

Stella Agnes Andrew-Warner

Tape 2 of 2

Question: Did, you talked about around the bases the people called you Johnny.

Answer: Yeah.

Question: Did your husband, when he wrote you, did he also?

Answer: Yeah.

Question: So that wasn't a code name, that was just a nickname.

Answer: That was a nickname. But there were a lot of, you see we were all called Johnny. All of my brothers and sisters. We were all Johnny's, you know, but that was just because of our last name being Johnson, and that, yeah, it was funny, and even as my brother, you know, the one that was prisoner of war in Japan, he had some very, very bad experiences, but he never talked about them. But, you know, until the last time I saw him, which was just 3 years ago, when I went to England, my both my daughters went with me, and we went to see, I went to see him and I stayed with him for a few days, and you know the strange thing is this, that I didn't realize he was in a prisoner-of-war camp. All the years the war was going on over here he didn't know anything about the war. He didn't, I mean it was really strange. In Malaysia, they were in Malaysia for awhile, I guess, but anyway, and he said, You know, I've got such a lot of blank spaces I'd really like to fill in, so I did some research and I went to a really good bookstore there and I ordered a book for him of the war as it was in the Far East, you know. His wife wasn't too happy with me about that. She said, I don't, I want him to have it, but I don't know if it's a good idea, and I said, Why. She said, I don't want him to start having bad nightmares again. You see, she was afraid it might...but apparently it didn't, but he lost the hearing in one ear while he was in prisoner-of-war camp. A Japanese guard hit him across the head with the butt of a rifle and it damaged his eardrum, and he, and then he started going deaf in the other ear later, but anyway, he used to drive his wife crazy, 'cause he's have all these war films on so loud, you know. Well, 'course I go through the same thing now. My husband is almost stone deaf and has two sets of hearing aids, \$5 or \$6,000 buried out in the vegetable garden, and they're not growing anything, but he's lost them, being out there, and I said, No more, and then somebody from the Lions Club told me that they have hearing aids for older people, you know, if you want to apply. Well, I applied in March, had him get his hearing tested, and nothing yet. But I refuse to buy any more hearing aids.

Question: That's kind of an interesting perspective because of that your brother had, where even though he was a part of World War II, being isolated, he didn't see a lot of history. Now in retrospect, we know a lot of things. Did you realize from England what was happening in Germany with the Jews?

Answer: No!! No, and you know, 'course after Bob was born, after awhile, you know I just felt very, shall I say, nervous to do something, and strange thing I didn't want to play the piano. Isn't that something after 18 years of playing... didn't want to play the piano, but I thought I should and maybe 'cause I hadn't really played seriously for almost 4 years, not really while I was in the service. I'd only played Deep in the Heart of Texas, and those kind of things for the troops, and one time in Wales, I was asked to play for a wonderful big gathering of Welsh, of a big hymn sing, and if you've ever heard the Welsh sing, I mean, they sing, did you ever read the book, How Green Was My Valley? Or did you see the movie where they were marching home from the mines when they're singing, sing from the heart. Anyway,

Stella Agnes Andrew-Warner

Tape 2 of 2

I sat up there with a grand piano and played all these hymns for all these men and they sang their hearts out, and I loved it, but then afterwards, the lady who had organized it and had found me to come to play through making inquiries, she took me to Lloyd George's house and let me play his piano in his living room, because he was dead then, but I mean it was his home, and he was the Prime Minister of England at one time, and let me play, so that was sort of an event. But anyway, that was one of the more pleasurable memories, but there's no people in the world that sing like the Welsh when they, at yet, they're not really a friendly people. Up there, you know, when I was stationed in North Wales, if went into a little store, of course, we were in uniform, immediately they'd start speaking in Welsh, and as soon as we went out, you could hear them, some of them speaking in English again, you know. And they weren't easy women to have as landladies, because we had to billet our girls in houses there. No. You paid for any repairs that were needed, you know, and they would submit the same repairs month after month. Oh, boy, I hope no Welsh people hear me saying this. My Dad was raised in South Wales, so he spoke some Welsh.

Question: do you remember, it's interesting, because the song you mentioned, Deep in the Heart of Texas, not a good English song. I assume that was for the American troops.

Answer: Oh, yeah. Roll Out the Barrel. South of the Border, Down Mexico Way. A Wishing Will Make it So. Nightingales Sang in Barclay Square. All of those were just great favorites with the...

Question: Any, 'cause those were mostly pretty, you know, Roll Out the Barrel, are up songs. Were there any that were ones that they wanted you to play that were a little quieter, that maybe took them back home, or were they more wanting to keep it...

Answer: Yes, the, the um, Mallory song, Now is the Hour When We Must Say Good-bye, soon we'll be sailing far across the sea. That one, yeah. They loved to sing those, and then, Wishing Will Make it So, just keep on wishing and cares will go, you know. Yeah. That was, there were a few various, sentimental, you know. When I was in a pub, oh, it was a good job, I'm not an alcoholic, but they'd put, I would have drinks, beers lined up over the top of the piano. They wanted me keep playing so they could sing, and I'd play for hours and hours, but it was one of the fun things, and I used to think this is the reason that I was given this gift. Because my gift was not just being able to play, it was the gift of what goes in hear comes out there. I could hear. They could sing something to me, and I could pick it up and play it. And so I'd been playing since I was about 5 years of age I guess, you know, but it's gone now, of course. I've got arthritis, and I can't get this finger won't go between the keys, and but it's been worth it. It was all worth it, you know.

Question: Do you remember any holidays? Christmas in a pub or anything like that with the troops?

Answer: Let me see...

Question: I just imagine, these are pretty young kids that are sent over there.

Answer: Oh, yes, they were. They were. Um, yeah. I was trying to think. More in the south. I didn't see any of that in North Wales, and I think that's what I

Stella Agnes Andrew-Warner

Tape 2 of 2

missed. But when I was at bomber command in Kurten on Lindsey, there was a little pub kind of close to the base there where it was within easy walking distance where you got off duty you could go down there, and we got down there and they'd all be, you know, sittin' around, Oh, here comes Sarge, you know of flight, you know, you gonna play for us? And here we go, and here come the beers, you know, and but it was. We really had, and too, the pub, the tavern keepers, you know, they always tried to, with what they had to do something special for the troops, you know, festive, a little festive on Christmas and, you know, 'cause they'd have the place all decorated up and they'd have nuts and things on the counter. Where they got them, heaven knows, because rationing was so cruel, you know. It was so hard. My father had this, we had this house, and it was in the suburbs and it was high on a hill and you could look down over the sea, and he had a lot of grounds, a lot of beautiful lawn, but during the war, he dug that up and grew vegetables and things, and he had rabbits, and he had turkeys, and he had geese. He got all this stuff so that, and he used to supply a lot of the neighborhood, you know, and so we had eggs and all the scraps and the neighbors would bring the scraps to my mother and they had a big, like a big boiler like this they put all the scraps in and then they had some other stuff they would add to it. I can almost remember the smell. It was horrible. But anyway, stir it all up and they call it chicken mash, and the chickens loved it, and of course, they would lay eggs and then people that bought the stuff, the swill and stuff for the chickens, they got eggs. And those goose eggs are like this, and you break one of those into a pan, you you've got an egg, you know!! We had ducks and, I mean, my father loved this because he had grown up with this enormous (inaudible) South Wales. He sort of grew up on a farm, and his heart was always really in farming and gardening. He grew beautiful apples, and oh, we had mushrooms, and I mean we were lucky, but there wasn't much in the way, you know, butter was very, very scarce, so my father, who dearly loved butter, we gave him our ration of butter. WE ate margarine, because, you know, he deserved it.

Question: That's one thing that the students, U.S. students being pretty geocentric, they only look at World War II in realms of the U.S., and yes, there was rationing here, but really different in the fact that here you have London that was destroyed.

Answer: Oh, yes. I was in London during the worst raid of the war, and I was staying, I was on my way through to get back to my unit, and I was staying at the King George and Queen Elizabeth Club on Sloan Street. I think it was Sloan Street or Sloan Square. And anyway, the bombing, you know, started. We could hear it, and I came out with some others. We looked toward the east and the whole east end of London was in flames, and the smoke, but you know, when I went back there in, I think it was '58, or '60, no it was '62, we took a ride in a boat down the Thames, and where it had all been burned and slummy and everything is beautiful now. It's all cleaned up and there's apartments and still a couple of old pubs are still there you can see, but you know, sometimes like the Great Fire of London, you know, after the plague, it did a lot of damage, but it did a lot of good. It burned out a lot of filth, killed a lot of rats, killed, I mean, if you've seen, if you've seen Oliver Twist and Fagan, and the East End, and just how very dirty and horrible parts of it were, and I don't know. You know, out of evil, as my mother would say, out of evil comes good. And out of evil of the war, good did come, because where a place, a lot of these places were bombed out, they grew gardens and the people were amazing, just amazing. And going back to something else, I look at young people today and think, you know, like a young man, he's 26, he's graduated from college, and he still doesn't know where he's going kind of thing, you know, there's so many of those. I

Stella Agnes Andrew-Warner

Tape 2 of 2

was so young. When I was 21, before I was 21 and I was a flight sergeant, I had, was in charge of discipline, you know, and if anybody, if any of the women did anything wrong, they had to come and, I thought, On what authority? I had no education in that sort of thing, you know. And then when I was an officer in North Wales, I had a particularly traumatic experience. I went to inspect the cook house one day, and I noticed this girl standing there by this hot stove and the perspiration was pouring down her face, and I looked at her and I thought, Lady, you're pregnant. You're pregnant. You shouldn't be doing this. So I didn't say to her, but I said, when you get off, stop by my office. I'd like to talk to you, and of course, she looked scared to death, Yes, Ma'am, you know. But anyway she did. She came, and it was such a sad story. I didn't realize that pretty much the same thing was going to happen to me, but it was happening all over. What had happened was that she and her fiancé had planned to get married and she got pregnant, he got shot down over the Channel. She had gone home on leave to tell her parents who lived in East London. When she got there, there was nothing there. The house was gone; her parents were killed, there was nothing. Now, you know, for a young woman like that, I mean, that kind of traumatic shock. Those were some of the terrible things that I had to deal with. And I was 21 years old, and less than 21 years old then. And I think to myself now, how on Earth did I ever do it? How did I, you know, where did it come from? The ability to deal with that kind of thing. So, of course, what I had to do in a case of the gal who was pregnant with the fiancé, I had her, we had homes a lot like the Faith Home in Tacoma for Unwed Mothers. We had those places, and of course, they were pretty institutionalized, but anyway, I arranged for her to get discharged and get sent there, and then what happened, they could have the babies. If they wanted to keep them, then they would get some help, so that they could support them and find a place for them, but if they didn't want to keep them, then they could come back in the service, and the babies would be put in orphanages or in sort of hold places until after the war, and you know. But those were the sort of sad things that went on, you know, during the war that was terrible. I could tell you lots of stories that weren't directly related to me, but my youngest brother who is the only survivor in the family beside myself, he was quite a character. He was, he falsified his birth records and got into the Army before he was 17. He was supposed to be 18. He got sent out to the Mid East, and they were out there with the Arabs, and there was this kind of no man's land, the strip, the Arabs were over here and the British troops and so on were over here. Well, this no man's land here was mined. They had mines there, but my brother, he kind of liked the Arabs, and he used to go after he got off duty, he's go across no man's land. He walked right across there, and the Arabs thought he was blessed. They thought he was some kind of a blessed human being, like they do for anybody that's a little bit crazy, you know. And he used to go over there, and they would have him go in the tents and eat couscous and sit around and he thoroughly enjoyed them, and he's got pictures of himself with his friends. 'Course he really got into trouble for doing that, I'm sure, but anyway, he survived, and 'course the Arabs, they was.. it was an honor for him to come 'cause he was a holy man, he could walk across mine fields. The truth of the matter was, sadly, he didn't care. Sadly, he was, just was a fatalist and he thought if it was gonna happen, it would happen, you know, so. But anyway, as my mother and father said, One day, there we were, all sitting around the dining room table, and the next day we were all gone into the service. Every one of us, and fortunately, we all came back in my family. In my direct family, and we survived.

Question: Were they proud? Your Mom and your Dad, 'cause I know...

Stella Agnes Andrew-Warner

Tape 2 of 2

Answer: Oh, yes, Yes, but you know the sad and the sweet thing was, my father was very proud when I was commissioned, 'cause I was gazetted in the London Telegraph, you know, you get what they called gazetted. There's a place there, you know, His Majesty, the King, or something has seen fit to commission dah, dah, this one, that one, that one. But anyway, my father was so proud, and when I came home on leave, I think the allowance was like 30 pounds by uniform. He didn't think that was good enough. I took me to his tailor, which was Hornsby downtown, and they measured me up for my uniform, you know, he was so proud, and so they had it ready for me when I left, 'cause I was given 2 weeks leave, so I could wear it back, and he was so proud, but you know that he would never, I said, Well, when I get my allowance, I'll repay. Oh, no, you won't. You're gonna need another uniform, anyway. You can't just survive on one. I did, actually, buy another one, a nice one, a second-hand one, but the sweet thing about it was that here I was, you know, an officer, really for a short time, less than 2 years, and then I came home. There was never any reproach, never any, Why did you have to go get married. Why did you have to do this? You know, why this, that, and my mother, they were just so welcoming and just so wonderful, and when Bob was born, they were just wonderful, you know, and I just had a lot of wonderful support. It was very sad for them when I left England, and unfortunately my father died of cancer, and I always felt very sad and guilty that I couldn't be there. I didn't know it, but I did get to see my mother. You know, I've been back lots of times, but at that time I just didn't have the money, and at that time it cost \$1,000 for a round trip, you know. It was just, so I just couldn't, and I just had to the best I could, but I mean, I have very fond memories. Even though I left, my Dad said, If I would younger, I would probably do the same thing, you see. Adventure, that's what it was, really. It was a foolish adventure, 'cause I went through some very lean years, some very lean years, and with limited capacity for earning a living, it was tough.

Question: You posed one question a little earlier which fits in with the hard life and stuff. You said you asked yourself, but I didn't hear an answer to it. Maybe you did and finally answer. You asked yourself when you saw this woman that she had lost her husband, she was pregnant, lost her fiancé, how you did it? Where that came from? How did, because again, that's what our generation doesn't. We've had it pretty doggoned easy.

Answer: Yes.

Question: I mean, you were 20-some years old and you'd faced a war, your country had been attacked, rationing, you'd lost your husband.

Answer: Yeah. My brother was in a prisoner-of-war camp, yes. Now, I don't know where we got that, except we were raised as Angela Hall always says, We were raised with a stiff upper lip. You did not bow your head, you were stiff-necked. You pulled yourself up by the bootstraps. It's pride. It's a personal deep-seeded pride that you never show, I mean, it's like the, we call them, I think my mother used to refer to them as the privileged poor. You know, people that put on a good front didn't have anything except nice manners and a gracious way of living, but they would never let down their guard. They were always, that's what it is, I think. It's pride, and something else that bothers me a lot is that when I became an American citizen, I meant it. I meant every word. I love England. I love the country. Don't care for the politics. Never was a royalist, but at the same time, I love the country, but when I became an American, I meant that, and you know I get so irate when I see people burning the American flag, when people don't stand quietly for the flag

Stella Agnes Andrew-Warner

Tape 2 of 2

salute. When they're playing the National Anthem, people are laughing and talking. That really bothers me, and I belong to an organization. There are two of them now. Daughters of the British Empire, they call them here in Olympia, and that's they first called me about this and said they were, you know looking for people, I said, Good heavens, there's two organizations in Olympia now, of war wives or service women, some of them were, but you know, I would go to their meetings, and their conversation would always get around to English is best. The Yanks, they do this. Things that I felt were disparaging, and I would say several times, You know, when I came to America in the first place, I felt like I was a guest in someone's home, that I should respect everything that they believed in, and I do, and I have some to really enjoy it, and now I'm having to relearn all my American history because that isn't what I was taught, you know. I never heard about Yorktown until I was here in the States, but you see, when Bob was in high school, he learned American history, but I had to go to night school to learn enough about American history, about the 13 colonies and what 3 branches of government were, and all of this. I had to go to night school to learn as much as I needed to become a citizen, but what made me a little irate, when I went for my exam, there were people from all different nationalities that couldn't speak hardly a word of English, Hungarians couldn't speak English, and you know, because I spoke acceptable English, they laid it to me. That was the attitude, they thought, Oh, here's someone we can unload on, you know, and I don't know how I scraped through that because they asked me about referendums and all that kind of thing, you know, and I had never heard of such things until I came here, but I managed it. So we became citizens the same time. I let Bob grow up as bi-national to make up his own mind when he was 21. Now, it's up to you, what you want to do. You want to become an American citizen. I can't take your British nationality away from you, but yeah, he was ready. You know, he'd gone to American schools, so we were...

Question: I have one last question that I've just thought about, because most of the vets that I interview, we talked about the big changing event here, which was Pearl Harbor. I mean, to us, that's when the war started, even though the war had been going on for years. What, did Pearl Harbor mean anything? Was it even on the radar over there?

Answer: Not very much. I mean, I remember there was something about it in the newspaper, but, I have to admit you know, to you, that not all English people were pro-American. And there were a lot of the rougher, the lower class that say, Well, the Americans, they finally got theirs, so now what it's all about, see that kind of, which in a way is kind of understandable isn't it? I mean, I didn't like it, but I could see that they would think that. Another thing, Americans came to England, they got paid a lot more and a lot better than English service people. They got paid a whole lot better, and so, and they took cabs in London, and they thoroughly spoiled the taxi service for others because they paid so well and tipped so well, so you know, there was an American standing along side of the road in uniform and some British troops, they'd take the American before they'd take the other troops because of that. The other thing was, the Americans were taking off with a lot of big gals, young women, but then there were others who, you know, like my parents. We had a big, they called it a big berth gun planted down below our house 'cause our house was elevated and it was down below my, they used to fire at the planes coming over, and as a matter of fact, when Bob was about 6 or 8 months old, Messerschmitts came over our back yard like this, like hedgehopping, shot off the side of the house that was next to us, which was a little distance, but at the angle, it's a wonder it didn't take off some of the side of our house, but it took off the side

Stella Agnes Andrew-Warner

Tape 2 of 2

of their house, and Bob was in his day crib, and we rushed him and put him under the stairs, so that's where you went, you know. That was the safest place, under the stairs, and, but what I was going to say was, my mother would have the boys to come up for a cup of tea, and my mother would always have, even during the war my mother always had her breads and pastries delivered, and also the butcher would deliver her meat. But anyway, my mother would order all this stuff from the bakery and anything that was available. Whatever you've got, bring it, scones, or you know. Oh, we got a little extra bit of lard this week, Mrs. Johnson, so we made some of these things. Oh, great, oh bring them up. The boys loved those, you know, so she called them up for a cup of tea and then they would deliver, so they would sit around and eat most of the stuff that she had delivered for the week. But she'd get her bread and stuff. My mother was really a very wonderful, generous person, and yet in a way we called her the duchess, because she was so dignified, and when she came over here to the States, it was funny. I have a winged chair in the corner of my living room, and I invited some of the friends that I work with to come for lunch and meet my mother. So they did, we came home, and my mother sat there like Queen Victoria receiving, and so my friend Jeanie, she said, No wonder they call her the duchess. She just like this, you know. But she always kept this icy outward calm, but she paid for it with heart damage and with shingles, and a lot of things because this intense. She had a very, very traumatic unfortunate experience. My youngest brother is a twin. His twin was a girl, Audrey, and she died when she was 11 months old. This was in like 1927 of crib death. She died. They didn't know what crib death was then, and oh, they put my mother through, oh, just terrible. They did autopsies and investigation. She had to go to court. My father had to go to court, and she was a nervous wreck. 14 years later, she had a reaction, had a complete nervous breakdown. 14 years later. But she just sort of never lost her, but after my father died, I guess they had quite a bad time, because she could not accept that that he was gone, and she would go out on the lawn and call him and you know, it was really sad. They were very, very close, and my mother always said that with my father, with her my father came first, no matter what. He came first. With my father, we came first. That's what she said, but he was always very special. She always made special things for him, and you know, it was a wonderful home atmosphere. Never, in all the years, I never heard my mother or father say a cross word to each other. Never. And I think it was because my mother deferred to him and he teased her, and they had a wonderful sense of humor, you know. So many little quotes they would say. My father quoted constantly from the proverbs of the Bible, you know. No matter what you were doing. No man can serve two masters, he'd say. And since he's been gone, when we get together, well, how there isn't anybody much to get together, there's Buddy? And myself, but my youngest brother, but we can still laugh about that. He always had a proverb up his sleeve for any situation. One of his favorite was about, you know, A penny saved is a penny earned. Very clever with money. Good mathematician.

Question: Well, thank you very much.