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Marian Sauer

Rosie the Riveter World War II American Homefront Oral History Project

A Collaborative Project of the Regional Oral History Office,
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Interviews conducted by
Jess Rigelhaupt
in 2002

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Discursive Table of Contents—Marian Sauer

Audiofile 1

Childhood—born at home—grew up watching the Southern Pacific and Santa Fe Railroads go by—mother was from Rio Vista came to Richmond by a steamboat—her father was born in Colorado and came to work at Standard Oil—near her neighborhood there were windmills that pumped water from the wells through wind power—in school there were free music lessons—played clarinet when she was 9 and started private lessons on piano—attended San Francisco State College—played at lodges and formal events—worked at Standard Oil for a summer, received empty barrels from freight cars and removed the caps, sprayed green paint on the rust then the barrels would go to get fueled—met her husband when he came to audition for a drummer in her band played saxophone in a girl band that was out of the Order—diversity happened during the war and afterwards, she went to school with Japanese kids and various children of European descent—began teaching 3rd grade right after college—as a music teacher had the freedom to teach the curriculum the way she wanted to—stopped teaching when her daughter had a physical problem; how she came involved in Special Ed—after the war with money cut backs, the arts were the first to go—vaguely recalls Port Chicago—her husband was drafted to Michigan and then San Diego for training, finally went out to Hawaii—her dad was severely burned at Standard Oil

Interview with Marian Sauer

Interviewed by: Jess Rigelhaupt

Transcriber: Sara Dabbs

[Interview #1: October, 15, 2002]

[Begin Audio File Sauer 01 10-15-02]

1-00:00:15

Rigelhaupt:

So I am beginning an oral history with Marian Sauer. I'll just start running through some questions. And if I keep looking this way, at the camera, it's me checking everything is going okay. You don't need to worry about it. So just to start, you're full name is?

1-00:00:39

Sauer:

Marian, Bryant is my maiden name, Sauer.

1-00:00:46

Rigelhaupt:

You said you're from Richmond. I was wondering if you could describe growing up here. Where you were born?

1-00:00:53

Sauer:

Well I was born at home. There were not hospitals available and that was at 158 Twenty-Second Street, right near the tracks. So I grew up watching the trains go by. The Southern Pacific trains went by this way and the Santa Fe trains went by that way and it was pretty interesting.

1-00:01:16

Rigelhaupt:

Okay. What about your parents? Where were they born and where were they from?

1-00:01:25

Sauer:

My mother was born in Rio Vista. She came to Richmond on the first steamboat to come in to Richmond, to Ellis Landing in nineteen-two [1902]. My father was born in Colorado and he came to Richmond—originally worked in the brickyard and then at Standard Oil.

1-00:01:44

Rigelhaupt:

Okay. What was a typical day like for your parents, for both your mother and your father?

1-00:01:50

Sauer:

Well, mom had a garden and chickens. My dad worked. He worked shift work. The interesting thing about him, he worked days: four to twelve and twelve to eight. When my brother had a dance band come and practice, my dad could go to bed and go to sleep in spite of all the noise because that's the time he had to sleep. He went to bed in the afternoon in order to get up at midnight or ten thirty to go to work. No matter what happened in the other room, he slept, because that was the time to sleep, which is pretty remarkable, I think.

1-00:02:31

Rigelhaupt:

So he worked a graveyard shift?

1-00:02:32

Sauer:

Sometimes. It was shift work, days four to twelve and graveyard, so it rotated.

1-00:02:39

Rigelhaupt:

Okay. Then could you tell me a little about your extended family, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, cousins, grandparents? Did you have a big family in the area?

1-00:02:49

Sauer:

Most of them didn't live here. My dad was one of eleven children and my mother was one of four. Another interesting thing you might like to know is we had a Maxwell car. Someone—a family member said, "I thought a Maxwell was just what Jack Benny had?" But not so. There were Maxwells built first and we had this one until 1926 when the Chrysler Company took over that company. So we had a blue Chrysler sedan and it was a closed car. My mother wasn't sure we could breathe in that thing because the Maxwell had micro glass means Isinglass curtains. Also, they were beginning to put four wheel brakes in cars in 1926 and my mother was really concerned about that because they just shook you when they stopped. [laughs] We had two wheel brakes in this closed car, which was a blue one with a black top—not a rag top, but a regular one—purchased at the automobile salesroom at Fourteenth and Macdonald, which was run by Mr. Harry Curry, very interesting.

1-00:04:07

Rigelhaupt:

You say interesting, the auto dealership or—?

1-00:04:13

Sauer:

Well, they sold Chryslers and in those days, there were Chryslers called 50s, 60s, and 70s, and they were each one more powerful than the other and more expensive.

1-00:04:23

Rigelhaupt:

Okay. So you said your brother was in a band. What can you tell me about your siblings growing up? You were one of—?

1-00:04:35

Sauer:

I was one of two. My brother was thirteen years older than I and belonged to another father. He played saxophone and clarinet and the local bands that were here. That's how come I learned to play saxophone, because I inherited them when he got married in 1929.

1-00:04:58

Rigelhaupt:

Okay. What was your neighborhood like when you were growing up? Who were the people around? What were the houses like, the area in general?

1-00:05:07

Sauer:

There were four houses on our block. There was ours and one next door and then some Austrians lived in the next two houses down. There was a house on Twenty-Third Street. also. It and one of the other houses had tank houses and people had wells, so that their water was not connected to East Bay MUD at that time. It was pretty interesting watching the windmills go around.

1-00:05:37

Rigelhaupt:

The windmills were for—?

1-00:05:39

Sauer:

Pumping the water.

1-00:05:40

Rigelhaupt:

Oh, so okay. When did—?

1-00:05:44

Sauer:

It was wind power that pumped water up from the wells. If they got too much water in the tank, which was on top to hold the water, then it would run over and you'd have to run out and shut the windmill down.

1-00:05:58

Rigelhaupt:

When did the houses get hooked up to central water, East Bay MUD you said?

1-00:06:03

Sauer:

We were hooked up to it. There were other houses that were, but some houses still remained on wells.

1-00:06:14

Rigelhaupt:

Could you tell me a little about going to school as a kid? Where you went to school?

1-00:06:21

Sauer:

I went to Grant School, which is on Grant Ave. and Twenty-Fourth Street. It was incidentally the only school that was built on one level at that time. Most schools were two or three levels. I went to Longfellow Junior High, which had been Richmond High School. It was located at Twenty-Third and Macdonald Avenue, between Macdonald Avenue and Bissell Avenue. Then I went to Richmond High School, which is still Richmond High School, at the end of Twenty-Third and San Pablo. When I went to high school, it was a union district, Richmond Union District. The kids from Orinda were bused into Richmond, and the kids from Pinole were bused into Richmond. It was a different kind of school district at that time.

1-00:07:20

Rigelhaupt:

What do you mean different kind of school district?

1-00:07:21

Sauer:

Well, it wasn't a unified school district as it now. Orinda has its own schools now and Pinole has part of Richmond Union High School District. It's part of a unified district now, but at that time it was a more remote area to come from.

1-00:07:42

Rigelhaupt:

I know we are going to talk a fair amount about music, did you learn to play as a kid or have you been—?

1-00:07:55

Sauer:

They had free music lessons in school, and I started clarinet when I was nine and I started private lessons on piano when I was nine.

1-00:08:05

Rigelhaupt:

So you've been playing more or less your whole life. What inspired you to start playing? Was it in the house? Was it just a musical family?

1-00:08:13

Sauer:

Instruments were available.

1-00:08:15

Rigelhaupt:

It was available and you liked it? Okay. I know you mentioned when we talked on the phone, you worked for Standard Oil for a summer. Did you have other jobs when you were growing up besides that? As a teenager did you work any jobs?

1-00:08:40

Sauer:

No, I played for dances when I was fifteen on. Two or three of us would play for lodge dances, Rebekah's and Odd Fellows for example, for their installation dances. In '37, I started playing with the all-girl dance orchestra. The only other place I worked was a Kress in San Francisco when I was going to college. That was just a Christmas job, but no I didn't do a lot of teenage work.

1-00:09:10

Rigelhaupt:

Where did you go to college?

1-00:09:12

Sauer:

San Francisco State College, which was then at Haight and Buchanan out by the Mint in San Francisco.

1-00:09:18

Rigelhaupt:

So much closer in than it is now.

1-00:09:21

Sauer:

It was a smaller college then. I think there were like 1500 and now there are thousands.

1-00:09:28

Rigelhaupt:

What did you study while you were at SF State?

1-00:09:31

Sauer:

I got an AB degree, a general elementary credential, and a special music credential, which allowed me to teach K-Junior College in the music, instrumental music.

1-00:09:43

Rigelhaupt:

What years were you at SF State?

1-00:09:47

Sauer:

In College? '37 to '41.

1-00:09:51

Rigelhaupt:

You mentioned you played for the lodges. Could you tell me a little more about that? I don't know a lot about the two lodges you mentioned.

1-00:10:01

Sauer:

Lodges were very prominent from the early 1900s, maybe before that, as social and helpful organizations for people. The Odd Fellows was very prominent, the Masonic Order, Mason's and Eastern Star, and there were others. They provided homes for the elderly, homes for orphans from various places. For example, the Odd Fellows have and still run a home for orphans—not the term used now, but—in Gilroy and also residence for seniors in Saratoga, which is near Los Gatos. Masonic Orders had various kinds of community help for people. They were concerned with widows and orphans and sick people and whatever. Unfortunately, or maybe fortunately, I don't know, the government does all of this now, so the lodges are losing their original purpose, in many cases, although they continue.

1-00:11:13

Rigelhaupt:

You mentioned playing some of their events. Could you describe the events that you played?

1-00:11:19

Sauer:

They had installations every six months and an installation was when new officers were installed. They would have installing teams and the ladies would be all dolled up in formals and

the men were dressed in tuxes, so this was a very fancy affair. After the ceremony of installation, then they would have a dance for two hours or so and that's what we played for then.

1-00:11:45

Rigelhaupt:

How did you get the job playing these dances?

1-00:11:48

Sauer:

I belonged to the Order.

1-00:11:50

Rigelhaupt:

What type of people did it attract? Was it a whole range of people? How did people end up joining the lodges? How did you end up joining, being a member of the Order?

1-00:12:01

Sauer:

I started with a girls' club, which was the Theta Rho Girls' Club, in 1935. It was similar to Job's Daughters, which is the Masonic Orders' young girls. The Masonic Order had the DeMolays [Order of DeMolay] as well. The Odd Fellows had Junior Odd Fellows. Then we just naturally went into the Rebekah part of the women's order. If you were a boy, you went into the Odd Fellows. DeMolays went into the Masons. Job's Daughters went into Eastern Star. It was just a family kind of thing.

1-00:12:40

Rigelhaupt:

So your parents were involved as well?

1-00:12:42

Sauer:

My mother was a Rebekah, my father was not a lodge member.

1-00:12:53

Rigelhaupt:

You did mention on the phone working for Standard Oil. I was wondering if you could describe that summer for me.

1-00:12:57

Sauer:

Well I was teaching school, but when the war started everyone was supposed to pitch in and help. One summer I worked at Standard Oil to help the war effort. I worked in the barrelhouse, which was receiving empty barrels from freight cars, and removing the caps, and spraying green paint on the rust. The barrels would then go on a line over to be filled with either diesel fuel or aviation or whatever it needed. They'd be filled and then toppled over and rolled to another freight car on the other side of the barrelhouse for shipment out to whoever needed it. It was pretty interesting.

1-00:13:41

Rigelhaupt:

Who do you remember working with?

1-00:13:44

Sauer:

I didn't know the people. I just went to work. They didn't have any mirrors. You had to put your lipstick on without any mirror. That was terrible. [laughs] They weren't used to having women work in these places you know.

1-00:13:56

Rigelhaupt:

Would you say a little more about that? Were there a number of other women that you worked with there or who else do you remember, even if you didn't know them, who else do you remember seeing about?

1-00:14:10

Sauer:

I can't remember their names now.

1-00:14:11

Rigelhaupt:

Okay, but there were other women?

1-00:14:13

Sauer:

But you had to wear coveralls and a bandana to work there.

1-00:14:21

Rigelhaupt:

How did you end up getting that job or it just—?

1-00:14:26

Sauer:

As I said, everybody was trying to help the war effort and they needed people to do this. So, you just went out and said, "I'm available for X number of weeks." And went to work. Got a huge salary, maybe thirty-five cents an hour. [laughs]

1-00:14:48

Rigelhaupt:

Obviously from just having read the article you gave me, you did get married. I was wondering if you could talk a little about how you met your husband and—

1-00:15:01

Sauer:

I met my husband because I needed a drummer for the small group that played for the dances. My mother and I went to Berkeley to meet this young man named George. After we met and played for the dances, George didn't leave. He just hung around for five years until we finally got married in 1942. I was not going to get married until I'd finished college and taught school for a year. He became an apprentice at Standard Oil and eventually a machinist and a general foreman. The interesting thing at that time, it was pretty hard to get some place to live, because people were coming in here like crazy to work in the shipyards. We finally did get an apartment at Twenty-Second and Barrett Avenue. Of course, we had to wallpaper and paint and clean it up. We were very happy to get it for \$25 a month. Sounds funny now.

1-00:15:56

Rigelhaupt:

Indeed. I was wondering if you could say a little bit more about having been born in Richmond and a lot of people did move here. What was it like watching the people come in as a sort of longtime resident? What do you remember about the beginning of the war and the boom in Richmond?

1-00:16:17

Sauer:

I was teaching in Orinda at the time and tires began to be rationed and gasoline and sugar and eventually shoes and a lot of things. We had to pass out ration tickets for those things. That was the reason I came back to teaching in Richmond, because I didn't know if I could get tires and gasoline to go to Orinda. You know, it just seemed like it happened. There was so much going on at the time that we just went ahead and did our jobs. They didn't build much new schools until after the war, but the influx was pretty interesting. I don't really remember. It just happened somehow.

1-00:17:04

Rigelhaupt:

It just was a big explosion.

1-00:17:05

Sauer:

I'm sure other people remember more, but I was busy teaching school and trying to keep up with everything. My husband worked nights and I worked days, so we got along very well. Somebody may have told you that we had a lot of theaters, movie houses, in town. The people who worked four to twelve for example, would go to the show after work and then come home early in the morning and sleep and then go back to work again.

1-00:17:34

Rigelhaupt:

It was just twenty-four hours of work?

1-00:17:36

Sauer:

Yeah. There are lots of things I didn't really know about. I was just trying to do my thing, at the same time.

1-00:17:44

Rigelhaupt:

What are the things you didn't know about? What do you mean?

1-00:17:46

Sauer:

There were a lot of people who slept in the theater, shared beds, and did lots of things. And they built lots of housing for the new people as they came in, the best they could. I wasn't part of that sort of thing, because I always had some place to live.

1-00:18:10

Rigelhaupt:

Let's talk a little bit about your life as a musician. Could you tell me about the first band you were in, how it formed and a little bit about it?

1-00:18:22

Sauer:

I played with my boyfriend, who was a string bass player. Then my brother, my husband and I, and another friend played, mostly for these lodge installation dances. And then, when I got out of high school, I was asked to join this group, an all-girl group of musicians. We played together for four years. Then I learned to be a music teacher and taught school. I taught children to play band instruments and formed orchestras and bands throughout the elementary schools as time went on.

1-00:19:13

Rigelhaupt:

How long were you in the band you just described, the all-girl band?

1-00:19:16

Sauer:

Four years.

1-00:19:17

Rigelhaupt:

Four years. From—?

1-00:19:18

Sauer:

'37 to '41. I quit first part of '42. You can't teach school and play dances at night. [laughs] It doesn't work.

1-00:19:34

Rigelhaupt:

Tell me a little about the rehearsals. Where did you practice?

1-00:19:38

Sauer:

We practiced at the leader's house, which was in Albany. We practiced once a week and then we played Fridays and Saturday nights. Some locally like Oakland and Berkeley and Hayward and San Leandro, and some as far away as Sonora and Angel's Camp and Manteca. It took us two or three hours to get there and then come back again.

1-00:20:04

Rigelhaupt:

Could you tell me a little bit about the other members of the band?

1-00:20:10

Sauer:

The sax player Lenora Snow Derheim who is now playing with my daughter's friend Marilyn Farauo Pellegrini and I, in a combo the Phil Seymour LMP Trio, I've known all these years. The leader I've known all these years. She's still here in the area. Actually, in 1992 my husband and I had an anniversary party for fifty years of marriage. And after that time, the girls I had

invited from the band decided to have lunch every two months, so we've been doing that for ten years now. We started out with ten of us, but it's kind of dwindled to about six. That's pretty good for friendships.

1-00:20:50

Rigelhaupt:

That's great. You just met through the order and you were all musicians?

1-00:20:59

Sauer:

No, this girl's band was entirely separate. I didn't know anybody. Most of them were from Berkeley and Oakland, but I got in because I play the saxophone.

1-00:21:09

Rigelhaupt:

And they needed a saxophone?

1-00:21:12

Sauer:

The leader's mother called the high school and found out who played the saxophone. That's how I got in that.

1-00:21:22

Rigelhaupt:

Could you tell me a little about what it was like? You said you played halls with the orders locally, but you just described going a little further, which was kind of like going on tour. What was it like when you traveled? How did you get there? How late—did you have to stay over night? Did the band stay together? What do you remember about those sort of long distance—?

1-00:21:46

Sauer:

The places we played, we didn't stay all night. When we went to Angel's Camp, we played from nine until twelve. Then we had one-hour supper hour and then we played until three and then we came home, which was about six in the morning when we went to bed. Those were long nights. You might like to know that we made a \$1 an hour. It sounds pretty ridiculous now, but at the time, it was pretty good, because if you worked at a store, you made fifty or sixty cents an hour. Also, I commuted to San Francisco to college. For \$6, you could buy a commute for the whole month, round trips. So, if I played two nights, \$3 a night, it paid for my commute. You can see the relationships of money in those days, so a dollar an hour wasn't bad.

1-00:22:55

Rigelhaupt:

Did you drive? Did you guys have like a tour van?

1-00:22:59

Sauer:

The leader's father took the music stands, which you see in the picture and we had one microphone, a loud speaker. The only person who used that was the singer, who happened to be a boy. We had a boy singer, for the girls band. My husband-to-be drove the rest of us five girls.

He was very trustworthy at the age of eighteen, so he did that and Mr. Faraudo, who was the leader's father, took the rest of them for these trips.

1-00:23:38

Rigelhaupt:

Was that common that there would be a boy singer in a girl band or was it just—?

1-00:23:44

Sauer:

Well, we made it common, because girl singers sang with boy bands, you see. You know, the big swing bands, it was always the woman who was the singer. Sometimes a man as well, but it was more interesting this way.

1-00:24:00

Rigelhaupt:

Did you have people try out to be the singer?

1-00:24:04

Sauer:

Oh yeah. The leader had tryouts for everybody. Her father was very strict about everything and wrote out rules for everybody, so you didn't just fool around. It was a business and if you accepted a job for X number of dollars, you had to know that these people were going to show up.

1-00:24:22

Rigelhaupt:

Could you describe some of the rules as a member?

1-00:24:25

Sauer:

Oh dear. I have a list of them at home, but I can't right now.

1-00:24:33

Rigelhaupt:

There were none that stood out as funny or—?

1-00:24:36

Sauer:

Well, the rules came about because in 1938 we were engaged to run the dance at Clear Lake, which is at Clear Lake Highlands, a place called Austin's Resort. Anyway, it was a resort with a rustic kind of open air dance pavilion. We had to rent a house and live there. My mother was the chaperone. To do that, there were rules set up for the girls. You couldn't run around and do this and that and the other thing. They had to mind their the rules of behavior.

1-00:25:22

Rigelhaupt:

So you were up there for a whole summer?

1-00:25:24

Sauer:

Three months.

1-00:25:25

Rigelhaupt:

How many nights a week did you play while you were up there?

1-00:25:29

Sauer:

We played every night but Monday.

1-00:25:31

Rigelhaupt:

You had Mondays off?

1-00:25:32

Sauer:

Yes.

1-00:25:34

Rigelhaupt:

What did you do with your night off?

1-00:25:35

Sauer:

On Monday night, we went around. The far end of the lake to Lakeport. We went to the show. Then we went to Hoberg's, which was another place up at Cobb Mountain that was a resort. It had a boys band up there so that we could dance too. It was ladies night by the way, and you could ask somebody to dance with you. Then we went back to Clearlake Highlands.

1-00:26:02

Rigelhaupt:

Who were the people that were coming to your shows while you were up at the—and what summer, what year?

1-00:26:07

Sauer:

'38.

1-00:26:08

Rigelhaupt:

1938. So who was coming up to your dances at Clear Lake that summer?

1-00:26:13

Sauer:

It was a dance and people who came up there, for their summer vacation were the patrons. And of course, the best nights were Fridays and Saturdays. The other nights we didn't make much, but we managed. And it was a lot of fun.

1-00:26:31

Rigelhaupt:

You said your mom sort of ran the house?

1-00:26:34

Sauer:

She was the chaperone and she saw that things were taken care of. One of the girls was telling my mother one day, she says, "Everybody over fifty ought to be dead." This girl's parents were older than my mother by about ten years and my mother was fifty, so she just laughed at Christine. That was her opinion.

1-00:26:58

Rigelhaupt:

Did your brother and your father come up on the weekends?

1-00:27:00

Sauer:

My brother was married in '29 [1929], so he wasn't involved. My dad didn't come up all the time, but my boyfriend, George Sauer, came up every weekend. And he was the only boy allowed in the house because my mother was there, you see. They couldn't have other guys at that house. That was one of the rules.

1-00:27:19

Rigelhaupt:

No boys in the house. But your mom knew your boyfriend?

1-00:27:20

Sauer:

No pickups. [laughs]

1-00:27:25

Rigelhaupt:

Was this boyfriend you were dating in '38 [1938], your future husband?

1-00:27:31

Sauer:

Yes. I told you, we met in '37 playing for a dance and he didn't leave. He just kept on. He typed some of my papers for college, so I decided that was it I guess. But you see in those days people went together, but they didn't go to bed together. It was a whole other era.

1-00:27:56

Rigelhaupt:

Indeed. Do you remember if your other band mates had boyfriends or were they dating anyone? What do you remember sort of about how romance went, so to say?

1-00:28:14

Sauer:

Well one saxophone player eventually married the singer. The drummer and the piano player went out a little more up at Clear Lake than the rest of us. Most of us were a little bit—well, we tended to business, I guess you'd call it. Didn't pick up the guys. They did.

1-00:28:40

Rigelhaupt:

There were a couple of members of your band that did?

1-00:28:45

Sauer:

And one of them married one of those fellows that she picked up.

1-00:28:48

Rigelhaupt:

Was the crowd that came up to Clear Lake part of the orders that you played for?

1-00:28:53

Sauer:

No, it had nothing to do with it, entirely separate.

1-00:29:00

Rigelhaupt:

While you were in college and still playing for the dances, you mostly played on the weekends.

1-00:29:08

Sauer:

Yes. I wouldn't call them shows. They were dances, ballroom dances.

1-00:29:13

Rigelhaupt:

Do you remember any of your favorite venues? Rooms you liked more than others?

1-00:29:18

Sauer:

Not particularly.

1-00:29:21

Rigelhaupt:

Did you have a chance to go out on the weekends after the shows or was it—?

1-00:29:27

Sauer:

Well after you played 'til 1 o'clock, you went home. [laughs]

1-00:29:32

Rigelhaupt:

Did you sort of have social nights on other nights of the week?

1-00:29:36

Sauer:

Sundays we went to the show and did whatever. I'll tell you this. They had a lot of double features in those days and I hated them, because you sat there for hours.

1-00:29:47

Rigelhaupt:

This was on Sunday night you went to the shows, meaning movies?

1-00:29:51

Sauer:

Abbott and Costello and other things of the era.

1-00:29:55

Rigelhaupt:

Any favorite movies you remember?

1-00:29:58

Sauer:

I don't remember too many. My husband loved Abbott and Costello. He thought they were a scream. [laughs] They were, I guess.

1-00:30:12

Rigelhaupt:

I was wondering if I could ask you a little bit more about the crowd that came up to either Clear Lake or the orders? Was it mixed crowd? Were there lots of people of different races?

1-00:30:29

Sauer:

No.

1-00:30:30

Rigelhaupt:

No.

1-00:30:32

Sauer:

Not diverse as now.

1-00:30:36

Rigelhaupt:

What do you sort of remember about it?

1-00:30:42

Sauer:

The members of the order were all Caucasian, if that's what you're asking me. Most of the people who went to Clear Lake were as well. The diverseness happened during the war and afterwards. I went to school with Japanese kids and all kinds of European descent and there were two or three black kids in school. But this was 1937 and nobody said it, we just all got along. It didn't matter who we were.

1-00:31:21

Rigelhaupt:

Did your parents encourage you to join the band?

1-00:31:27

Sauer:

It just happened. I just did, that's all.

1-00:31:30

Rigelhaupt:

You were just a good musician and got a good job. You mentioned you left the band in '42. Could you talk a little about the decision to leave?

1-00:31:44

Sauer:

No, it just was a practical thing to do. You can't teach school and do that at night.

1-00:31:52

Rigelhaupt:

Was it hard leaving the band?

1-00:31:54

Sauer:

Oh yeah, I enjoyed doing it, but I was really busy with my new job. I was twenty-one years old and I taught in Orinda School, which was a really nice school. Talk about numbers in classrooms, I had forty-five kids, with a split grade, fourth and fifth grade. I am brand new teacher. Plus, the school board gave me money to buy instruments, so that either before or after school I could teach a band, which I did, and a chorus. So for thirteen eighty a year, I did all this stuff. Of course, when you're twenty-one you can do everything, simultaneously.

1-00:32:38

Rigelhaupt:

So you started both the orchestra and the chorus at the Orinda school?

1-00:32:41

Sauer:

Yes. It was K-8 school, so the older kids were in the chorus. It was exciting.

1-00:32:50

Rigelhaupt:

Starting it? We'll jump back to the band when we can get to look at some stuff. So your schools, I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit more about who—you mentioned a little about the different types of people at schools when you were a student. Was that sort of similar student body make-up elementary school through high school or did it change?

1-00:33:24

Sauer:

When I'm going to school?

1-00:33:25

Rigelhaupt:

Yeah.

1-00:33:26

Sauer:

No. Pretty much a lot of us went all through school together. As a matter of fact, my class is having its sixty-sixth reunion next year. We've already planned it. That's pretty old for you I'm sure. [laughs] The point is, we still know each other and are together. And that's the way things used to be. People did not move from one place to another as much as happens now.

1-00:33:56

Rigelhaupt:

You finished college you said, in 1941. And you started teaching pretty much right after you finished college?

1-00:34:05

Sauer:

Yes, I started teaching in September of '41. And of course, then the world got turned upside down by December 7. Then we began the passing out ration books for the various items. But in the meantime, we have this chorus at the school and the principal was go-getter. By April, the kids could all sing all these patriotic songs: The Marine's Hymn and the Caisson Song and the Navy songs and Airforce songs and so forth. And so he arranged for us to broadcast over KRE, which was a station in Berkeley at the time, from the Chapel of the Chimes. This all happened in one year. Some place, I have a picture of this chorus there. They put red, white, and blue crepe paper "Vs" on the kids, on their white blouses. It's quite impressive.

1-00:35:11

Rigelhaupt:

Your first job was in Orinda? You started and that was your first job out?

1-00:35:15

Sauer:

I would have stayed there, except for the war.

1-00:35:18

Rigelhaupt:

It was too hard to commute?

1-00:35:19

Sauer:

Tires, gasoline were rationed.

1-00:35:24

Rigelhaupt:

What year did you switch to a school closer?

1-00:35:27

Sauer:

'42.

1-00:35:29

Rigelhaupt:

Which school?

1-00:35:32

Sauer:

I was assigned to Woodrow Wilson School, which is right over here on Forty-Second and Roosevelt.

1-00:35:38

Rigelhaupt:

Could you describe what you taught at both schools? Just music or—?

1-00:35:45

Sauer:

I couldn't get a music job right away, so I taught third grade. The school was a beautiful English-style building, three stories. It was built with ramps instead of stairs. Very nice school, which

they eventually tore down, because quote, “it wasn’t earthquake proof.” But it was a lovely, lovely school. They had wonderful custodians at that time. There was an Englishman who was custodian. I can remember he wiped down the rails on the ramps with Hexol to make sure they were always clean everyday. I don’t think they do that now.

1-00:36:27

Rigelhaupt:

How long were you at Woodrow Wilson School?

1-00:36:28

Sauer:

Let’s see. About four or five years, I guess. Then I got a music job, in which I could travel between schools, three schools at the time. They kept building new schools, some of which are now gone. Each time as I described in that article why we’d get money to buy instruments for the school and teach the kids how to play, which was also very exciting.

1-00:37:04

Rigelhaupt:

I’m real interested in what you remember teaching at Orinda. You said you started in September ’41. How did it change after Pearl Harbor in December? Did it change how you taught? The sort of feeling at the school? What are some of your memories about being a teacher sort of around Pearl Harbor and its sort of the beginning of World War II?

1-00:37:30

Sauer:

It didn’t effect us in that sense. You still taught the same things, but we began to play or to sing patriotic songs a great deal, that sort of thing. I don’t remember too much about a change, except for the rationing thing. And I remember one boy came into my classroom who had been in Hawaii when the bombing occurred, and they moved over here and he joined my class. You know, those things were sort of—you’re sort of in shock, but you don’t know it. It happened, sort of like September the eleventh happened. It was someplace else even though it was close. It takes a while before the impact of certain things affect you, I think.

1-00:38:30

Rigelhaupt:

You said there were Japanese students in your high school and in Richmond. Do you remember them leaving with internment or how it was talked about?

1-00:38:44

Sauer:

I know they went to the camps, but as I said, at the time we were all so busy trying to keep up with what we were doing that that was another thing that was ordered and sort of happened, but I didn’t observe it. The two kids that were in my class, yes, they went to camps. In fact, the girl still comes to our reunion committee.

1-00:39:12

Rigelhaupt:

You said after about five years teaching back closer, in Richmond, you go to sort of be a music teacher for three schools?

1-00:39:22

Sauer:

I was an instrumental music teacher for elementary schools and there were three of us to start out with. Each of us would have three schools, assigned three schools. One that you'd get pretty good results, one you got fair results, and one where you gave the lessons, but there was no place to perform or do anything. That was the way it was assigned. Then I had these programs, which I gave you a copy of, from 1946 where we took the best kids from each school and put them together for a program. These programs are listed, one for '47 and one for '46. In '46, there were three of us who were teachers of the instruments and in '47, they had added two more teachers and they kept adding them, because we had so many schools. You might like to have those copies. That's what was happening then.

1-00:40:29

Rigelhaupt:

Thank you. As the music teacher for the three schools, how much freedom did you have to set the curriculum?

1-00:40:40

Sauer:

It was up to me. I took the kids out of the classroom, scheduled the classes. And we taught violins in one class and we taught trumpets in another class and we taught clarinets in another class. We took that many children out at one time to instruct. And then we had another time for the orchestra. You were the boss.

1-00:41:03

Rigelhaupt:

What was sort of some of your favorite music to teach? Did you do Mozart or swing or how did you—?

1-00:41:10

Sauer:

These children were beginners, so we weren't into anything except getting the notes right and hopefully getting them all together. This was children from fourth through sixth grade, you see. So they're really beginners. Most of them didn't have private lessons, although some did. They did very well.

1-00:41:31

Rigelhaupt:

Did you do any of the private lessons outside?

1-00:41:34

Sauer:

I taught eighteen children private lessons during the war while I was teaching.

1-00:41:40

Rigelhaupt:

This would be after school hours? Okay. Do you remember some of the favorite pieces you got to teach or how did you choose what they played at the concert?

1-00:41:59

Sauer:

You can see the names of the songs that are listed there. They were simple enough for beginner/intermediate kids to play. I don't really remember the names of all them. They sound pretty good when you read them. *Gypsy Trail Overture, Air Brigade, Finlandia, Emerald Waltz, Caissons Go Rolling Along, Scherzo in B Flat*. Again, they were songs that were of intermediate nature, once the children learned how to play the notes. And they sounded pretty good. Unfortunately, we don't have any recordings of them. The principal of Orinda School though, he bought a recorder. This was '41. They were pretty primitive. He made recordings. It would make grooves in it and this string would come off, what was in the groove before. Someplace in my closet there, I have these records. They were pretty interesting too.

1-00:43:22

Rigelhaupt:

Those would be great to hear.

1-00:43:24

Sauer:

I'd have to find them. He was a pretty ambitious fellow.

1-00:43:33

Rigelhaupt:

I was wondering if we could talk about some of the things that were unique about teaching during World War II?

1-00:43:41

Sauer:

We had lots of different kids, they were for the most part well behaved. Everybody got along pretty well. They pretty much had to. They were on double session and triple session. Everybody just did the best they could to take care of everybody and teach them. I guess they turned out all right. They're all adults.

1-00:44:11

Rigelhaupt:

What do you mean by double session and triple session?

1-00:44:15

Sauer:

When I taught at Woodrow Wilson, I taught second grade for a while. We started at eight in the morning, from eight to twelve and from twelve to four was the next session, another teacher.

1-00:44:28

Rigelhaupt:

And triple session meaning—?

1-00:44:31

Sauer:

Triple session they had in some of the schools. I wasn't part of that. They had to make do with what they had.

1-00:44:36

Rigelhaupt:

There just wasn't enough space for—?

1-00:44:39

Sauer:

That's right. All of a sudden all these kids were here. At Stege's school in 1947, there were 2000 children and seventy-five teachers. That was a double session school. The Nystrom School, which is down on Tenth Street had pretty much the same. All the schools were crowded. So they just doubled up.

1-00:45:05

Rigelhaupt:

You said your classes were about forty-five students when you first started. Did it get bigger as the war went on?

1-00:45:12

Sauer:

Yeah, one of my friends had seventy-five in kindergarten. You see, the kids behaved pretty well then. [laughs] Nobody got much out of hand. That's a lot of children, but there they were.

1-00:45:35

Rigelhaupt:

Wow. Did the racial makeup of your classes change as the war went on and more and more people moved to Richmond?

1-00:45:43

Sauer:

Oh yeah. Yeah.

1-00:45:45

Rigelhaupt:

Was that sort of a smooth transition? Do you remember what it was like in the schools?

1-00:45:51

Sauer:

It didn't bother me too much. There were kids of lots of colors and lots of backgrounds. They're all kids and so you just teach them all.

1-00:46:06

Rigelhaupt:

You said the kids behaved very well, but some of the books I've read Richmond in the war said there were discipline problems sometimes.

1-00:46:16

Sauer:

I'm sure there were, but the ones I dealt with—I don't remember having a big problem with them.

1-00:46:25

Rigelhaupt:

Maybe in high school?

1-00:46:27

Sauer:

I really don't know. I can only tell you what was my experience. But I really think the discipline is harder now than it was then.

1-00:46:38

Rigelhaupt:

What do you remember about how the schools changed as the war efforts on the homefront were sort of winding down, 1944, 1945? As the sort of buildup in jobs and the boom was sort of slowing down, did you see—?

1-00:46:59

Sauer:

Nothing slowed down at that point. It was just booming away at that point, because my husband didn't go into the service until '44. He was in 'til '46. It was just a growth. Then the schools started to be built so that you had more and more schools all the time until the 50s. I sort of don't remember all of that.

1-00:47:28

Rigelhaupt:

So the slowdown with jobs and the sort of boom in Richmond—

1-00:47:32

Sauer:

I don't think it happened 'til later.

1-00:47:35

Rigelhaupt:

Did you notice it in the schools? How—did it change what sort of funding there was?

1-00:47:44

Sauer:

I don't remember really.

1-00:47:56

Rigelhaupt:

Okay. Could you talk a little bit about what it was like to teach in the fifties and the sixties in Richmond? What sort of classes you continued with in the schools?

1-00:48:09

Sauer:

I had time off for having three children, so I didn't really do much in the fifties. I went back in '63. No, I went back for two years in the fifties, in the middle of 1950. They opened a new junior high school and I went as the music teacher there. That was a good program. Then I had to quit, because my daughter had a physical problem and I had to stop and take care of her. She was handicapped. She is how come I got into special ed. the last part of my teaching, because I did a lot of research with her problems. I learned a lot of things for special ed. kids, so I did that for twelve years at the end.

1-00:48:59

Rigelhaupt:

What years were you teaching that?

1-00:49:03

Sauer:

At the junior high? '55 and '56. It was Grenada Junior High, which is now where Kennedy is. It became a non-school again.

1-00:49:20

Rigelhaupt:

You came back in the sixties you said, for twelve years? Where did you teach then?

1-00:49:25

Sauer:

I taught at El Monte for three years and then I went into special ed. and taught at Fairmede, which is now Highland. Changed the rules all the time.

1-00:49:36

Rigelhaupt:

Did you still get to teach music in the special ed.?

1-00:49:38

Sauer:

I managed to do some. I had understanding principals that let me go off and accompany a couple of the choruses that my friend was teaching. I got to do some of the things that I liked.

00:50:00

Rigelhaupt:

Why don't we talk pretty generally on how you remember life in Richmond changing during the war? If you could just talk generally about your memories about how the city changed—be it new movie houses, social life, whatever you sort of remember as the war boom took off in Richmond.

1-00:50:24

Sauer:

I remember all of the apartments being built in the south Richmond, particularly in the Stege area. And this area, every vacant lot was built. We needed housing very badly, so the housing boom is what I remember most.

1-00:50:48

Rigelhaupt:

And every neighborhood was built or were some built up faster than others?

1-00:50:52

Sauer:

It just seemed like everything happened at once. It seemed like it, now that I look back.

1-00:51:02

Rigelhaupt:

What do you remember about sort of the city and the city government doing well or maybe having problems with or were there other things they could have done better at?

1-00:51:11

Sauer:

I really was too busy doing my own job to pay close attention to what was going on. I don't really remember now. I'm sure they did the best they could. I don't know.

1-00:51:21

Rigelhaupt:

Did you feel like you had sort of everything you could have in the schools or did things have to be cut back?

1-00:51:33

Sauer:

We had more things, more funds available then than ever before, during the war. It seemed to me like, at least I did for the music program. It really took off.

1-00:51:46

Rigelhaupt:

Interesting. Were there things you got to do in the music program that you weren't able to do after the war?

1-00:51:51

Sauer:

Well they cut it back until when my kids started, were in elementary school, which would have been in the fifties. They got some lessons, but then it was cut back quite a bit and by the time I started teaching in the sixties, the recreation department had taken over. All those wonderful instruments I had helped to store, I don't know what happened to them. I wasn't real happy about that.

1-00:52:18

Rigelhaupt:

What could you tell me about why the recreation department took it over, do you know?

1-00:52:24

Sauer:

The school department's money ran out, you know, and the arts were the first to go.

1-00:52:29

Rigelhaupt:

And this you said was in the early sixties, did I hear you right?

1-00:52:34

Sauer:

Well in the fifties it was running down.

1-00:52:36

Rigelhaupt:

They were already sort of cutting back arts programs and music was part of the cutback?

1-00:52:44

Sauer:

When there's a war going on everything happens it seems like and there was money, at least for the music program. Then after war people just don't have it anymore I guess.

1-00:53:01

Rigelhaupt:

Do you remember talking with other teachers about why there were cutbacks or how those decisions were being made?

1-00:53:08

Sauer:

I don't remember. I was not teaching much in the fifties, the sixties.

1-00:53:22

Rigelhaupt:

You said you came—when your kids were young you stopped teaching. Was that common, I mean in the era? I don't—

1-00:53:38

Sauer:

Well if you didn't have parents to baby-sit, there weren't a lot of childcare things. Well, they had childcare for the shipyard workers, but I had parents that took care of my little ones and helped me, but then I quit for a while.

1-00:54:01

Rigelhaupt:

So it wasn't childcare as much, I mean as you would find—?

1-00:54:06

Sauer:

Well the public childcare, I mean the ones the childcare centers they set up for the shipyard workers, I knew existed, but that wasn't something I wanted to do. I don't know if I would've have qualified anyway.

1-00:54:20

Rigelhaupt:

Do you remember when the sort of the boom of housing was being built, who was moving into what neighborhoods? Did you move at all during the sort of World War II or were you in the apartment you said on Macdonald, is that right?

1-00:54:42

Sauer:

Twenty-Second and Barrett Avenue.

1-00:54:44

Rigelhaupt:

Barrett. I am sorry.

1-00:54:45

Sauer:

Then we didn't move until 1950 and we built this house.

1-00:54:55

Rigelhaupt:

Okay, interesting. You and your husband physically put or designed the house or had it—?

1-00:55:01

Sauer:

Yeah, we had the house built, this one. We bought the lot and had the house built.

1-00:55:11

Rigelhaupt:

So you've been in this house since?

1-00:55:12

Sauer:

Since 1950. We expanded it. There's more house back there, in 1963. So it's a six-room house. My son has improved it as time went on, so that it's kept modern—marble fireplace and, plantation blinds. But anyway, he's always kept it fixed up so it was modern.

1-00:55:45

Rigelhaupt:

So this whole neighborhood got built up in the early fifties? Were you one of the first to move into the neighborhood?

1-00:55:53

Sauer:

Yeah. This house was here and this house was here and all of them, they sort of just all came up about the same time, because the lots were available. One of the nice things about Richmond is that the houses are not carbon copies of each other like they are in some of the developments. Most of the houses are different around here. Some contractors would build his pattern or his design here and there, and I can just about tell which houses belong to which decade, if I go around. But they all have their own characteristic that you seldom find in the newer areas. Pretty hard to figure out whose house belongs to whom now. [laughs]

1-00:56:48

Rigelhaupt:

Well we're just about out of tape on here, so why don't we take a break.

[Audio File Sauer 02 10-15-022]

2-00:01:16

Sauer:

I know somebody, if she would agree to an interview. Her father was the city manager of Richmond. Her mother was a librarian and she was a principal of a school and she knows a lot about Richmond.

2-00:00:14

Rigelhaupt:

I would be delighted to take her name.

0:00:17

Sauer:

I don't know if she'd do it or not, but she should.

2-00:00:19

Rigelhaupt:

Certainly someone in our office will call. Just as I was changing the tape, you mentioned what it was like with the trains during the Depression. I was wondering if you could talk about that?

2-00:00:29

Sauer:

Oh, the trains went by our house on Twenty-Second and Bissell where I grew up, the Southern Pacific and then the Santa Fe up on the bank. We'd count the number of cars in the big freight trains. Then at that time, the hobos rode the rails. They would come over to our house, which was just a half a block off the track, to ask for food. They were hungry. Once in a while they would offer to work, but not too often. Sometimes they'd chop a little wood or something. My mother always fed them on the back porch. This was pretty commonplace for people to do that. But one day, my mother had a habit of going out and digging weeds with a butcher knife, you know just outside the door. "Oh, there's a weed," you know and she'd dig it up. So there was a gate and a walkway up the side of the house. This hobo came up the walkway and my mother stood up and he turned around and went the other way fast. She had this butcher knife in her hand and I think it scared him a little, quite a little. [laughs] Quite a little. But anyway, that was the story of the hobos and the butcher knife.

2-00:01:44

Rigelhaupt:

You were a child during the depression or adolescence?

2-00:01:49

Sauer:

I was a child in the twenties. I was born in 1920. I'm almost 83 years old. My goodness!
[laughter]

2-00:01:57

Rigelhaupt:

You don't show it at all. What do you remember about Richmond during the Depression?

2-00:02:06

Sauer:

Well now let's see. I was going to junior high school. My dad worked at Standard Oil, as I told you, and they cut back quite a bit. He worked three days one week and four days another week, which wasn't a lot. Even so, my parents managed to have my teeth straightened, which was a very unusual thing those days. Orthodontia was new. That was in 1931. It cost \$350 for that. So they had to scrimp to do that. Let's see, junior high. I got piano lessons, a \$1 an hour for piano lessons, so they managed to do things. But we had a garden and chickens, so we had our own food pretty much. They always had a car, Maxwell until '26 and then a Chrysler. Our entertainment was to go for a ride. We never went out to a restaurant. There weren't too many anyway, nothing like now. We always visited people in Alameda, or Antioch, or places you had to go in a car. I knew where I was in the whole area, which was a very good thing to be able to do because some kids had never even been to Oakland. That was sort of what we did. During the Depression, that was in the thirties, that's when all the wonderful movies were made, all the musicals. They were wonderful to see. That's the kind of music we play now, the thirties and forties music that we remember a lot. We had formals to go out in, to go to dances and things. It

was a dress up time, in spite of the fact that there was not much money to go around. But people sewed and did their own cooking and raised their food, just because that's the way it was done. I didn't have a very hard time. I didn't know I was poor. I was, but I didn't know it.

2-00:04:20

Rigelhaupt:

What are some of your favorite musical pieces that you like playing now from that era?

2-00:04:25

Sauer:

Oh! We just loved Nelson Eddy and Janet McDonald and *Naughty Marietta* and *Rose Marie*. Then Dick Powell and Ruby Keeler were in the *Forty-Second Street*. Oh, it just goes on and on. They were so wonderful to see, beautiful things. Busby Berkeley had these gorgeous dance numbers. Let's see, what else? Then, of course, the world's fair came along at the end of the thirties. That was a wonderful thing to go to on Treasure Island, '39. There, Esther Williams was in the Aquacade, which was a swimming thing, beautiful. And the Folies Bergère came from Paris, and Sally Rand's Nude Ranch, which was really risqué in those days, you know, topless. [laughs] The entertainment part of the fair was the Gayway [Gayway Amusement Area], which of course we wouldn't use that term nowadays, but it was, you know, these sideshow-like things, very special. And wonderful exhibits. It was a great place to go.

2-00:05:39

Rigelhaupt:

How long was it in town?

2-00:05:40

Sauer:

It was two years. They had it for another year. You've probably seen pictures of it someplace, but it was a special time.

2-00:05:52

Rigelhaupt:

Did you go over often?

2-00:05:55

Sauer:

Oh, fairly often. It was fifty cents to get in, I think. No, it was fifty cents to get across the bridge. I forget how much to get in. They had a Dutch mill, a restaurant, where they served dollar size pancakes and something new called apple juice, not cider, but juice. Tuna and tomato sandwiches were thirty cents, pretty expensive. [laughs] I think it was about fifty cents to get in. I can't really remember, but as I told you, money was a whole other thing in those days, the relationship of one thing to another.

2-00:06:45

Rigelhaupt:

And some of your favorite exhibits while you were there? You said the water—

2-00:06:50

Sauer:

Well the shows were great and we performed with different groups from college on Treasure Island. I can't remember the whole thing now, but I remember performing over there in choruses. Let's see, the different pacific countries had wonderful exhibits from Asia. It's so hard to remember everything.

2-00:07:25

Rigelhaupt:

So you sang as well, you said you were in a chorus.

2-00:07:27

Sauer:

In a group called the Madrigal Singers. They sang early English songs and dressed up in Elizabethan costumes with high colors and beaded hats and men wore tuxedos. We sang around the table. It was very nice.

2-00:07:47

Rigelhaupt:

You did that while you were in college? And you didn't do that as much when —

2-00:07:52

Sauer:

No, just in college.

2-00:07:56

Rigelhaupt:

Did you like singing as much as playing saxophone?

2-00:07:59

Sauer:

Oh yeah. You know, when you're young you like doing everything. You should know. [laughs]

2-00:08:12

Rigelhaupt:

So, jumping back to the housing as the war was going on, do you remember how—as the housing was being built? Were neighborhoods segregated or how did people decide where to live? Was it just based upon—?

2-00:08:29

Sauer:

Well I don't really know. I guess I didn't pay any attention. The only thing I do know is that one of the teachers at Fairmede School, and I taught there from '66 to '78, she was Chinese. Her husband was Portuguese, both of them from Hawaii. But Orientals had a difficult time buying homes. I guess blacks did too. As I said, I was pretty busy with my own things and I didn't really know what other people were having problems with.

2-00:09:08

Rigelhaupt:

And this was the late forties is it?

2-00:09:11

Sauer:

This was in the sixties.

2-00:09:16

Rigelhaupt:

Oh, sixties still. Interesting.

2-00:09:19

Sauer:

The Japanese kids that went to school, most of their parents ran nurseries in this area. Some of them up in North Richmond and there were some in El Cerrito, but most of them had that kind of a business.

2-00:09:47

Rigelhaupt:

Do you remember when Port Chicago—?

2-00:09:53

Sauer:

I remember when it blew up.

2-00:09:55

Rigelhaupt:

What do you remember about it?

2-00:09:57

Sauer:

I just remember it shook the house.

2-00:09:58

Rigelhaupt:

Here?

2-00:10:00

Sauer:

Yeah.

2-00:10:00

Rigelhaupt:

You felt it all the way here?

2-00:10:02

Sauer:

Yes, oh yes.

2-00:10:04

Rigelhaupt:

Wow. What was your initial reaction?

2-00:10:07

Sauer:

Well, shock. We didn't know what it was of course. And I don't remember details. Nothing much was published, as far as I remember now, about all the problems that existed with some of the races and things that came out later. I don't even remember what year it was for sure, but I remember feeling it. It was a big explosion.

2-00:10:34

Rigelhaupt:

I did not know that it was physically felt as far away as here.

2-00:10:38

Sauer:

Pardon me?

2-00:10:39

Rigelhaupt:

I didn't know you could actually feel it.

2-00:10:40

Sauer:

Oh yeah, yes. It was an ammunition ship. Oh yeah.

2-00:10:50

Rigelhaupt:

What do you remember about when the war ended? Do you remember where you were when you heard the war was over? Or in Europe or in Asia?

2-00:11:01

Sauer:

I don't remember where I was, but I remember being really happy about it, because my husband was in Hawaii ready to go to Japan and I was glad he didn't have to do that. But I remember where I was the day of Pearl Harbor. My husband had bought a new suit. He was my boyfriend then. No, he was my husband. He bought a new suit and he got his picture taken in Berkeley and came out to dinner with some friends of ours here in Richmond, and that's when we heard about it. But I don't remember where I was when it ended.

2-00:11:46

Rigelhaupt:

So you said you're husband was in the service from '44 to '46 and he was in the Navy? And he volunteered in '44?

2-00:11:56

Sauer:

No. [laughs]

2-00:11:57

Rigelhaupt:

He was drafted?

2-00:11:58

Sauer:

He was drafted. He was deferred for some time because of the war industry. Then he was old when he was drafted, twenty-four. That's old. Because the selective service—as soon as a fellow was twenty-one he was up for draft, and so George was deferred for two or three years before he had to go. And then went into the Navy and served on a destroyer. The picture is over there.

2-00:12:39

Rigelhaupt:

He only went to Hawaii? Did he go, so he didn't go—?

2-00:12:42

Sauer:

No, he went to Machinist Mate School in Dearborn, Michigan after the initial boot camp in San Diego. Boot camp in San Diego wasn't exactly fun for him, because he was short and when they marched along the beach, Mission Beach, you know, to practice marching, the tall guys were in front and the short ones behind. So you know what happened. The little ones were running. They got pretty tired. [laughs] Anyway, he went to Dearborn, Michigan to the Ford Plant and took the Machinist Mate School there. Then he was assigned to the destroyer Ericcson. They went to Africa, Orient-Africa, escorted ships across the Atlantic. You know, the U-boats were blasting ships and so the destroyers were the protectors. He went over there and then came back and went through the canal and to San Diego and there went to Hawaii and they were supposed to go to Japan. But then the war ended, which was very nice for us. However after that they did go to Japan for the—what do you called it afterwards? Anyway, they went to Sasebo, Japan and then came back to San Diego again. So that was his adventure in the Navy in the bottom of the ship.

2-00:14:15

Rigelhaupt:

Bottom of the ship meaning—?

2-00:14:17

Sauer:

Well, that's where the Machinist Mates are in the engine room.

2-00:14:22

Rigelhaupt:

What was it like for you while he was gone?

2-00:14:26

Sauer:

Well, I wrote a letter everyday, which most of us did and he did too. I got the letters and I taught school and just tended to business.

2-00:14:39

Rigelhaupt:

Do you still have some of those letters?

2-00:14:42

Sauer:

I do, I have most all of them upstairs in a box. Maybe they're downstairs, but you know they were censored. You had to be careful what you said. He couldn't tell you where he was, because

of the “loose lips sink ships,” that was one of the posters that was out. Maybe you don’t know all these things, but I’ve rambled on and on about different things and I’m sure it’s a mixed up mishmash now.

2-00:15:18

Rigelhaupt:

It’s wonderful. No, it’s great.

2-00:15:20

Sauer:

You trigger certain memories and those come out and others I can’t remember at all.

2-00:15:28

Rigelhaupt:

How do you remember the social life in Richmond changing just after the war ended? Did any of the theaters close down?

2-00:15:41

Sauer:

Eventually they did, yes. They had opened up, I can’t remember how many, at least ten I guess in different places because that was the way to entertain these people who were working so many shifts, working very hard. Let’s see, what year are we talking about? In the apartment we had at Twenty-Second and Barrett, you weren’t supposed to have cats or children, so I got a cat. The lady who was the landlord’s representative liked us, so we had the cat. That was fun. Then we weren’t supposed to have children, so I had one baby there, in 1948. That was all right, because it was us and it was fine. Her twelve-year-old granddaughter helped me take care of baby now and then. That was fine. We had enough room for one baby, so then we had another baby in 1950, and that was still all right, but we were running out of space. One was in the dining room and one was in the bedroom, so that’s when we built this house. It was time. Rules are meant to be broken I guess, so cats and babies got accepted all right.

2-00:17:06

Rigelhaupt:

What do you remember about the changes in housing after the war? Did it get easier to find places to live?

2-00:17:13

Sauer:

Well, people began to build their own, like we did. The city began to spread out. El Sobrante built up a great deal and even now it is still spreading out. That’s what happened then. I am sure that there are real estate people who could tell you a lot more.

2-00:17:36

Rigelhaupt:

What do you remember about wartime propaganda? What films you saw? You mentioned one of the posters about the “loose lips sink ships.” Other things you remember about those sort of —?

2-00:17:47

Sauer:

Well everything was hush hush, you know. We didn't know a lot of things that were happening right around us, because it was all pretty top secret. I do remember we had blackouts because they feared invasion on the West Coast, which we later found out wasn't too far off. There were submarines off of Oregon and out here that we didn't even know a thing about. They'd ring this—not ring, but there was a siren that we had to blackout. We'd turn out all the lights and wait till the “all clear”. Let's see what else? What was the question?

2-00:18:35

Rigelhaupt:

Just about the wartime propaganda, if you remember any films, posters.

2-00:18:41

Sauer:

To keep still about everything, of course, and many many posters. The museum has a lot of them. A lot of patriotic kinds of things. The war effort was pretty important. In fact, it was very important because had Hitler and his ilk taken over things, we might have had a whole different world, the same with Japan. It was a lot more serious than maybe we even realized at the time, another kind of world.

2-00:19:27

Rigelhaupt:

What was your social life like while your husband was in the service? Did you go out? I mean you were teaching, so you have weekends. Did you play occasionally?

2-00:19:39

Sauer:

No, I really don't remember much about it. I was busy writing letters a lot—I know that—and correcting papers and doing things that teachers do. So I don't remember it being a big problem or doing very much. Maybe go to the show. I really don't remember.

00:20:13

Rigelhaupt:

Just sort of as a wrap up question, how do you sort of compare Richmond today to the World War II era? Are there things that are more positive about it or things that are more troubling? How would you, as someone who has lived here your whole life, how would you talk about it?

2-00:20:39

Sauer:

I'll tell you this. I feel that Richmond has no place to go but up. It has had a lot of bad publicity, because of various crime happenings here and other things, and the media has not been kind to Richmond. But it has a marvelous shoreline. It has a great history. There is a lot going on now that I think it's about time it's gone on. They have a wonderful bay trail that's just opened. Things are going forward and I have every feeling of good for this town, but of course I'm prejudiced.

2-00:21:20

Rigelhaupt:

How would you talk about some of the times that were sort of tough? Schools often reflect the larger social world. When were some of the tough periods you mentioned with Richmond's growing up?

2-00:21:45

Sauer:

Tough periods? What decade are we talking about?

2-00:21:52

Rigelhaupt:

However you would talk about it. Wherever you would locate it? I'm not positive.

2-00:21:58

Sauer:

I guess I just got along pretty well. I don't remember having any tough periods except on a personal level. On a personal level, my dad was severely burned at Standard Oil in 1942, six months after we got married, and spent two years and eight months in the hospital recovering. That's what I was busy doing for one thing. My mother commuted to San Francisco while he was in the hospital. Severe burns like his—he couldn't have covers on, like a covered wagon with a light in it. He couldn't have any clothes on, because he was just burned that badly. But he did recover. But it took us—that was part of what I was doing in '42 'til late in '43. I'd kind of forgotten about that. But personal things that happen that you have to deal with and you just kind of put it out of your mind after you've done it. It was a difficult time for all of us.

2-00:23:16

Rigelhaupt:

You said your mom was commuting to San Francisco, is that—?

2-00:23:22

Sauer:

Yeah, he was in Saint Francis Hospital, which was a burn center at that time, or where they treated burns. They didn't know a lot about it. They learned a lot during the war with injuries and things, but they didn't know a lot about treating burns, so they used chlorophyll packs on him and I can't remember all the things. He was not supposed to live, but he didn't know that, so he did.

2-00:23:56

Rigelhaupt:

It was an accident?

2-00:24:00

Sauer:

It was at Standard Oil. He worked at the saltwater station where they have big turbine pumps and pumps. This was an oil-immersed switch and he was turning off or on something, and whoever had repaired the switch hadn't fastened the plate down, so a spark came out and ignited his clothing. So, he was burned—this arm and all over here and all the way down to the legs to the shoe tops. He had a surgical belt on and that kind of saved his middle. His face wasn't burned, which was very good, but it took a long long time for him to recover because it was pretty deep.

He had black crusts on him and they had to be removed and that left him sort of raw, absolutely raw. Anyway, he was moved to San Francisco for care, for twenty-four hour care for eight months, nurses around the clock, which Standard Oil had to pay for of course. Anyway, it ended up that he did finally get healed up and lived to be eighty-nine. He was only sixty when that happened. That was a bit of a shock.

2-00:25:18

Rigelhaupt:

You had worked there before this accident. You worked at Standard Oil that summer?

2-00:25:25

Sauer:

No no no. That was in '45 and the war was on. We had to contribute to the war effort, that was that sort of thing.

2-00:25:34

Rigelhaupt:

Was it sort of hard for you to work with the fuel? No?

2-00:25:38

Sauer:

No. My husband worked there for forty years too. He was a machinist.

2-00:25:43

Rigelhaupt:

It never felt dangerous?

2-00:25:44

Sauer:

No, no, no. This was just an accident that happened, just an accident. Anyway, things do happen and that had nothing to do with the company. It was a good company otherwise. It was a very family-oriented company. They liked to have the sons and daughters of the employees to come and work in those days. That's the way it was.

2-00:26:14

Rigelhaupt:

And it's changed?

2-00:26:17

Sauer:

Well everything has changed. It's another world. Every year and every decade is different and you can't go back. You have to just go ahead and take each day as it comes and enjoy it, which is why we're doing this music. We have fun doing it and some people have fun listening to us and so we do it. I don't know if you've ever looked at *Modern Maturity Magazine*, it's a magazine for seniors and it's been modernized somewhat now, because people fifty and over can belong to this organization AARP [American Association of Retired Persons]. In the latest magazine, it has a picture of Kitty Carlisle, who was a movie star. She's 94 now and she's still performing. She looks great. The attitude of people is, "Go ahead and do what you want to do. Enjoy it." So we do. And everything changes as I told you and you go on with it.

2-00:27:28

Rigelhaupt:

Can we sneak a peak at some of the stuff you pulled out?

[referring to pictures]

2-00:27:33

Sauer:

This is the dance orchestra that we played from '37 to '41. This is one of the groups. This is another picture of these individuals. We were pretty young then, like eighteen. It was lots of fun doing that. And what else did you want? I'll have to find other pictures if you want them in the future, but couldn't find them this time.

2-00:28:14

Rigelhaupt:

Those were sort of most of the questions I wanted to go over. Is there anything you'd like to add? Things I should have asked that I didn't?

2-00:28:32

Sauer:

I don't think of anything now. I think you've covered my life. [laughs] Maybe found out things you didn't care about, but that's all right. Lots of the general questions that you ask, most of us were busy with our own lives and our own little circle of things we had to be responsible for and we're not entirely aware of all the problems that existed. We later found out about them. I'm sure you're not aware of all the problems that exist now. Somebody will ask you in fifty years what happened in the first decade of the 2000s and you'll say, "Hmm, I don't know." [laughs] You better remember all this stuff. Somebody is going to ask you someday, you know.

[laughter]

2-00:29:32

Rigelhaupt:

It's true.

2-00:29:39

Sauer:

Perhaps each person that you interview will give you enough information that you can kind of fit together some of the information that you really wanted about government and some of the housing and other things. One person can't recall or didn't pay attention to.

2-00:29:55

Rigelhaupt:

We're mostly after what people do remember. Whatever—

2-00:29:56

Sauer:

Whatever it is.

2-00:29:57

Rigelhaupt:

Yeah.

2-00:29:58

Sauer:

Well you know, you don't remember everything, but then there are some things that for some reason stay with you, like the hobos. You sort of remember that episode.

2-00:30:17

Rigelhaupt:

That's great. Okay. We've pretty much covered my questions.

2-00:30:22

Sauer:

I hope I've been helpful.

2-00:30:23

Rigelhaupt:

Incredibly.

2-00:30:23

Sauer:

It's not easy to sit here and think of these things and know you're being filmed. It isn't probably the most wonderful performance in the world, but oh well.

2-00:30:42

Rigelhaupt:

If a performance—would you be interested in playing anything that was sort of one of your favorite songs from the era around World War II?

2-00:30:52

Sauer:

I don't think so. I don't—. Do you know Judy Hart? She is one of the ladies that's in charge of the Homefront National Park here. I met her the other day. She has one of our CDs.

2-00:31:15

Rigelhaupt:

So we'll get a performance sometime.

2-00:31:17

Sauer:

Maybe I'll give you a CD and you can play it for yourself.

2-00:31:20

Rigelhaupt:

Okay, that would be great.

2-00:31:22

Sauer:

What we do is for a \$20 donation to the Red Oak Victory Restoration we give people a CD. But I might just give you one so you'll have it.

2-00:31:34

Rigelhaupt:

Thank you. I am going to go ahead and stop then.