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Tybie Flapan

Rosie the Riveter
World War II Home Front Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by
Sarah Selvidge
in 2010

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Tybie Flapan

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Interview 1: August 7, 2010
Begin Audiofile 1

Selvidge: This is Sarah Selvidge interviewing Tillie Flapan. Is that how you pronounce your last name?

1-00:00:07

Flapan: Flapan.

Selvidge: It's August 7, 2010, and we can just go ahead and start. Even though I know some of these things about you, people who might watch this video won't, so I was hoping you could start by telling me a little bit about your early childhood and your family and those kinds of things.

1-00:00:33

Flapan: Oh, all right. Well, I was born in Los Angeles, California on June 4, 1917. I went to grammar school in Los Angeles. I lived there for a long, long, long time, and I've had a lot of friends. As a kid I went to school, and it was very good. I liked most all of my teachers. They were all nice. I remember some of their names: Miss Fowler, Miss Bess Olson. And Miss Timmons was my kindergarten teacher. Oh, she was so nice, and as I look back, she was dressed like in the olden days.

Selvidge: Oh, tell me how she dressed.

1-00:01:26

Flapan: With a full skirt, you know, long skirt, black with a little white top on like that; I remember that. Then our other principal later on, she was a doozie! She wore this beautiful print summery dress and beautiful colored shoes and everything, and we thought, "Oh, wow. She's the cat's meow."

Selvidge: Was she more modern or just more colorful?

1-00:02:01

Flapan: Oh, yes definitely. She was more modern, and she was really a sharp one, and she looked real nice. Let's see, that was grammar school, then junior high and high school. The usual things with that.

Selvidge: Well, I'll ask you a little bit about that, but tell me about your family, the siblings—

1-00:02:24

Flapan: Oh, my family. Well, at the time when I was little, let's see, I had four brothers and three sisters, and we lived in Los Angeles on Beaudry Avenue; I remember the address, 420 North Beaudry. We used to have a mailman at that time, and he would come deliver the mail twice a day. His name was Mr. Green, and he was as black as the Ace of Spades. He was just one of the nicest guys, real nice man.

Selvidge: Were most of the families in the neighborhood Jewish?

1-00:03:20

Flapan: Yes, at that time, oh yes. Most all. There were a few Mexicans and Spanish people, you know, but mainly Jewish, definitely.

Selvidge: And where were they mostly from?

1-00:03:38

Flapan: Well, I guess from Europe or Russia or one of those places.

Selvidge: But it was a mix? It wasn't like a lot of Jews from a certain region, just kind of all over?

1-00:03:47

Flapan: No. They were all mixed, and we went to school, and our school was mixed. We had all kinds of people there. We had Jewish, Irish, Spanish, Italian. You name it, we had it. It was a melting pot, as they called it at that time. I used to do my schoolwork, and I'd bring my books home, and I had a—when I came home, because we had a Singer sewing machine. So I threw my books right on the sewing machine, and they stayed there until the next day. You know, the next day I bring books home, put on the sewing machine, back and forth, back and forth. But after a while I got to straighten things out. What else do you want to know?

Selvidge: Well, tell me more about the neighborhood. Did you go to a temple in the neighborhood?

1-00:04:53

Flapan: Oh, yes.

Selvidge: Tell me about what that was like.

1-00:04:55

Flapan: We went to a temple that was at Custer Avenue School, and it was a real old building. We used to go there, and, you know, being I'm Jewish, the men sat in the back and the women sat off to the side. We did that. It was a very old building. I was a miracle it didn't cave in at that time. We'd go to service there.

Selvidge: On Saturdays usually you'd go?

1-00:05:32

Flapan: Whenever.

Selvidge: Sometimes?

1-00:05:34

Flapan: Yeah. Saturdays sometimes, and there was me, my sister Coy, and my brother Moshe, my brother Frank—he was my oldest brother—and then there was my

brother Hillis. He was older than we were, not much, but he was older. And I had my sister Jesse and my sister Coy, I think I said, and my sister Mimi, and then, of course, me. So that was our family.

Selvidge: Did you go to Sunday school or anything?

1-00:06:15

Flapan: I went to Hebrew School two days, and I quit. I didn't start at the beginning of the class is what happened. So I was in there and they expected me to know this stuff, but I did not know it. And the teachers they were very mean. I don't why they were, but they were, and especially to the boys. Oh, they treated the boys so mean, they did they were—

Selvidge: What did they do, do you remember?

1-00:06:50

Flapan: Well, they slapped them a couple times, you know, hit them over the head. You know, gave them a clonk on the head. This is true.

Selvidge: So it was very different than from your grammar school where you said it was nice.

1-00:07:04

Flapan: Yes. Oh, absolutely. The grammar school was nice. Now that was nice. This is the Jewish School.

Selvidge: And it was much more strict?

1-00:07:10

Flapan: Yeah, and I only went two days, and I quit.

Selvidge: Did your parents mind that you quit?

1-00:07:17

Flapan: No, my mother—I told her, and she says, “Okay, you don't have to go.” So I didn't go. And that was the end of that.

Selvidge: So you didn't learn Hebrew then.

1-00:07:29

Flapan: No.

Selvidge: Did you speak Yiddish much in the house?

1-00:07:35

Flapan: I speak Yiddish, not perfectly, but I can understand it better than I can speak it because my mother and father they wanted to learn English, so we spoke a lot of English to them.

Selvidge: So they would learn?

1-00:07:52

Flapan: Yeah.

Selvidge: How did they learn English?

1-00:07:56

Flapan: Just speaking with everybody. Well, Papa was a shoemaker, and in his store he had to talk to people, which he did, so he learned, you know, how to speak Yiddish. He knew how, he spoke Yiddish very well.

Selvidge: But he never went to classes or anything to learn English?

1-00:08:18

Flapan: No, not Papa. No. No. He already came Jewish.

Selvidge: No, I'm sorry, I don't mean classes to learn Yiddish; I meant to learn English.

1-00:08:27

Flapan: No.

Selvidge: He just picked it up.

1-00:08:28

Flapan: Yeah. And my mother also, she learned how to speak English, and she spoke pretty well. Of course, they had an accent, which was Lithuanian. They couldn't say their s's: fis for fish, fis, fis they would say. But other than that she spoke pretty good English.

Selvidge: So she spoke Yiddish, English, what other languages too—

1-00:09:03

Flapan: Oh, I think she knew a little bit of Russian also.

Selvidge: But just not something she spoke around you guys.

1-00:09:08

Flapan: No. Uh-uh.

Selvidge: What about, did you have chores that you had to do around the house?

1-00:09:16

Flapan: Of course.

Selvidge: What did you have to do?

1-00:09:20

Flapan: Of course. I used to dust the furniture I remember three days a week. I had to dust the whole house, and at dinner time I was the dishwasher. I washed the dishes and my sister dried them, and we had to do that. We did, and we did help around the house.

Selvidge: What about the boys? Did they help around the house?

1-00:09:46

Flapan: They didn't do nothing. Mom spoiled them.

Selvidge: Really?

1-00:09:48

Flapan: Oh yeah. And she was a good cook, my mother. Oh, the food was delicious.

Selvidge: Tell me about some of the things she cooked.

1-00:10:00

Flapan: Let's see if I can think that far back. Well, yes and she was right with it. One day I come home and I said, "Where is everybody?" Nobody was home. I looked around the house, all of a sudden, "Ah," they all screamed. They came out from behind the sofa. It was my birthday. My mother made me a surprise birthday party. Did you ever do that?

Selvidge: That's great. So do you remember about how old you were?

1-00:10:37

Flapan: Eleven-twelve, yeah, and in those days they used to wear these ensembles they called them. A real neat little dress, I remember, with a jacket. And they called that an ensemble. The jacket was in a print; I remember that. And oh, I was just thrilled with it. Then my mother made me a surprise birthday party. She was right with it, definitely.

Selvidge: Tell me a little bit since you remember the clothes; tell me about shopping for clothes. Do you remember?

1-00:11:14

Flapan: Yes. Where we lived we'd go down to Whittier Boulevard. We took the streetcar and went—and the street car was five cents. We'd go to Whittier Boulevard, and we'd shop there. The clothes we had they were nice, neat, I can't remember exactly, but I remember having this one pretty skirt with a nice top on, and that was sort of a nice thing we had. But I don't remember too much about that.

Selvidge: Did you go to department stores though?

1-00:11:50

Flapan: Yes, oh yes. We had the Broadway Department Store at Fifth and Broadway downtown LA, and they used to have the hat box, and we'd buy hats. We wore hats all the time.

Selvidge: Really?

1-00:12:04

Flapan: Oh yes. That was one thing we did.

Selvidge: And did you wear gloves?

1-00:12:07

Flapan: Oh, when we went out, we wore gloves, hats, the works. Oh yes. And some of my girlfriends, we'd get together and we'd go to lunch. We went to this lovely place on Sunset Boulevard in LA, you know. I can't remember the name of it. Well, that'll come to me, but it was a very nice restaurant. We went, and we got dressed up and had gloves and everything, and our hats.

Selvidge: This is when you were a teenager, I guess?

1-00:12:41

Flapan: Yeah, a little bit older, a little bit older then, yeah.

Selvidge: When you were a little girl, though, did your mother make clothes for you?

1-00:12:49

Flapan: Oh yes. Yes, she did. And she also even had a dressmaker make us—we had the cutest jumpers, now that you reminded me, beautiful maroon jumper with a shell blouse. And oh, I thought I was the cat's meow in that thing. It was so beautiful, it was.

Selvidge: And do you remember the fashions sort of changing, where you wanted to get things that were new a fashionable, or you just wanted things that were pretty?

1-00:13:24

Flapan: Well, yes. Things did change. I don't remember too much about that part really.

Selvidge: Yeah. Did you look at magazines and stuff like that?

1-00:13:32

Flapan: Oh, yeah. We had magazines, and we used to get this newspaper. Every Wednesday, I think, they had specials, so we'd look through the paper to see what they have. One day they had a special on blankets: a dollar. Well, so my mother sent all of us, the three girls. We went and we bought blankets and came home with three blankets.

Selvidge: That's good.

1-00:14:04

Flapan: That's funny that came back to me, and I don't know what else.

Selvidge: Well, let's talk some about high school.

1-00:14:17

Flapan: High school.

Selvidge: I know sometimes people get really involved in the school activities and stuff like that. Did you do those things?

1-00:14:26

Flapan:

Well, in high school I was very lazy with school. I wasn't crazy about it, but I went, I had to go, and I did. But I belonged to the—oh, I got my letters for sports, you know. We had a C; it was a red, think it was red. In fact, I still have some of the initials from my sports. Oh yeah, I played during recess. I used to play volleyball, and recess another time I played baseball. They had different things, you know, for us, and I participated in all of them. And then when you participate in so many you get a letter, which I got. I got a whole bunch of them. Yeah, so I was active in that respect.

Then sometimes we had—what do they call it?—well, crafts, something like crafts, and they showed us how to make our official daffodils we made with crepe paper and everything. We would do that, and sometimes they had us make a cat, a black satin cat, with white face and white tips on his paws. So I did that. So I did quite a few of those different things.

Selvidge:

One thing about the sports that makes me think that must have been so different from the kind of experience your mother had as a teenager. She wouldn't have played sports—

1-00:16:22

Flapan:

Oh, no, no, no, no. But now that you mention that, I played baseball in the playground. We had this baseball that was so soft, but we played anyway, and yeah, I did play a lot of baseball.

Selvidge:

What did your mother think of that, of just of how it was different from her own experience?

1-00:16:49

Flapan:

Oh, she didn't, no, she didn't comment. No, she just, I don't know.

Selvidge:

She expected it to be different maybe?

1-00:16:55

Flapan:

I guess. I don't know. Listen, she was born in Europe. Her whole life was completely different than mine. But whatever we did, she accepted it.

Selvidge:

What about your friends in high school? You must have had a lot of friends.

1-00:17:22

Flapan:

Oh, I had a lot of friends. I was in the in crowd.

Selvidge:

Oh, yeah? What does that mean when you say that?

1-00:17:29

Flapan:

What is there you don't know?

Selvidge:

Well, I kind of get what it means, but tell me what it meant.

- 1-00:17:33
Flapan: Activities, all the kids, others, came and wanted to be friends with me and my girlfriend. They all wanted to get in our group. That's what it means.
- Selvidge: So what kinds of things did you do that everyone, you know, wanted to do to go?
- 1-00:17:51
Flapan: I don't know. What did we do so different? I don't know what we did really.
- Selvidge: Did you go to movies and stuff like that?
- 1-00:17:56
Flapan: Oh, yeah. We used to go. We started at a nickel a movie, went up to a dime, and then it went up to twenty-five cents because we were twelve. Yeah, the price, you know, went up. Oh yeah, we went to the—and we used to say to “my mother” in pig latin: “ama may an cay e way o gay o tay the o shay?” “No.” She'd understand what we said.
- Selvidge: And what about dating. Did you date when you were in high school?
- 1-00:18:39
Flapan: Yup. Yup. Oh, let's see about in the eleventh grade, I had quite a few boyfriends that I liked.
- Selvidge: Did your parents have rules about dating and stuff?
- 1-00:18:49
Flapan: No. No.
- Selvidge: They just kind of let you—
- 1-00:18:54
Flapan: We just—whatever, if we didn't do, she'd let us know though. You know, my mother kept tabs on us. She really did. Let's see, yeah, I had a couple of boyfriends. Nothing serious though at that time.
- Selvidge: Would you go out just with a boy, or would you go out in groups?
- 1-00:19:18
Flapan: Both. Yeah, we used to go in groups. Oh, one fellow had the car, and we all had to pitch in for gas. We all pitched in, you know, to go to Venice Beach. We'd go down to the beach and have fun, have a wienie bake sometimes, and then we'd come back and have a lot of fun. That was nice, there was a nice group of us guys and girls; we all went.
- Selvidge: So you would go sort of on driving places on the weekends and stuff.

1-00:19:56

Flapan: Yeah, but we had to pitch in for gas. At that time none of us had any money to speak of, you know. So if we had any extra money we were lucky. My father was a shoemaker. Did I say that?

Selvidge: Yeah.

1-00:20:18

Flapan: He was a shoemaker.

Selvidge: Did you go to his shop much?

1-00:20:22

Flapan: No. He made me a pair of shoes, though, me and my sister. He made us a pair of black suede pumps, and they were really nice, and we wore them for a long time.

Selvidge: Would your parents just sort of give you pocket change here and there?

1-00:20:40

Flapan: My father used to give us a quarter a day, and we had to pay for our lunch out of the quarter. Yeah, he gave us a quarter a day.

Selvidge: How much was the lunch, do you remember?

1-00:20:53

Flapan: Oh, ten-fifteen cents, something like that—

Selvidge: So you'd have a little change left over.

1-00:20:59

Flapan: Sometimes, yeah, so I used to hoard it. In fact, with my brother Moshe and my sister Coy, I made them give me a nickel each time because we wanted to buy my oldest sister Jessie a birthday present. We didn't know what to get her, so I saved up all that money from them, you know, and put it all together, and before her birthday we went downtown to the Broadway Department Store. They had stationery, beautiful beige and brown stationery, real pretty. I think it was under about two dollars, and we gathered up all our money and paid for it, and we gave it to her for her birthday, which was on July 24, and oh, she was so thrilled. She said, "Oh, you kids shouldn't have done it." I says "Yes, but we did. You've been so good to us," which she was. She used to get us things and give us things, you know. She was working and everything, so she was able to do those things.

Selvidge: Where did Jessie work?

1-00:22:22

Flapan: Jessie lived?

Selvidge: Where did she work? You said she was working.

1-00:22:21

Flapan: Oh, she worked at the Water and Power building at Second and Broadway, downtown LA. Yeah, Water and Power.

Selvidge: As a secretary?

1-00:22:32

Flapan: Yeah, she was secretary or something; I don't know what she did. But she helped build the Boulder Dam. You know the Boulder Dam? She worked on that stuff.

Selvidge: And that was while the other kids were still in school.

1-00:22:49

Flapan: Yeah, yeah. And the Boulder Dam got built, and it was beautiful. We went there quite often. We took tours—

Selvidge: Oh, you did? You went on the tours?

1-00:23:02

Flapan: Oh gosh yes, sure.

Selvidge: With Jessie or just with the family?

1-00:23:05

Flapan: No, all of us kids went, and then at that time they were building the new City Hall which turned out to be a twenty-eight storey building, you could see it today from anywhere in that area. It's twenty eight stories; it was the first tall building built, it was twenty-eight, I don't remember. Anyway, we took a tour through it, and we went to a—every so often we'd go to a trial. We'd walk in, they let us go in, and we'd sit and listen to a trial.

Selvidge: At the courthouse?

1-00:23:51

Flapan: Yeah. That was a beautiful building in its day. It's real nice. It's still there.

Selvidge: Yeah, tell me maybe a little bit more about some of the changes in LA that you saw in those years. Did it change much when you were growing up?

1-00:24:13

Flapan: Yes, it did, but I mean I just took it all with a grain of salt, you know. I wasn't interested in changes and what have you like I am today, I mean, it's different and my thoughts were different, too, at that time. So it changed, so that was it.

Selvidge: Yeah. So tell me, what year did you graduate from high school? Do you remember?

1-00:24:35

Flapan:

I graduated winter of '36, I remember. We got to wear dresses, and I had a beautiful dress, a taffeta, and it was a beautiful red; you could see me. It was a beautiful shade of red taffeta, and it was real cute here with little black that way and came down and then was a nice skirt. I mean, it was a beautiful gown. Nobody complained about the color; they all seemed to like it.

Selvidge:

That's good.

1-00:25:19

Flapan:

"Oh, that looks so good, that looks so good," you know?

Selvidge:

Was it much more flashy than other people were wearing?

1-00:25:25

Flapan:

Yes. Yes. Absolutely. But I got by, and it was real nice. Oh, and we had a couple dances there, and they had these little booklets where you signed your name for who you were going to dance with. A dance card, yeah. We did that.

Selvidge:

Did you fill up your dance card?

1-00:25:47

Flapan:

Oh, yeah. We were all filled up. We had fun.

Selvidge:

So you were basically in high school during the Depression.

1-00:26:01

Flapan:

Yeah. Oh, yes.

Selvidge:

Yeah? So did you really feel that a lot?

1-00:26:04

Flapan:

Yes. We certainly did. My father used to give us a quarter, I told you, for lunch, and he changed it to fifteen cents, so you know things weren't going so good. Yeah, but of course, and then sometimes we'd take our lunch, make our lunch and then take it with us. We'd do that once in a while.

Selvidge:

What other things did your family do to save money during that time that you remember?

1-00:26:35

Flapan:

All I can tell you my mother was the best manager there ever was. How she managed to this day I don't know, but we always had enough to eat. During Passover we always got new outfits, shoes and a little dress or something during the holidays. We always—and she managed. Well, all the store people knew her, you know, and this one store they had like a haberdashery, and you could charge it. So she used to charge, and I don't know how she did it—I still don't know—but she managed, yeah.

Selvidge:

What about, you had other family also that lived—

1-00:27:25

Flapan: Oh, yes, I had cousins galore.

Selvidge: So did you spend a lot of time with the cousins and stuff even when you were in high school?

1-00:27:32

Flapan: Oh, gosh yes. My cousins and I, we always got together. We went all through high school together and junior high, also. And my one cousin Joe, he became a millionaire.

Selvidge: No kidding?

1-00:27:47

Flapan: Yeah, he was quite smart in the health food business. Yeah, we did all right. Then we'd start, you know, blossoming so to speak, yeah.

Selvidge: Did a lot of people in your high school also have a lot of family where they had lots of cousins and things like that?

1-00:28:14

Flapan: Oh, they all had a lot of family. We were all in the same boat. None of them were wealthy, just plain everyday working people. Yeah, they were all in the same boat.

Selvidge: So tell me about when you were in the end of high school, graduating and stuff; were there a lot of people who thought about going to college?

1-00:28:38

Flapan: Yes, quite a few of the kids wanted to go to college. In fact, I wanted to go, and I wanted to be a kindergarten teacher. And my brother, he wanted to go to college. Of course he was older than us, and he worked his way through; he went and got jobs, and he worked his way through college because my mother didn't have any money to give him, you know. So they helped him a little bit, and eventually he graduated, and he became an optometrist. He did very well as time went on. In fact, I went to work for him when he first opened his office, and all he gave me was carfare to get there. He didn't have any money either. And little by little his business grew and grew and grew.

Selvidge: Did he start paying you?

1-00:29:41

Flapan: Oh, yeah, I got paid then. I think it was twelve dollars or—it was a very small amount. I don't remember exactly, but then he was able to pay me.

Selvidge: So what was your first job after high school?

1-00:29:58

Flapan: My first job? Oh, God. Well, I remember I went to work for this company folding pamphlets and stuff; I did that. You know, I just can't remember that far back. You know, any details.

Selvidge: Yeah, but most of your girlfriends did they also graduate and then take jobs?

1-00:30:29

Flapan: Yeah, they all struggled. We were looking for jobs, it wasn't easy. No, it wasn't easy. Oh, finally I got a job at the department store to sell. In fact, I said, I was supposed to be eighteen. I was sixteen, and I told them my girlfriend and I were eighteen, so they hired us.

Selvidge: Oh, this is when you were still in high school then.

1-00:30:52

Flapan: Yeah. This was just, yeah.

Selvidge: In the summer maybe?

1-00:30:57

Flapan: Yeah. I don't remember, summer or winter, something. But anyway, we went to work in the department store, and the people that worked there already, they were older women. Us girls, we were sharp, you know. We'd get all the customers. They went from one end of the room to the other. We were there, so the big boss says, "You know, you girls will have to stay back a little bit and let these other people do the selling." Can you imagine that? Yeah, so we said, "Okay," because we got PMs, a little commission if we sold so much, I remember that. They called them PMs, yeah, but we got through it okay. It was just for the summer or something, I don't remember exactly.

Selvidge: So you worked in different jobs after high school, lots of different jobs.

1-00:32:10

Flapan: Yes, yes, yes. My last job, or one of them—I don't remember; I remember I worked for a termite company—this was later on—and I worked there about three years, and my boss was from England. He had an accent so thick I couldn't understand him. Eventually I was able to understand him. It was a one-girl office, and I think I worked there about three years. I took care of the whole thing, you know, the termites and all that. People would come in, and this guy threw it on my desk, "What's that?" Bugs from an envelope, he had them in an envelope, "What are those?" I says, "Oh, I don't know; don't ask me."

Selvidge: What about the jobs the boys who you went to high school with had; did they have different kinds of jobs or more luck getting jobs?

1-00:33:06

Flapan: They struggled, because some of them wanted to get to college but lots of them didn't. They just didn't have the money.

Selvidge: Mostly they had to work and not go to college.

1-00:33:20

Flapan: That's right, they struggled quite a bit.

Selvidge: Yeah. So tell me then about how you met your husband.

1-00:33:37

Flapan: My first husband. All right.

Selvidge: Because it must have been a couple years after high school, I guess, right? In that time?

1-00:33:51

Flapan: Well, yeah. It was about three-four years, I don't know exactly. Anyway, they had the Saturday night dance at the, I can't remember the name of the dance hall; well I can't think of it, I can't remember. Anyway, we'd all go there on Saturday nights, my girlfriends and I, we'd all go and dance and, you know, flirt with the boys and all that jazz. So then I met Carl there. He asked me to dance, we danced, and I start talking, you know, and then eventually he asked me out again, and again, and again. So we got married. Carl was very nice. He was a very nice man.

Selvidge: Tell me, did you take him to meet your parents?

1-00:34:50

Flapan: Oh yeah, sure.

Selvidge: When did you do that, like after a couple dates, or when it got more serious?

1-00:35:00

Flapan: This was all within a year that I did that. I met his father and mother and sister and brother; I met his family. Then my mother invited them to our house; she made dinner and everything.

Selvidge: For the whole family.

1-00:35:19

Flapan: Oh yeah, we had a very nice time, you know, doing that. My mother was a wonderful cook. That's one thing I miss definitely, her chicken soup and everything. But then another little incident: every Friday night my uncle would come from Long Beach and come in unexpectedly at dinnertime. So we'd say, "Mom, put more water in the soup. Uncle Nathan is here." So that was really funny, you know. He was a little stingy, but he had health food stores and once in a while they would bring us dried fruits, a bag of dried fruits. So that was good. Just once in a while they did that.

Selvidge: Well it's pretty early to have health food stores. He was on the cutting edge, I guess.

1-00:36:29

Flapan: To have what?

Selvidge: A health food store. It must have been sort of a new thing.

1-00:36:34

Flapan: Oh they were. Health food stores were becoming the thing.

Selvidge: Oh, yeah?

1-00:36:39

Flapan: Oh, gosh, yeah, *and how*. My cousins had theirs in Long Beach, California, and then all over people were going into health food stuff. Oh, yes. Yes. That was very popular.

Selvidge: So what year did you get married then?

1-00:37:05

Flapan: I think it was 1954. I don't know, I can't remember dates, near World War II.

Selvidge: Oh, 1945.

1-00:37:29

Flapan: Forty-five, it was about there.

Selvidge: Around there.

1-00:37:34

Flapan: I don't remember.

Selvidge: Doesn't matter so much the year.

1-00:37:37

Flapan: Yeah, and of course the war came, and they said they weren't taking men thirty or older, and Carl was thirty at the time, and they took him.

Selvidge: Did he volunteer or—?

1-00:37:52

Flapan: Are you kidding? They volunteered him. No, he didn't volunteer for that, so he went into the Army, and you know the rest.

Selvidge: Yeah. Tell me, though, what it was like for you being here. I know that you and my grandma lived together, right?

1-00:38:19

Flapan: Oh, yes, Mimi and I—

Selvidge: So tell me about that because I think you had been living in a house with Carl, right?

1-00:38:25

Flapan: Yes.

Selvidge: Just the two of you.

1-00:38:28

Flapan: Yeah, so I moved into Mimi's place, and, of course, Max, her husband, was in the Army, and so was Carl. So we lived together.

Selvidge: So tell me about how you—do you remember how you decided to do that, to live together like that?

1-00:38:42

Flapan: Well, it was the most logical thing to do. I mean, she was alone; I was alone. She had an apartment, and we had an awful mean landlady. Oh, gosh. Oh, for heck, can't remember her name either. Anyways, she wasn't very nice.

Selvidge: And Judy was just a little, very little—

1-00:39:09

Flapan: Judy was about—well, at that time she was about two. Something like that.

Selvidge: So did you and my grandma share a room, and the girls shared a room?

1-00:39:24

Flapan: We had a wall bed, I had the wall bed, and Mimi had the bedroom. And the kids, we had Barbara and Judy; they were little at that time, yes.

Selvidge: And they slept together in a bedroom.

1-00:39:43

Flapan: Yeah, both the girls, two beds I think. I can't remember just what.

Selvidge: Was that something that a lot of people did, moved in with different family members?

1-00:39:54

Flapan: I wasn't alone; I wasn't alone. It was a bad time. Everybody either buckled up or decided to live or do something because a lot of the women were left with their husbands gone. So I wasn't alone, and it wasn't just me. Lots of them were. I had quite a few girlfriends; they lost their husbands also, yeah.

And you know, I look back now, what did war do? It's still no good. They'll always have wars. There will always be a war. I mean, in my estimation I'm what, ninety three now? I think one hundred, two hundred years from now, they'll still have wars, and it'll be the same thing. They'll never get through with them. I mean, that's my thoughts. I could be wrong, which I hope I am.

Selvidge: I don't think so. Do you remember how you felt at the time about the war itself? Was there a lot of sort of patriotic spirit about it or—?

1-00:41:05

Flapan: Well, I certainly did not like it, did not like it. And there are always articles in the paper about this and about different affairs that came up and politics; it was all politics, the whole thing.

Selvidge: So do you remember if it seemed at the time that it was a necessary and important war?

1-00:41:32

Flapan: No. To me it was useless because the fellows were getting killed like flies, and I mean to me that is nothing, that's no good. It's no good. I did not like it.

Selvidge: What do you remember about Pearl Harbor?

1-00:41:55

Flapan: Oh, yes, Pearl Harbor. In fact, my aunt was in Hawaii at that time, at Pearl Harbor, and she was trying to get out, you know, to come home. And luckily she was able to get a plane, and they got her out, and she was able to get home. So we were all quite thrilled about that. Yeah, we were so anxious and everything that Aunt Hilda was there.

Selvidge: So you remember what people were saying about the attack on Pearl Harbor?

1-00:42:26

Flapan: Oh, I can hardly remember the details. It wasn't pleasant.

Selvidge: How it felt? Not really?

1-00:42:34

Flapan: It just wasn't a pleasant time. I can do that. Yeah, to go in detail I just don't remember that—

Selvidge: I just want to ask you one more thing about it. I know it's not pleasant to talk about it, but I'm just wondering what if as a Jewish family, people in your family really had a reaction to finding out about the concentration camps and that aspect.

1-00:43:08

Flapan: Oh, we were devastated, devastated, absolutely. It just was inconceivable; we couldn't even fathom it really. You just couldn't. But it was there. Then a lot of these people, "Oh, they didn't do anything, they didn't do anything," you know? We said no. Oh, and a girlfriend of mine she was in the concentration camp, and they had them get all naked and they put them into the ovens. Well, they called her name, and she came out. And that happened to her twice. Can you imagine that? I'll never forget that. And she says, "God was just with me," she says. And then another time she was all ready to go into the ovens,

and they called her name again, so she got out. And she just still can't believe it that she was able to get out.

Selvidge: How did she get out, do you know?

1-00:44:22

Flapan: She doesn't know, and she didn't care. All I know, all I remember, she says, "All they did was call my name, that's all I had to hear," and they took her out.

Selvidge: Wow.

1-00:44:33

Flapan: Twice that happened. Yes, I remember that instance.

Selvidge: So did finding out about that change your feelings about the war at all, that it was, you know, important to stop that?

1-00:44:47

Flapan: As far as I was concerned, the war stunk, in plain English. I wasn't for it, I was against it, and I didn't understand the politics and all that stuff, and it just was no good as far as I was concerned.

Selvidge: Was that an unpopular opinion, do you remember?

1-00:45:12

Flapan: Oh, I wasn't alone. There were millions of people with me who didn't want it. And then they were denying that anything—that they even had the ovens over there, but they had them. They took pictures and everything. Oh, another time they had dead bodies piled up all around, and they showed that on TV. They were piled high like this, they were all naked and dead, you know, and they were just—it was horrid. It was horrid.

Selvidge: Did you and your family have any contact with relatives still in Europe at that time?

1-00:46:02

Flapan: No, I don't think we were able to. No, we had a few relatives over there, but they never came back.

Selvidge: Yeah. So tell me then how it is that you became or started working in the war industry as a riveter, a little surprising since you had such negative feelings about it.

1-00:46:40

Flapan: Oh, but I still had to work and find a job. And I found a job as a riveter, and I liked it, I loved doing it.

Selvidge: Do you remember how you found the job?

1-00:46:50
Flapan: You go down, you put an application in.

Selvidge: You just heard about it from people; everyone knew that they were hiring.

1-00:47:00
Flapan: Oh, we all knew. Yeah, I wasn't the only one. My neighbor went, about three of my friends went, and we all got jobs. Some were riveters and some were in the electrical stuff and everything. Yeah, so, I mean, we all did it.

Selvidge: And where was the place that you worked exactly?

1-00:47:19
Flapan: At Lockheed, California.

Selvidge: Yeah, so you just, you went down and you put in an application?

1-00:47:33
Flapan: Yeah, yeah.

Selvidge: And do they hire you right away?

1-00:47:33
Flapan: Yeah, absolutely.

Selvidge: Did they give you training first?

1-00:47:39
Flapan: Yup, they did.

Selvidge: What was the training like, do you remember?

1-00:47:44
Flapan: Well, we learned how to use the rivet gun and how to do that, and how to put the things together.

Selvidge: Did you like that part?

1-00:47:54
Flapan: Oh, yes, the work was nice. I liked it very much.

Selvidge: Did it seem really different from other jobs you had done before?

1-00:47:59
Flapan: Of course, of course, day and night, day and night.

Selvidge: Tell me what things were different or what things you liked about it.

1-00:48:10
Flapan: Well, we knew what we had to do. We were fighting a war. We were thinking of our husbands and our relatives and our brothers and sisters when you're

working there. And you're doing the best you can because you know it's important, very important. In fact, on some things on the riveting they had this aluminum foil that we worked on. We'd get a whole wing, and we had to rivet it together and everything. And at certain points the metal had to be four inches thick on the corners, so that means we had to use an ice box rivet, a different rivet, and we had a portable ice box going around with rivets in there, and we'd take them right out and put them on this four corners, I call it. We'd push it down, and it would close just perfect. In other words, it's just like a seam in a sewing machine, you know? Just like a seam, and you had to get it perfect, which we did.

Selvidge: Can you just tell me a little like every—the day to day routine was for work? Did you work daytime shift?

1-00:49:45

Flapan: No, I worked swing shift, and my husband worked there also at the same time. We had to arrange to get a ride because we lived in Boyle Heights at that time and we had to go to Burbank. So this fellow says he'll give us a ride, you know. We had to pay him so much, and we did. And he'd pick us up every day, and either I would make lunch and take it with us, or we'd have lunch there in the cafeteria.

Selvidge: So this is then after the time you were living with my grandma.

1-00:50:23

Flapan: Oh yeah. No, I was still living with Mimi during the war.

Selvidge: Oh you were.

1-00:50:25

Flapan: Oh, yeah. We lived together all that time.

Selvidge: All that time.

1-00:50:30

Flapan: Yeah, sure.

Selvidge: I was just confused because you said your husband was there also?

1-00:50:39

Flapan: I was still with Mimi, and we got along pretty well, we really did.

Selvidge: And Mimi wasn't working then? She was taking care of the girls?

1-00:51:00

Flapan: No, she had Barbara. Yeah, well mainly Barbara was still little. Barbara was still little at that time. She was so cute.

Selvidge: So Mimi would take care of Judy while you went to work.

- 1-00:51:18
Flapan: Yeah, and I did that work. And then we divvied up; I did the cleaning, and she did the cooking. So we got along real good; we had no problems.
- Selvidge: So while you working the—what's the swing shift, what hours, in the middle of the day?
- 1-00:51:38
Flapan: Yeah, 4:00 p.m. to 12:30, I think it was.
- Selvidge: So it was pretty late when you were done.
- 1-00:51:47
Flapan: Oh, yeah, so we'd always meet, and they had a movie theatre, and they showed late movies. So we'd go to the show a couple times.
- Selvidge: You and the other—
- 1-00:52:00
Flapan: After work, yeah, my friends and I we all went, and we'd go see a movie and get home about two hours later, so what?
- Selvidge: Yeah, and I guess you'd sleep in kind of late then if you had to.
- 1-00:52:14
Flapan: Yeah, that's right.
- Selvidge: So was it pretty social, the atmosphere where you were working?
- 1-00:52:20
Flapan: Yes, it was. We had a nice group of people. Oh, we had a lot of people from Oklahoma. And we used to tease them and call them Okies. "Hey, Okie. Hey, you Okie." Oh, they'd get so mad at us when we did that. We didn't do it too often, but we used to tease them.
- Selvidge: Yeah. What kinds of things did you associate with Okies?
- 1-00:52:49
Flapan: All I knew is they were from Oklahoma.
- Selvidge: That's all you knew.
- 1-00:52:50
Flapan: That's all. I didn't care where they were from.
- Selvidge: So were there a lot of people then coming from other places?
- 1-00:52:57
Flapan: Oh, yes.

Selvidge: All over?

1-00:52:56

Flapan: Yes, all over.

Selvidge: Was it kind of rare that you were someone who grew up in California working there?

1-00:53:03

Flapan: No.

Selvidge: Oh, also there were a lot of people from California.

1-00:53:07

Flapan: No. They were from all over, all over.

Selvidge: Where did the people live who came from all these new places?

1-00:53:15

Flapan: Well, I hear some came from Oklahoma, Arizona, from different states. Pennsylvania.

Selvidge: Where did they live during the war? Was there like special housing or—?

1-00:53:31

Flapan: They found places to live. I mean they weren't fancy, but they found places to live, and I lived in Boyle Heights with Mimi.

Selvidge: Right.

1-00:53:41

Flapan: So we had a place to live. It was hard finding places also.

Selvidge: We're getting close to the end of this tape here.

1-00:53:57

Flapan: What else do you want to know?

Selvidge: Well, maybe I'll stop this.

Begin Audiofile 2

Selvidge: This is Tape 2—

2-00:00:03

Flapan: Now we're at during the war. Mimi and I live together, and Barbara was a little girl about almost two, and Judy was a little bit older than her. Anyway, they were in the backyard, and they hadn't seen each other for a while, Judy and Barbara. So when they saw each other they were so happy they ran and

Barbara—I can still see it, “Judy, Judy,” and she took her and hugged her, and they hugged each other. You know, that stands out in my mind.

Okay, so from that standpoint, I mean, they got along well, which is the girls, and whatever activities there were. Mimi was right there, I was right there, and we had birthday parties in between, you know, which we did, and that was a lot of fun. Then what else? Then the fellows came home, and I had a '36 Chevy, and Mimi and I we went to the airport to pick them up. We picked up my friend, also, this fellow, this other guy—he lived right near us—so we picked him up also.

Selvidge: So you picked up him and my grandpa, too?

2-00:01:43

Flapan: Yeah, yeah, we had Max and not David. We had Max and this guy; I picked them up. Yeah, they came home, and everybody was happy. Other than that, that was about it.

Selvidge: Well, my Mom tells me that you used to sing a lot of songs.

2-00:02:06

Flapan: Me?

Selvidge: Yeah.

2-00:02:06

Flapan: I couldn't carry a tune, but I guess I did sing.

Selvidge: She remembered that. Do you remember any of the songs, or kind of just singing tunes?

2-00:02:20

Flapan: No.

Selvidge: No?

2-00:02:21

Flapan: I don't remember that.

Selvidge: That's funny. She does.

2-00:02:26

Flapan: Well, she probably remembers. Not now, but she would remember things, you know, that I don't. But on a whole, we got along well. That was very important.

Selvidge: Yeah, close family.

2-00:02:44

Flapan: Yeah.

Selvidge: So tell me when the war was over you must have stopped the riveting job, I guess?

2-00:02:50

Flapan: No, I worked for a while.

Selvidge: Oh, did you?

2-00:02:52

Flapan: Yeah, I worked for a while. I don't remember any details, though. Then I think I start looking for a job, yeah.

Selvidge: Do you remember if it was harder to find a job now that all the guys were home?

2-00:03:07

Flapan: Oh, you bet it was, absolutely. It was no picnic.

Selvidge: So it seems like it was pretty hard to find a job before the war, during the war it was a cinch, and afterwards it was pretty hard again? Is that right?

2-00:03:23

Flapan: That's right. That's right. Yeah.

Selvidge: That must have been the experience that a lot of your girlfriends had, too.

2-00:03:31

Flapan: Oh, yeah, in all this situation I wasn't alone. There were millions of people in the same spot that I was in.

Selvidge: So Max came home.

2-00:03:45

Flapan: Yeah.

Selvidge: And did he move in to the apartment also?

2-00:03:50

Flapan: Yeah, and then we lived together for a while, and then meanwhile I had met David, and David and I were going to get married.

Selvidge: How did you meet David?

2-00:04:04

Flapan: At the dance, same dance where I met Carl.

Selvidge: Oh, well that was a good dance for you.

2-00:04:06
Flapan: What's the name of it? Palms, I think it was, Palms. Yeah, and we'd go every Saturday night, you know.

Selvidge: You and your girlfriends would?

2-00:04:19
Flapan: Yeah, oh yeah.

Selvidge: During the war?

2-00:04:22
Flapan: Yeah, and after.

Selvidge: And after?

2-00:04:22
Flapan: Yeah, yeah, so I had met David, and we got married.

Selvidge: Was it mostly single women who went to the dances or married women also?

2-00:04:37
Flapan: Mainly single women looking for husbands.

Selvidge: Yeah, I guess so. Did people go in couples sometimes also?

2-00:04:47
Flapan: Usually friends, yeah. Well, like with us we had a little gang of us that went together.

Selvidge: Maybe some people were dating, maybe not, and you would all go together?

2-00:04:56
Flapan: Yeah, we'd—no, but it was mostly single women. Palms, I'm sure it was the name, Palms. Every Saturday night we went. Then we found a place to live.

Selvidge: You and David.

2-00:05:15
Flapan: Yeah, David and I.

Selvidge: After you got married.

2-00:05:16
Flapan: Yeah. It was a one-bedroom place, was at downtown LA at Third and Flower Streets, and we lived there for quite a while until we were able to buy a home, which we did. So we did buy a house. It was two bedrooms, I think, and \$10,500 we paid for it, \$10,500.

- Selvidge: Do you remember a lot of people buying houses after the war like with the GI—?
- 2-00:05:58
Flapan: Yeah, there were a lot of houses up for sale; there was a whole bunch of them I remember.
- Selvidge: Do you remember more about that, where they were or—?
- 2-00:06:08
Flapan: Well, they were in my area where I lived, there in Boyle Heights; it wasn't all in my area.
- Selvidge: New development or just lots of sort of turnover of older houses?
- 2-00:06:17
Flapan: No, it wasn't a new development.
- Selvidge: But also there must have been a lot of building of new houses at that time?
- 2-00:06:24
Flapan: There were, yeah. There were a lot of houses to choose from.
- Selvidge: Yeah, because I knew LA was growing a lot at that time.
- 2-00:06:32
Flapan: Yes, it was, yeah.
- Selvidge: Did you know many people who moved sort of to the suburbs more outside of the—?
- 2-00:06:41
Flapan: Later on they did.
- Selvidge: Later on.
- 2-00:06:42
Flapan: Later on. They moved to Hollywood. They moved to West Adams, and different areas. West Adams was very popular, too, at that time, but you couldn't find a place there to rent.
- Selvidge: Yeah, do you remember after the war also more freeways and stuff like that?
- 2-00:07:05
Flapan: More what?
- Selvidge: Freeways?
- 2-00:07:05
Flapan: Oh, gosh, yeah. Freeways were coming up all over the place.

Selvidge: How did that change things for you?

2-00:07:13

Flapan: Well, it helped, it helped a lot. We'd be able to go from one section to another.

Selvidge: So you sort of went farther distances than you used to before, to visit people and stuff like that?

2-00:07:30

Flapan: I don't know. Yeah, because my sister Coy lived in Alhambra, so to get to her place where we were they built this freeway, so we were able to go on the freeway to her. We did that.

Selvidge: That made it a lot quicker I guess.

2-00:07:43

Flapan: That was my sister Coy; she was already married, yeah.

Selvidge: Let's see, I think that's most of the questions I have sort of about that time, you know, the time of the war and right afterwards. Are there other stories that you can remember about that time?

2-00:08:11

Flapan: I can't think of anything. All I can end up with is thank God, it's over, and as far as I'm concerned war is a waste of time, that's my opinion. They haven't accomplished anything forty years ago, and they still haven't accomplished anything. That's the way I look at it. I'm not into politics and all that stuff.

Selvidge: Okay.

2-00:08:37

Flapan: Thank you. Goodbye.

Selvidge: Thank you, Tybie, goodbye.

[End of Interview]