

World War II, Watchtower, Writing Letters

VH: We've heard that you were living in Vienna during the war.

SM: Up until 1944. And I came back in '46.

VH: I think Mike (Berger) told us that you had manned the watchtower?

SM: Yeah! We were airplane spotters. It was up on top of the hill there at Wilmar. I did that.

AS: How much? Were you a regular?

SM: Yeah. I don't remember how much we did it. There were quite a few people willing to do it.

AS: Was it manned, do you remember, 24 hours a day? I feel like it was.

SM: I don't remember. I think it was.

AS: Horace Lukins had one of the wee hours of the morning.

SM: I think it was.

CG: What was the tower like? Was there a room at the top?

SM: It was small but you know, there was room. I don't even remember if we had a place to sit or not.

AS: You did. I'll show it to you. It's in Fairfax.

SM: Oh, is it!

AS: It's not on its stilts anymore but it's somebody's garden shed.

SM: Oh how nice. Oh, that's great.

AS: I hope someday they'll give it to Vienna. What was it like here during the war? What was the mood?

SM: At first I think everybody was kind of frightened with all the preparations to keep dark and all that kind of stuff. Maybe people were a little uneasy. As time went on, it eased. Life just went on normally.

AS: One thing I remember from reading Annette Berry's diary and some of the Garden Club stuff, is that there were still always groups rolling bandages or visiting forts and stuff?

SM: Yes, I know the church a lot of the time had bandages, doing the bandages.

AS: And entertaining? Sometimes people would go play the piano at Fort Belvoir. Do you remember any of that?

SM: Yeah. I think everybody was very conscious of how much was needed. We had big Victory Gardens. People who hadn't had gardens before had gardens. Everybody tried to do something.

AS: This paper that Sarah Jane (Brady) transcribed talked about all the recycling and collecting that you mentioned to her. Metal?

SM: All the scrap metal was used for guns and planes and whatever they had to use metal for. I think everybody was very conscious of the need to do something. I know we had not lectures but they would tell us at school what we should do if anything happened. That was when I was still in high school

AS: When you say 'anything happened'. Do you mean like an attack?

SM: Right.

CG: What would they do?

SM: I don't remember what we were supposed to do but I remember when my kids were growing up, and we had the other wars, they went under their desks. That's probably what we were told to do. I honestly don't remember, it's been too long.

AS: What about when you were here. I guess everybody wrote letters. So you would get letters back from people in the war?

SM: I didn't get many. The young men that were my age or the ones that I was going out with, went in about the same time that I got married. In that era. It was after the war had started—*our* war had started. You remember Mrs. Nevisor? Mildred. Her sons were in the service and I used to get letters from them. I'd always write back and forth. I know Russell Morond got killed on D-Day. He was a little bit younger than I was. I always wrote letters to my friends while I was single. After I got married my husband didn't like that. I didn't write any more letters.

AS: It must've felt so awful when you would hear that somebody from a little town. To hear that somebody died or was injured.

SM: there was another one. If I remember correctly, he was in the Presbyterian Church. Walter Norford. He was killed. Actually, we were pretty lucky we didn't have a whole lot of young men die, nor did we have a lot of them badly injured. We were very fortunate in that respect.