



LauRene Buswell

Civilian

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Location of Interview:
Ogden, UT

Interviewer:
Rick Randle

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Rick: Thank you for being with us today LauRene, can you spell your name for us?

LauRene: It's L-A-U capital R-E-N-E.

Rick: LauRene we appreciate talking to you, could you just tell us what life was like in Ogden during the early war years and leading up to getting married to this wonderful guy here?

LauRene: Well I think, like Don, it's a little bit hard to get our brains to go back that far, but I do recall that we were rationed in our home. I lived with my parents in Plain City on a dairy farm and crop farm and I taught school at Plain City Junior High which I had gone to since I was six years old. Sugar rationing was part of it. If we wanted a pair of shoes we had to have coupons for that because of the leather I guess. Gasoline was rationed; we didn't take unnecessary trips anywhere. Of course I had just learned to drive so I didn't do much driving at all. But we did our shopping in Ogden at grocery stores on Saturday....

*** Tape Interrupt ***

LauRene: A lot of my friends from Brigham Young University and my childhood friends were married at this time (I guess at the age of 22 years old) and a lot of them traveled by train to meet their husbands wherever they were. Whether they were military air pilots or whatever. One of my friends came with me to Chicago because her husband was in Missouri if I recall, somewhere down below Chicago and he was a regular soldier. So the girls were coming and going and there were a lot of questions about the advice of marrying at this time. That was one thing; I was very aware when we were at Brigham Young University and the reserves were all called up about the same time and we were going down to the railroad stations and saying good bye to these fellows all going to various parts of the service. In my little hometown I think most of my grade school boyfriends were involved in the service. I don't recall but two that didn't go in the service and it was a heart-wrenching situation for parents to have their boys leave and yet they wanted to. Those who were 4F's because of health or whatever felt bad; they felt subordinate to these other people. When the war broke out and we were on campus at the time, everyone around us were aware those men were wanting to get their names on the list and go wherever. It was a very patriotic time and whenever we have a patriotic parade today with flags flying and the young people are wondering why we're standing and crying – well it's a patriotic response because that war was mean and terrible.

Rick: Tell us about saying good-bye to your husband when he was headed for overseas. I imagine you didn't know if you were ever going to see him again or not. Where were you and what was that like?

LauRene: My first good bye was at the Ogden Depot when he went to fulfill his assignment to get his orders and then I went back to New York. I stayed there about three weeks and at that time so many people were doing so many things to be patriotic people. One instance was – wherever we were as Navy wives, homes were opened up to us and one home was owned by a lady who had quite a big house and was able to have four or six Navy wives come and stay. We had a bedroom apiece and access to a bathroom down the hall. And that little lady would have brunch for us every morning – coffee and doughnuts or sweet rolls or oranges or whatever.

Rick: She didn't charge you?

LauRene: No, I don't think I ever paid her anything and we were more than welcome and at that time Don was still in training. He would leave at about 7:30 in the morning and go to the harbor and be trained and then be home by four in the afternoon. I would join the women in the morning and then I'd go out and get on a double-decker bus and see New York. I was a country girl and that was high adventure.

Rick: And then when he left were you able to go down and wave good-bye as he got on the ship?

LauRene: No, I forget how it happened but one of the things that I recall was that it was time for me to head out home and he was on the bus with me to take me to where I was to catch the train and then he would go back to get to his ship and that would be it.

I recall him saying, *"I've never ever thought of going AWOL, but boy it would be easy right now"* (as we embraced). He went his way and I went mine.

Rick: That's got to be repeated probably a million times by parents and mothers and wives and so forth. Tell us about the prisoners of war stories that you know about.

LauRene: I can't remember too much about that except that I know that during harvest time people in agriculture could go (I assume it was the 2nd Street Depot) and they could sign up for prisoners for the day for hourly work.

Rick: And did you have to pay them? Your dad as I understand had a farm and he used these German prisoners of war on his farm?

LauRene: I don't recall my father using them a lot but there were times he used them because he had potatoes to pickup out of the field and load on trucks and so on. I don't recall my father being involved except that I knew it was going on and when he needed someone it was a method that he used. I can't remember the details of it.

Rick: Do you remember if they had guards with them when they came out to work?

LauRene: I would assume so. I know that my father's brother came from California to work for about five or six months as a guard so I should have a little better memory of that, but I don't.

Rick: And they had a large camp here in Ogden where they housed both German and Italian prisoners?

LauRene: Yes, true. And I can remember them (maybe it was a parade), I can remember them being in the back of a truck and waving to people and us waving to them. They were well fed and cared for properly.

Rick: Can you describe where the prisoner of war camp was and who was there?

LauRene: They would have had barracks for them and mess halls and all of that sort of thing.

Rick: This was on 2nd Street in Ogden?

LauRene: I had an aunt that worked at the same place as Don's mother. These married women came and I don't recall their assignments but they had a lot of people helping to work at that time.

Rick: Do you remember the Ogden Train Station and the soldiers?

LauRene: Oh yes! The Depot was so busy day and night – early morning to late. The luggage department was always busy! Parents and people of families meeting to say 'hello' as men came home for a week or two or left for a week or two. I remember many military uniforms coming and going and the fellows with their packs on their shoulder or whatever and everyone was busy going or coming and everyone was so happy as laymen to greet them even though they didn't know them personally, but to welcome them or say good bye to them or wish them luck. It was a heart-warming experience to be in that big old Depot and there would be people wall to wall. All

of the benches were full, soldiers would be laying on them having a nap because they'd traveled all night or whatever. Then when I boarded the train my father shook his finger at me and said, *"Don't you let any of those soldiers convince you to go anywhere with them or eat dinner with them or anything"*! And then I was able to have the accommodations of a seat – kind of a recliner where I could lean back and that. But the aisle – almost the whole time from Ogden through Denver and all the way would be people sitting on suitcases. There was not enough space for people to be placed and there was jolly conversations – kidding and joking. People were sleeping and others awake and others pacing up and down. Everything was overloaded.

Rick: When you went through little towns did you have town's people waving or any of that to the soldiers?

LauRene: They had the USO in every station and they had a wonderful one in Ogden where the soldiers or people like me who were traveling to get to a soldier were welcome to have their goodies and they would seek you out and come and find you and welcome you.

Rick: When the war was over I guess every Utah veteran came through Ogden in order to get home is that correct?

LauRene: As I recall it was just a hoopla experience.

Rick: And I bet people were packing that station to greet their soldier?

LauRene: Don and I were on the train with his parents going to get his release when we heard about the war being over so I went with him for his official release and coming back home everyone was just super elated. Every year at that time it was celebrated for a long time!

Rick: Can you tell us about the censored letters you got from Don?

LauRene: Yes, they had stamps on the outside of the envelope and I don't recall any of mine having...well there might have been a word or two crossed out. Come to think of it I think there were some censored words.

Rick: That's because your husband was doing the censoring.

LauRene: But yes the censor stamp was on it and a date as I recall. All of them – and I would sometimes get six or eight letters at a time and weeks would go by without hearing from him.

Rick: Would you get V-mail where it was photographed?

LauRene: I can remember it being written – we would buy the stationary to send and it had red, white and blue edging and it was folded a certain way so we couldn't write a very long letter. I hadn't thought about that but that was the proper way to mail a letter to him. His letters, I have them tied up in a package, I wish I would have brought them.

Rick: Thank you so much LauRene.