

I=Interviewer, Judy Garry

V=Veteran, **Lucille M. Lamy**

I: This is Judy Garry. It is Friday, August 1, 2003. I am interviewing Lucille Lamy here at her home in Asheville, NC and we are affiliated with the Center for Diversity Education in Asheville. Lucille, why don't you give me your full name.

V: Lucille Lamy. Maiden name G

I: And your age at this point.

V: Age at this point is 78 years old.

I: And where were you born and raised?

V: Lynbrook, New York for two years and then moved to Asheville and lived the rest of my life here except for one year after the war when my husband and me got married when we lived in Hartford, Connecticut and he decided to go back to school and back to Asheville we came.

I: What was your family background and your educational background?

V: I had just high school education. I studied hair dressing after I finished high school and worked at that field for about 12 years before I married and then moved to Hartford, CT where my husband was from. Worked at a defense plant since it was the tail end of World War II. And for nine months until we decided to move back to Asheville and he went back in to studying in school

V: What was your husband's name? He was not in the service, correct?

I: He was in the service. That's how I met him.

V: What was his position?

I: Private first class in a medical group. How I met him was they shipped them in to open up Moore General Hospital in Asheville. They walked from Swannanoa to where the hospital was which is quite a little bit of a walk. But they opened up Moore General Hospital when it first opened here during World War II for the veterans coming in who were injured and what have you.

I: Where was the location of the hospital?

V: Between Swannanoa and Black Mountain is all I can say. Where the Juvenile Evaluation Center is now.

I: So at the time of the war you were single, initially.

V: That's right.

I: And your husband's name was?

V: Emile Raymond Lamy.

I: And you said he was from Connecticut.

V: Hartford, Ct.

I: So when the war started, where were you? What were you doing?

V: I was hairdressing. My mother and me owned the beauty shop down on Flint Street right down below the Catholic Church

035

I: And your primary activity during the war?

V: Well, I guess you'd other than working all day one or two nights a week and weekends we spent at the USO canteen after it opened.

I: And that was located where?

V: In the basement of St. Lawrence Church, which at the time wasn't even completed down there. They decided to dig it out and cement the floor and what have you and fix it up as a USO canteen, 'cause in Asheville there was no place for the soldiers to go for - what would you say? - entertainment, recreation after their time of duty was over in the daytime. So we decided to open the USO canteen, and my mother herself went out and begged all the furniture - lamps, tables, chairs, everything - to furnish the place. And then, of course, we ladies... the older ladies came in as senior volunteers and the younger girls came in as junior hostesses.

I: And you were a junior hostess.

V: Yes.

I: How old were you?

V: I guess I was only 18. Maybe 19 at the most. Let's see, that was 1942. About 17, 18..some where in there. I

graduated from highschool at 16. That's why. We only went ten grades. We didn't go to eleven.

I: What kind of activities did a junior hostess perform?

V: Well, to begin with, we all had to bring in refreshments. We didn't serve meals, but we did serve cake and coffee and sodas and things like that. Popcorn and things so each girl each night that she served had a certain amount of food that she had to bring in...we'd spread it on the table and the soldiers would help themselves to it. So that was mainly that. And then, of course, the other was to play games with them - ping pong and card games. We had an old nickelodian down there that we used to play music on. And, of course, originally when the canteen was first open we heated it with just a great big old heatrola heating element, I guess you'd call it. Used to make a regular fire in it to keep it.

I: Where was the canteen located in Asheville?

V: On Haywood Street, right across from the Civic Center.

021

I: Tell me how you felt about the war.

V: Well, of course, it was a shock to all of us . I mean, it just developed so fast. I mean, we knew Germany was in war and everything all, but then actually the United States getting in it when Pearl Harbor was bombed - that's really when we got pulled into it in mass. I mean we had some soldiers over there, but I think you would call them more like a police force until Pearl Harbor was bombed. And then, of course, everything broke loose.

I: How did your family and your friends all feel?

V: Well, we felt like there was no other alternative. I mean, if we wouldn't have stopped the Japanese then, they'd have been over in this country. There'd be no United States, I don't think, today.

I: Did you live with your family at that time?

V: Yes

I: Do you ...what were some of the changes in your life after the war started?

V: Well, of course, rationing was one of the biggest things. We went through the - we had our points that you had for food. Of course, you had your clothing points for shoes and things. You could only buy so many every year. I can remember at that time I was working in the beauty shop and they didn't take into consideration that you had to wear white uniforms and white shoes to be a hairdresser. It was a problem trying to get enough points to buy your every day dress shoes and still buy a pair of comfortable white shoes to work in. I specifically remember that so well. When I married, I can remember several of my customers feeling sorry for me and giving me their tickets so that I could buy a couple of pair of extra shoes to go along with my clothes to were on my honeymoon, and what have you.

I: How did you earn points?

V: Well, they issued so many points a year. I can't remember how many we got, but it wasn't manay they gave us a year. And I know the same thing was with food points you got just so much according to the number of people in the family is what you got in the number of food points. Especially for meat. I don't recall anything else was rationed, but I do remember sugar and meat being rationed as well as the shoes.

I: So you worked. And after you worked, what kind of social activities did you do with your family or your friends after work?

V: Well, of course, gasoline was also rationed in those days. I mean, you didn't have too much...you had A and B cards, I can remember that. According to what kind of job you were in that you had a car or had to use it for working problems, then you got more gasoline. But the average person who was not employed that needed a car, we rode busses and things like that. At that time, we lived - oh, I guess we lived a good mile and a half from the bus line. And it meant you went back and forth with the bus or you carpooled with a neighbor or something like that. I can remember we had a neighbor across the street from us that he worked at the Asheville Citizen-Times at that time and he took my mother and me into work every morning.

I: Where were you living at the time and where was your beauty salon located?

V: The salon was located on Flint Street downtown and we lived at that time out about 4 ½ to 5 miles out in that place up above New Bridge which joined right in to Beaver Lake and Lakeview Park and all there. It was just a suburb.

059

I: Tell me a little bit about your mother. Who said, "We're going to have a USO"? How did that happen.

V: I think it really got started through the Knights of Columbus who previously here, I don't know whether I actually - I do have some write-ups in the book there where we entertained the soldiers from Camp Croft down in Spartansburg, South Carolina. They had invited maybe a couple hundred soldiers up for the weekend. But this, I think, is actually before we really went in to - it was, before we went into the December 7th bombing of Pearl Harbor. This was just where they had soldiers in training and they invited these soldiers up for the weekend and every family took two or three soldiers and put them up for the weekend and fed them, and all, and on Sunday afternoon we went out for a great big picnic out to the, well I call it the dance pavillion, that used to hang over the lake at recreation park which, there is no lake there any more, but the building is still there. They had a big dance out there. And then we fed them all and then finally they went home on their buses to Camp Croft, SC.

I: Did you all keep any soldiers in your home?

V: Yeah, we had three fellas to stay with us at our home on the weekend. That was the object of it. They had to be, I guess, I don't know whether that was a law or what, but we had to have them all placed in private homes. They attended mass together. They must have been all Catholic boys, I imagine. Knights of Columbus is a Catholic organization, so...

I: So did you, outside of the USO, did you have any other forms of entertainment when you weren't working?

V: Well, not too much. We worked two nights a week at the shop on Wednesdays and Friday nights, and actually, didn't have too much because you didn't have transportation in those days. I had no car. I didn't get a car until after we were married. We didn't have those things in those days that you have now. The kids think they have to have one in their junior high school and if they don't, it's awful.

082

I: So you got married during war time?

V: Actually, I got married after my husband got discharged from the service. I - as long as I dated him I said "I'll not marry you as long as you're in service" because I said "I just don't want that worry. It's enough of a worry not being married to you." But I said, no, I wouldn't. And he was discharged from the service in January or November previous of the war ending in August of '45.

I: And so, when did you all marry?

V: July 4, 1945.

I: What was your wedding like?

V: Well, I had a big wedding and, of course, he only since he had been out of the service only for about six months he was able to get a week off for the wedding. And, of course, during the wartime nobody could get off to go to weddings and things like that. So that's the reason we waited until July 4 to be married. People would automatically be off on the holiday and that way, they could come to the wedding, because it was a big wedding.

I: And you were married here, in Asheville?

V: St. Lawrence, Basicilla

I: How many people did you have at your wedding?

V: You mean all together or the attendants or what?

I: Yeah

V: Attendants? Oh, I'd say at least 250 people, which was a lot in that day and time because people couldn't travel. There wasn't many people that could come in any distance. They didn't have the gas to drive with and the trains, the service people had the trains taken over.

I: Was your husband's family able to be here?

V: His two sisters came down and that was all. His mother and father were not able to come because they were up in years to begin with. And they weren't able to come. But one of his sisters was my matron of honor and the other sister came as a guest.

I: How many attendants did you have?

V: I had three attendants. Two of my sisters and his one.

I: After the wedding, what did you do?

V: We had a reception up at the Battery Park Hotel. No, I take that back. That wasn't it. The reception for me was at Sky Club up on Beaucatcher Mountain.

I: Is it there any more?

V: The building's there. It's a condominium now. And people by the name of Emma Ottler ran the Sky Club. And we used to go there quite frequently on Friday nights after we got through working all day and have dinner. They served lovely food. And this was the reason she said, "Oh, I...she said we were having so much trouble trying to find a place, you know, that would even cater any kind of a reception because the service by then had all the hotels taken over. They were using them as R and R's. So we went to the Sky Club for what we called the brunch, because at that time you had to be married in the Catholic church before noontime. You could not have an afternoon wedding if you were both Catholic. You could have a mixed marriage in the afternoon, but you were not allowed to have a marriage and mass. Of course, my husband and me were both Catholic and we were married in mass with three priests.

I: Did you have other friends who married servicemen?

V: Yes, this one girl I was telling you - Mary Ann Meehan, she was, she's Mary Ann Gedders now - and she met her husband there and married. Oh, there was quite a few of the girls we knew. My brains won't work for me, but I do know Mary Ann and her husband met there and married.

I: Tell me about your meeting your husband.

V: Well, I can't remember exactly when I met him. I know it was in the spring of the year, though I do remember. It seems to me it was in April and it was a Sunday afternoon. There was a whole group of us at the canteen. And all of a sudden somebody said: "Oh, it's such a beautiful spring day. Let's go take a walki." So there was a whole group of us that went out and took a walk. And we walked all the way from downtown all the way through Biltmore Forest and went back out on the Hendersonville Road and came back home. Now that's quite a feat of walking. But, you know, we had no transportation as I said. There was nothin' running.

I: About how many miles do you think that was?

V: Oh, it must have been at least a good five miles round trip, at least.

I: So was he part of that group?

V: Oh yes, he was part of the group. And then periodically from then on we started seeing each other. He'd come out to the house and spend his daytime off that he had, you know, and mother would feed him and what have you, and other boys would come out at the same time with him. But finally it got to the point that he was claiming me, so to speak. But I said: "No, I'm not marrying as long as you're in the service. When you get out of the service, then I will marry you." That's the way it went all the way through for four years. We dated while he was in service, but I did not marry him until he got out. When he was discharged I went up and met his family and he gave me my ring and then we were married in July. That was in January, and then we married in July.

023

I: Did you worry that our side might not win the war?

V: Un, I don't think so. Really, to me, in those days I really didn't have much concern. Of course, we were losing a lot of boys. There was a concern there. So many of them got killed and all. But personally I don't feel like - I was just too young to realize how serious the war was. No, I don't feel like that we felt like we were going to lose the war.

I: You knew people who were killed or wounded in the war?

V: Oh, yes, oh, yes. Several that I knew. We had our next door neighbor that was on the Hornet ship when it went down. Bombed it and it went down. He was alive, I mean he didn't get killed. He was rescued, I guess you'd say. But, no, there was several and we had other acquaintances here in town that had children in the service, you know. It was touch and go with them, but I don't feel like we ever had that feeling that - at least I didn't - that I didn't realize it was that serious that we might lose the war and they'd take over.

I: Did you write any letters to friends who were in the service? Friends or family?

V: I corresponded with the three fellas that had stayed at our house with us for quite a while after they were shipped. And of course then after Pearl Harbor I didn't hear any more from them. So I, to this day I do not know whether they were maybe killed, because they were sent over to Pearl Harbor after they left Camp Croft, South Carolina. That's where they were sent to, Honolulu. So I mean, it just stopped after that. There was just no way that I knew whether they actually ever got killed.

I: You still know their names?

V: Yes, I know their names.

I: You know there are records that you could

V: Yes, I imagine that if you wanted to delve into it. But, I just, I really never had any reason for it, you know. They were just acquaintances. It wasn't that they were close to us in any way, shape or form.

I: Did you have any family members who served?

V: No, I only had sisters. Well, I had a cousin that was best man in my wedding. He was in the Air Force. He was a lieutenant in the Air Force.

I: Tell me what the most memorable experience was with your USO time.

V: That's hard to say. We always had a good time. It was always a good group of fellows. They were all different kinds because we had air force in Asheville, we had the medics out at Swannanoa. And then they had another group or some kind of weather-orientated up at the City-County Plaza up in those buildings. We had quite a variety. The place was packed every night that it was open at Laurentine Hall. It was quite a few soldiers down there. We never, in other words, wanted for men. They were always there.

I: Where there bands? Live music?

V: Just the nickelodian

I: And was there dancing?

V: Yes, we had dancing. There was dancing going on. As I said there was ping pong, card games, jigsaw puzzles. They just, you know, anything that was entertaining.

070

I: Did people's lives change. I know there was rationing, but did friends continue to get together and church activities continue. Was there a difference after the war.

V: Well, in regards to our own church, I can't say there was any change. Because we had a pastor there that had been there for 35 years. He was not a mixer. So consequently, there was very little social activity at St. Lawrence Church as a child growing up in the church. We had our children to marry, which was the girls religious organization. And then we had the, uh, high school group went in. I don't even know what you'd call them. But we had them to get together when we had picnics and things. But really, in the church in its body itself we never had that much entertainment or social activity in St. Lawrence Church. Almost like it is again now. We have a pastor now that, we just don't have any social activity.

I: Did you belong to any clubs? Or school friends? Was their activity around the USO as well?

V: Now the school group that I grew up with actually, they were almost a clique all by themselves. I was the outcast because I was Catholic. They were all Protestant and they had their own little niches that they stayed with. Consequently, once I left high school, well actually up until we had a reunion- I guess it was the 25th reunion that we had, that was about the first time I ran into any of my classmates. Of course, the boys all went in to service when I graduated. And a whole lot of them were killed. Never came back home. What weren't killed there was quite a few of them were lost limbs and deformed the rest of their lives because of the injuries in the service.

O94

I: You mentioned there were shortages of rationing food and gas. What did your father do during the war?

V: My father actually came to Asheville because of his health - tuberculosis. And consequently, he never went back like, an employed person. He had an income for life and consequently, had made money hand over foot in New York. They had invested it and saved it. When his health broke down and he came down to Asheville, the doctors said if he didn't leave New York, he'd be dead in six months because of the climate up there. So they sent him down to Asheville or Pinehurst. Well, he went to Asheville first and fell in love with it. And this is where he stayed.. Then two years later after he was, what they called - I don't say they would call it cured but it was a closed case of tuberculosis they allowed mother and me to come down and they rented a house to begin with and then eventually, bought property. And we stayed the rest of our life. But my mother even worked all her life..

I: Where was your home?

V: Well, we lived in quite a few of them. But actually, the first one we bought was out in above New Bridge there, as I was telling you. Then from there I guess we bought the big house on Merrimon Avenue called The Weaver Estate. And my Dad having an architect and a builder in his performing days, he could see the aspects in this big 35 room house being made into something that could give him a good income. So he bought the big house on Merrimon Avenue with the 35 rooms in it, remodeled it and made it into 8 apartments. So that is really, what you'd say I guess they lived off of other than the fact that my mother owned and my dad the beauty shop. That gave them

some income too, but of course not any tremendous amount in those days. You didn't get paid for beauty work like you do now.

I: Is the house on Merrimon still standing?

V: Yes.

I: Where is it?

V: 2 Merrimon Ave. It's still called the same as we called it, Linden Apartments. And from the outside it looks identically the same as when we owned it.

I: Did you have to recycle? How about recycling rubber and grease and other commodities?

V: I don't have any recollection that we had to do any recycling at all.

129

I: Was there any black market activity that went on?

V: Especially with gasoline with cars. That's where a lot of people were selling tickets to things like that. And, of course, I guess it went on with the other ration products too - shoes and food and everything, but you didn't hear that much. But I think gasoline was the biggest thing that people were paying premiums for.

I: And there was hoardint? People would hoard?

V: I don't think they hoarded so much here, but I have to tell you a little secret aboout my mother-in-law in Connecticut. She was one of these that went to the grocery store every day, and if ciourse when she realized that things were going to get hard to get before they went on rationing, she started stocking up stuff. So consequently I can remember after we were married it was so hard, because you didn't get enough of anything. And she always says "Got plenty of sugar. Don't ever worry about sugar. I got plenty of sugar." She had stocked it up before the rationing came in, so we had sugar through the whole war. We didn't have to worry about sugar.

144

I: Have you visited any memorials or participated in any activities after the war?

V: The only thing ny husband and me, we made the trip to Hawaii and made a stopover in Honolulu and took the tour, not the tour - not the tour but the regular thing they offer there, and it was just breathtaking. I'll tel you, it was worth the price of the whole trip to see the Arizona laying below the water there and the memorial they have for the soldiers and the whole rigamorile that you go through was just breathing, beautiiful, just beautiful.

I: Where was your husband stationed during the war?

V: Well, he actually - he was just coming into the service with the medics when he was sent out here to Swannanoa, and then they hiked down and opened Moore General Hospital, which was a service center, one of the biggest service centers we had. Now they took some patients to Oteen, but they were more or less not the war from this war, they were really from the first war. The Moore General Hospital they opened up between Swannanoa and Black Mountain that was for all the World War II patients.

I: And he was there the entire time?

V: Yes. He finally then was shipped down to Williamston, NC down on the east coast toward the end, and, uh, had to do with - it seems to me they were prisoners of war. I don't know actually what kind they were, but I know they were prisoners of war because he said they always fed him a lot of shrimp. And he said "I cleaned shrimp until I never want to see another shrimp for the rest of his life."

189

I: Well, after the war, how did you feel when the war ended?

V: Well, very joyous. And, of course, as I said, we were married right then and were in Hartford, CT when the jubilee service went on for the climax of World War II. And, of course, it was a wild time.

I: What did you do when you heard the news?

V: Well, I think everybody - we knew it was coming. But you just didn't know exactly when it was coming. And, of course, when it did break lose, everybody went down to the center of Hartford in Connecticut. And you couldn't tell, the streets and the sidewalks were all the same. There were no cars. All the streets and sidewalks were full of people, everybody joyous and having lots of fun and everything hoopla going on.

I: And on VE day, you were in Hartford.

V: Yes.

I: How would you describe the way that the war changed your life and other peoples' lives?

V: Well, it let you know that everything we get, we can't take for granted. In other words, you have to learn to live with your rationing, put up with things that you couldn't have, and other times - you know, you can get them now. Those days, we had to do without them, literally. And you had to scrounge around to make things stretch from one time to the next. That goes from transportation all the way up to the food and everything else that you have - to clothes and everything.

I: Did you have a Victory Garden?

V: No, I don't recall that we had a Victory Garden.

I: Is there one thought...let me ask you this, did you get to keep your job or continue other activities - wartime activities after the war?

V: Well, yes. I was in Connecticut, see, working for a plant. When I went up there, they would not accept my North Carolina hairdresser's license. You'd have had to go to school for six more months and pass their state board and everything in the beauty shop. And, to me, I says to my husband, I says, "You know, we don't know how long we're going to be here" because he was very undecided.

His main goal was he wanted to go home to see his family and be with them for a while. And then, as I said, he was in love with North Carolina here and wanted to come back. And so I said to him, "There's no point in me doing that", so I went to work in a defense plant which made all the bomb timers. They were the original makers of the parking meters to begin with, Mark Timer they were called. And they made the original parking meter timers and then had this war contract where they made all the timers for the bomb sites and things. So I did a little job on then including a screws in the plate that we actually timed the timing device with. It was the first step on the beginning of the timing thing. And, of course, it was so funny because I had never worked in any kind of a defense factory. Asheville didn't hardly have any factories to begin with at that time. And, when I went up and applied. The lady who interviewed me says to me, she says "Have you ever worked on a machine?" I said "Sewing machine." I'd sewed all my life, but I had never worked in a factory of any kind. She never let me live it down. Every time she went by, she'd see me and say, "Oh, there's my sewing machine girl"

I: How many people worked in the factory?

V: Oh, I'd say less than 1,000. I'd say it would be a good 750.

I: And what did your husband do when he went back to Hartford?

V: Well, of course, he was discharged from the service with a duodenal ulcer and he went back to daytime school up there when we first got out of the service. And I got the job here, he decided he would try to go - well, he tried going at night school. He was working in some kind of a defense plant at that time himself. Gague grinding was his type of job that he was doing. And, he just - his stomach condition with his ulcers just going to school and working both was just too much. So that's what made us make this decision after nine months that we were going to move back down to Asheville when I'd go back to working in the hair dressing salon again and he could go to school then full time. So that's what he did. He went to school here at Cecil Business College at that time full time taking his accounting course. That's what he was proficient in. He had a head for figures like nobody knows. And he went to school and after he was, I'd say, about half way through his course there, which seems to me it was about two years - uh, he went to work for Highland Hospital part time after school til 9 o'clock at night. That helped bolster the money for our living and then of course when he finished all of his schooling he still continued to work full time for Highland Hospital but then applied for a government job and passed his exams there and went into government service.

I: What did he do in, for the government?

V: He was an auditor for the I.R.S.

I: For how many years?

V: Thirty-three years.

I: When did he pass away?

V: 1994.

I: Did he keep up with, was he involved in any Veteran's associations or activities?

V: No

076

I: Is there one thought about your wartime experience that you would want to share for future generations?

V: Well, it was a rough time. I mean, it wasn't easy. But I don't feel like that most of us, I don't think, really were what I'd call upset over it or worried that things weren't going to settle out the right way. We always I think felt like that things were going to be alright in the end, even though we were losing boys most like we're doing right now. We're losing good men right now. But I feel like we always feel like things are always going to turn better and all. We've got the upper hand. We're not dumb.

I: Is there anything else I should ask you?

V: No, nothing that I can think of.

I: Anything else you'd like to add on this subject?

V: No, I believe we've pretty well covered everything.

I: Thank you so much

090

I: We're going to talk a little more about your USO experience. Tell me, I'm looking at a news article here that talks about presentation of USO pins at the canteen ball. What was that?

V: Well, each Saturday night either the Vanderbilt or the Battery Park would let us have the main ballroom. And then we did have dancing. And I think we had little bands then played music and stuff. I can't even remember. It's been such a long time. But actually, we did have dances every Saturday night, I know, at one or the other hotels. They'd sort of switch one back and forth, you know, I guess who ever had it vacant at that particular time and were not using it. But, actually, we did have those dances. They were very enjoyable.

I: What were USO pins?

V: They were just a little tiny pin that clipped on that, well, they asked us to wear them once we got our pins so that they'd know we were hostesses and that also identified us, 'cause we had the senior hostesses and then they had what we were called - junior hostesses. And, of course we had to sign in every night that we came down there because there were, say 10 or 12 that had to be there on that certain night. But then the others could come in if they were free to come too to fill the crowd up and help entertain the men. As I said, we had a group there that came in every night.

I: Did you have any training?

V: No training whatsoever. I mean, there were certain rules and regulations. Like on weekdays we were not allowed to leave the canteen with the boys, you know. I mean once they were going home, they were going home. We had to stay put. We weren't allowed to do things like that. Of course, most of them walked from the canteen down to Coxe Avenue where the bus station was. Because they went back and forth on the trailway buses. They didn't bring them in from the camp or anything. They came in through Trailway buses that they got out, I don't know where they picked them up - camp or whether they got them at Swannanoa.

I: Where was their camp?

V: Their camp was Moore General Hospital was out there. Of course, the ones that were in town, here. Now the weather wing, the group that was weather, they were in some kind of little huts like a camp. They were the, I want to say the WPA, and that's not right. During, I guess it was Roosevelt's time, the early days, that he built these camps over there for workers who came in and did road work and different things around, and that's where they'd put them up as dormitories. So that eventually, during the war years, was turned in then to barracks for the boys that were here with the air force and weather. They stayed out there. That was their barracks just like ours. Moore General Hospital - those barracks were built just specifically for those boys coming into the hospital