

John C. Conners
Narrator

Hady Finch
Clarke Wayne
Interviewers

Interviewed on November 6th, 2009
New York State Military Museum
Saratoga Springs, New York

Hady Finch: HF
Clarke Wayne: CW
John Conners: JC

CW: It is the 6th of November 2009, we are at the Saratoga Springs history museum Canfield Casino Saratoga Springs, New York and we are from the New York State Military Museum and Veterans Research Center. Sir for the record would you please state your full name and date and place of birth please.

JC: My name is John. C. Conners, my date of birth is 6/10/39 and I was born in Saratoga springs New York.

CW: Did you attend school in Saratoga Springs?

JC: Yes, I attended Saint Peters Academy.

CW: Ok, and when we entered the war you were a small child of approximately two years old?

JC: Yes

CW: So as the war went on you entered elementary school and would you like to tell us about your own personal experiences and your family's experiences during that time period.

JC: Ok, so I went to the number two school which is on Dam street. My father for some reason was not eligible to go into the army, because he had children I suppose, but he worked at the local locomotive plant in Schenectady. I believe they were assembling tanks if I'm not mistaken. He also worked as an airplane spotter up in Green Field. I do remember that we lived at 17 Van Dorn street and I remember the air raid drills, I recall sitting on the sofa with my parents with the curtains drawn shut and the lights off and I remember this very vividly. I also remember that we had a victory garden when we lived on Van Dorn street. But it didn't grow very well at all, I remember some very spindly tomato plants. I also recall collecting tin cans for the war. We had a neighbor by the name of Bob Green who was in the military and I remember him coming home, and somewhere in my house I have a picture of myself him and another neighbor at the time named David Millward. In the photo we are sitting on the running board of a car. As far as school goes, I remember going out into the local swamp area and collecting milk weed. We would then bring it to school and give to the janitor who had a big burlap sack. I believe they used the milk weed for life preservers I also remember buying not bonds but war stamps. I also recall going down to the A and P store over on Broadway with our coupon book for groceries and such. I remember we always entered through the back door because that's where the parking lot was. We would go down the stairs and right at the bottom of the stairs is where they had the

artificial butter with the little yellow envelope that you used to squeeze in and mix to make the color for the butter.

HF: Were the holidays any different because of the war?

JC: I can't remember anything about the holidays.

HF: Did you have a radio at that time?

JC: Oh yea we had a radio, but I was too young at the time to pay much attention to it. As I said before the big things I remember were my father being an air plane spotter, as well as sitting on the couch during the air raid drills. I do remember after the war that a lot of the guys brought back German helmets and stuff like that. I remember my father taking me to the Union furniture store on Church street and we bought a German helmet and a life belt, I have no idea why. I do remember when fellas starting coming home a man by the name of Charlie Cloud who just recently just passed away, and I guess back then the Drum and Bugle Corps were very popular because it was semi military. Charlie was the drummer for the Saratoga drum majors, and Charlie lost his leg during the war. I remember we went up to the rec field and they came marching in with their khaki uniforms and pit helmets and they made a point of acknowledging Charlie because he lost his leg in the war.

CW: Did your father have an auto mobile?

JC: He did but he sold it because he couldn't get gas and after that he would car pool with his brothers. His three brothers were all in the army and we have a picture somewhere of them all meeting up in Europe somewhere.

HF: You also remember being behind the Roosevelt Baths?

JC: Yes, I don't remember quite how it worked but when the fellas were released from the army they were sent to a convalescent place to make the transition back into civilian life smoother. As a kid our big trips would be to go down to the Spa state park to get spring water on Sundays and back then the road down to the spring went right behind the Roosevelt baths. I remember seeing all the veterans sitting around on the benches in the baths relaxing in their pajamas and coats and stuff so I guess that the Roosevelt baths were a part of that program. I also remember that Mt. McGregor was a part of this rehabilitation program if I'm not mistake.

CW: Yes, I think you're right. Now do you remember any rationing. Did you remember your mother having a hard time getting food for the family?

JC: Now it's funny I don't know if I'm going to get this right but there was a butcher's shop on church street and I remember my mother and one of our neighbors buying a pig and brining it home in this wagon.

CW: Now this was a live pig?

JC: Oh no it was butchered but it was still intact.

CW: I see; now did you ever have any problem getting candy or anything like that?

JC: You know I was a little kid and I can't really remember.

CW: Did your parents ever have any trouble buying clothes or shoes or anything of that nature?

JC: Again I was just a kid and didn't pay attention to any of that sort of thing.

CW: Ok, now when you were in school did you ever practice any sort of air raid drills?

JC: You know what I think we did; we would hide under the desks. But you know I only went to the number two school through first grade then I transferred up to Saint Peters, but anything as far as the war goes would've been back when I was in the number two school.

CW: Do you remember any celebration going on back in town when the war ended?

JC: I don't remember.

HF: Do you have any memory of the toys that you would have had at the age?

JC: Yes, I remember that all the toys around that time seemed to be cowboy toys and I remember having two little plaster toy cowboy guns.

CW: Did you have any military toys back then like a wooden air plane or something?

JC: Yes, we had some of those, to be honest I think every kid had one of those.

HF: As a child do you remember ever being fearful because of the war?

JC: No no at all, I think I was just too young to really worry too much about it. In fact, everything was more quite like I remember the city being very quiet.

CW: Did your parents have the black curtains over the windows?

JC: Yes, I remember them having those.

CW: Ok, you mentioned that your father was an air plane spotter, now was he up in a building or a tower of some sort?

JC: He took me up there one time and if I'm remembering correctly it was up in greenfield and it was a stone house on top of a hill.

CW: Do you think it's still there?

JC: Well if it's the one I'm thinking of then yes it is still there.

HF: How does your occupation today help us with our project? You have been very generous with us in terms of finding photographs.

JC: Well I think the photographs help you the most.

JC: One other thing that I found, my wife's family used to own Carol Auto Sales and I used to be employed there. So back then you couldn't get tires because of the war and I went up into the attic and found a tire grooving machine. You could groove a bald tire with this machine and be able to use the tire still.

HF: Is this device still around?

JC: I don't believe so it most likely ended up in the dump when we sold the building.

HF: I see, well thank you very much for meeting with us.

JC: You're welcome I hope I gave you enough.