

Fred Ringsrud

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Question: So do you remember when Pearl Harbor happened, where you were?

Answer: Actually I didn't. I was out working in the orchard and I didn't know about it until in the evening. I had to work you know, part of the time.

Question: And you were in Cashmere by then?

Answer: Yeah, I was in, well, actually close to the orchard that I used to work at. That used to be 40 acres and I finally bought five acres from her father and I picked up nearly another five acres from a neighbor, and then I bought the house -- the only reason I bought the house and well and stuff -- that it was all there. We had figured on building up on Norma's dad's property. But look at the expense it would have, you know.

Question: So you did apples?

Answer: Oh, yeah, oh, we used to do concord grapes for awhile. We had 3-1/2 acres of concord grapes. That got to be kind of a laughable matter, maybe. We - the help -- we used to get fairly older kids out to help pick grapes. And the kids got smaller and so it got so after we more or less -- well, one thing I did do which some people in the basin wanted to buy the contract. I was making \$900 an acre for the stuff. It was pretty good.

Question: So during the war, while World War II was going on, you had to keep things going over here?

Answer: Yeah. Well, I was deferred, oh, at the very beginning because of the harvest. And went down to the board and Harold was my boss then and wanted me deferred for harvest. Well the guys wanted to know was I any good sort of, well they never did find out. Of course I used to do pretty well picking fruit and stuff.

Question: So when you say deferred for the harvest, they needed people back home to keep the home front going?

Answer: Hm-hmm. And then it turned out that after the harvest -- I was deferred through the harvest, and it turned out that they were getting short of help here in the Valley. So Harold asked if I wanted to keep on working and of course I knew the business so why not.

Question: Now your mom had a different idea?

Answer: Well, she wanted some -- she wanted the star in the window. A fellow that was in the service. And she thought I could get in as older, places and stuff where I'd be safer, that was the idea, yeah.

Question: So she thought, I'll get my star in the window but we'll find you a safe place.

Answer: Yeah, that's right.

Question: Did your mom discuss this with you or how did you --

Answer: Oh she mentioned it a time or two but -- (laughs)

Question: And what did you say to your mom? Now that's --

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Answer: Oh, I guess I just -- I just shrugged it off. I could probably get into the service but I was committed to help with the orchard too, you know. I don't know if she's ever thought of that much. She lived in the same orchard that we -- that I worked on. No, yes, she did live in the same orchard that I did when we worked.

Question: Did you have any brothers or sisters?

Answer: No, just a sister.

Question: Okay.

Answer: And she's four years younger than I am. She lives in North Dakota yet.

Question: Oh, is that right, okay.

Question: So what was it like here during the war? The rationing and all that? Did that effect your life?

Answer: No, not really. I had a bunch of friends we used to chum around. They were younger than I was. I was the oldest one of the bunch. Like Quern and there was -- still around. Newberry. They were about ten years younger than I was. We used to go hiking, skating, dancing.

Question: So did they end up -- did your younger friends end up serving in the military?

Answer: Yeah they did.

Question: What was that like? Did you keep in touch with them?

Answer: Oh, sort of. Quern now, Newberry went -- he served evidentially in the Coast Guard. He was maintaining airplanes in Florida. And now Charlie Quern, I'm not sure what he did.

Question: So did you lose a lot of your friends during World War II? A No, I lost an acquaintance that I knew back in North Dakota. He was killed and -- oh, at Cassino I guess that's it. And actually, see he lived in North Dakota and I moved out of there.

Question: So you were pretty lucky then?

Answer: Oh, yeah, I mean I wasn't complaining. My mother was more upset about it than I was.

Question: And that's interesting. I mean, you know, you think of a mother wanting to protect her children and all that. And here your mom wanted --

Answer: Wanted some star in the window -- that's what it was. Not one that was cashed in, but the one that he was serving, yeah.

Question: Cause I assume a lot of your neighbors, a lot of the other mothers had the star.

Answer: Oh, yes, they did. The fellow that was killed that Cassino or -- he was a brother and he had a father, no mother. And there was one brother left. There was another one I knew -- I didn't know him real well, but he was over in Italy and he had quite a serious car

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accident or truck. But he got home. He was okay, but he died fairly quickly after. In fact, in time, you know.

Question: Now were you -- were you out of high school when the war started?

Answer: I never get to high school.

Question: You didn't go to high school?

Answer: My sister made it.

Question: Because I was going to say you had the ratio of men to women was pretty good for you for dating.

Answer: Oh, yeah, I was afraid of them, too.

Question: So and then where did you meet Norma?

Answer: Oh, out picking pears. She used to rush over and help me pick pears.

Question: Now was that during the war, after the war?

Answer: That was during the war.

Question: Okay. Did you -- do you remember ever discussing the war or were you too smitten to --

Answer: Probably too smitten, yeah.

OCF: We used to talk about food and gas rationing.

Question: Oh, yeah, gas rationing.

Answer: Well, didn't bother me too much. We, let's see -- we ... they had A and B cards, I guess, I don't remember quite -- and I was driving a Model D Ford, too. Maybe helped.

Question: Now was that -- did you have trucks for the orchard? Did you have to get gas for them?

Answer: Well, yeah, they -- the boss of the orchard -- they would furnish gas, so you had to have a certain amount. Well have tractor to run and stuff.

Question: So was there ever a time when you couldn't get enough to run the tractors or --

Answer: No, there was enough for the tractor, most of the time. But one of the things that they did was kind of foolish. The government wanted all the tires you weren't using. And you donated them. Never did really know what happened to them. And some of those weren't any good either, you know.

Question: But you never knew what they did with them.

Answer: No.

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Question: I wonder what they did?

Answer: That's right.

Question: What about food rationing?

Answer: No big deal. Well, it was no big deal. We had plenty of food, of course we lived on a ranch sort of, on a farm, most of the time.

Question: So you were better off than the city folks?

Answer: I think so.

Question: Do you remember where you were when they announced the war was over?

Answer: Well, I was out working in the orchard and I never knew about it until they had a potluck at church that evening. And they were listening to the radio. And I found out about it.

Question: So what was -- what was the feeling?

Answer: Oh, it was kind of -- wondering how it would turn out. That of course, I really can't tell you about that.

Question: Life continued on?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Do you think that there's a message for future generations from World War II?

Answer: Well, if they listen, they should. The, well, the camps over in Germany; they were pretty bad, you know. And some of the German people didn't even know they were going on, you know. It's kind of hard to believe that, but. But of course they've had -- we have a Japanese student over here now staying with my son and stuff and they seem like common people now, you know.

Question: It's amazing how quickly that changed, isn't it?

Answer: Well, I -- in my day I worked on the railroad gang. And it was what they called an extra gang, and on this gang I was on there was a Japanese who was the boss. He was a good guy. And he had a relative working there too and he was kind of -- more or less telling some of the guys off -- that he'd get you in the end, you know, and stuff. No, they --

Question: You think of the '60's when we didn't want any Japanese products. Made in Japan meant cheap, terrible, and nowadays,

Answer: You can't get by it, can you?

Question: Japanese, Japanese, Japanese.

Answer: Well, they had this leak in their atomic plant the other day and they finally controlled it and I figured that they're smart enough to do that. They're not like the Russians. Now I'm downing the Russians, too.

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Question: Oh, yeah. You know that leak was an interesting thing. Because here you are, in Japan, that we bombed with the atomic bomb. And so now we have this nuclear leak over there. Do you think that -- that for some people that brought back World War II?

Answer: Oh, no, you know, I think two bombs dropped on Japan shortened the war. I can't -- I couldn't figure out any other way that it could -- well, it could go on for several years otherwise. You had to have something to shake them up with, I guess.

Question: One gentleman that we've interviewed said the same thing. That the atrocity that it was, it still saved a substantial amount of lives.

Answer: Oh, yes, I really think so.

Question: I guess that definitely changed the world.

Answer: Yeah.