

Interview with Hazel Everly  
Interviewer: Mike McKasson  
April 21, 1975

**Q:** You came to Evansville in 1943 from Central City, Kentucky, right?

**A:** Right.

**Q:** Okay. What, [what] was the reason for coming to Evansville?

**A:** To work in a war plant.

**Q:** The work was abundant at that time in Evansville?

**A:** Right.

**Q:** What, [what] kind of different plants were, in Evansville at that time?

**A:** Well, they had Serval, [that] made wings. And, Republic made the bodies for the planes.

**Q:** Yeah.

**A:** And then they had the shipyards. And [aa Serval], but that was the major plants. But they had several other small plants, you know, that made other material. Like Chrysler, was one of the major plants. They made ammunition, and maybe other things. I really don't know.

**Q:** Okay. What plant did you work in?

**A:** Serval and the Republic.

**Q:** Okay. Serval, what'd they make?

**A:** Wings.

**Q:** Wings for the...

**A:** ...for the Republic.

**Q:** P47's?

**A:** Right. And... the Republic made the bodies for the planes.

**Q:** Okay...what, [what] was your job [in the,] in the plant?

**A:** ...I was a riveter.

**Q:** Riveter?

**A:** Uh huh. Rosy the Riveter!

**Q:** Rosy the Riveter. Okay... During that time [in the,] in the plant, was the security, was it rather...strict?

**A:** Right. They, we had guards when we went into the thing, you know, that searched our purses when we went in, in the morning. We had to wear badges, and...then when we came out in the afternoon...

**Q:** Okay... During this time was there a, oh, was it hard to get a job in Evansville?

**A:** No. You could...in fact...they was, I was laid off one morning at Serval, at, on account they had got ahead on the materials, you know, and I went down, and that very afternoon got a job over at Republic.

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**Q:** And...and then you worked at Republic how long?

**A:** ...about a month. And they called me back to Servel. So, I went back to Servel.

**Q:** Okay.

**A:** In other words, you could just...[just] have your choice of jobs.

**Q:** Quite different than what it is now?

**A:** Right.

**Q:** Okay... You came from Central City and then a lot of other people came from Kentucky? Right?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** Okay... Were there any other people that came from any other parts of the country?

**A:** Well, we had 'em from all over. I...[I] remember working with mostly, there was a lot from Tennessee. And then...mostly Kentucky and Tennessee, I think. And then I worked with a girl from Texas. And I don't recall, you know.

**Q:** Most of the people came from the South, then?

**A:** Uh huh...yeah, that was closer.

**Q:** [Okay.] Okay, due to this on-rush of people coming to Evansville...how was the housing situation?

**A:** It was bad. You couldn't, [you,] [they had,] they had these government houses...housing projects for people to live in and...they was really nicer than the apartments that you could get. The ones you could get, you know, wasn't very nice and most of the people that worked in the plant lived in them probably.

**Q:** Okay... How did they determine how much you paid?

**A:** By the size of your family.

**Q:** And...how much generally was a house?

**A:** They was, they run from twenty-one to about thirty-five, I believe. And that was your...utilities.

**Q:** Twenty-one to thirty-five a month, including utilities?

**A:** Uh huh. Right.

**Q:** ...

**A:** You could send your children to a nursery school. The government furnished this too. And, it was very cheap...which...I left, your mother went and...[your mother went]...Wendell, and it was \$4.00 a week for their...they had their dinner and their breakfast for \$4.00 a week. The government, see, paid the rest of it, whatever the cost was.

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**Q:** Okay. At this time what was Grandpa doing?

**A:** He started when we first came from Kentucky, he worked about...three months at Servel, then he was called into Service. And, he was in the Navy for a year. And, then he was discharged on account of his health.

**Q:** Okay. During this time was there any racial tension in Evansville?

**A:** Not that I remember.

**Q:** Were...they...did they get jobs in the plant to...to work on the airplane wings, like you?

**A:** ...we, [we]...in the plants that I worked we hadn't not any colored people worked, black people worked, that type.

**Q:** And...during this time was it mostly women, the biggest population of the work force? Was it mostly women...because of the war?

**A:** Well, I would say so because since the men, [men] was in Service, that I would say it. And the men that we did have was older men, because most the younger men was in Service.

**Q:** Okay... In Evansville, during the war, how was the transportation?

**A:** Well, most people...they rode the city buses because the gas was rationed and so was tires. And then, people from them days didn't have cars like they do now anyways. So, the buses ran every five minutes from five in the morning to twelve at night. And...most of the war workers used buses.

**Q:** ...were the plants running 24 hours a day? At this time?

**A:** Seven days a week most of the time.

**Q:** Seven days a week...

**A:** Well, now, that was at the beginning of the war. They, at [...you know, they at...] kinds of closer, they got so they went down to five, six to five days a week. But at the beginning, they was running full force seven days a week.

**Q:** Were there any in the plants...were there any troubles as far as labor uprisings...strikes...anything like that or was it...

**A:** Well, one of the plants I worked...Servel, they didn't have a Union, so we didn't have any problems of striking. So... They did have a Union, I worked at the shipyard, and they had a Union there, but they didn't [have] any trouble. Believe it was CIO, I'm not sure.

**Q:** Worked at the shipyard too?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** What'd you do there?

**A:** Well, I, I was...they had most of women that worked at the shipyard...just did cleaning like. They'd send you up maybe to the Captain's quarters...someone to clean his, clean the rooms and that's all they

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did. Oh, they did have a few that worked on other jobs, but that was my job because I was just filling in...see, I was using Servel as my main place to work and I was just...that was another time they laid me off for a while.

**Q:** So, jobs again were easy to get?

**A:** Yeah, see, they would get caught up on their jobs and they laid you off for a period, you know, and then I'd go somewhere else. See that's how easy jobs were to find.

**Q:** ...was most of the population centered around what is now downtown and riverfront?

**A:** ...yes. I don't know just where the boundaries were at that time, but, I'm pretty sure they wasn't near as they was now.

**Q:** Well, there wasn't, there is like now they're in suburbs or anything like that? It's just mostly around the city, what's known as inner-city now?

**A:** Right.

**Q:** And...were there any prejudices placed upon the Germans that lived here and German descent, or were they just more or less left alone?

**A:** No...not that I know of. I never heard any.

**Q:** Most of them lived on what is now "west side"? Right?

**A:** ...yes.

**Q:** They were farmers, more or less?

**A:** Uh huh.

**Q:** Okay...in the plants did they...have any kind of, [of] say, propaganda about the American involvement in the war?

**A:** No. It was very quiet. You didn't hear, you know, everybody just seemed to do their job and they didn't you know, you didn't hear any disturbance or anything from them.

**Q:** Okay...You said that they played...had movies every now and then about the war?

**A:** About once a month why, we had to watch some of the news reels...but, I understand that was to keep us on our toes, you know, and we pretty well knew what was...going on.

**Q:** Is it...

**A:** Don't ask me about that because I forgot.

**Q:** It stressed about surveillance and stuff like...about a sabotage more or less try to stress that?

**A:** Yes... They, yes. That was what was one of the things. Another thing was to keep us, you know, on our toes.

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**Q:** Okay. You said that...at this time that due to all the people, the on-rush of people that came into Evansville, that Evansville wasn't ready for it since it was a small town? Wasn't ready for population?

**A:** Yes.

**Q:** How did that hurt, say...getting groceries, and going to theaters, and everything else? How'd that...

**A:** Well, you just stood in line for everything. It just seemed like you just got tired. You just stood in line for...groceries, not as much groceries as other things, like sheets. If you needed any hose or...that was mostly. Of course, the grocery stores, they didn't have big groceries in like they do now. But the A&P's were real small. You'd call them a country grocery, you know, just a little grocery now, but almost like.

**Q:** Did you have rationing tickets for anything, food of any kind?

**A:** Yes. We had, there's sugar, and all meats except lunch meat, and shoes were rationed. And some foods that you couldn't. Coffee wasn't rationed but you couldn't hardly find my coffee. Jell-O was one other thing you couldn't get. And quite a few things that, you know. You couldn't even buy candy. In the plants, why they had a canteen man who'd come in and he would let us have candy. But in the stores, you couldn't buy candy. Cigarettes the same way. I could get cigarettes. I got cigarettes for my brother-in-law...your Grandpa, he was in Service, but I had...his brother lives here, and I got cigarettes for him in there. But in the groceries, you couldn't buy them.

**Q:** Okay. Did you have a car or anything?

**A:** When we came...when...he went in the Service I don't drive and so we sold the car.

**Q:** The rationing tickets were, you said, classified, like the work. People work in the war plant got [a] different type of rationing ticket than somebody else.

**A:** Yes. They got, I forgot what [they]...they had a number, but I forgot, you know, what the number was. But they pretty well could get enough gas to get to their jobs. But, like if you didn't work in the, them plants, why you was, you just had to stay home, you know. Save your gas for an important trip.

**Q:** What was the pay like in the plants?

**A:** Well, see I forgot, [...I believe...] I believe I made something like \$12.00 a shift.

**Q:** Which is 8 hours?

**A:** That was for 10 hours.

**Q:** 10 hours, \$12.00 dollars?

**A:** Yeah, we got, I believe we started at 81 cents...an hour, but I'm not too sure. Somewhere around \$12.00 and that was for 10 hours.

**Q:** Okay. That would be about \$1.20 an hour.

**A:** Well, maybe I was wrong then. But I was thinking...but we got time and a half see, for two hours. It was like it is now. All over the 8 hours you got paid time and a half. So, I believe it was about 81 cents. I don't know.

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**Q:** Who was the Mayor at this time in Evansville?

**A:** Mayor Reichert, I'm pretty sure.

**Q:** Remember if he was Republican or Democrat?

**A:** He's Republican, uh huh.

**Q:** Was there anybody, any other community leaders or people at this time...were...kind of more or less the bosses of the city or anything?

**A:** Well, Louis Ruthenberg was the President of Servel. He had quite a bit of political things, you know, in the city. I never was much of a politician, so I don't know too much about that.

**Q:** Okay. Were there any other big companies besides the war plants that were in Evansville that you remember?

**A:** Well, see, they...before they went into the war plant, they were making other things. I believe Servel made ice boxes and...I don't know...and Chrysler made cars. But, when World War II started, why, they converted to war plants. And...I don't know what Republic Aircraft...I think it was built here for a war plant. I'm not sure about that.

**Q:** Where's...where's Republic Aircraft located now?

**A:** It's out on 41. It's where...Whirlpool owns it. You know.

**Q:** Okay. Near the end of the war, things kinda slack off? People move out.

**A:** ...well, when the war ended a lot of them moved out, but quite a few of them stayed. And...even after the war it was still housing shortages here, you know, because they begin moving out of these housing projects, you know. And you couldn't, in fact we bought this in order that... the only way we could, we couldn't rent so we had to buy a house in order to get out of the housing project. Then people who'd come that was moving in these housing projects were lower class people and you just didn't want to live there anymore.

**Q:** Yeah. Did...say about the last year of the war, was production kind of cut a little bit?

**A:** Yes, they started to, you know, they had more layoffs. That was like the time that I was mentioning, you know, that I was laid off. They started them layoffs. They'd get caught up on their planes and things, and so, they had a few layoffs. And then, but you didn't have any trouble getting a job somewhere else when you was sure that you'd get called back on your job.

**Q:** When, [when] these companies, well I don't know what it would be, but when these companies just quit making the war materials after the war, was...did they revert back to what they originally made or did some of them move out all together?

**A:** Well...Servel and Chrysler, they convert, they went back, they converted back to what they was making. And International Harvester took...bought the Republic Aircraft. And...I believe, I never worked there, and I even forgot what International Harvester made, I guess the...

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**Q:** The tractors?

**A:** Yeah, probably.

**Q:** Okay. Then boat...[boat]...shipyards was all together not of any use?

**A:** Yes, it was over whenever the war ended, why they stopped that right away.

**Q:** What kind of ships did they build? Do you remember?

**A:** The shipyard?

**Q:** Yeah.

**A:** They worked 24 hours a day just like all the plants worked them. But they had 8-hour shifts. Servel had two shifts, they worked two ten-hour shifts.

**Q:** ...what kind of ships did they build? Were they landing craft or something? Do you remember?

**A:** I do remember the name...was it LS...

**Q:** LST? Was that it?

**A:** LST. Yeah, the...was landing, they were small. I understood they was the one that went up on the beach at, you know, to let the, the ammunition or tanks and all of that. See, they could go up closer because they were small. They could go in shallow water.

**Q:** Yeah, the shipyards were where Mead Johnson's is now or near there?

**A:** Yeah, near there.

**Q:** One of their parking lots?

**A:** Yeah. I think some of their old buildings are still there, you know, them little white buildings you see along the river.

**Q:** Yeah, they look like barracks.

**A:** That was some of their offices and things that they had.

**Q:** Okay. In...at the end of the war, was Evansville's growth stopped any or did it keep on growing that time?

**A:** Well...for a little while see they had the changeover back to their...for, you know, and they had...had a little, there was a little slump in there for a little while. But, seemed like they come out of it real fast and every-thing. You know, seemed like they've been progressing ever since.

**Q:** ...did this amount of population we have spur housing? The building of housing and spreading the city out a little more into the suburbs that we have now?

**A:** Yes, quite a bit.

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**Q:** Would you say that the war kinda, I mean, you know, helped Evansville a little bit as far as growth?

**A:** Well, I would, I would think so cause they was, see they, there was more production here for about four or five years. I didn't live here before the war, so I don't know just, you know, how much it did help but I'm pretty sure it did.

**Q:** Yeah, well, like you said before, they weren't ready for the people that came into Evansville, you know, for this big rush of people into Evansville and stuff like...

**A:** Well, that's why housing was so scarce.

**Q:** So evidently it helped them.

**A:** Yes. Even the downtown area wasn't large enough at that time. That's why we've got all the shopping centers and all the things we have now. It's because, well, you can imagine how it'd be if everyone had to go downtown to do their shopping.

**Q:** Well, just during the war how was a place like Newburgh effected or did you even know of Newburgh?

**A:** Well, Newburgh is much larger now than it was then. So is Chandler, all these little towns surrounding...Mt. Vernon, all of them are much larger than they were then.

**Q:** Did they have their own, or do you know, did they have their own war production of any kind?

**A:** Not that I know of, mostly...

**Q:** Or was it basically farming or something?

**A:** Well, most of them came to Evansville to work, cause they didn't have enough, they didn't have...they was advertising in the paper for people to come here to work cause they didn't have enough people here to take care of the work that they had at that time.

**Q:** Okay. Thank you.