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Josephine Sletto

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Josephine Sletto
In front of the Douglas County Selective Service Office



**Josephine Sletto, Chief Clerk
With Douglas County Selective Service Board Members**



Josephine Sletto
In her front yard, 1949

Mrs. Josephine Skavanger Sletto
Narrator

Patrick Moore
Interviewer

August 4, 1980
Josephine Sletto home
Lake Mary, Minnesota

PM: The following is an interview with Mrs. Josephine Sletto. She lives on Lake Mary, which is near Alexandria in Douglas County, Minnesota. The interview took place on Monday, August 4th in 1980 at seven p.m. in Mrs. Sletto's home. The interviewer is Patrick Moore and the subject is the home front during World War II.

Okay Mrs. Sletto. Should I call you Josephine?

JS: Why don't you call me Jo. Everybody does.

PM: Jo Sletto, where were you born?

JS: I was born out in the western part of North Dakota. At Keene, North Dakota. It is just a little white spot in the road.

PM: Was it on a farm or in the town?

JS: No. We were born and raised on a farm out there near Keene.

PM: What year was that?

JS: 1916.

PM: Okay. Did you come from any ethnic group? Any ethnic ties? Did you have any ties with the old country in your youth or anything like that?

JS: Well, my mother and dad, they were both born in Norway and they both came over from Norway as young people. I think dad was about nineteen, twenty years old and my mother was about the same age when she came over here.

PM: And they went right to North Dakota?

JS: Yes. My mother and my dad both said they can't understand how come they crossed all of Minnesota which is so beautiful and reminds them so much of Norway and they went clear out to North Dakota.

PM: Was it because there were other Norwegian settlements out there?

JS: They had relatives and they went to their relatives. And of course it was pretty much of a Norwegian settlement right out in that area.

PM: Do you know what year that was that they came over from Norway?

JS: Oh, I can't exactly tell you what year it was. I don't recall that right off hand. I would say my mother came about 1914 or 1915. Right in through there. Dad came before that, maybe about 1912.

PM: What was your father's occupation then, once in America?

JS: When he first came over here he was up in northern Minnesota and up in that area and did some lumbering. But then, of course, when he came out to Dakota he worked for this relative of his at first. Then this relative of his went to Norway so he took over the farm while his cousin was in Norway. And then eventually he homesteaded out there and had his own homestead and filed on that. They had to live on it so long before they could file on it and put a claim on it. Then he sold his homestead and he went down to McKenzie County where he did buy a farm. It started out a small farm but he was farming quite a number of acres when we left there.

PM: So what kind of education did you have?

JS: I went to a little, tiny white country school about a mile from our home. Of course, I was just real lucky I was that close to home. I went through my first eight years there. And then I went to Whitewood City where I attended high school. Following high school I went one year to Concordia College and then I went on to the business world.

PM: From Concordia. And where did the business world begin for you?

JS: The business world began in Bismarck, North Dakota in the State Capitol building. And of course I happened to get in there through a friend of mine. It was kind of a political deal, I guess. I got the job and of course as soon as the political different action got in there, I was out. Just like that! [Laughs]

PM: What year was that? Do you remember?

JS: It must have been about 1937, 1938.

PM: So kind of during the Depression. Do you remember the Depression? Were you affected by it?

JS: Well, I remember it as a very young child. We out in North Dakota, we really had the drought out there. I can remember that my dad didn't have a bit of grain, bit of hay. We went out and we cut thistles. I remember in the haystack with my dad tramping it down to pack it. I had overalls on, bib overalls. Dressed just like a man. And my legs when I was through in the

evening, they were just all sore, you know, from the thistles. But we cut them real green so the cattle could eat it. My dad had to ship all his cattle except for twenty heifers that he kept so he'd have a good start the next year. I helped drive those cattle to the railroad station and that was to Sanish, North Dakota. It was quite an experience. We took two days. We had the little calves and the mothers and sometimes we had to pick up the little calves and put them in the big truck because they couldn't keep up with the rest of the herd.

PM: So there were actually cattle drives! You'd use automobiles to—?

JS: Oh, no! We went on horseback. Yes. We just had one big truck that we had that we took the little baby calves because they couldn't keep up with the herd. I do recall that, too.

PM: So the drought here during the Depression was particularly hard on your family?

JS: Well, we managed to get along, but we had food. It seemed like we had meat. We had our eggs. I know my mother tried to raise a garden but she didn't get much out of her garden at that time because it just all dried up. And we had dust storms that you just wouldn't believe. Dust piles formed up along the fence line because the tumbling weeds would first come and lay in there and then the dirt would pile up there. I recall that very vividly. We couldn't even see the barn at times because of the dust storms. We really had the dust and the winds out there. And it was hot! And then the grasshoppers came. We used this big truck of ours to go out and get some kind of a deal that my dad put on the back of it so we could spread out the poison for the grasshoppers. I think we got that from the government to try to stop the grasshoppers.

PM: Have you heard about the rediscovering of the poison that they gave the farmers back in the 1930s and 1940s?

JS: No. I haven't.

PM: That's the big news item today. Apparently the government gave farmers in Minnesota—at least Minnesota state government did—gave farmers arsenic and some other poisons to use to kill grasshoppers. And they were instructed that whatever they didn't use to bury. Now they're worried that poison might have gotten into water systems or stuff like that and so they're trying to relocate it and trying to find it. And apparently, there's quite a bit of it buried right down by Morris.

JS: Is that right! Oh! That is frightening. That it is.

PM: That's interesting that you just happened to remember that by coincidence! Do you remember actually a time when you left the farm to strike out on your business career or were you always kind of keeping ties with—?

JS: No. That fall I had done some substitute teaching because there was a shortage of teachers out there, too. So the superintendent asked if I could possibly fill in until they could get a qualified teacher. Now I was just out of high school when I did this. And kids were just as big as I was if not bigger. I got along just real fine though. As a matter of fact, they even asked me if I

wouldn't consider staying on after they had gotten a fellow that was qualified if the county superintendent would allow that. But I said, "No way." I had already understood that I was to leave the teaching, especially in that school, and let the other fellow step in. That was quite an experience, too. Way out in the hills the school sat on top of a hill. At night the coyotes howled. And I stayed in the schoolhouse at night. One room. And I put a partition up in the back with just a curtain and I had my food there. No refrigerators.

PM: Did you cook over a fire?

JS: No. Most of the time if I had wieners or something I could stick it in the old potbelly stove and cook it that way. My little coffeepot, I would set that in there and cook my coffee that way, and I did that a number of times.

PM: [Unclear] So you lost your job at the capitol after the new party moved in?

JS: That's right.

PM: So what did you do then?

JS: Then my folks had by that time moved to Minnesota and were renting a farm here in Minnesota. So I naturally came down to where my folks were. And then somebody came and asked me if I was looking for work and I said, "Well, sure. I'd consider it." So I went to work for the ASC. I worked there for a while. And then I went on to work for, let's see, from there I think the Credit Bureau.

PM: In Alexandria?

JS: In Alexandria. And then, of course, the Credit Bureau had to close its doors because of the fact that the war was on and gas rationing got to be quite a problem. We had a collecting agency run out of there and of course they could not operate. They could not get gas to operate with. So then that office was closed. The main office was at Willmar.

PM: Now I'm not really familiar with what a Credit Bureau did or does in those times.

JS: They ran a collection agency, for one thing, out of there. Whereby if someone had bills they would send the bills to us and we'd go out and collect them or try to collect them.

PM: So it wasn't a public organization at all. It was a private collection agency?

JS: Private. Yes.

PM: And what did you do for that?

JS: I was secretary. Of course, we gave credit ratings out of there, too. That was one of our jobs—to get the credit rating on the various people in the community or people that moved into

the community. And then, of course, the businessmen uptown, they could call us and get credit ratings.

PM: Did you have anything to do with foreclosures on farm mortgages or—?

JS: No. I didn't. We didn't go into it that far. We didn't.

PM: What year did your parents come to Minnesota?

JS: It must have been about 1939. Right in about that time.

PM: And where did they settle?

JS: They settled on a farm out south of Brandon in Urness Township. And they rented this farm. It was quite a huge farm for Minnesota but it wasn't very big as far as my dad was concerned. But he did find out that farming in Minnesota was a little bit different than what it was in North Dakota.

PM: In what way was it [different]?

JS: I think the grounds had to be worked different. Of course, out there they did a lot of summer plowing, which we didn't do here in Minnesota. And of course we went into sheep. We had a lot of sheep out here. We had a few out in Dakota too but here in Minnesota we had more sheep.

PM: So you were living near Brandon. East of Brandon?

JS: No. Southwest of Brandon.

PM: Southwest of Brandon.

JS: Just about straight south of Evansville.

PM: And you were working in Alexandria?

JS: Yes.

PM: How far was that away?

JS: Oh, approximately twenty miles. My sister was working there, too. So we drove to and from work, in fact, when we first got here. Then we had other passengers with us so that helped on expenses.

PM: What kind of car did you have?

JS: We had a Chevrolet. Been Chevy people ever since. [Chuckles]

PM: Was it usual for women to be driving back then in 1940?

JS: Oh, yes. Women drove then.

PM: What were the roads like? Do you remember?

JS: Oh, the roads were nothing like what we have now. We're really spoiled now. They were just gravel roads. I can remember one time that a heavy rainstorm came up and I was driving alone that day. And I didn't get home. I saw this rainstorm coming and I turned around and went back to Alec [Alexandria, Minnesota] because I was only about a half mile out of Alec. And as I was coming near home I met my dad and the hired man. They were coming with a great big log chain to pull me out of the ditch. They thought for sure I was in the ditch somewhere! But I wasn't.

PM: [Chuckles] So you would drive twenty miles every day to work?

JS: One way.

PM: One way?

JS: Yes. Forty miles round trip.

PM: Was that an unusual thing for people to be doing in 1940?

JS: No. Not too usual, I don't believe. But we were because there were three of us in the car from out in that area.

PM: Okay. So I'd like to start talking now about wartime. Not actually getting into it but just the years before the war. Try to remember as much as you can about those days. You were living at home. How did you learn about—what were your news sources?

JS: We had newspapers and radio was our main news sources.

PM: What newspaper did you get?

JS: *Fargo Forum*, I believe it was.

PM: And did that cover national and international events as well as the local?

JS: Yes, it did. And then of course we had our local paper. I don't recall the name of it at that time, but it was our local paper here.

PM: And what about the radio? What stations did you listen to?

JS: That I don't recall right now.

PM: Did WCCO, any Twin Cities stations—?

JS: I'm sure that there was a station there. I wonder if Fargo didn't have a station, too. It seems to me they had a station too at that time.

PM: Do you remember listening to the radio a lot and kind of depending on it for entertainment and news?

JS: Oh, yes. That was our entertainment, of course, and news, too. We did listen to it for that. But of course I was working most of the time so I didn't listen to it during the daytime. It was just evenings and mornings. Like I do now, perhaps.

PM: Do you remember any particular commentators? I know that during those days the radio used to have commentators like, you know, Joel Thomas that would talk about the day's events.

JS: No. About the only one I can say that I really recall right off hand is Cedric Adams.

PM: Oh, yes?

JS: I remember him.

PM: I'm not familiar with him.

JS: He was from a Minneapolis station. He was quite a news reporter and people seemed to like him pretty well. He had a way of putting it across.

PM: What kind of impression did he give you of the news? Anything other than—?

JS: Well, I think pretty much like any news reporter would. He would just present the news as it was and he presented it in a very interesting way. That he did.

PM: Was there a movie theater in Alexandria?

JS: Yes, there was.

PM: Did you ever go to it?

JS: It seemed like Saturday night was a movie night. And they used to have some of these (the Ma and Pa Kettles and all this kind of thing) sort of fun movies. They were quite different from what they are today!

PM: [Laughs] Do you remember newsreels in the movie theaters?

JS: They did have some, yes. I can't recall any special ones right off hand. They did have newsreels. And a comic strip.

PM: Did you travel much outside of this area when you were working and living here? On vacations or anything?

JS: Not a great deal. We did make a few trips back to North Dakota but we didn't travel like people do in this day and age. Our biggest amount of car travel—we did go around the area and we really became well acquainted with the area. We perhaps knew the area better than some of the people living right here, because on Sundays we used to take the car. This is one thing we did. We'd drive just down to Lowry and around, you know, just the local area. Take a different road every Sunday, it seemed like.

PM: The family?

JS: The family as a whole. Yes.

PM: Did you just have that one Chevy or did you have two cars?

JS: We had a Chevy and a truck. And that's all. So when we drove to work in town we had the car and my dad had the truck. We did not have—we young people didn't all have cars like they have in this day and age.

PM: Did you have acquaintances that lived in faraway places that you wrote to or kept in contact with?

JS: In Norway. We had our relatives in Norway we kept in contact with.

PM: Have you ever been to Norway?

JS: No, I haven't but I sure would like to go. [Chuckles] Someday perhaps I can.

PM: What about world events before the war? I mean did people talk about them, be aware of things that were going on like the Spanish Civil War in the late 1930s or what Japan was doing in China before they attacked the United States?

JS: No. I really didn't. The first that I really remember was Pearl Harbor. And perhaps the reason I remember that was because of my husband's cousin that was killed there. He was one of the first casualties in Minnesota.

PM: So you knew your future husband at the time of Pearl Harbor?

JS: Yes. I did.

PM: What were you doing when you heard the news of Pearl Harbor?

JS: Oh, dear. I don't remember. [Laughs]

PM: Do you remember your reactions to it?

JS: I know we were sort of upset about it, you know. We felt that things were not the same as what they were.

PM: What kind of things?

JS: Well, maybe our lives would be changed because of it. And there might be more of our boys going into the service and more of our friends and this kind of a thing. Naturally, that would change our lives, too.

PM: What kind of emotions did you have about it then?

JS: Well, I just really don't know what to say.

PM: Were you angry at the Japanese or sad or kind of—?

JS: Well, I felt bad to think that we were in war. I don't know that there was anger there. I don't anger real easily. But I felt disturbed because we were at war. I knew what war could mean. I know there were some people that during the war they started shipping scrap iron and stuff over to the foreign countries and some of the people at that time were against this because they said we shipped it over there to make weapons for them to shoot back at us. Some of the comments that were being made. I don't recall any certain person making that comment but I remember the comments being made like that.

PM: Now the war was going on over in Europe for a while before Japan attacked. Were you aware of that?

JS: Yes. I was aware of it but perhaps not as close to it as—

PM: Did you feel that America should get involved and help out England and the other countries that were being overrun by Hitler?

JS: I don't recall what my feelings were at that time. I really don't.

PM: What were your feelings about war before and then after Pearl Harbor? Did they change [about] war in general?

JS: I just felt that something had to be done. Because, I suppose, working for the Selective Service I felt that we would have to go into this thing and just do the best we could and try to end the war.

PM: Do you recall any community-wide anti-German or anti-Japanese sentiment or maybe some anti-German sentiment that extended to people of German origin in the community?

JS: Well, I think we had this feeling, yes. I really do think that there was a certain amount of it. Not a great deal in this area but a certain amount of it.

PM: Did you feel threatened by the war or did you think of it as a war for survival, perhaps?

JS: No. Not really.

PM: You never were afraid that Japan would win or—?

JS: I didn't have that feeling. No. I didn't have that feeling. I thought we were out there to settle this war and it was this war and that was it. Just kind of had that feeling. At least, that was my hopes, that we'd settle it.

PM: So was the war something that was far away or something that you were deeply involved with day-to-day or—?

JS: I felt I was kind of deeply involved in it after I started working with the Selective Service. I felt quite deeply involved in it and it was a part of me. As a matter of fact, we had some people that came into the office. I recall a young fellow. And he was pretty upset because he had to go into service and he kind of jumped all over me, so to speak. I had been thinking seriously of going into the service myself because I had no brothers and all these other families, the boys were going in one after the other. And because there were no brothers in my family I was really considering going in myself. However, the Board told me I was doing a good job for the war effort right where I was. They didn't think I should go. And I really was serious about it. But I ended up not going. I ended up staying with Selective Service until it was over with.

PM: I see. So you say, to get back to your job with the Credit Bureau, do you remember what year you were working for that?

JS: No. Not exactly.

PM: Was that 1940, 1941, around there?

JS: It was in there someplace.

PM: Then what were you saying about the gas rationing affecting the Credit Bureau?

JS: Yes, the gas rationing. They could not come on up here to Alexandria from Willmar, the main office, to check on the office and they could not send collectors out because of gas rationing, so they had to close the local office here. And that is when I got into the Selective Service right after that.

PM: Had the gas rationing affected you personally?

JS: Not quite at that time but it certainly did later on. My folks moved here to the Maryland Resort out here about a few years after they'd been on the farm. They couldn't keep up the farming because the farm boys were being drafted. So naturally, with this big farm that my dad had, he had to give it up because of the fact he didn't have help. So then he bought this acreage out here, about fifty, sixty acres here. And then we lived out here—eight miles out of Alec.

But then the gas rationing started getting to the point whereby we could not get gas to drive to and from work, so my sister and I rented an apartment in Alec. We stayed in Alec and then weekends my dad would come and get us. On Friday he would take us home, then he would bring us back on Monday morning. The reason for doing it on Monday morning was because if he had an errand in town he could take care of the errand at the same time, so it wasn't special trip for him into town.

PM: Okay. So your job was closed at the Credit Bureau because of the gas rationing. And what did you do then?

JS: I had to go look for a job and I was on my way to go to the cities to look for a job. Had my suitcase packed and everything ready to go and then someone told me about the Selective Service Office. That they were looking for a girl to help here. So I went up to the Selective Service Office and I was hired at the Selective Service Office at that time. They had a chief clerk there but he had lost his assistant so I was hired as assistant clerk.

PM: So let's talk about your job with the Selective Service.

JS: Well at first I was just assistant there. Just help the chief clerk with all the registrations and with the classifications of all the men that we had registered. I worked with that for quite a bit of time. When we made copies of stuff there it had to be about five copies. And of course we didn't have electric typewriters like we do in this day and age. And those copies were supposed to be perfect. If not, then they were sent back to us.

PM: Those were government regulations?

JS: That's right. That's right.

PM: And no typographical errors whatsoever?

JS: Well, if you could erase it without them seeing it, why that was fine, but you had to be pretty good to do that. And there were about five copies of everything that you had to send in. The main office (our main office) was in St. Paul, of course. Then finally the chief clerk left because of ill health and at that time that was when they hired me as chief clerk.

PM: How many other people were working in the Selective Service Office?

JS: It was just two of us most of the time. Of course, they had a Draft Board, which consisted of three men. They were from this area. And then, of course, we had coordinators that would come from the State Office. They came out to each Board and checked us. They went through all our records from time to time and checked that we were doing the work the way it was supposed to, the way they had directed it at us to do. So we had to follow their directives, of course. And sometimes we'd get a directive to tell us to classify a certain group of people a certain way and the next day it would be just almost reversed. So it was quite a job to keep up to it all.

I especially remember the one instance whereby they had—we were supposed to take everybody. Just take everybody. Of course, we started with the lowest number. To fill our quota we started with the lowest number that we had in Class A and we picked—say if they wanted twenty men, we picked twenty men. This one time we picked a manager of a store in town. The next directive we got, which was very shortly thereafter, it said to keep the key man in the store.

PM: That particular man or just the men in general?

JS: Just the key man. The key man then had...

[Tape interruption]

PM: ...for instance when the directives were changing all the time and you drafted somebody that should have stayed?

JS: Well, he really shouldn't have stayed, but this is where the directives kept changing and whereby it made it a little tough on us. Because, like I was saying, a directive would come through that we were supposed to draft say twenty men in for induction. We always started with the lowest number that we had and in this lowest number that we had there happened to be this manager of a store.

PM: I'm not sure I understand this lowest number.

JS: See, the registrants were registered one, two, three, four and all the way up. As you registered you got a number. And of course by the time we'd use up one, two and three numbers, why then we'd have to start with four and go on up like that. That's the way we pulled the people for registration. So a fellow that had a real high number perhaps wouldn't be called.

PM: Because he registered later than somebody else?

JS: This is right. Yes.

PM: What determined whether or not he registered? Is it like today where—?

JS: His birthday.

PM: I see. Do you remember how old?

JS: Well, that kept changing. That was another directive that kept changing. But I do recall that then they took this manager out of this store. We drafted him and then the directive came through telling us to keep the key person in the store, which would have been the manager, but he was already drafted. So the assistant manager got to be the key person in the store, and he was deferred. And of course that was kind of a rough thing to see. But this is some of the things—

PM: How soon did that directive come in after you had—?

JS: Very shortly thereafter. I think it got to be about the next call that we got. The assistant manager would have gone. But that's one of the instances that we had. It was kind of hard to cope with sometimes. But those were the directives that we received.

PM: Okay. I want to talk some more about how the Board worked and the procedures and things.

JS: We had three members on the Board. One was right from town there. One had a grocery store up in Brandon and the other one was a farmer out in Nelson. So they came from different walks of life. Whenever there was a directive we had to reclassify people, then the Board would meet. And they would meet to reclassify these people and go through all these directives that we would receive. Then, of course, if somebody wanted a hearing with the Board, they would have to meet with the Board for a hearing with them to see if they were classified 1A. Perhaps they had more material that should be placed in the file that we were not aware of and they would get it in the file. So that was their job. Of course, when we would get inductions, the Board was there too, helping the fellows. The American Legion also took a big part in the induction and they sometimes gave breakfast to the fellows before they left from the American Legion Club. They were a help to us that way. The Board could meet many times during the month. They were volunteers.

PM: They were?

JS: They were paid mileage, if I recall.

PM: But they weren't picked by the government or anything?

JS: I don't recall how they were picked. They were already in there when I got there so I do not know how they were chosen. But they had to volunteer their work is what I mean. They were not paid a salary.

PM: I see. So they kind of—let's say you have information about a certain male. Did you have to make a decision on each individual? Did the Board have to meet to make a decision on each individual that was inducted?

JS: Yes, they did.

PM: Now how did that decision process work? Would you meet publicly, privately? How much input would you have? How much time would you spend talking to people?

JS: Well, it would depend on just certain individuals would come in and want a special hearing with the Board. Otherwise we worked with their files. We had files with all kinds of information on the individuals that they put into the file themselves.

PM: They would send these out throughout the whole county?

JS: Yes. If there was—on agriculture, for example. If they were farm boys we'd send out a letter/questionnaire to these farm boys that would state how much livestock they had, how much grain farming they did, and all this kind of a thing and their income and all of this. And of course all this information was strictly confidential information. But it was for the Board and for the office and that was it. So we gathered all this information into their files and they put some of the information in their files, too. Of course, the boys had been down for a physical before we could induct them. So they had their physical in the file, which was a determination, too. Whether or not they were to be inducted into the service.

PM: So you kept track of all these files?

JS: Tried to! [Chuckles] It was a job.

PM: I can imagine! So the Board—you could request a special hearing and meet with the Board in person?

JS: Yes.

PM: Or otherwise the person being inducted would not necessarily have to be there while the decision was made to induct him?

JS: That's right. They wouldn't have to be there unless they wanted a deferment of some kind and they felt they had more information to put into the file. That's about the only time that they would meet with the Board.

PM: So how often would you say the Board would meet to decide or how many people would be inducted at one session of the Board?

JS: Well, during the heaviest time of induction I would say about maybe up to twenty.

PM: And then how often would you do that?

JS: It varied. It varied. It depended on when our calls came through. We'd get calls through maybe once a month.

PM: Directives from St. Paul?

JS: That's right.

PM: Saying that Douglas County needs to induct so many men?

JS: Yes. On such and such a day and such and such a place.

PM: Interesting. So how much input did you have as the chief clerk in the decision of who was to be inducted and who wasn't?

JS: I had no input.

PM: Did they ask you—would you meet with the Board?

JS: I met with the Board because I had to help classify them and I put down the classification as it came through. Of course, sometimes the directives were so plain that I could classify them and say, "Okay, these are all 4Fs." Naturally, I would know when they were 4F because we had strict directives when they were not qualified because of physical conditions. Then I would just classify them and I would hand it to them and say, "These fellows are all 4F." But then we'd have this coordinator come through and he'd check all our 4F files and they'd better be 4Fs. So we couldn't do anything, change any classifications, except follow directives very strictly.

PM: But the Board were volunteers and weren't paid for their work except for their mileage that made the decision on each individual?

JS: Yes.

PM: And you took those decisions. And was it your job to inform the draftee?

JS: That's right.

PM: How did you do that?

JS: We sent cards (classification cards) showing what class they were to be in and then we'd send a letter of call then when we were ready to induct them.

PM: So I've got to get this straight now. The Board would meet to classify the individuals and then when the directive came to draft a certain number of individuals in this classification then you would send it out?

JS: Yes.

PM: So the decision that the Board made was what type of classification the people were at?

JS: That's right. That's right.

PM: Okay. So that wouldn't mean necessarily that they were drafted right away.

JS: No. No. They would be given notice of their classification then so that they knew where they stood as far as being classified. You had to be classified 1A in order to be a prospective inductee.

PM: Do you remember any of the other classifications and what they meant?

JS: Oh, we had a 2C and I do believe that was farming. Deferred for farming. And then we had a 4F. That was because of physical reasons you were deferred. Then it seemed like there was a 3A. I think that that had something to do with being deferred for—I wonder if it wasn't for doing

something that was essential to the war like working in the factories. Most of those were from out west that worked in factories out there.

PM: So you would deal with people who had—you knew the people who had gone to work in the defense plants?

JS: The people who were in charge of defense plants, we would get letters for them asking for deferments for the people that they had employed out there.

PM: Now after you received a directive to induct so many men from St. Paul, you would then take the proper classification and notify the people that they were drafted. Is that correct?

JS: Yes. We'd send them a letter of call, is what it was called.

PM: Was that a basic form?

JS: That's right. It was a basic form. With their name typed in saying that they were to be inducted on such and such a date.

PM: So then what happened? When did you actually meet with these people? Or did you?

JS: Well, yes. They were usually inducted in the morning it seemed. And then, of course, we usually met at the Legion Hall and there was a big Greyhound bus that would pick them up.

PM: Who is we?

JS: Oh, the Board and myself.

PM: Would you talk with them? Can you remember any particular encounters or—?

JS: No. I really don't.

PM: Or the feelings or the attitudes that the men gave you?

JS: No. Most of them went with pretty good feeling, I guess. I recall one instance though, when I was down at one of the other Boards. I was a transfer clerk there for a while. And this fellow, I inducted him into service and he was a fellow that used to come up here to the resort. And after we bought back the resort he said, "I'm sure going to give her a rough time!" [Chuckles] But he never did. He was just lots of fun with us.

PM: Did you ever feel any kind of responsibility for the work you were doing? Did you feel bad about—?

JS: Oh, I sure did. After the fellows had been inducted and I came back to the office I just seemed like I couldn't work the rest of the day. I just had this feeling that I had a certain responsibility of sending these fellows in. And my biggest hope and maybe prayer was the fact

that these fellows would all come back healthy bodies again. I can say this much, after I took over as chief clerk I had nothing to do with it, but it's my fortune that all the fellows that were inducted under me came back in good shape. And that was a joy.

PM: Once they got on the bus from here where did they go?

JS: They went to Fort Snelling and that's where they were sworn in, I guess, and then they were sent out from Fort Snelling to various places. Of course, we had nothing to do with them. As soon as we got them on the bus then our duty was performed.

PM: You had an assistant under you then once you were the chief clerk?

JS: Yes. I had a young girl that was working under me, helping me. We could never handle it alone. There was a lot of typing to do.

PM: When did you acquire your typing skills?

JS: In high school. I took typing in high school.

PM: Stayed with you ever since, I suppose.

JS: That's right! I wouldn't give up typing and I love it.

PM: So tell me about your experience as a troubleshooter.

JS: Oh, yes. I was transfer clerk or a troubleshooter is what they called me. I was in that. They sent me all over the state to various Selective Service Boards. Perhaps they had lost a clerk or didn't have anyone to come in. And then, of course, I had to go in there and work until they could get someone else. Sometimes they had a little problem with the records and things and then I would go in and straighten them up. I could work in maybe a couple weeks, maybe one week, maybe a month. And that was all over the state. Of course, at that time I didn't have a car. I couldn't drive, I had to use buses and trains for transportation. One place I went I couldn't even get near the town. The coordinator had to pick me up in the town where the train left me off and drive me into where the Board was located. We didn't have transportation like we do now—cars to go with.

PM: Do you remember any particular experience? Were trains and buses crowded during those war years because people didn't have cars?

JS: Yes. They sure were crowded. I recall some nights when I was working out and I would come home. Especially one night, I recall coming home about midnight or two o'clock in the morning. I don't recall just when it was. From Minneapolis. I had to stand just about the whole way up. There was somebody that was sitting in the seat. They told me if I wanted to I could sit on the arm of the seat, you know, so that helped. Didn't have all the weight on my feet all the way up. But at two o'clock in the morning, you know, you get kind of tired. [Chuckles]

PM: Standing all the way.

JS: That's right. The buses were really filled all the time. Quite a ways on up. Once in while by the time you got up near Alec, why, you could get a seat. I recall one night I stood the whole way.

PM: The government would pay for your transportation then?

JS: Yes. They paid for the transportation and, of course, my lodging wherever I stayed.

PM: How is it that you were picked for this troubleshooter job as the statewide transfer clerk?

JS: I don't know, really. But I do know the coordinator came up and asked me if I would consider it and I said, "Oh, no. I can't do that." He says, "Yes, you can!" [Chuckles] And I really sort of enjoyed it because you got into different areas and met some very fine people. Stayed in some very fine homes with some great people.

PM: You wouldn't stay in hotels then or anything?

JS: I'd stay in hotels. If I could get a room in some home I would stay in a home.

PM: What was the longest time you ever spent?

JS: I think a month was the longest time I ever spent in one place. And that was because the chief clerk there got sick and they had to try to find a replacement for her.

PM: Was it something that you could kind of walk into and know what to do right away because the procedures were the same all over the state?

JS: They were very much the same. The records were supposed to be kept the same, which they were in just about all the Boards I was at. And it was no problem for me to walk into a Board and start right where they left off at. I had no problems at all.

PM: Did you receive a raise in pay because of this transfer clerk status?

JS: I think I did. If I recall rightly, I did get a raise just about that time.

PM: How long were you a transfer clerk then? How long did you work for the Draft Board?

JS: I wasn't a transfer clerk too long. I don't believe it was more than a year or a year and a half perhaps, before they closed all the Boards. And then, of course, I was out of a job again. They had offered me a job in St. Paul but I didn't want to go to the Cities. A farm country girl, I guess. I kind of like it out in the open.

PM: What do you remember about any controversies that surrounded your work? Or were there any?

JS: There were things that came up. Naturally, people didn't—there were a certain number of people that didn't want their sons to go into the service or this kind of a thing, which is natural. And there were some problems like that. We had one or two conscientious objectors here in the area. I didn't deal very much with those. Those were when we had the other chief clerk.

PM: I suppose they had to have extensive files.

JS: Oh, yes. They did. They did. That's right. And hearings, of course.

PM: But only one or two?

JS: Conscientious objectors? Yes. There were only a couple of them. That's all we had in this area.

PM: Were they religious-affiliated?

JS: Yes. They were.

PM: Jehovah's Witnesses or something?

JS: I wouldn't want to say.

PM: What about agricultural deferments? Do you remember much about that?

JS: Yes. There were big farms set up whereby they needed to have—of course, they usually were deferred to work on the farm. There were a couple instances where perhaps the boys just came home and were deferred. Naturally, they came under directives and were deferred because of agriculture set up, and as soon as the war was over they were gone. Just like that! So they were not true farmers, but it was something you couldn't do anything about.

PM: Do you remember the directives for agricultural deferments being complicated or—?

JS: No. They weren't complicated. The only thing is there was a questionnaire they had to fill out. Of course, they had to tell the farm income. The farm had to be a producing farm and of course you had to show that you had so much livestock so you were actually producing meat or milk or whatever it might be. And grains. The same with hogs. You had to show that you were actually producing. So that you were contributing something towards the war efforts.

PM: Then would they determine from that information how much manpower it took to run the farm?

JS: That is right. Yes.

PM: Do you remember what they used to determine that?

JS: No. I don't remember that right now.

PM: Do you remember if there were quite a few agricultural deferments from this area or not?

JS: There were quite a number of them, yes, because we are in a farming area. And it's a producing area that we're from. So there were quite a number of farm deferments towards the end. At first, of course, when we were drafting, they just drafted everyone to start with. Then these directives came through.

PM: So at the beginning there was no allocation for—?

JS: I don't recall at the very first that there was any. Of course, I wasn't there at the very first, when they first started drafting. Of course, there were 4Fs. They were deferred, naturally.

PM: So was there a labor shortage that was experienced around here?

JS: Oh, definitely there was a labor shortage, I feel. Because I do recall that the County Extension sent out a plea for help. To come out and help the farmers shock. So there were about six of us girls. We volunteered to go out and shock. When we got out to this farm, why, the farmer went to the county agent. He said, "What are you going to do with those girls out here?" And we girls, we showed him we knew how to shock. We were all from the farm. We went out after work and we volunteered our time. And I think we went out two nights and shocked, if I recall rightly, at that one farm. The businessmen uptown, they volunteered their time and went out and shocked, too. So there was kind of working together there, bringing country and the city together.

PM: Do you feel that there was a division that existed between the country and the city?

JS: Well, not too much of a division, but I think it brought them closer together. I think it brought them closer together. It showed the people in town that they needed the farmers and also showed the farmers that they needed the people in town and they could work together.

PM: Whereas before they might not have thought that?

JS: This is right. This is right.

PM: Do you think that kind of division might have grown again since the war was over? Do you think that might exist today?

JS: That I wouldn't be able to answer. Sometimes you get that feeling. And then again, why, you see the town people do something for the country and vice versa. So I think at certain times it perhaps is.

PM: But you say your father had to close down his farm because there wasn't enough labor.

JS: He was renting a farm at the time but he had to get off the rented farm because he could not get help. So that's when he bought the resort or this small acreage down here and he turned it into a resort.

PM: So he left the farming life for good?

JS: No. We had acreage here. He had a few milk cows and he had some chickens. Then he had about, oh, I'd say maybe forty acres of cropland. And then he would go up and he would work for the farmers, too. Help them out. Of course, he was getting up into the years where it was about time for retirement.

PM: Okay. Before we leave your job with the Selective Service I just have some kind of general questions. What kind of things did you learn from the job? Your job with the Selective Service?

JS: I think I certainly learned how to deal with people. We had all kinds of people we had to deal with in all different walks of life. My mother said I got hard working there because you had to stand on your own two feet. It was a good experience working with people, like I say, from all over the county. And it just gave me more self-confidence in myself.

PM: Was it that kind of experience, that kind of self-confidence that you used later in life, do you think?

JS: Yes. I sure have. I sure have. And I think it's taught me to deal with people and there are maybe two sides to every question. I think there definitely is because some of these fellows would come in and I would see a different side than what the information we had in the folder (just the information there). So we'd get this extra information into the folder for them. There are two sides to everything, in my way of thinking.

PM: Did you make any new friendships working on the Board? Or enemies, perhaps? [Laughs]

JS: Maybe enemies! [Laughing] But I think eventually most of them saw that I had a job to do and I had to do it.

PM: Is there anything I've missed?

JS: I think you've covered things pretty much.

PM: We're going to talk a lot more about other things but I just wanted—you know, for us it's really valuable to have someone to talk about this because we didn't know anything about how it worked. So I'm just trying to think—something perhaps that I missed. Maybe talk about the coordinators that would come around. Were they people to be feared or—?

JS: Well, I recall one of the first coordinators we had. I tell you, you could hear him way down the hall. He'd really jump at us and really argue with the chief clerk. Thank the Lord I didn't have him. [Chuckles] I didn't have to work under him. We got a new one. And actually, they were there to really help us. They were there to check us, to make sure that we were doing the job as it should be done. I'm sure that maybe if they hadn't been there some of us could have maybe done something that deferred somebody that shouldn't have been deferred or something. But they went all the way through these files. I tell you, they'd stop for days and go through some of these files. And sometimes they'd find a fellow that maybe should be 4F and we didn't

have him 4F. Nothing serious. But it could be that they'd find something like that, but nothing serious.

PM: And they came from St. Paul?

JS: They worked out of St. Paul. They had a certain area that they had to cover, each of them. They had several of them in the state. I don't recall how many they had, but they had several of them.

PM: How often did they come?

JS: We never knew when they were going to come, for one thing, and it varied.

PM: They just kind of dropped in?

JS: They just dropped in. We better have our records up to date.

PM: Where was your office located?

JS: At first we were located in Alexandria. We were upstairs over the old bank building there. And I guess we were there all the time I worked for the Selective Service.

PM: Did you ever feel any frustration with the changing of the regulations and the directives all the time? Were you irked by the Army or the government because they were making your job harder?

JS: Sometimes. [Laughs] Sometimes we'd get a directive to do something and then a little bit later on we'd get another directive to undo exactly what we'd done. This would happen. And that, I recall, happened to me one time and I was kind of irked. I said, "Why in the world did we do all this work and we have to do it all over again?" It was a change in the directives. Had we just waited a little bit, we wouldn't have had to have gone through all that work.

PM: But you had no way of knowing.

JS: We had no way of knowing. We had to do what we were told to do. That's the thing. They were our boss, you know! [Laughs]

PM: Did you feel that you were contributing directly to the war effort on the home front? Did you feel this was maybe a patriotic thing to do?

JS: I felt that I had a job that *had* to be done. It perhaps wasn't as pleasant a job as what I would have liked to have been doing because of the fact of war. Inducting these boys into the service. But it was a job I felt had to be done and somebody had to do it. That's what I was told, too. So that's why I stuck it out.

PM: Did you ever feel like quitting?

JS: Like I said, yes, I felt like quitting and going into the service myself. That I did.

PM: With the WASPs or what were they? WACs [Women's Army Auxiliary Corps]? WAVES [Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service]?

JS: That's right. WASPs, I think it was.

PM: I don't know.

JS: I think that's what it was.

PM: I think I'm mixed up. I think I'm thinking of white Anglo Saxon Protestants! I'm not sure.

JS: Oh! [Laughing] But I know some of the fellows in the service had heard about it somehow or other. I don't know how they'd heard it. But anyway, they came home on furlough and said, "Jo, don't ever go into that!" I think maybe that made me change my mind, too.

PM: Did you hear a lot from the boys on the front in letters and on furloughs?

JS: Yes. We heard from them. We had boys that were in the neighborhood that we kept writing to. I think we wrote to them to just try to help pass their time away. And they certainly appreciated our letters because they would write home and say, "Keep us posted on what's going on at home." And this is what we tried to do.

PM: Did you keep up then with—abreast with what was happening militarily?

JS: Oh, yes. We kept up with that.

PM: How did you do that? With the radios?

JS: With the radios. Some of it, of course, was what we heard from the boys who were across about what was happening. And radio, newspapers.

PM: Did you have any feelings about the way the war was being run at the time?

JS: I don't recall that I did. I don't recall.

PM: What about community activities that related to the war? Do you remember if on the home front in Alexandria if there were ever any parades or rallies or awards given maybe to returning servicemen?

[Tape interruption]

PM: Were there any community activities, special citywide things relating to the war?

JS: I just recall perhaps when the National Guard came home. And there was a real party then. It seemed like the whole town came alive. And they were driving cars up and down the sidewalks.
[Laughs]

PM: Was this at the end of the war?

JS: This is when the National Guard came home, so it was towards the end of the war.

PM: What about any kind of home canning classes that were offered during the war? Were people encouraged to—?

JS: Yes, they were. They were encouraged to do home canning. I remember my mother with her pressure cooker. There were classes offered on that.

PM: Neighborhood discussion groups or physical fitness campaigns or anything that you can remember?

JS: I don't recall any of that. I really don't.

PM: How about the war bond drives?

JS: Oh, yes. They had war bond drives. We had a number of them. I can recall that. And I remember personally, especially when you worked for the government, you were sort of expected to take a war bond every so often. That came right out of my check. I recall that. Oh, yes. Came right out of my check. Of course, it was a nice savings for me.

PM: Were you saying that you were pressured into doing that?

JS: Well, I think I just more or less felt that I should do it. I guess I more or less felt that way. I do know that some of the people said that when they were around on war bond drives they were—some of these people said that they were kind of pressured by the fellows around to take a bond. They were different denominations, these bonds were.

PM: But you say you saved money every—?

JS: I did. Sure. I saved money. It was a good way for me to save money.

PM: How about scrap metal drives?

JS: Yes. There were scrap metal drives, too. I was telling you before that some of the people were sort of against this because they thought that we were shipping it over to other countries and they were using it to shoot it back at us. This was some of the talk I remember hearing. I don't know if there was any truth to it or not.

PM: Did you get the impression that the scrap drives were something that were vitally necessary to the war? Is that the way they promoted it?

JS: I think they did. Yes. I think they did.

PM: Did you ever think that maybe they were just there to keep people aware that the war was going on? To make them maybe—?

JS: I don't think I had any thoughts of that.

PM: Did children participate at all in any special way, do you remember?

JS: I just don't recall.

PM: How about like the Red Cross? Do you remember if they were particularly active?

JS: They were not active in this area. But I understood that they were quite active. The USO and the Red Cross were quite active in outlying areas where there were Army camps.

PM: But they weren't here making bandages or getting people to join or—?

JS: Say, come to think of it, they were making bandages, yes. Yes, they were. I recall that now. I hadn't thought of it.

PM: Would you say that there were a lot of people involved then with the war in Alexandria or around this area?

JS: I kind of have a feeling that everybody was touched by it in some way or the other. Whether it was to try to produce food or whether it was working in some plant someplace or a businessman uptown. He was touched by it because of losing his help, no doubt. And seeing what the war was doing to the community as a whole. Like sugar rationing and gas rationing—these kinds of things, too. I'm sure they were touched by it.

PM: How did people react, respond to rationing of sugar?

JS: I think maybe there were a certain amount of people that were just buying sugar every time that they got a coupon or a stamp or what in the world it was we had. They'd perhaps keep buying and didn't need it at the time but were afraid if they didn't buy it, the next time it comes around, why, they wouldn't get any or maybe there wouldn't be any to be gotten. But as I recall, we had plenty of sugar. Of course, we used honey. I do know we used honey in our baking and different things. But I don't know that we were hurt an awful lot by sugar rationing. Perhaps we didn't use that much sugar.

PM: Do you think that the hoarding, the psychology, is inherent whenever a rationing program starts?

JS: Oh, I definitely do. Yes. I think as soon as you hear there's a shortage of something everybody is going to run and get it. It seems to be that way. And then it gets to be a shortage.

PM: Do you think that rationing is a good thing? Like would you be an advocate if they started rationing gasoline again now?

JS: Well, I think what they have right now is as good as rationing, with the prices way up there. I think it's cutting down on driving. Looking out to the road sometimes you don't think so but when you think of all the cars that we have now compared to what we had back in those days, I do think that perhaps there would be other ways of doing it than just rationing, like up the prices of gas. I wouldn't say that that's the way to do it because I do know it's cut down on our driving. Just because we can't afford it.

PM: How about—do you remember having to deal with the rubber shortages, tires?

JS: I remember them talking about it. Tires. This was when, of course, you would try to run your tires as long as you possibly could or try to get a second-hand one someplace if at all possible. But that was just about unheard of.

PM: Were you aware that the reason that they rationed gas was really because of the rubber shortage?

JS: No.

PM: See, the rubber shortage was the most acute thing because—

JS: It was?

PM: The places where they usually got it from were cut off because Japan had conquered [them]. And so they didn't have any rubber. And the more people drove, the more they wore down the rubber and the less was available for the war. So they figured if they cut down on gas people would stop driving so much and conserve more rubber. There was plenty of gasoline.

JS: I think they drove longer on those rubber tires of theirs at that time. We'd patch them. Whereas before perhaps they would have gone and bought a new one.

PM: Do you remember, did you ever hear of any Black Markets for things that were rationed?

JS: I don't recall any. I really don't recall any.

PM: Do you remember if anything got disrupted or cancelled by the war effort? Maybe a county fair, sports teams around the area?

JS: I don't recall any of that in this area.

PM: Did you notice a significant drop in the male population?

JS: Oh, yes. Naturally, we noticed that because of being on the farm. We noticed we couldn't get the boys out to help us on the farm. They just weren't available.

PM: How do you think the war affected women?

JS: I think women at that time perhaps started working in factories whereby they were not working in factories before. And of course they had to fill in to take jobs that men were holding down before that time. I'm sure that a lot of women were working on the farms at that time. Farmwomen were helping on the farm more so than they had prior to that. I'm sure that uptown, the businesses uptown, they were working, you know. Filling in where men had worked before.

PM: Was that something you thought was new and good for women? I mean, to come out of that traditional role that they had?

JS: Sure. It's good for us. [Laughing]

PM: Is that something that continued once the war was over? Or they reverted back to the old ways?

JS: No. I think it's kind of continued. I think women have been getting out more and more all the time since that. Maybe this was the start of it. Of course, the fact you almost have to have two incomes now to live on. Why, I think this is why the wife is working much more than we saw back in those days, too.

PM: Do you think that might have had any particular effect on the children that were growing up at this time?

JS: The war?

PM: Yes. Because maybe their mothers were working and normally they would be at home taking care of some kids or something.

JS: Not any more effect than it has on them right now. I do think it does affect children not to have a mother at home. I really do. I think I saw an example of that when my youngster was real small. I went to work one time when he was way down in second, third grade. And I came home from work and I didn't have time for him. I said, "Just wait a minute. I'll get to that after a while." Mother had to hurry and get the dishes done and food on the table and the clothes washed and the house in order for the next day. And I saw a difference in my child.

PM: What about migration of people from Alexandria to other places? Was that noticeable? Like you say yourself, when you were going to the Twin Cities before you got your job. Was that a common thing for people to go and leave?

JS: Not as much as what it is now, I don't think. But of course, at that time a lot of them went out to the war plants during the war. They went out there to get jobs to work in the war factories and war plants. There were a number of our people that went out to the Great Lakes to work there because there was a need for it there. So we had quite a number of people that went out there, too. I kind of think maybe this had something to do with the migration of people out of the area. The war did. We got started that way. [It] continued.

PM: Were these people that would normally have never gone anywhere if there hadn't been a war?

JS: There wouldn't have been the plants out in the state of Washington or California. They wouldn't have gone there, I don't think.

PM: Would they come back after the war was over?

JS: Many of them didn't. Many of them stayed out there. They liked it out there and stayed there. So I would say the biggest share of them maybe stayed out there.

PM: Do you think that there's been a drop of population then since the war years?

JS: Oh, the population here has been increasing all the time.

PM: It has?

JS: Because of our lake area here. I think that has a lot to do with it. People are moving out of the cities, retiring out into the area, I really believe.

PM: How did the war affect tourism or the resort business?

JS: We weren't in the tourist business at that time, but I recall seeing tourists uptown at that time. There were tourists around. But the tourist industry in this area wasn't as great as what it is now. More influx of people, of course, makes a difference, too. But there seemed to be tourists up here, to a certain extent.

PM: I was talking to Vern Johnson the other day and he said that the tourists today are different from the tourists of the past.

JS: Oh, yes.

PM: What would you say about that?

JS: Well, the tourists of today [are] a lot of the just plain common people, I think. I think tourists back then, they had their maids and their butlers and things like this when they came up here and they had a summer home up here. They would come up here and spend the whole summer up here, whereas a lot of the tourists today are more the common, ordinary people. They come up for a couple weeks, maybe a week or two, maybe three at the most. Of course, we do have certain ones that come up and spend the whole year, too. But we have a lot of these that just come for vacation.

PM: Did you notice any year when that change started taking place? Do you think maybe like the better-improved roads had anything to do with that or the post-war boom in the economy or something like that?

JS: I do think maybe the economy had something to do with it. And transportation has changed things quite a bit. People want to get away. Jobs that people are working at offer them vacation time now. Perhaps there wasn't that much vacation time offered before. And when they have vacation, I think that they want to get away from it and they want to relax, whereas before you just didn't have those opportunities. Things have changed a lot since back in the war days, that's for sure.

PM: You think the war had a lot to do with those changes?

JS: Had something, I'm sure. Yes.

PM: How do you think the war affected the economy in Douglas County? Did you think it was a good time for business, good time for farmers? Or was it a time of shortage and conservation?

JS: It's just my feeling it's the fact that it was a time that we had to kind of, you know, watch everything. It was a time that things were just kind of rolling at an even pace, perhaps. But like I said before, the farmers, they were kind of hard hit because of the fact of the help situation. I don't know that it was felt as much here, perhaps, as it might have been felt somewhere else.

PM: Do you remember price controls?

JS: I can't say I remember anything about that now. I just don't remember that. I recall that we had price controls here but I didn't work with it. I don't recall just what it was all about.

PM: Did more people grow gardens than normal during the war? Victory Gardens? Or was that more or less a thing for the cities?

JS: I don't think we had too much of that. I don't recall it.

PM: I mean, most people in this area grow gardens anyway.

JS: Yes. They do. Usually grow gardens and do their own canning and this kind of thing anyway. So I don't think there was anything special there.

PM: Okay. How about a comment on the sense of community that existed during the war? Was there a sense more of togetherness would you say during those years?

JS: I had a feeling that there was. I think your people living out in the country, I think that they were more together because you just didn't get in the car and go fifty, a hundred miles, two hundred, three hundred miles away from here. You were more with your neighbors at that time. I notice that now. We're not with our neighbors as much as what we were back then. And I know as a young person we had more get-togethers with neighbor children and not only the children, but mom and dad were there, too. We'd have our get-togethers like that. And we just didn't jump in the car and go fifty, sixty, a hundred miles to some gathering or something. We just—neighbors within five, six miles. I don't know how it was in town. I really don't know how the situations were there but that was what happened in the area where I lived. We got together

with neighbors much more than what we do now. Now if we go someplace, get in the car and drive ten miles, fifteen miles.

PM: And think nothing of it.

JS: No.

PM: Was your father there on the farm affected by gas rationing at all?

JS: Yes. He was. I know they weren't allowed too much gas for their farming operations. I don't recall how it was distributed or anything but it was rationed.

PM: There was no way or any way to get extra coupons or anything like that?

JS: Well, I think if you had a good reason for it or you could show a good cause for it then you could get extra coupons. But you had to have a good cause for it, I'm sure.

PM: One other question I thought of. This is kind of out of context. Were there a lot of people that volunteered (men who volunteered to serve)? Or did they wait to be drafted?

JS: I recall there were some that were volunteers. Yes. We didn't have an awful lot of them, but we did have some.

PM: Okay. You said you're not really into politics that much.

JS: No. I'm not. [Laughs]

PM: I'd like to just dwell on some questions. How did you and your community feel about Franklin Delano Roosevelt? Did you listen to him on the radio?

JS: Well, I didn't. I wasn't much interested in politics, really. But I think you had both sides. Some of those that really thought he did a good job and then others again that didn't think too much of what he did, naturally. I don't know that I have any special comment to make on that.

PM: Would you say that people were interested in government?

JS: Oh, yes. That I agree, because I remember hearing them talk about what he was doing and different things. But I don't recall just what it was now. But I remember there was talk, political talk, at that time.

PM: How about government on a local or a state level? Did you vote during the war?

JS: Yes. That I did.

PM: Did your views of the war change from the beginning (Pearl Harbor) to towards the end (1945)? Or did you kind of maintain the same attitude all the way through?

JS: I kind of maintained the same attitude, I think. As I saw the war progress and saw that it was coming to an end it made me feel much better. It seemed like it was coming to an end, I should say. Of course, I was real happy when it ended. That was a great day.

PM: What happened on that day? Do you remember? Did you go running around, just dancing in the streets?

JS: My mind is completely blank on what happened then. My mind is completely blank.

PM: Did you trust the government? Did you believe what you were being told?

JS: Oh, yes.

PM: Did you think that the news that you were getting was in any way slanted or maybe had hints of propaganda in it?

JS: No, at that time I thought that that's what it was.

PM: Do you still hold that attitude about government?

JS: Today?

PM: Yes.

JS: Well, sometimes I don't especially like what they do and some of these news reporters. I can't say that I like the way they put across some of the news. I don't think—I think they kind of have their news a little bit mixed up or [chuckles] they put it the way they see it and maybe it's not altogether just the way it should be.

PM: What about patriotism during the war years?

JS: I think we saw more of it then than we do now. We'd see a flag go by and you would see people remove their hats and they would hang it over their heart but you don't see that as often now.

PM: Do you have any ideas as to why that might be? Do you think it's something that's important for every country to have?

JS: I do. I really do. Yes. But maybe we don't practice it as much. Maybe we aren't talking about it as much to our young people. Perhaps they haven't heard as much about the war or something. I just don't know why. But of course the schools, too—we used to pledge allegiance to the flag every morning and all this kind of thing, which they are not doing now.

PM: They don't do that any more?

JS: I don't think so.

PM: I did.

JS: You did?

PM: Well, I went to a parochial school, but—

JS: I haven't heard it in Alec at Central Junior High School. Maybe they do down at Reeds. I don't know. When my son was in the tenth grade, then he did it. We used to do that every morning, I remember.

PM: So when the war was over how did people feel about the Russians and the treaty that was signed with the Russians? Can you remember or do you recall that?

JS: I don't recall that.

PM: There was no fear of the Russians or any kind of mistrust of them at that time?

JS: I don't recall.

PM: And what happened to you? You said you got married. Did you get married during the war?

JS: No. I got married after the war. They closed the Draft Boards here. We had to pack up all the stuff that we had and send it back to St. Paul. I closed up two Draft Boards here, the local one and one over in Elbow Lake. Packed it all up. Destroyed the stuff we didn't have to have and that had to be burned because it was confidential. We just couldn't—we had to see to it [that] it was destroyed properly. Then they closed up the Board and everything went to St. Paul. I was asked to go down there, but I didn't want to go to the big city, so I stayed in Alexandria without a job. I went to work for the county commissioners office and I worked there one year and then I was married.

PM: Had you always planned on getting married to that person?

JS: Well, no. I didn't.

PM: Was he in the service?

JS: No. We were neighbors out in Urness Township. That's where I got to know him. Went to the same church. Good neighbors out there. So I hadn't planned on getting married to this person! [Laughing] Had no idea. But he was the one for me.

PM: So you got married in 1946?

JS: 1948.

PM: 1948. And then what have you done since then?

JS: We were married and we lived on the farm about seven years out in Urness Township and then we bought the resort here and we ran this resort. We were starting our twenty-fourth year when we sold it last spring. And of course in the meantime I've been working part-time. Worked for the county treasurers, helping them out. When we got a new county treasurer in there I helped him out. Then I got a job with the OEO, Office of Equal Opportunity, and worked for the secretary there until they moved the office out of Alexandria to Elbow Lake. And I didn't want to go to Elbow Lake [laughs] so I just quit and stayed at home until I had a chance to work for the immigration department and senior citizens office. The two of them were combined. Since then they've added the department for adult education. Now I have really three bosses, I guess.

PM: Still going strong?

JS: Going strong. Hope to keep going for another few years. [Laughing] Don't know how much longer!

PM: Well, unless there's anything else you can think of?

JS: No. I really can't think of anything else right off hand now.

PM: I really want to thank you for your time and thank you for an excellent interview. It was really great.

JS: I enjoyed it. I really have.