a garden club." Because I was successful in the others, I figured I could organize anything. Since that time, all four of these organizations are very active and going strong.

Arbona: I can see why you have so many appointments and you are so busy.

1-00:41:05

Magleby: I have many, many appointments. This house is not a house; it's an office. It holds the materials for all of those organizations, because I am available, this house is available to store things.

Arbona: What do you think if we actually come back to these things because I think this is very important local history from the recent past? But I was thinking we could go back to the high school, and you were talking about Spanish speakers in California. Is there anything else that you can add to the population of the high school, and were there Latinos in Mt. Diablo High School?

1-00:41:48

Magleby: We did not have Latinos in high school. That movement did not start in 1944. We did not have people from Mexico to California. We did not have any of that. We had one or two who were Latino, but they were here for a long, long time, had been here for a long time. The movement of Latinos, or the Mexican people, did not start until way later. And to be honest with you, I can't begin to tell you when it started, such as it is now, like the border is being inundated with people coming from Mexico. Not in 1944. When I was going to school, there might have been two or three kids in high school who were Latino. We did not have to have things printed in Spanish. We didn't, because there weren't that many Latinos going to school. There were very few, as a matter of fact. That movement didn't start until way later. I'm thinking it had to be the sixties, seventies, maybe even as late as the eighties before this influx of Mexican people came to California. So there wasn't any reason for us to have to learn Spanish, because we didn't have to; we just wanted to because it was a good teacher, and we loved the language. So the only reason we took Spanish is because we wanted it to be part of our unit credit, so we did.

Arbona: I have another question the geography of this area where we're in right now. You've loved in this house pretty much most of your life.

1-00:43:30

Magleby: Right.

Arbona: And we're in Bay Point. So what was it like to—well, back then it wasn't Bay Point, right? It was called—

1-00:43:39

Magleby: West Pittsburg. And a few other little names. We called it Enes Track and Bella Vista, like that.

Arbona: Did you get out to Port Chicago? Did you get out to the other neighborhoods?

1-00:43:55

Magleby: As a matter of fact, some of my classmates lived in Port Chicago. And Port Chicago of course was where I got my first job. My first job was at the Naval Magazine in Port Chicago. The people from the Naval Magazine needed people to work there so they came to our school. They came in April or May of 1944 and solicited people that need a job at the Naval Magazine. I thought to myself, "This is ideal. This is perfect. I can get a job at the Naval Magazine and help myself with some money to get to college. So I signed up immediately to work at the Naval Magazine at Port Chicago right out of high

school. Two or three days after I graduated I found my way to their employment office and was signed up as an employee of the US Navy that I worked for. I think we went to Mare Island first to sign up, but then we ended up where we were called to be and that's Port Chicago, and I worked in Port Chicago.

Of course, as you well know, if I graduated in June of 1944, and I started work in early July of 1944 at the Naval Magazine in Port Chicago, the explosion came only seventeen days later, July 17, 1944, 10:17 at night. I was in my house, and when the explosion came it was the loudest noise I have ever heard in my entire life. I don't think my ears will ever be the same. It was absolutely, totally so loud that you cannot explain it. That was the first explosion, and then came the second one. I was in the bathroom at the time, ready to get ready for bed and I don't think I was jolted as much as I was shocked at the noise. Then here came the second explosion, and then I was truly shocked. My mother and father were in the front bedroom of our house, windows right there. Not one window was broken at their bedroom. But in this room where I'm sitting, all the windows in the front were broken. The door was blown across the room and ended up over on that side of the room. The garage door was broken and open. All the nails in the ceiling came out half way. Dishes were all broken. We knew it was bad.

But to my mind, my mind didn't go to Port Chicago at the moment. It went to the Japanese. I figured the Japanese had dropped a bomb across the street from my house. I figured that it was an airplane that had done, so there weren't going to be any Japanese out there, but that was the first experience I had, the first thought I had, "the Japanese have come to America, or California, and they've dropped a bomb right across the street from my house." It was that loud. It wasn't that loud. And it didn't take long at turning the radio on and listening to the news to find out. I thought, "Oh my gosh." I had just helped load one of those ships completely full of ammunition and both of them had exploded." I knew my job was in jeopardy. But guess what? Three days later a knock at the door, and here's somebody from my job saying, "Come back to work. We've got to clean up the mess. We're going to be in business again." So I went back to the Naval Magazine and said, "Wow. Look what happened."

Let me tell you the most horrific thing that happened going back to work was the smell of dead bodies as you're driving down Port Chicago Highway to get to work. There were lots of bodies around. They had not all been picked up. And the smell of dead bodies is something I don't ever want to smell again. But they did finally recover the bodies, and of course the story of Port Chicago becomes world renowned. But I was part and parcel of the working force at the time. Nobody that I knew intimately was killed that day. Some of the men that I knew that we worked with were killed. And the black sailors, a lot of black sailors were killed. But I did not know anyone personally that was killed at Port Chicago. All I know is that I smelled their bodies, and it was not

a good smell. The odor was terrible. But we did clean up. We started cleaning up, and then we started loading ships again. And at that time, it was like we survived, we're ready to go back to war.

Arbona: What did your job entail?

1-00:49:22

Magleby:

Just clerk. A clerk typist. You'd get information from where the ammunition was, and you'd write orders to have certain ammunition come and be placed in a certain location of Port Chicago. Then the next paperwork would be loaded on the ship. A funny thing happened when we were working. You could buy a war bond or war stamps there too. I bought a war bond one time, and when you bought a bond, you got to go down in the basement where there were a lot of bombs. In the basement of our building, as a matter of fact. There were all kinds of bombs down there. You got to stencil a message on a bomb. Of all the horrible things I ever said in my life, I stenciled on one of the big bombs in the basement or the lower half of my building, "Here's one for you, Tojo."

And that makes me think now of what war does to people. You write on a bomb, "I hope this hits you, Tojo, and kills you." That's what war does. You forget what you're saying because you hate. Wars kill people and you're glad that they're dead when they're on the other side. That's one thing that wars can do is change your heart and soul into something bad, and that's why I hate wars, too. People who hate wars usually have been to war. I felt like I had been to war. Taking a stencil and saying, "Here's one for you, Tojo," makes me sorry that I did that. But we did it because—and if you went to the movies and you see news of a Japanese plane going down, everybody in the theater clapped and yelled, "Yeaaa! Another Japanese going down." Wars do terrible things to us. As I think about it now, and we clapped and hollered when a Japanese plane was shot and going down and men dying, we still cheered. That's what war can do to you. It's a sad thing to think about. It really is.

Arbona: Tell me a little bit more about going to the movies. As a parenthesis, you mentioned the films.

1-00:51:53

Magleby:

Before the movie, we always had a preview kind of—it was a news preview. We didn't have TV, of course. We didn't listen to the radio all that much, but we learned what the news was going to the movies. You'd find out President Roosevelt signed this, President Roosevelt did that, President Roosevelt declared war on the Japanese, and you'd get to see it in the movies. As a matter of fact, come to think about it, we were in school in Elko, Nevada, and we had a paging system. We got to hear President Roosevelt on that paging system as he declared war. I remember he said that—it was probably the Monday or Tuesday after the bombing when we declared war—and he said something like, "That dastardly event." And I thought, "Oh, that's a bad word,

isn't it? Dastardly." Because I was thinking of bastard and not dastard. But no, it's a good word. But we heard President Roosevelt declare war on the Japanese while we were in school. That's when I was fourteen years old. That was quite a day. I will never forget hearing his voice.

In the meantime, the explosion happened, we continued on with the war, and when V-E Day came early 1945, we were delighted that it had come, but when V-J Day came, it was right here at home. We were so delighted that the war was over. And both of them happened in one year. V-J Day late in the year and V-E Day early in the year. Both wars ended 1945. From that time on, we were free to live as free people and our freedom was secure. We were very delighted that the war, *the* war, which was world war, was over. World War II was truly world war. I will always be glad that I lived through it because it reminds me of how you can survive with people dying in your own family—not my family, but in many families. You can live through it. You survive. You can even survive horrible wars and go on and go to college and get jobs and live until you're eighty-four!

Arbona: Actually, we are at fifty-four minutes right now, almost fifty-five. So that means there's a little bit left in the tape, but there's so much to talk about in terms of Port Chicago. Maybe if we just talk briefly about something. If there's anything else that you want to expand on that you've just mentioned so that we can almost get to the end of this tape.

1-00:55:10

Magleby: Well, let me think. Our classmates were part and parcel of the war too. So when we look back on it now, as I talk to my classmates, we tell these kids that come to eat with us that World War II didn't stop our lives. We went on with our lives. We got married, or many did. I didn't, but many did and had children. So you can survive wars by living your life the way you wanted it to be lived. There was no scarcity of jobs. When you got out of high school, you almost had a job before you left school. It was rare that you looked for a job because they were very, very plentiful. It's different today. When you get out of high school, it's hard to find a job. When you get out of college, it's hard to find a job. But not in those days. Jobs were so plentiful. And then in the early fifties, the United States became like in good shape. We had money to spend, and we spent it. But those days are precious to me because they're part and parcel of my life to kind of balance things out. If things are good, there were some sad times too. But that's the balance that you take and you make. You have sadness and gladness. If you can look for the gladness, the sadness drifts away.

I am delighted to be here today, but let me say one more thing. While I was going to college, I went to the University of California for a semester, and the best thing I ever did was go to The Bancroft Library. I did find there some original papers from my church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, from a very, very prominent woman in the church, Eliza R. Snow. She

wrote a poem after the martyrdom of Joseph Smith and her brother, and I found that poem at The Bancroft Library. So if anybody says they don't have stuff that's great, I would challenge anything because I asked if I could look at it, and they said, "Put all your pens away. Put everything away. You may have a pencil, but nothing else. Put everything aside. We do not want this material to be damaged in any way." I took that from their library, copied that poem in pencil, and it was quite a long poem. When I finished it, they took it from my hands and put it back in the library, and there it still is. But I will ever be grateful that I got that poem copied and I still have copies of it.

Arbona: That's wonderful.

1-00:58:05

Magleby: Eliza R. Snow's original writings.

Arbona: Why don't we pause right there with that thought, and we can take a break and maybe change tapes here.

Interview 1: July 9, 2010

Begin Audiofile 2 07-09-2010.mp3

Arbona: Once again, this is July 9, 2010, and this is Javier Arbona speaking. I am here with Gloria Magleby, and this is tape two of our oral history today. And we were talking a moment ago about Port Chicago and your work there as a clerk. One of the things I was just wondering about, I was curious about was, were you unionized?

02-00:00:26

Magleby: No, no unions. None at all.

Arbona: With the Navy.

02-00:00:30

Magleby: With the Navy.

Arbona: And I also was interested to ask you, then, a broader question, just before the explosion. We read so much about today, the conditions at the base. And was there any discussion or a consciousness that perhaps conditions were unsafe? Or how did you feel about that?

02-00:00:55

Magleby: Not at all. There was no talk *ever* about any conditions that were unsafe. Not with us, anyway. We loaded ships, and we did the paperwork for the ships; we saw the personnel come in the office periodically. We'd see the officers, the Naval officers, and we'd see some of the workers, black and Caucasian. But never any talk about, "I don't think we should let this condition go on." Never anything like that was—nothing *ever* mentioned about unsafe conditions. It was a boat, we were loading it, and we were doing well; that's all I know.

Arbona: In terms of doing well, you mean my measure of the success in the war?

02-00:01:45
Magleby:

We were doing it on time; we were getting the boats loaded on time. Remember that before I came to work there, they had loaded many boats to send them off to the Pacific. This is just one of the boats that was ready to go, that blew up. And for what reason, no one will *ever* know. And another one partially loaded. So no, never any thought whatsoever of anything so drastic happening, or anything ever unsafe. Maybe they did on the waterfront, but not in the officer workers, not with—the general consensus or feelings there, never any word whatsoever about unsafe conditions.

Arbona: As a clerk, it sounds like the work that you did had to do with knowing where munitions were—

02-00:02:36
Magleby:

Right.

Arbona: —in the base, in the space of the base. Can you describe that a little bit? Were the munitions stored in boxcars?

02-00:02:43
Magleby:

Well, interesting enough, in Henderson, Nevada, there were lots of munitions that we had to transport to Port Chicago. What they were doing in Henderson, Nevada, I don't know, whether they were being made there or manufactured there or stored there. All I know is a lot of my paperwork for stuff that had to go back to Henderson or stuff that had to come from Henderson, Nevada to our loading docks; that was an important place that we thought about. And where the ammunition came from had to be from big manufacturing plants. And that could very well have been in Nevada, because we were not afraid of things in Nevada; Nevada was out of the way of anything. Japanese wouldn't bomb Nevada because they couldn't find anything there. But of course, the first A-bomb explosion happened in Nevada, too I'm understanding. But no. When we worked, the ammunition was somewhere and we made the paperwork possible for it to be loaded on the boat, so that they knew how much was on that boat; they knew how many bombs were on the boat, they knew how much ammunition of any kind. Mostly bombs, because I had the feeling that they were going to go to aircraft stations and aircraft were going to drop the bombs. You didn't have a bomb on the ground; bombs come from the air.

Arbona: You described for us the explosion before, and then you went back to work there. Did you feel that things were unsafe at that point? Or did you feel that it was just as before or what?

02-00:04:38
Magleby:

Well, I can understand you asking that question, but remember, I'm eighteen years old. And I felt as safe as sound. I didn't have one concern about no

safety. The explosion happened; it was tragic. But we were there to clean it up, not be afraid of it. No. No worry whatsoever about unsafe conditions, or us being unsafe for any reason. None at all. None at all.

Arbona: And your parents at the time—you were living in this very house?

02-00:05:10

Magleby: I was.

Arbona: And in the house, were there discussions about that? Did your parents ever mention anything about the base?

02-00:05:18

Magleby: No. They were just glad that I had a job. And of course I only worked till December, and then went to school at the University of Nevada. But while I worked there, they were very glad that I had a job and very glad that I was getting paid, which I was. But when you think about—when I went to the University of Nevada, I was out of state. And so I had to pay out-of-state dues. That was \$75 for a semester. So when I saved up \$75—remember now, I'm working from July through December, and I saved up \$75? That was a lot of money in those days. But I had it ready to go. And my sister lived in Reno, so I went to live with her and go to school at the University of Nevada in Reno, and kind of helped take care of her one son. Her husband was in the Army. And by the way, he was injured, to a degree, as he was in Europe. And so he had some injuries, but not life threatening. But when you think about it, \$75 a semester is quite a bit in those days.

But after 1945—and I was in the University of Nevada from January to June or July 1945—V-E Day happened in Nevada, for me. Then the GI Bill came in the act, and that happened right away. The Congress passed the GI Bill in 1945. Because when I went to go back to school in the University of Nevada starting in September, the charge was \$150 a semester. I could not afford that. And so I had to come back here and go to school at the University of California. Not that I didn't want to go to Cal at the time, but it was just something that—a friend of mine and I had family that lived in Reno, and so we both went there to school. But in September, I went to school for free at the University of California, not being an out-of-state student. And it was so easy in those days. There wasn't a dime that I paid to go to school. I had to buy books, but even then, it wasn't that much, didn't cost that much. And I enjoyed going to school at Cal. I didn't feel a part of the Berkeley group because I lived at home and not in a campus, not in a dorm or anything. So I missed that part of going to Cal. But I'll always be a Cal favorite. If there's a team and it's from California, Berkeley, I'm cheering for it all the way.

Arbona: What happened next? Can you refresh that memory a little bit? You were at Cal for how long, in total?

02-00:08:33
Magleby:

Only one semester.

Arbona:

One semester.

02-00:08:35
Magleby:

One semester. Then I had to get a job.

Arbona:

And then you went to work not back at Port Chicago?

02-00:08:39
Magleby:

No, I didn't go back to the Naval Magazine. I got a job with a man who had a printing business. And as a matter of fact, he sold the business to me, so I became a business owner. But I was so young that I didn't realize what a business owner was. I didn't realize that you had to save your money, not give it away. And so I didn't last in business that long because I was too free with everything. If somebody said, "how much is it going to cost?" I'd say, "Oh, for you—" And so I gave too much away. And finally, actually sold it again to someone else and went to work at Shell Chemical Company, right two minutes from where I live. And it's right down on Willow Pass Road, and now it's called Henkel Corporation.

But Shell Chemical, in those days, made agricultural—ammonium sulfate. And I started work there in their adhesives department, where they make structural adhesives for the aircraft industry. A very, very interesting job, being a customer service person. And you sell adhesives to the aircraft industry. And so now, starting when I started work there, which would be 1948, it meant that you *glue* planes together; you bond them. You don't have bolts, nuts, rivets; you have glue. And people still have a hard time believing that airplanes are bonded together, that they don't have a lot of metal in them to hold them together. Because guess what? They come loose. And that's a lot worse than having a strong bond, and a lot lighter weight. So it made it fun to work there because it was something so new and so different. And I was delighted to be able to work there. Of course I got the dates wrong. I didn't start there till 1959, because I was in my business, trying to keep it afloat for about eleven years. But that was eleven years of just learning; I didn't earn anything. I didn't make any money.

Arbona:

Well, eleven years, by today's measures, would probably—

02-00:10:57
Magleby:

Pretty good.

Arbona:

—be a very successful business.

02-00:10:57
Magleby:

Pretty good. But I lasted it, but I didn't make any money. And it seemed like I owed everybody.

Arbona: Where was the business located?

02-00:11:08

Magleby: In Pittsburg, on Black Diamond Street. And the building is long gone, since I left. Because Pittsburg has revitalized their downtown, and it is turning out to be a fabulous little community. I am so pleased with what's happening in Pittsburg. It looks like another town. And everything that they've built has been fruitful. And I'm looking forward to more and better from Pittsburg because the downtown Pittsburg is going to be something to behold. But that building is long gone, where I worked in from '48 to about '59.

Arbona: You used to sell general goods, or what was the merchandise?

02-00:11:51

Magleby: I was printing.

Arbona: Printing.

02-00:11:53

Magleby: But remember now that copy machines are coming out pretty soon, and printers now print specialized things. You don't print forms anymore because you can copy the form. If you've got a form, all you do is put it in your copy machine and copy it. I have a copy machine in my house, right next to my computer. And so printing businesses specialize in printing now, not forms. Because in those days I made the forms and printed them up and sold them. But you can't sell forms anymore because all you need to do is copy them. That's the difference between those days and nowadays, when copy machines are so easy to have and to find and to use.

Arbona: I had a question going back a little bit to the naval magazine, because I'm trying to imagine—you have these African-American sailors working there. Did you ever see them around town or in Pittsburg when they were off duty?

02-00:12:54

Magleby: Yes. Yes, we did. Yes, we did. And because we lived in Pittsburg, Pittsburg was amenable to the black people. We had black people that lived in Pittsburg, and in Bay Point. And so it wasn't unusual at all to see black sailors. And on leave, if they went to town in Pittsburg, it was great. I did not go to Concord to spend evenings, even though I went to high school there, so I don't know how much they appeared in Concord. But in this general area, if there was a black sailor, it was a black sailor. What's the difference between that and a white sailor? No difference at all, because Pittsburg was amenable to the black people. And they felt at home going to Pittsburg.

Arbona: Is that because there was an African-American community also living—?

02-00:13:42

Magleby: Yes, exactly. I'm sure it was; I'm sure it was. And they were welcome at the churches, and the churches welcomed them. And people invited them to

dinner, and they enjoyed having dinner with the black families that lived in Pittsburg. So it was a little different because some of the other communities were proud that they *didn't* have black people. And that was so unfair and so bigoted, really. But Pittsburg was amenable to black people. And that's why it was easy to watch them; a black sailor that worked at the Naval Magazine was a black sailor. And he was welcome in Pittsburg. And welcome anywhere. I was not a bigoted person. Never have been; never will be.

Arbona: How do you think that happened?

02-00:14:31

Magleby: Oh, I think because of my mother and father. They liked everybody. And my church. My church is one that says, like Martin Luther King, you judge people by their character, not their color. And I learned that quite early in life. I was impressed with how they behaved, and I was always congenial with them, but never felt any different from anybody else. Color was lost with me; I didn't see it.

Arbona: Did that change at all in Pittsburg after the war?

02-00:15:10

Magleby: Not at all. Not at all. Matter of fact, it became easier and easier in Pittsburg. And then black people moved into the Antioch area, into the Concord area, and finally into Northern California, so black families are everywhere. And it's no different next door to a black family than an Asian family, a Spanish family, or a Caucasian family. I wrote a little poem about Bay Point, or a little song, actually. And one of the parts of it says, "We are Caucasian, black, brown, and Asian. And everybody accepts all of them. All of the above."

Arbona: So we're here on Marys Road—

02-00:15:56

Magleby: Marys Avenue.

Arbona: Marys Avenue. Would that characterize this very avenue?

02-00:16:00

Magleby: Yes, it would. Yes, it would.

Arbona: There are various families?

02-00:16:02

Magleby: We have black families across the street, we have a Latino family next door, a black family up the street. I just can't begin to tell you how many because I don't count them. I don't care what color you are. And if you live on Marys Avenue, you're welcome to live on Marys Avenue; we don't have problems. Once in a while, we have maybe a break-in of some kind, so we get together as a group, on a neighborhood watch, and we all pull together for the same purpose, and that's to keep each other safe. We watch out for each other. And

that's very nice, too. I rent to a black family. I have a little rental on the back of my house. And they are sweet, sweet people. I love them.

Arbona: It sounds like the church is very important, also in your world view and in your person.

02-00:16:53
Magleby:

It is very important. It is very important.

Arbona: I'm interested to know, were your parents born into that church, also?

02-00:17:00
Magleby:

Yes, indeed. Born in Utah, because that's where the Mormon pioneers finally came, starting out with Joseph Smith in Vermont and moving to Pennsylvania, moving to Ohio, finally to Nauvoo, Illinois. And then being chased out of that area. The LDS, or Latter Day Saints, had to leave Illinois and finally crossed the plains to Salt Lake City. And that's why Salt Lake City is the center for the Mormon Church. But Mormons live everywhere, or Latter Day Saints live everywhere. But it's a very, very real part of my life. It gives me reasons to live and reasons to love. I enjoy life, and I'm very fulfilled, not even being married, because of the fulfilling part that the church plays in my life. And it does a great deal. I teach in church. I've learned to be a good teacher. I teach kids, little kids; I can teach adults, and enjoy teaching. As a matter of fact, it's one of the things that I think I should've been, a teacher. Because I could've, I think, added to a lot. And I added to my own life by being a teacher because I admire teachers so much. I admire what they do and what they accomplish in our local public schools, and *wherever* they teach. I love a teacher.

Arbona: Have you always worshipped in the same temple or the same church in this area? Or have there been a couple of different ones where you go to?

02-00:18:45
Magleby:

Yeah, well, in this area, we first went to church in the Legion Hall, American Legion Hall, because we didn't have a building. And that was in 1943. As I say, that's when we came to California. We met in the Legion Hall for a long time. And it was a long time, until we finally bid on an Army church. And it was put up for bid by the Army. There were fifteen organizations in our community that put in a bid for the Army chapel in what we called West Garrison, on Crest View Drive in Pittsburg. And the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints won the bid. And guess what we paid for that whole building. \$985. For the whole church building, including a fabulous furnace, which was worth more than that. And so our first church was an Army chapel that we remodeled a little bit. As a matter of fact, we bought a dispensary, a medical dispensary from the Army because that was where the Army was, right there, and we added that to the church building. Then we bought a dental clinic and added that. So we had a cultural hall, and we had classrooms, and we had a church chapel, all because the Army was here. We enjoyed that building for many, many years.

Then they sold it and built a brand new building of the church, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, in Antioch. And now we have our own building in this area, on Golf Club Road in Bay Point, or Pittsburg, and that's where we go to church now. So we did have different buildings. But as far as the temple in Oakland is concerned, that is our temple; that's where we go to do ordinance work for the dead. And that's a pleasure to do, also. But that's the only temple in our area. There's one in Sacramento, and there's other temples about in California, but that's the closest one to us.

Arbona: That chapel that you mentioned, that had been a part of Camp Stoneman?

02-00:20:57

Magleby: You bet it was. It was part of Camp Stoneman. It was where they went to church, where the servicemen went to church. As a matter of fact, our church met with some of the men there at one time, and we had a man from Martinez who could speak very fluent German. And they had German prisoners of war who were imprisoned there. And they took those German prisoners of war and said, "If you want to come and listen to a subject about church, you're welcome to." And five members of that German prisoner of war cadre were baptized in the San Joaquin River by our priesthood and joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. And when they went back to Germany they were members of our church. And of course they joined in and helped with the church back there. And told their families, "We joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in California." And so that was quite an incident because here they are, five prisoners with guards, and priesthood in white clothes, down at the river baptizing by immersion for the remission of sins, these German prisoners of war. It was quite an occasion.

Arbona: Wow. Well, we are getting a little bit close to what you told me was your kind of—

02-00:22:22

Magleby: Cut-off time, yep.

Arbona: —deadline, but to ask you one more question that maybe we can finish on. You said before that the end of the war was an opportunity to ask, how do we want to live? And you felt you had the freedom at that point. How did you see, then, that way that you wanted to live? How would you describe that way that you wanted to live then?

02-00:22:46

Magleby: Well, it gave us freedom to choose. Before, we pretty well had to do what was available for us. For example, you didn't have cars, so you couldn't drive very many places. But after the war, and we realized that we were going to have cars made, we're going to build some new cars and buy a car, we were able to choose our life a little bit more. And that choice became very precious to us. I had a brother who, as I say, went on a mission, and then he came back and was able to go to school at the College of Mortuary Science and became a

mortician and built—as a matter of fact, he hauled one of the buildings—. This is a story. My brother became a mortician. And he needed a mortuary. He hauled one of the buildings at Camp Stoneman, which was a medical dispensary, over to Pleasant Hill. And there it stands today, as the Oak Park Hills Chapel, on North Main Street in Walnut Creek. That was at Camp Stoneman at one time and became his chapel. And it was something that you could do then. Choices were more—they were available to us. And the fact that we didn't have to live under the Japanese rule or German rule, we felt relieved and special. We felt like we came together; we did it ourselves. We fought the war, we won the war, and we were very, very pleased that we were free to do what we did. And we were able to go to school, get jobs, and complete our lives and fulfill our lives.

Arbona: And you yourself, what was the choice you wanted to make at that point?

02-00:24:37
Magleby:

Well, I didn't have as many goals as men do because—I didn't get married, and so my goals were to earn a living and to participate in the church and in the community. And by the way, finally now, I'm communicating in the community, or involved in the community, more than I ever dreamed. I am more involved in this community than any other person, I'm sure. But it's because I love this community and I love to see it grow bigger and better. Bay Point *will* be bigger and better. And I'm helping to make it so. And I'm very humble about that because I know that it's not me, but it's from our Father in heaven, who gives me the courage to go ahead and make one step forward again.

Arbona: Well, I am personally very impressed. And it sounds like you have a lot to be proud of.

02-00:25:33
Magleby:

And a lot left to do.

Arbona: And a lot left to do. Very good.

02-00:25:37
Magleby:

And I'm eighty-four and still got time to do it.

Arbona: Well, since I don't want to step on the time that you have to get ready for your next appointment, [laughs] since you're a very busy person, why don't we finish up with looking at those photos that you have of your brothers and your parents and maybe we can—?

02-00:25:56
Magleby:

All right. All right. That would be very nice. That would be very nice.

Arbona: We can get a little bit of—

02-00:26:01
Magleby: We can certainly do that.

Arbona: We can do that. Let me see if I can get the camera.

02-00:26:04
Magleby: We'll do that, and a pleasure.

Arbona: I'm going to try to zoom in one these, and you can—I think I'll keep the audio going. So if I can get the camera off of here, and I am going to zoom into the photos.

02-00:26:31
Magleby: Now, the first one there is my family, and behind them is my mother and father. So you can see what you have there.

Arbona: I'm going to try to zoom in.

02-00:26:45
Magleby: Let me tell you who's on the front row. On the left is Gloria, that's me; then my father, Harold Magleby; then my mother, Alta Erickson Magleby; then my sister, Mildred Magleby {Robie?}. On the back row is my twin brother, {Roger?} Magleby; then my oldest brother, Burns Magleby; then the middle brother, Harold Junior Magleby; and then my brother Douglas Magleby. All of them were in World War II.

Arbona: Those were from left to right?

02-00:27:17
Magleby: Yes, from left to right.

Arbona: So Douglas would be the one on the far right.

02-00:27:21
Magleby: On the far right.

Arbona: Okay. And then we also—

02-00:27:25
Magleby: And in back of that is a picture of my mother and father, if you can see that.

Arbona: Yeah, I think we can get, also a clip of that.

02-00:27:30
Magleby: And that's a picture that we use all the time, because that was when they were, oh, maybe fifty-one years old. And it's hard for me to believe that my father and mother were only fifty-one at one time, but they always seemed very old. Children always think their parents are *old*. Now I'm older than both of them were when they died.

Arbona: Wow. Can you repeat their names one more time?

02-00:27:54

Magleby: Beg pardon?

Arbona: Can you repeat their names one more time?

02-00:27:57

Magleby: Alta Erickson Magleby and Harold, Joseph Harold Magleby. He went by Harold more than Joseph, but JHM. Both of them born, one month apart, in Monroe, Utah. My mother was one month older than my father, and don't think that he didn't remind her of that ever year. "I'd hate to be as old as you are." [they laugh] But we had a great time together. We laughed a lot, we sang a lot together. We did a lot of singing together. And as the families came along, we had family reunions that were incredible. Everybody participated.

Arbona: Had your grandparents come from abroad? Or were they born—

02-00:28:48

Magleby: Yes, from Denmark and from Norway.

Arbona: Which side of the family—?

02-00:28:52

Magleby: And also from Scotland and Wales, on my mother's side. So as far as I'm concerned, I'm part Danish, Norwegian, Scotch and Welsh. All of the above.

Arbona: All right. Well, I think we probably should stop there. But thank you so much, Gloria.

02-00:29:12

Magleby: Oh, you're welcome. You're entirely welcome.

Interview #2: July 29, 2010

Begin Audiofile 3

Arbona: Today is Thursday, July 29, 2010, and this is actually our second interview with Gloria Magleby. I'm Javier Arbona, and this is our third tape overall, number three, and we're back again at the house in Bay Point, California.

3-00:00:35

Magleby: You bet.

Arbona: We were just talking about a good starting point that could be going back to a little bit where we finished last time and pick up where we left off. You told us about some German POWs that were, I guess, captured during the war, and you mentioned in that interview that they were baptized through your church.

3-00:01:02

Magleby: Yes, I did.

Arbona: And I just thought I'd ask you first if you could expand on that a little bit, how you knew them or knew of their stories and what else came of them.

3-00:01:16

Magleby: I will. You know there were five of them in all, and what was interesting is that we found a man from Martinez who could speak fluent German. So we got him, the church did, and brought him over to Camp Stoneman and said, "Let's send out a notice to the German prisoners of war that if they wanted to come and listen to your discussions on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints that they could." I do not know how many came to listen, but five of them decided that they liked the message, and they received extensive knowledge about the church and lots of classes, and decided to join the church. Well, that meant, of course, that the church had to talk with the powers that be in the Army and say, "Can we take these five German prisoners of war down to the Suisun Bay or the waterfront and baptize them?"

Arbona: [noise] We have a truck going by.

3-00:02:25

Magleby: That's a big truck. But we will pay no attention to trucks. Anyway, they agreed that that would be fine, but they had to send guards, and that we could take priesthood, which would be at least three men, one to baptize and two to witness the baptism, and that it would be all right to take them down to the waterfront and baptize them. Now, I remember the names of two of them, Alfred {Amelong?} and Karl {Hillen?}, and I wrote to them after the war was over because in talking with them I remember saying to them one time, "Wouldn't you like to live in America?" And they looked at me like, "No. We're Germans. We want to go home." And I thought to myself, "Well, that was a dumb question to ask them." It would be like asking me, "Do you want to leave with us and go to Germany and live?" So I appreciated their comments that they appreciated the care that they were given by the American soldiers and by the Army, but that when the war was over, they wanted to go home. They had wives and families there.

And so understanding that they were going to be in Germany, we found out where they went, and I and some of the others wrote letters to them just saying, "Thank you for letting us appreciate your testimony of the Gospel, and we want you to know that when you joined the church you joined a huge church, and that there were lots of members in Germany, and that you are welcome in the wards there." We heard back from them for a while, and I'm so sorry that I didn't actually stay in touch with them because now that I'm this old, I could have had a lot more experience with how they were accepted when they got home. "You mean you joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints while you were in America? What was the big idea of that?" And I didn't hear any of that. Or maybe they said, "Good for you. It's time

you got some Christian gospel in you.” So I just don’t know what happened to them.

Arbona: I take it you saw them at services several times.

3-00:04:52

Magleby: Yes, I did. Very nice men, very clean cut, but they had families and children, and they wanted to go home. But when they got home, we wanted them to know that we were appreciative of their testimonies of the Gospel and that we appreciated them joining the church. So we wanted to kind of keep up with them. Matter of fact, I think we sent them some gifts. We, meaning the bishop and some of the other priesthood members, like maybe some fudge or candy or things like that, maybe cookies. But we wanted to stay in touch with them and tell them that we will always remember them. And I still do to this day.

Arbona: And aside from the person from Martinez that could speak German, would other people at church speak with them or try to communicate with them?

3-00:05:45

Magleby: No. They didn’t come to church per se. They only had classes at Camp Stoneman. They did not participate in our meetings. They only had classes at Camp Stoneman, weren’t allowed to leave the Camp, of course.

Arbona: So the bishop would have to go to the camp.

3-00:06:00

Magleby: The bishop would have to go to the camp, and other priesthood members and the teacher from Martinez would go to the Camp Stoneman area. And I think they were taught, I’m sure, thinking back on it, in an old chapel there. And by the way, that old chapel went up for sale after World War II was over, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints bid on the chapel, and we won. Out of fifteen bidders, we won the chapel, and I think I explained this last time—

Arbona: Yeah.

3-00:06:34

Magleby: That we paid \$984, something like that, for the whole church.

Arbona: Wow. So did you ever go to Camp Stoneman to that service then?

3-00:06:44

Magleby: Absolutely. Absolutely. As a matter of fact, I went to Camp Stoneman to meet with members of the church that would be my age. See, I was only eighteen years of age then, and we had services for members of the church, servicemen there, so I was there a lot. I led the singing for them. They pretty much ran the service because they know how, but the young men were not connected at all with these German prisoners; that was another story completely. But we did

have services at Camp Stoneman before the war was over and then, of course, after the war was over. That was interesting, too.

Arbona: And how much longer did they stay around after the war? Were they sent back immediately after?

3-00:07:32

Magleby: No. Most of the American servicemen went home. I don't recall that very many stayed; maybe some married a girl from Pittsburg. I think three or four that I know of did, but most of them after the war was over went back to their homes.

Arbona: Sorry, I just meant the Germans.

3-00:07:57

Magleby: Oh, no. They didn't stay around at all. When the war was over they went back to Germany fast.

Arbona: Right away.

3-00:08:03

Magleby: And I don't know how they went back, whether they went by boat or whether they flew them back or how, but they went back to Germany. That's why we wrote to them in Germany.

Arbona: Did you keep any of those letters?

3-00:08:16

Magleby: No. I didn't. Well, I don't think I did. In the house that I live in now, it's a trash bin for lots of lots of things because I save everything. And so there's a possibility that I could find one of those letters eventually, but at this point in time I don't think I kept any.

Arbona: Well, just shifting subjects a little bit, another one of our—through our conversations we talked about, talking about the community of Port Chicago—

3-00:08:54

Magleby: Right.

Arbona: I guess we can start by talking about your friends there, or how you socialized with people at Port Chicago, how were you familiar with Port Chicago since you're here. You're close by; you're here in Bay Point which is only a few miles.

3-00:09:06

Magleby: Yes. Exactly.

Arbona: So how did you come to know people in Port Chicago?

3-00:09:09

Magleby:

Well, mostly from school, and I did not go to Port Chicago that much while I was going to school because there was nothing for me to go there for. I didn't live there. But I had friends there, and it was just another part of the community like this Bay Point or West Pittsburg was a part of Mt. Diablo High School, such as Pleasant Hill was part of it. So there were lots of little communities that went to Mt. Diablo High School, including Port Chicago. So my friends that lived in Port Chicago were the same as friends who lived in Clyde or Nichols or Pleasant Hill or, of course, Concord.

But the reason I got close to Port Chicago is that before I graduated there was a man that came from the Naval Magazine and interviewed girls and boys who needed a job or who wanted a job because there were many being offered. And I went to an interview, and I signed up right then and there. So the very first job I ever got out of high school was at the Naval Magazine in Port Chicago. And this would be late June 1944, and remember, it's July 17 that it blew up. So I was only there for almost less than a month working as a clerk typist. Then came the explosion, but that was a boon for me because I wanted to go to school. And I had to have some money to go to school or to go to college, and so I took the opportunity to take a job there, and I worked there from July through the explosion through December and then went to the University of Nevada in Reno to school with the money I made.

Arbona:

I recall from our last conversation that you, as you just mentioned, you left and then you came back, so what were your impressions when you returned about how Port Chicago was recovering after the explosion. What did it look like?

3-00:11:23

Magleby:

Well, I was intimately concerned about it because I had a very good friend and family, the Chomor family. He has passed away and she is long gone, but they lived in Port Chicago, were members of our church and were just full of agony when they realized that the Navy at that time wanted to destroy Port Chicago and use that area as a buffer zone for the Naval Magazine. And they worked day and night, some of the people in Port Chicago, to save their town.

Now you can imagine what it would be like having been born and raised in a little community on the waterfront and all of a sudden, you're going to have to leave your house, watch it razed to the ground, demolished, and you wanted to save it. You didn't want anything like that ever to happen to your little hometown. And so it was an agony that they went through and that their friends went through. They went everywhere that they knew how. They went to Washington. They went to Sacramento. They wrote letters by the thousand and petitioned by the thousand, but nothing would deter the Navy from saying, "You have to leave Port Chicago. We're going to use this as a buffer zone, and it's going to be demolished."

Now, I'm sure they didn't say that directly to them, but that's what happened. And it was agony for me to watch, to see the people. In a way, they died the day they all had to leave Port Chicago. And they still remember it as the place they were born and raised and the sweet, sweet memories they have of that little town. And, as I said before, it was a bitter agony to my mind than some of the men that died in the war because they knew they were there to fight for us, and the families knew that if they were killed, then that was part of war; that's what war does. But this group of people were wiped off the face of the earth without dying. And that's what was so hard for me and for everyone to accept, that they were gone from their little town. They tried and tried and failed, and that was what was so agonizing for all of us. And that was a bigger story by far than the mutiny. The mutiny was a few men who died, of course, but men were dying all over the world in the war. They knew they were going to die, many of them. The mutiny itself was not near the story that a whole community of mothers, fathers, children, grandmothers, grandfathers, wiped out. The town is not there any more, but they still call it home. That's the name of the little book that was written about them.

Arbona: You mentioned the name Chomor.

3-00:14:39

Magleby: Yes.

Arbona: C H O M O R ?

3-00:14:41

Magleby: C H O M O R. Arthur Chomor. He was very instrumental in doing his best to keep Port Chicago alive, and it died. They weren't successful, but they gained friendships during that time that will be everlasting. And the whole community of Port Chicago stayed together as much as they possibly could and still coming Saturday, have another reunion of what is left. It gets smaller and smaller because people do die, but they do have a reunion, and the children of those who lived there are going to probably keep that reunion going as long as they possibly can, once a year, the last Saturday in July, Port Chicago reunion at the Ambrose Park in Bay Point.

Arbona: Have you gone some years?

3-00:15:35

Magleby: I have indeed, and it's very, very fun to watch them. They're older and older, you see lots of canes, and you see lots of walkers and so on. But there are a younger generation, too, that joins them, and they will carry on I feel confident. But it's fun to watch them talk about the good old days in Port Chicago, and I am so sorry that their town is gone, but their friendships will never die.

Arbona: Do you remember when you first heard that the Navy was trying to condemn the town, approximately what year that was?

3-00:16:22

Magleby:

Oh, boy. I do not remember because I was going to school and getting employment by myself. You'd have to talk more to the people who lived there and who were intimately involved. I certainly do remember the time, but not intimately. The Arthur Chomor type would remember that, but there are many people that will be at the reunion on Saturday who will remember, and that would be a good place for you to find out and talk directly with those who said, "I remember the day I left my house." And they will tell you the agony they went through. The whole world, it seemed like, turned on them. They felt like they had been rejected by the country and by the world. They were in a state of angst because of what has happened. But they left, and they survived.

Arbona:

Did you ever become active during that period, going to any meetings or—?

3-00:17:28

Magleby:

No, I wasn't. I was only watching it as a good friend to the Chomor family, and they were so involved. I was hoping and praying that it would work for them, but it didn't.

Arbona:

I wanted to also ask you, I've read in different places, reports that some people when they left the town actually did pass away. They did die because, either directly or indirectly, depending on how one interprets it, that really the separation from home was so difficult, and it also broke a lot of social bonds. Did you know of any people like that?

3-00:18:22

Magleby:

I did not. I did not. But that could very easily have happened because they were in agony, and the tremendous pull on their hearts was bad, but I did not know of anyone. I could imagine it could have happened, but talking directly with those people, you may find that out. But I did not know anyone personally.

Arbona:

I wonder also about, you mentioned the mutiny and the mutiny trial, and so many things changed after the war. The military changed from a segregated institution to an integrated institution. Did you notice any changes in Port Chicago, for example, that any African-American families move in, or did some of the composition change?

3-00:19:17

Magleby:

No, because I wasn't that intimately involved with the town. Once the war was over, once I quit my job to go to school, I didn't have that much connection with Port Chicago. I did know people who came from there, the Lichti family. I think Otto Lichti was the judge there. But I did not have that much connection with them after the war was over and especially after I left the Naval Magazine and went to school.

I was delighted when the war ended, of course, and that meant that no more loading ships, no more explosions because we weren't loading any ships to go

anywhere. V-E Day early in the year and V-J Day later in the year, and it was over, and I think that was 1945, as I recall. So after that, then things settled down until Port Chicago knew that their town was going to be taken from them, and I only felt agony for them at that time.

Arbona: But then the Korean War came around.

3-00:20:27

Magleby: Yes. That was not anything in particular to me because it was a war that was called because of their problems there, but servicemen became servicemen starting 1940-41 on and on and on due to conflicts throughout the world, Korean War being one of them. But I was not intimately involved in any of that either. That was a world situation, and men that were in World War II went back and joined the Army or whatever to be a part of fighting for America in the Korean War.

Arbona: I was wondering if you have any recollections during the Vietnam War and in this vicinity. Did you know people, for example, from Port Chicago that went and fought or hearing stories of that?

3-00:21:27

Magleby: No, I don't. I don't. All I know is the Vietnam War was "how do I get out of going?" That was the thought on the minds of so many. Many wanted to go to serve in the Army, and that was those very, very patriotic people who wanted to serve. But there were a lot, I would almost say half and half, would say "not me, boy; don't send me over there." And so that was the conflict that we had at that time. Some who said, "I'm not going," and some who said, "I'm going to go because it's the patriotic thing to do."

Arbona: So let's talk a little bit about the post Port Chicago, after that condemnation. Oh, there's your phone.

[tape pause]

Arbona: Okay, so I'm just making sure we're rolling again. Let me see if I can remember what I just asked you.

3-00:22:34

Magleby: Exactly.

Arbona: Well, I had asked you about the post-Port Chicago. How did that affect the community of Bay Point or what was then West Pittsburg. You mentioned that they left the town, of course.

3-00:22:49

Magleby: Okay. I can only talk to a couple of instances because on my street there was one really nice family that moved in from Port Chicago. In Shore Acres the Chomor family moved in there, and I was in their house many, many times.

There were maybe, as far as me personally, only about four or five families that I knew who moved in into Bay Point. Most of them moved into Concord, and some moved other places, but they had to find a house; they had to find a place to live. And so they bought where they could, and I'm sure the Navy made arrangements for them. I'm not sure that they were happy with the financial deals; I'm not sure at all. But, as far as getting away from Port Chicago, they did. And I know of maybe four families that moved into Bay Point, especially the Chomor family, the DiMarco family and a couple of others, but they continued on with life.

Arbona: It sounds like they didn't, of course, want to move very far?

3-00:24:01

Magleby: They didn't want to move far; no, they didn't. So then there was housing to be found in those days, especially in Bay Point in the Shore Acres area and, as I said, on my street, right up the street, there were vacant lots that people built a house. But I don't know the intimate details of their—of course there were lots of people moving, but I only of four families that moved into Bay Point. There could have been a lot more, but I don't know them.

Arbona: But you have the Ambrose Park not too far from here, correct?

3-00:24:43

Magleby: The Ambrose Park district, yes, but did not include Port Chicago, but the Ambrose Park district includes part of the Pittsburg area and all of Bay Point. But the Ambrose Park district is made up of the community center, which is on Willow Pass Road right downtown Bay Point, and the park, which was a donation; the land was a donation, from Clementine Enes of the Enes family who built this house. This house and the houses in Enes tract where I live were built by the Antoine Enes family and, I think, his sons, Bernard, Alfred and others. There were four brothers that were contractors and built this tract. They started building this in 1940, maybe '41, and lo and behold came World War II, so when we moved to California because my father got a job here, of course, there was housing, lots of housing to buy.

We bought this house for \$4,500 in 1942, moved in in 1943, but that was because they had to finish the housing. And, by the way, that was a good time to build houses because you could use the bona fide redwood hardwood. All of these houses are built of redwood hardwood, and they give and take, redwood hardwood does, with earthquakes. It shifts, kind of. I learned that. I don't know how much more there is to know about that, but I learned it. I'm glad I live in a house that will give a little bit with an earthquake because it doesn't just crumble. The redwood hardwood gives with earthquakes, so I'm glad for that, truly glad.

Arbona: Well, it sounds from what you said a little bit earlier that the yearly reunion of the Port Chicago town, Port Chicago people, is in Ambrose Park in what is contemporary Bay Point—

3-00:27:01

Magleby: Right.

Arbona: So it sounds like this is a little bit of a new nucleus of the community, is that fair to say?

3-00:27:05

Magleby: No, the Ambrose district has been going sixty years; 1946 was when the Ambrose district was organized. It has been going for many, many years, and it was the place that people went, the Ambrose Park, because it's in a little ravine type, and there you find just a little hidden treasure where the Ambrose Park is, but that's only part of the district. The district includes three or four other little parks and Anuta Park, and, of course, the Ambrose Center, which was the house or the schoolhouse for a long time, an elementary school in Bay Point, and it was bought by the Ambrose district, and that's where our center of this community is now, the Ambrose Community Center, 3105 Willow Pass Road in Bay Point, which was at that time West Pittsburg.

You understand, the situation between the name Pittsburg and West Pittsburg and Bay Point all of those communities had the same zip code, so it's pretty hard to differentiate sometimes between which is which. When we moved to California, we thought we were moving to Pittsburg, and we were delighted that it was Pittsburg, but it was a little community at the side of Pittsburg, and some of the people who lived here called it West Pittsburg. And then, of course, in the mid-nineties there were some people who said, "Well, do you realize that this entire area was once Bay Point?" At one time it was Bay Point.

I'll tell you a quick story; maybe I told this already. In 1857 the first school district organized in Contra Costa County was a district from Railroad Avenue in Pittsburg to Pacheco. That school district was called Bay Point School District. So that will tell you that Bay Point was a lot bigger than the little community that we see now. It had the name from way back, a lot bigger than it is now. But then the community that was Port Chicago called themselves Bay Point, and they decided they didn't like the name and changed it to Port Chicago. So Bay Point has a name good and bad. Some people didn't like it, and now some people still don't like it because they took the West Pittsburg name away and named it Bay Point. But when you get it all together, the name Bay Point is bigger than this little community will ever be.

Arbona: Because it sounds like at one point it was used loosely for a district, and at the same time it was the name of Port Chicago before they existed over in the thirties.

3-00:30:06

Magleby: Exactly.

Arbona: So how about that name change from West Pittsburg to Bay Point? Why did that happen?

3-00:30:15

Magleby: Well, I think it happened because people found out that the genealogy of this area was Bay Point. And they said well, why don't we go back and why don't we call it Bay Point? Because West Pittsburg seemed like an appendage to another town, like not our own community, but, of course, the people who really loved the name West Pittsburg were adamant against changing it. We had meetings where there was very vociferous language spoken. It was sad to see that there was such a divide between those who said "why don't we call it Bay Point" and those who said "don't you dare call it Bay Point; it's West Pittsburg." Those people still will not call it Bay Point. They insist on calling it West Pittsburg, which is their privilege, their right to do, because it has history. It will always be an historical name. As a matter of fact, when I organized a Bay Point Historical Society, the object of that historical society was to preserve the names of Bay Point, Clyde, Nichols, Port Chicago and West Pittsburg. None of those names will ever be lost, as far as I am concerned, because the Bay Point Historical Society will keep them alive for as long as we can.

Arbona: It sounds like you were very active when this name change—

3-00:31:50

Magleby: Yes, that's the first activity I ever got into because I was going to school, I had a job. I wasn't interested in this little town I lived in, but all of a sudden things changed, and it changed with the name change. I was not adamant about it, but I thought it was a good idea. Bay Point sounded good to me, and West Pittsburg didn't have any real glamour or glory, and it didn't have any. I didn't cling to that name, so I was willing to vote for a Bay Point name. I worked on it, not extensively, but I did sign petitions and had other people sign petitions, and then we finally got permission from, I think, the League of Women Voters. They said they would have an election. Sure enough, we had an election. They sent out mailers to everybody that lived in Bay Point or West Pittsburg then, and said which name would you choose? And they chose, the majority chose Bay Point. So it was over when the election was held, the name Bay Point became official. The names on the streets were changed to Entrance to Bay Point; Entrance to Bay Point was the name then that was given to all of our community. And we had then the Bay Point everything, so that was the difference, and I think that was 1994, if I'm not correct. I think it was; we can check that out.

Arbona: We could, yeah. What do you think divided people? Why would some people cling to West Pittsburg, and what maybe identified the folks that wanted Bay Point?

3-00:33:42

Magleby:

Oh, I think it was the fact that the people that wanted it Bay Point that first started out were new to the area. They were genealogists and new to the area, and those that were old timers here. Of course I'm an old timer, but I think young, so I was not so taken back. But those who had lived here forever said, "What? You're not going to change the name of our town." And I think they were angry more with the people who started the program or started the process, more than the fact that it was going to be changed. They said, and those people who helped change the name will ever be remembered as "those people helped change the name of our town." So there are still people who won't call it Bay Point.

Arbona:

Now when you say new, new people, do you mean new from completely out of the State of California, or—?

3-00:34:41

Magleby:

No, well, yes, yes. Some of them completely away from—they lived here, maybe came here in 1990. Well, that's way late in time for Bay Point or for West Pittsburg. And if you come to our town and then you want to change the name, you better not. But it was successful because of the fact that when they looked on the computer and looked for Bay Point there, they found a zip code 94565, which is the Pittsburg zip code. And they said, "Whoa, the post office knows about Bay Point. Why don't we name the town Bay Point?" And that's what started it all, the fact that they found the zip code for Bay Point the same as Pittsburg zip code. So they said the name is genealogically correct; let's change the name. And really it was a boon to this community, Bay Point is known far and wide for Bay Point, not any more West Pittsburg. But West Pittsburg is historical, and we never denigrate the name.

Arbona:

So it didn't necessarily have anything to do with the families from Port Chicago that wanted to go back to a previous name of Port Chicago then.

3-00:36:04

Magleby:

No, not really. Well, it resembled that same thing because in those days in Bay Point and Port Chicago, the change from Bay Point to Port Chicago created all kinds of stir, too. There were two sides to that story also. But you're going to find that with people who their family history says Bay Point or their family history says Port Chicago, they don't want it changed. They don't want it lost. So the West Pittsburg people said, "Leave it alone; don't change our name." But now people have been born in Bay Point say, "Don't mess with Bay Point. Let's keep it that way." It's just a matter of opinion, and it happens every time you try to change something. It means forgetting something in the past, and people don't like to do that.

Arbona:

So from being somebody who signed petitions and maybe, you know, participated in different elections or ballots, you then it sounds like you started to become much more active beyond ballots and beyond—

3-00:37:15

Magleby:

I did indeed. I did indeed, and let me explain—

Arbona:

How did that happen?

3-00:37:17

Magleby:

Let me explain how that happened. In 1996 Mr. Seeno, the Seeno that builds the houses here, S E E N O, wanted to build a casino outside of the boundaries of Bay Point just a little ways. I keep saying I could throw a rock and hit the spot, but I couldn't. But it was to the west of us and a little bit to the south, and they had visions of a casino being built there, Albert Seeno and the people that lived in Bay Point and in Western Pittsburg, you've got to be careful to say Western Pittsburg, not West Pittsburg, said, "We're not going to put up with a casino in our back door." So I joined with a group from Western Pittsburg and Bay Point fighting against the casino that wanted to be built at our doorstep almost. And we worked very hard on it. We spent about \$10,000, raised it somehow, and Mr. Seeno spent \$300,000. And we worked very, very hard, went door to door and finally got the City of Pittsburg to say, "Well, let's let the voters decide." And so that meant that we had to reach to the voters, and so we went to every house in Pittsburg, not Bay Point. We couldn't even vote on it. It was a Pittsburg thing. But I worked very hard on it, and the people against the casino won two-thirds to one-third. It was a huge victory for us having spent so little and Mr. Seeno having spent so much. And we won decisively. After that I was on such a high that I thought I could do anything.

So then I ran for election on the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council and won that election. And in 2001 I decided that it was time to revive the Bay Point Pride. It was called the West Pittsburg Pride, and nothing had been done since the name change. And so I revived the Bay Point Pride, and those people who ran the West Pittsburg Pride were very adamant that it wasn't going to happen, but it did. And it's been going now for ten years, and we're celebrating that very thing on August 12 at the Ambrose Recreation and Park District and will be at the community center where we'll receive certificates from Senator Torlakson or from Assembly person Torlakson now for the ten years that we've had the Bay Point Pride. The Bay Point Pride covers over graffiti that comes on every community; we try to paint ugly houses that maybe they don't have money to paint. And so we get free paint and have volunteers and go paint the houses. We clean up vacant yards and do things like that. We have to buy a lot of weed eaters because weed eaters give out, and we have to buy new ones every so often.

We also have a little program in the Bay Point Pride called Yard of the Month. And five sections of Bay Point get a certificate and \$25 every month for ten years to say you have the best yard in your neighborhood, or you have a beautiful yard, so you win Yard of the Month for August 2010. And so we're

going to celebrate ten years of that; that means 600 yards when you add it all up have been given Yard of the Month.

You'll notice over on the side of my wall there's a sign that says Yard of the Month. That's the sign we plant in their yard. You won. You're a winner. Then we give them the \$25 certificate from one of the stores. Sometimes it's Ace Hardware, mostly it's Home Depot. But it's worked that long.

Then after organizing that and it worked, I said, "You know what? I think Bay Point needs a historical society." And so lo and behold I got the people that I knew that were old timers here together, and we organized the Bay Point Historical Society, and that's where I say our job is the preserve the histories of Bay Point, Nichols, Clyde, Port Chicago and West Pittsburg and so that society has been going now since 2003.

In 2003 I was chair of the Bay Point Municipal Advisory Council so I had a little bit of clout to be able to go ahead and decided Bay Point needs a Chamber of Commerce. And so 2003 I organized the Bay Point Chamber of Commerce. Since that time we have had about fifty members, not all from Bay Point, people who sell in Bay Point. For example, Allied Waste, the garbage company. They have always belonged, and they are in Pacheco. We have the Pittsburg Disposal, they're in Pittsburg. We have Ready Print, which is in Pittsburg.

But the Bay Point Chamber of Commerce is going strong, and we keep it going because this community has twenty-three, maybe twenty-five thousand people. They deserve representation in a business community, and the people who have stores here deserve accolades for them, for keeping their stores open. There's still vacant property here. We want the economic growth in Bay Point to truly grow, and so that's what the Chamber of Commerce does. We meet once a month in a luncheon and have speakers there. We sponsor the Bay Point parade that happens on Memorial Day every year. We handle the memorial service, and we foot the money for the parade and the festival.

So the Bay Point Chamber of Commerce is alive and well, and it's so nice to have members on the board who are site managers of our big industry and who are managers and owners of the small industry here. It's a beautiful combination, huge industries joining and small businesses joining together to promote this little community. It's a thrill to see it.

Arbona: So you would say that it was, it sounds from the math and the years that you mentioned that it was around the year 2000?

3-00:44:54

Magleby: Right.

Arbona: That Bay Point Pride was organized.

3-00:44:56

Magleby: Exactly.

Arbona:

You read sometimes in the newspapers about issues like crime and other community concerns. Was that part of the I'd say agenda at that time, or was that part of the concern that—?

3-00:45:12

Magleby:

Not really. Not really at all because we were doing what we felt was the proper thing to do to prevent crime and that's to have a beautiful community. If you have a clean, nice community, you have less crime. If you have a tacky community and one window broken you're going to have blight immediately and crime. So our job was to make the community more beautiful and more accessible and open more stores and have more businesses promote this little community, and that would handle any crime, and it certainly has. The crime rate in Bay Point is no bigger than it is in Alamo or Danville, and that's a pleasure to always say because we are not in a position where we are afraid at all. What we want to do in Bay Point is make it cleaner and better, and that brings people to dress up nicer and to act better. The whole thing goes together.

Then, of course, one more thing I thought about, and that was a garden club, so 2004 I organized a garden club, or I founded it. And it's going now. They're the people who actually handle the parade. The Chamber of Commerce provides the money, and the Bay Point Garden Club handles the parade, including, of course, the garden club does a lot more than just the parade. They do talk about plantings and what to plant in Bay Point, and we have our own little garden section where we have, right next to the Ambrose Center is the community gardens. So you can buy a plot there, and it's been going for almost a year, maybe more now. So it all adds up to a community that is involved, and that was my main point, get people involved.

I can say that since the organization of all these groups that maybe over 500 people have been involved. And that's a good feeling because that's 500 people that weren't involved before who now say, "I'll join your group," or "I'll be on that committee," or "How about we go paint the church over there because they need some help?" And so we get free paint, but we have to buy a lot of things to go with it for the Pride, the Chamber, the Historical Society, and the Garden Club, so we are a community. And LAFCO who decides what can be a community and what can't, can look at our community and say, "We better not disrupt them. They're going fine." And that's one of the reasons I think that I did it, although I wouldn't be adamant against being annexed to Pittsburg. I'm just not that kind. I look at both sides and say what is the best for the community, what is the best for Bay Point.

Arbona:

So this is a possibility, that they'd annex Bay Point to—

3-00:48:24

Magleby:

We are in their sphere of influence. S-O-I, sphere of influence, and if they wanted to, they could annex us. If LAFCO said, "That sounds like a good idea," but if LAFCO said, "I don't think that's going to work. I think this little community should stay by itself. They have their own groups; they have their little civic groups and community groups, and I don't know that they need to be annexed." On the other hand, it could very easily happen. If Pittsburg said, "Look what we could provide for you. You've waited a long time for the waterfront to be developed. We could do that overnight because we have the money and the county is broken, or broke. Not broken, but broke. The county has no money, and we do." So, you know, there's a way to resolve all kinds of things like that, but all I do is look at both sides and make the decision what is best for Bay Point?

Arbona:

The name you mentioned, is that the Mayor? I'm sorry, I don't, it doesn't, LAFCO—

3-00:49:32

Magleby:

LAFCO is the group that tells you whether you can, they organize, they're the ones who say, "You can be a city or you can't," or "You can annex this or you can't." That is the local area formation committee.

Arbona:

At the county level.

3-00:49:47

Magleby:

At the county level. Yes. So that's just the name that we always say, "LAFCO might let them do it. Maybe LAFCO won't." They're people that's a community group.

Arbona:

Let me see how we're doing on time real quick, well, it does, we might have time for one or two more questions here.

3-00:50:09

Magleby:

Okay.

Arbona:

I think that we've covered more or less a lot of what I had on the outline, but this might be jumping back a little bit, but I was wondering if I could throw it in there just to ask you how you would like to see Port Chicago remembered.

3-00:50:30

Magleby:

Oh, I think Port Chicago should be remembered as the sweet little community it was. You can't have a little town that had so much fun together, that had their own mayor, their own bank, their own chamber of commerce. You can't wipe that out and have it not be remembered. It is remembered with sweetness and always will be because they didn't do anything wrong. They didn't do *anything* wrong. They just lived there, but they were wiped out anyway. And that's big government that does things like that sometimes, and maybe we can say certainly the Army and the Navy and so forth. But when you think about a little community that didn't do anything wrong and yet had their town wiped

out, the sweetness that was there will always be remembered, not only by the people who lived there, but by the people who were round about who said, “That can’t happen,” but it did.

Arbona: Was there ever a presence in common places in, say, restaurants or other places of leisure where you’d see the officials or military people that were on the other side of the Port Chicago condemnation?

3-00:51:52

Magleby: No. The military people never spoke about whether it was good or bad. It came mostly from, I’m thinking, from Washington, DC, and that’s about as simple as how it is. It didn’t come from local Army or Navy, I’m sure, but it came from the higher ups and they were far, far away from that little community. I still think it was a shame, but we can’t bring it back. Can’t bring it back.

Arbona: The soldiers, more employees of the base, was there any relation to them, or would they just stay on base? I’m trying to understand more or less how they mixed in.

3-00:52:37

Magleby: They probably went out to dinner with Port Chicago people. I’m sure. They were the Navy people there, and I’m sure they were invited to lunch in Port Chicago and other places around. But they didn’t take a stand. I’m sure they didn’t because I don’t think they realized what was going to happen, and when it finally did happen, they were long gone. But the servicemen in Port Chicago that were loading those ships, they were friends, a lot of friends locally, and the African Americans who were loading the ships had friends in Pittsburg. I know some of those today, and it’s a thrill to visit with them and to know them and realize their position.

Eddie Hart, who was an Olympic champion, and his father were at Port Chicago, and all of those people do remember. But they don’t have bitterness. They don’t have a lot of bitterness now. It’s over, and let’s build a life. Let’s look to the future, and they certainly do. Eddie Hart and his father are very active in Pittsburg, and I’m part of their activity, support them all the way.

Arbona: These actually might be—you mentioned those names. I think we might want to get in touch with some of those folks if you have their contact info.

3-00:53:57

Magleby: You could do that, and I can put you in touch with Eddie Hart’s family. I’ll certainly do that because he remembers.

Arbona: Also before we run out of tape I’ll just ask you if there’s anything else that strikes you as important that you haven’t mentioned, that’s somewhere in the back of your mind that you wanted to say.

3-00:54:16

Magleby:

I'm sure there is something because living here this long and going to Mt. Diablo High School. Mt. Diablo High School, as I have said before, was at that time the premier high school in California and maybe in the nation. It had a fabulous record, and so many went to college after they graduated. The scores were so high. It was a great place to go to school, and we still revere our going to school there, and I think I told you this, that we have a meeting once a month during school time where we take the kids and say, "This is how good we thought this school was." And they're saying, "We think it's good, too." And we're building self-esteem in them right today. But if there's anything I've left out, I will be in touch with you because I certainly want this, I am interested in history as much as anybody. And I have a long way to go in this life, so who knows what's left to come. But I'm looking to the future, and I'm still organizing. If you want a job, come and see me, you'll be on my committee.

Arbona:

That might be very important after a PhD.

3-00:55:33

Magleby:

Yeah, it should be. We need PhDs.

Arbona:

Well, thanks a lot for your time Ms. Magleby, and I think we'll just wrap up the tape right there, and I'll just hit the pause button.

3-00:55:46

Magleby:

I thank you; you're very good to work with.

Arbona:

Thank you.

[End of Interview]