



Gayle Macey

Civilian

Logan, Utah

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Interviewer:
Rick Randle

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

Rick: Gayle we're really glad to have you here with us. Will you just spell your name for us?

Gayle: My name is GAYLE MACEY.

Rick: Can you take us back to maybe a few days before December 7th, what your life was like and where you were on December 7th?

Gayle: Before December 7th I was a young teenage girl just having a great time playing with my friends in the neighborhood. I was only 14 at the time, and when Pearl Harbor was bombed, we were in church. We came home from church and we heard the news on the radio and it was like it was in our own back yard. We were so devastated because that had happened uh to our military in Pearl Harbor. It was a hard thing.

Rick: Had you ever heard of Pearl Harbor before December 7th?

Gayle: Probably not. I don't think I heard of Pearl Harbor before December 7th, but it certainly was in our memory after that for a long, long time. I've been there two or three times since.

Rick: Now you were a young girl just entering high school, what happened after that? What was your life like? Talk to us about the rationing and the hardship that may have occurred.

Gayle: Well after Pearl Harbor of course everyone knew we were at war. The President declared war and so everybody was involved in it and everybody, not only those who went to fight, but those in the community, knew we had rationing then because we weren't prepared to go to war. Our country had to cut back on everything. We had stamps to buy sugar. We had rationing for gas. We had rationing for meat and so all of

those things affected us. I don't remember that it was a particularly hardship. We couldn't buy electrical appliances. We couldn't buy any of those kinds of things. And so, we sort of got into it in school. We talked about it a lot. We bought savings stamps to help the war effort. We collected tin cans. The tin cans were used to make cures to put morphine in for the soldiers. When I was growing up in Logan we had Air Force cadets at Utah State and so we were involved with them. We had dances for them and I can remember I worked at Lloyds of Logan--it was a record shop. And those Air Force cadets would come in and buy records, and I became acquainted with two or three of them and corresponded with them. But it was a real effort on everybody's part because we knew that we had to fight a war to keep our freedom.

Rick Randle: Did you have any friends that went in waiting for servicemen to come home and perhaps they didn't come home?

Gayle Macey: I did have friends that went into the service. Some of them left their senior year in high school. One of our very fine men at Logan High, he was our class president, was killed in an airplane crash and that affected all of us, so the boys all went, they all went. They didn't wait to be drafted. They signed up. They signed up for whatever organization they wanted to join. My husband didn't sign up. He was working in the steel mills in Pittsburgh, California and finally he got a letter that he was drafted and he then went into the Army.

Rick Randle: Did you meet him before?

Gayle Macey: We were actually friends growing up on the same street in Logan. My husband I've known him since I was seven years old. We grew up together and I lived next door to my uncles who were his age. He's about six years older than I. And so he was around with my uncles quite a bit and when we little kids would be playing jacks or jump rope he would come along and join in and play the games with us, so I've known him my whole life.

Rick Randle: And then were you boyfriend girlfriend before he left?

Gayle Macey: We sort of were. I mean he was such a good-looking, handsome man I thought. When I turned twelve years old I started noticing boys and I thought he was about the handsomest guy I had ever seen. And so we were sort of friends, and when he went off to war we corresponded back and forth as friends and that went on for probably a year or two before he came home. He didn't get a furlough before he went overseas but he came home on a leave and we sort of got together then and I think we had kind of a romantic attachment at that time. I was still in high school and of course he knew that he was going to go overseas. When he went overseas we still corresponded and wrote letters back and forth.

Rick Randle: Were these Vmail letters he was sending to you?

Gayle Macey: The letters that I got from overseas were Vmail letters. I brought some to show and all of his letters that he wrote to me were actually monitored. They were actually read before they were sent. I have one letter where a whole paragraph is cut out, of things that he said about going overseas that they didn't want me to know, or anybody to know and so the letters were censored but I always got them. I got Vmail letters from England when he was there and he didn't write as often when he got to England because theyY when they got there you know they were rehearsing for the D-Day invasion and so they were out away from anything. I think they had three rehearsals for that D-day invasion.

Rick Randle: Let me ask you about the lettersY your letters to him were just regular letters?

Gayle Macey: Yes my letters to him were regular letters just sent like we do today with a postage stamp that cost three cents.

Rick Randle: And did he get them on a regular basis?

Gayle Macey: He got my letters on a regular basis, yes he did.

Rick Randle: And nobody censored those to your knowledge?

Gayle Macey: As far as I know I don't think my letters were censored but he never kept my letters so I'm not sure. I don't know what I could have said that could have been of any importanceY just talking about home and what was going on with the family and activities at the school and so forth.

Rick Randle: It was approaching D-Day then in 1944 and your husband was in England?

Gayle Macey: My husband was in England getting ready for the D-Day invasion. They were supposed to go June 5th 1944. Well, it was a terrible, terrible stormy day and so they cancelled it that day. The men were all on these ships waiting to go across the Channel and then General Eisenhower at that time decided to go on the 6th. It was still a bad day but they were afraid that if they didn't go it would be worse than it actually turned out to be because the Germans would have known more about what was going on. So they went on June 6th. It was a horrible trip across that Channel. Men on the boat were sick and my husband said he wondered why they were going. So when they got close toY he was on Omaha Beach, the bloody Omaha, and when they got close to the beach the Germans were firing their guns at them when they were let out in water. They waded out to the beach. Hundreds of men were killed. Nine hundred men lay in a pool of blood in one hour on that D-Day beach and somehow my husband got onto the beach. He had a special assignment. He was to go and blow up the fences so they could have a path to get in. Well, of course he was pinned down on the beach and wasn't able to do that for quite some time and he saw his comrades being shot. He saw his captain, Captain Durnavich, who was an all-American football player from California, shot down. And so my husband witnessed that. But finally they did get off of the beach and then it was nine days later that he and two other servicemen were detecting land mines and he stepped on an Italian Fox mine and it blew his leg off. The two soldiers who were with him were killed, I guess from the shrapnel, but he survived that and that's when he flew to England, and then he came home to Bushnell Hospital to recuperate for a year.

Rick Randle: Let me ask youY you were corresponding with him. Did you have any idea that he was going to participate in that D-Day invasion?

Gayle Macey: I had no idea that he was going to participate in D-Day. There was no way he would tell me that. He just talked about everyday kind of things they did, you know. He never mentioned that. I don't suppose he was able to tell that.

Rick Randle: At that time I'm sure you realized you were in love with him.

Gayle Macey: I did.

Rick Randle: You're here representing millions of young girls just like yourself who felt the same way. Can you possibly tell us, for future generations, what that is like to be in love with somebody you know you may never see again?

Gayle Macey: By the time that he left for England, I think I was pretty much in love with him. I was still pretty young but I realized that he was probablyY and my friends would say to me, "Oh you're going to marry him" because my friends lived on the street and they knew him and they'd said, "You're going to marry him" and I said, "Not if he's the last guy on earth" but deep down in my heart I think I knew. And I had no idea what kind of danger he was in. I had no idea at all. They sent a telegram to his parents when he was hit saying that he had been injured and that there would be letters coming. Well when he wrote home to his mother and father, he wrote a letter and said "I guess you're wondering what I'm doing." He said, "I'm fine. I'm fine." We had no idea what his injuries were. He had lost his left leg. He had shrapnel throughout his body. They didn't think he would keep his other leg because of all the shrapnel. He was in a body cast from his neck down to his knees. So he just sent word home that he was fine. "Everything's OK." he said, but that's the kind of a guy he wasY just a positive guy and everything was going to be OK, and so then when he came to BushnellY well they got a telegram saying that he would be sent close to home so he came to Bushnell andY

Rick Randle: Tell us where Bushnell was.

Gayle Macey: Bushnell Hospital was in Brigham City and that was an amputee hospital for all of those men who were amputees. I don't know of any other injuries. It was mostly amputees. As far as I know it was Army, all were in the Army or the Air Force or something to do with the European Theatre. But he came to Bushnell and I remember the day that my sister and I went down to see him at Bushnell Hospital. He was a big man. He was 6'3" and weighed about 200 pounds. When we saw him at Bushnell he weighed about a 146 and he just looked terrible. He smelled awful. I looked at him and I knew right then and there that I was going to marry him. I knew it the minute I saw him, although he grabbed my sister and kissed her first. And so we've talked about that over the years.. That's what happened. But then he stayed at Bushnell for a year and I went down there many times to see him, and then when he was able, he could come home to Logan. He would get a pass to come home to Logan to stay for the weekend. Bushnell HospitalY the guys that were there wereY I can't even tell you about these guys, they were so great! I never heard one of them whine or complain about their injury or what had happened to them. My husband's best friend lost his leg up to his hip. They had a hard time putting a prosthesis on him because there was nothing there to hold it. But they never complained. They just had a good time and got involved in all of the activities at Bushnell. There were a lot of things going on there. A lot of celebrities came there. Gary Cooper came there with his wife. Alan Ladd came there. They built a golf course there. Bob Hope came there to dedicate the golf course, and they had a lot of activities. They played basketball in their wheel chairs. They played volleyball sitting on the floor. They had a bowling team and they would bowl on their one legChop up the lane and throw the ball and I was involved in a lot of those activities with my husband, although we weren't married at that time. We didn't get married until after he was discharged.

Rick Randle: Bushnell eventually became the Indian School up there in Brigham City.

Gayle Macey: Bushnell hospital became the Indian School and they had those students there for quite a long period of time. I'm not sure how many years they were there, but I think it was several years. So they had a school there for them and they had activities. They had sports activities at that school for those children.

Rick Randle: Tell us what happened when he got discharged. Was it after the war?

Gayle Macey: Actually I think VE day was in May as I recall. After he got discharged, he came home to Logan and he spent some time in Logan and I remember clearly VE-Day. We were sitting out on the lawn and I think it was in May, and then he was discharged in June so he was actually still at Bushnell when the European war was over. He had worked in Salt Lake before he went into the service and they wanted him to come back and work and so he went to Salt Lake to work at the Buehner Block Company.

Rick Randle: I want you to go back to VE-Day and tell us much detail as you can remember when that happened and what your thoughts were.

Gayle Macey: When the European war was over, that would be VE-Day, we were just so thrilled and of course we didn't have television then so we couldn't see anything, but we'd go to the movies and they'd show it on the newsreels and they'd show the celebrations of everybody in the country and how people were gathering togetherCthousands of people in New York gathered together and celebrated and hugged each other, you know. They just couldn't celebrate enough. It was a marvelous, marvelous thing to have that over and we knew then that our boys would be coming home and we could go on with our lives again and just be normal people hopefully.

Rick Randle: What happened in Logan?

Gayle Macey: In Logan in the neighborhood we all got together and we had neighborhood parties. We had food and we got together Y I mean we didn't do anything in particular except we were just grateful that it was over and that we could have a

normal life again and Y growing up in Logan on the street that you lived it was like one big family. **All of the neighbors were your family. We grew up in the depression and everybody helped each other and so when somebody went off to war it was like your own child going in the neighborhood.** So when it was over, everybody was just so happy because now their child was coming home and everybody is coming home and I just can't hardly explain it, it was so great.

Rick Randle: After VE-Day?

Gayle Macey: After VE-Day my husband came home and he stayed home. He was actually discharged in June in 1945, and he came home and went to California to be with his brother for awhile. His brother was in the Coast Guard and he went down there for a little trip. Then he came to Salt Lake and I stayed in Logan while he was in Salt Lake and we still wrote letters back and forth while he was in Salt Lake. So I still have letters and by that time we were engaged. I got a diamond on my graduation night from Logan High, and we were going to wait until the next spring to get married. We couldn't wait. So we got married in November of that fall. He was working in Salt Lake and when we got married and I moved to Salt Lake and have lived here ever since.

Rick Randle: Tell us about where you were on VJ-Day.

Gayle Macey: VJ-Day was in August, I'm not sure the exact date Y August 12th or something like that. We actually Y he had come home. He came home from Salt Lake and I remember we were out on my front lawn sitting out there with some friends when we heard that the war was over in Japan and they had conceded and the same thing. We were just happy and celebrated. We had friends that just came over to the lawn and we sat there and I think we were kind of in shock in a way knowing that this was really the end now. Now everybody could come home, everybody! I had an uncle who was in the Pacific Theatre who was actually on the Bataan Death March, and we were grateful that he was going to come home. His parents who were my grandparents were just so happy

that finally they were going to have their son home. And so it was just a great celebrationCthe same thing with parties in the neighborhood.

Rick Randle: When the atomic bombs were dropped, do you remember the feelings about the atomic bombs?

Gayle Macey: You know, when they dropped the atomic bomb I justY as I remember I wasn't thinking too much about the horrible thing that would cause. I guess I was just so glad that the war was over that I wasn't thinking about that as much, Then afterwards, when we got through with our celebrating and we thought of all the devastation that it caused, it sort of was hard. It was hard to realize what happened to so many people. We wished that could have happened some other way. But from what I understand, it actually saved the lives of many more people.

Gayle reads letter:

This was dated January 7, 1945 from Bushnell hospital and he said, *Dearest darling, Gosh honey I can't wait until tomorrow to write to you. I'm going to do it tonight. Gosh, I was sure glad you came down. It makes me feel so much better. Every time I see you I wish more and more that we were married. I guess the time will come. When I came back into the ward all of the guys said, "So that's your one and only." And I said, "Yes!" And they think you are really swell. But so do I, only more so. Gosh dear, I can hardly wait until next weekend. I just feel so different when I'm around you. Boy I know what they mean when they said that life is grand because I'm so much in love with you. Well honey I must sign off because the lights are going out. Goodnight. All my love and kisses. Yours forever, Wooley.*

And he always said to tell everybody hello and to be sure and check on that tube 6A, it was a radio tube.

Rick Randle: Did he ever get depressed because of his loss?

Gayle Macey: My husband I never, and I think my son Rex could attest to this too, I never heard him complain a day about his problems. He had many revisions on his leg, on his stump and of course when he got prosthesis he had a lot of trouble with blistering and soreness on his leg but he never complained, he never said why did this happen to me. No he never did. He always said, "Everything's going to be OK, everything is going to be OK., don't worry everything will be OK." And he was just kind of a happy go-lucky guy. That's the way he grew up in Logan with his friends just having a good time all of the time. I think that having a positive attitude and thinking that things are going to go well somehow they do. Now if you think you're going to be sick, then you're going to be sick. If you think you're not going to be sick, you're not going to be sick. I mean it's a thinking process that you go through and I think that is kind of the way he was. He just well you could see from the pictures how he participated in all of the activities. He never let anything slow him down, even after he was released. When he was discharged from the service we moved to the Forrest Dale Ward and they had basketball that's when they had ward basketball, and he played on the team. He was a great basketball player and he played with his artificial leg and he had so many experiences with that leg. For example, he wore sweat trunks when he played so people didn't really know that he had an artificial leg but he was sort of getting into it with one of the guys on the other team and his foot on his leg broke and he grabbed this guy and they both went to the floor. Well, the referee said, "You're out of the game" and he threw them both out of the game. So he just picked up his foot off of the floor and hopped to the side and the referee came to him later and said, "Oh I'm sorry, I didn't realize that you had an artificial leg. You can go back into the game." So then when he went back into the game everybody said, "Let him shoot, let him shoot!" He had so many experiences with his leg funny things that happened and he just always laughed about them. I think people had a hard time seeing somebody who had lost a leg in those days. Now we don't think too much of it, but when you came home you were on crutches and you didn't have a leg and people would look at you and they would stare. He was a great swimmer and he'd get on the diving board and he'd dive with his one leg, and it never affected him. He just participated in all kinds of things. Even after we started having our children, he was coaching little league softball with the kids, and basketball with the kids, and playing

with them, and playing ball, and throwing the ball and playing basketball with them. Nothing ever slowed him down.

Rick Randle: He's a real great example for future generations.

Gaye Macey: Well I think that having a positive attitude like that is an example to young people. I can remember there was a young boy in the neighborhood who had a cancer on his leg and he had to have his leg amputated. Wooley, my husband, went up to the hospital to talk to him about it and to give him some positive vibes about what he could do and how it was going to affect his life. I think he did that two or three times with other people and it helpedY it helped them, yes.

My father worked at 2nd Street in Ogden and that's where they had supplies that they distributed around. They sent POW's from Italy there, and I can remember my father talking about those prisoners of war when he was there. He was involved with them and I don't know that he could understand them but he got a big kick out of hearing them talk. I don't know if he even knew what they said, but they were treated pretty decently down there as prisoners of war. I can remember the train would go through Ogden and one time my husband was being transferred from California to Florida. The train stopped in Ogden and he sent me a letter later and said that he had been in Ogden and he said, "Oh, I wish I could have gotten off of that train if I would have had fifty dollars. I would have got off of that train and I would have come home and taken the risk of getting thrown in jail." He said, "They wouldn't let me off of the trainY they kept me on the train." So then he was transported to Florida after that.

Rick Randle: Tell us as much as you can about those Italian POWs. I understand some worked at Hill Field. Do you have any other stories about them?

Gayle Macey: As far as what I know about the POWs, I really only know what my father said about them being there at 2nd Street. I don't know if any of them were at Hill Field. They probably were, but he didn't ever mention that. I only know that he just got a kick out of hearing them speak with each other. That's about all I know about the POWs. I don't believe that there were any POWs at Bushnell. I really don't think that they sent any of them there. So if there were any of those prisoners of war that were injured, they were probably sent to different hospitalsCmaybe the Veterans hospital, I don't know.

Rick Randle: Were the POWs well behaved?

Gayle Macey: He never said that they caused any trouble. I think they were probably heavy guarded there and so they weren't able to go out and about, but I don't think they were miss-treated as far as I remember.

Rick Randle: I understand that they had some volunteers that would provide donuts and coffee and sandwiches to the servicemen as they came back and forth through Ogden. Do you know anything about that?

Gayle Macey: I believe my husband stopped in Ogden and he probably got some refreshments from somebody, because he was never able to get off the train, and he was there on that train for over an hour. I'm sure that almost everywhere they went there were people volunteering to give them refreshments. You know they even told them that when they were going to land on D-Day, there would be somebody there with coffee and donuts to serve them.

Rick Randle: Thank you very much Gayle.

Gayle reads letter:

