



## **Gladys Breinholt**

Civilian

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Eccles Broadcast Center, Salt Lake City, UT

Interviewer:  
Rick Randle

**THIS INTERVIEW IS NOT EDITED FOR CONTENT, LANGUAGE OR HISTORICAL ACCURACY**

Rick: Gladys we're glad to have you here with us today. Can you state your name and spell your last name for us?

Gladys: Okay, my name is Gladys Breinholt, B-R-E-I-N-H-O-L-T.

Rick: All right now tell us about how you were planning to get married on December 17<sup>th</sup> and what it was like when you heard about Pearl Harbor.

Gladys: Well of course the whole nation was shocked when we heard about Pearl Harbor and everybody said "you're taking a big chance if you get married now because you know he's going off and he'll be drafted" and I knew he would. But we considered it and decided to go ahead and get married anyway. As it turned out he was able to be in the states here for two years before he went overseas so I was able to go to a number of places and be with him while he was here in the states. Which was actually a good beginning for a marriage because we had to depend on each other and we had to learn that we couldn't run to our families for things because they were far away. It was actually a time when you worried about what was going to happen but also it was a good time. The thing was that as I traveled where he was I met a lot of other women who were in the same situation as I was and we became friends and we supported each other and it was a good time, a good experience in many ways.

Rick: Tell us about when you first heard that he was going to be shipped out.

Gladys: Oh I don't know if I can tell you; when I first heard that, well actually there were two times when I thought he was going to be shipped out, you know, when he first went to Virginia – to **Blaxsome** Virginia, when he was there that really was for the purpose to ship them out and it was hard but then he didn't get shipped out then. He went to Texas and I was able to go and stay there with him while they were testing these tanks. He actually had pretty good hours. He would work all day with the fellows and then he would come home and we'd have our evenings together. He was over these fellows so he didn't draw guard duty or things like that very much. So we had that time that he was in Texas but it was hard. When I finally knew that he was going

overseas and I said goodbye to him in Texas (as he said our little boy had just started taking his first little steps at that time) but there were a lot of other people in the same situation and you know the people in the country were so kind to each other. I'm thinking, often when he'd get a leave and want to come home he couldn't find a bus or a train that was convenient for the time he had and he'd just go out and people would pick him up and take him places. One time when we were in Texas he had a furlough to come home and we were coming back to Utah to bring our little baby and show our family. We hurried over to the little town and called and they said there was a train leaving for Fort Worth right away. So we hurried over and got on the train and after he got on the train he realized that he had left his pass for his furlough in the phone booth. Well you didn't go anywhere in those days without a pass or you were in trouble. So he hurried down and jumped off the train and the conductor was screaming at him all the time but he went back to the telephone booth and his pass was there luckily. But I was on the train not knowing what had happened to him and in the meantime he had my ticket in his pocket so the conductor came through and wanted to know where my ticket was and I tried to tell him but he said "oh sure, I hear stories like that everyday". He wasn't very sympathetic to me so I had a long ride going to Fort Worth worrying. But in the meantime somebody had picked him up on the highway and he got to Fort Worth an hour before the train did and they wanted to buy him dinner and they wanted to just treat him so well. That's the way the people were. They loved the soldiers and they were kind to their wives. Anyway we made it to Salt Lake okay, he was waiting for me there.

Rick: When you got to Fort Worth you looked up and there he was waiting for you?

Gladys: Yes and I said after that every time we moved "have you got your pass? Have you got our tickets?" He was waiting right at the train when I got off and the conductor who had been so unbelieving of my story before was so nice. He was nice to me then.

Rick: Well that second time that he got shipped out when he went for real did they just say to him while he was on the base 'this is it you're not coming back' and you had no idea and you were waiting for him to come home that night?

Gladys: No it wasn't like that, they told him that he could go home. He went home that night to tell me so that I could prepare to take care of myself. I was going back to stay with my parents and they told him that they would be going to a Port of Invocation and [tears] I went down to the train where they were loading along with hundreds of others and said goodbye to him and that was hard! And that was the last time I saw him until the war was over and he came home. And it was the last time that we talked to each other until he got home again.

Rick: Did you have your little baby with you?

Gladys: I had my baby with me and you know what? Traveling was not any fun in those days; you would get on a train and maybe somewhere along the way they would decide to load it with soldiers who were going someplace and they would just crowd that train with soldiers and maybe you would arrive on time or maybe you would be delayed. So sometimes there were no...often there were not enough seats for everyone. Usually the soldiers were nice and gave me a seat but sometimes they didn't, sometimes they just sat in the seats and you just stood and waited for somebody to get moved or something. So traveling really wasn't that much fun because you didn't know if you were going to arrive on time and you didn't know what your traveling situation would be. So I didn't really enjoy the trips that I took at that time but I took a lot and I took my little boy along with me. But generally speaking the whole country was behind the war and that was such a good feeling and people believed in what was being done and they were willing to help and the women went to work and people did everything they could to help the war effort along. Even though many things were rationed, we didn't feel too deprived by it; at least the people that I knew didn't. I've heard of some people that found ways to complain, you know there's always some way to get around rationing or whatever is going on but we had sufficient supplies for our needs. Actually, you know, we wanted our soldiers to be fed and provided for and it took a lot of the materials of the country to do that and we knew it was okay; there was enough for all of us. I think actually we learned some good things from it, I was telling my children the other day that that's the first time that I had a pair of shoes that wasn't leather, you know, we thought that shoes had to be leather but during the war the shoes were rationed. But they could make them out of other things and you could buy them. And now many of our shoes are not leather, they're made of other things but I think the country learned to

use a lot of things and they developed a lot of things that we had not had before. On the street where we lived almost every house had their little banner in the windows where they had the stars showing how many from that home were gone and in my house my brother was in the Marines, my other brother was in the Air Force in India, my brother-in-law was in the Army and Verle was in the Army.

Rick: So you had four banners with blue stars on it?

Gladys: Four in our house. Verle had two brothers who were also gone, were off in service and of course occasionally one of the blue stars was changed to a gold star which meant that the person had been killed. But it was a time when you appreciated a lot of things that sometimes we just take for granted now.

Rick: When you were traveling on trains and there were a lot of soldiers onboard; would there be people there with food and sandwiches or something in the small towns where maybe the train would stop or do you remember anything like that?

Gladys: Well often there were but the soldiers were usually provided with their own rations. But a lot of things were done for the soldiers, you know, parties and entertainment and all kinds of things were done to help make the soldiers happy. Soldiers then were just like people in general now, some of them were really nice and very polite and some of them were not so polite and when I went to Texas with our little boy who was only a couple of months old I was on a train and they loaded a bunch of soldiers on, soldiers more than they had seats and they were sitting on the floor and everywhere. But when they got on there was a vacant seat by me and a soldier came and sat down and he was pretty drunk and he wasn't behaving very well and usually the other soldiers would say 'hey, behave yourself'. But this day he kept annoying me pretty bad and I kept telling him to 'get lost' but he didn't get lost and there was a lady sitting behind me who said, "Do you want to get rid of him?" And I said "yes" and she pulled out a hatpin about that long and gave him a real good jab with it and he just flew up out of that seat and of course everybody around laughed about it and about that time the conductor and an MP

showed up and said “is this fellow bothering you?” and I said “yes” and of course they marched him off and took him away. But anyway this lady was equipped with her own weapon.

Rick: Tell us about the war bonds and maybe if you have any stories about...you were in South Carolina where your folks lived? [Yes] Did they have block wardens and air raid drills and Minute Ladies and things like that?

Gladys: They did, in fact where I lived was just right across the Savannah River from Augusta Georgia and up to Augusta the Savannah River had boats that navigated it and so we were pretty close to the coast and we were aware of a lot of things that went on. Yes they had air raid drills and ways on our radio that we were to know what was going on and actually Verle's brother was in the Navy and they were on the boat that went to Jacksonville Florida and found a German submarine there that was just off the coast. I think maybe the only one during the war that we know that got that close to the coast, but they were actually right off the coast and his brother was on that boat. But there were a lot things going on and then sometimes they had blackouts. The little town where we lived, they didn't have blackouts but there were blackouts and we were all made very aware of talking about the war. If we did find out anything about the war we didn't tell it because who knew who was listening and what damage it could do for our soldiers who were overseas. There were German prisoners of war located in this little town where we lived and near my parents home they had some cotton fields and they used to send those prisoners of war out there to pick cotton and to help in the fields and they would come and sit in our yard under the trees and eat their lunch and our little boy played with them and they liked it. They couldn't communicate too much with words but children don't need words.

Rick: Did they have a guard with them?

Gladys: Yes, they had a guard. But you know they seemed pretty happy. Generally I think they were really kind of relieved and hoping that the war would be over soon.

Rick: Well that's interesting. Thank you Gladys.