

ANNIE VERNICE EDEN WELLS

Cleveland, Utah

August 4, 2004

World War II, Women on the Home Front

Oral History Project

Emery County Archives

Interviewed by Dottie Grimes & Shirley Spears

**VERNICE WELLS, AUGUST 4, 2004
CLEVELAND, UTAH**

**EMERY COUNTY ARCHIVES
WORLD WAR II PROJECT**

Interviewed by Dottie Grimes and Shirley Spears

Dottie: We have a grant to get some oral histories of women who lived through World War II, but we want to hear about your life, so lets start by telling us your name and age and where you were born.

Vernice: I'm Annie Vernice Eden Wells, and I was born on the 30th of March, 1918. I'm 86 now.

And I was born in Cleveland on the John Eden home-farm.

Dottie: Who were your parents?

Vernice: My parents were Henry Eden and Annie Catherine Williams Eden. She died in 1921 on my birthday, 30th of March.

Dottie: Terrible birthday present. What did she die of?

Vernice: She had that flu that was going around at that time in 1921, and I guess partly the results.

Dottie: How old were you?

Vernice: Three. The day I turned three, she died. And the next day, by 7:00 the next day, my father's sister Harriet, her husband died. So the brother and sister had both lost their companions in hours. So then both of them moved up with their father, John Eden, here in Cleveland up on the Eden farm.

Dottie: Where is it located?

Vernice: Well it's just a little west of . . .

Vernice: Yes. She was my aunt, sister to my father, and sister-in-law to Ilene's father. We weren't any relation, but we was twins.

Dottie: What schools did you go to then?

Vernice: Cleveland Elementary, and then the first year when they consolidated up to Huntington and had the 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades up in Huntington. We went up there.

Dottie: What are your memories of Cleveland Elementary?

Vernice: Let's see. I think it had eight rooms—four down and four up. And one set of stairs, they were wooden. But they changed that and put cement in years later. And in one room they made it a workshop, and Jack Ward taught the boys woodwork in there.

Dottie: In elementary?

Vernice: Yes. In elementary.

Dottie: Who were your teachers, do you remember?

Vernice: Miss Johnson, Miss Too, Soderquist and another Johnson, and a Harris, Gomer Arnold, Harry Mortensen and Leslie Bennett. He was the principal also, but he taught us classes.

Dottie: What a great memory you have. I can't name all of my elementary teachers.

Vernice: They were all good teachers. When they consolidated, Gomer Arnold and Harry Mortensen and Leslie Bennett went to Huntington. Leslie Bennett was the principal up there again.

Dottie: Did you have fun at school? Was school a fun time in your memory?

Vernice: Oh, yes! We had recess, I think twice a day. They had a lot of play things—teeter totters and slides and everything. They had it quite nice down here.

Dottie: Who were your friends?

brothers went down to what we call Washboard—east of Elmo and they had a homestead down there—my dad and grandfather both, and he got both of them. And it was a very good farm.

Dotie: Do you know about what year? John Eden was your grandfather, right?

Vernice: Yes.

Dotie: About what year did he come to Emery County?

Vernice: About 1887.

Dotie: So he was one of the first?

Vernice: One of the first.

Dotie: Did he settle—was this the first place he settled?

Vernice: Yes. They homesteaded that up there, and they lived there.

Dotie: What was your grandmother's name?

Vernice: Harriet. Harriet Allott Eden. She was from back east . . . And she died in 1917, and then in 1921 is when my mother and Uncle Al died, and moved up there, so there was quite a household up there.

Dotie: How fun, though.

Shirley: Do you remember the Opera House they had here? I was surprised to see an Opera House here in Cleveland.

Vernice: Would that be the Davis Hall, you mean?

Shirley: Yes.

Vernice: I don't know just when he built that. He had chosen it. You know before they had the sound?

Shirley: Yes. The silent movies?

and just helped on the Washboard with cooking. And then got married.

Dotie: How did you meet your husband?

Vernice: You know to say when I first met him. . . I first remember him when he and Lilas were married and he came to Cleveland to live.

Shirley: Where was he from?

Vernice: He was from Victor. He loved Victor.

Dotie: Was Lilas from Cleveland?

Vernice: Yes, she was born and grew up here.

Dotie: How did they meet, do you know?

Vernice: Well, I guess just with them being around and young people.

Dotie: School?

Vernice: No, it wouldn't be school.

Dotie: Did Victor have its own school?

Vernice: Victor did. Oh, yes. But this was kind of after Victor. See Victor. . . that dam in Desert Lake broke and they didn't have water and they couldn't get help to fix it, and they all moved out and left it.

Shirley: Do you remember much about Victor and Desert Lake—what it looked like?

Vernice: The most I saw of it. . . Well, the first time I'd been to Victor—we'd been to Price, Ilene and I—that's the one I grew up with. We wanted to see Victor because we had heard so much about it. So Uncle Bill decided to take us that way and let us see Victor. And just as we got to the hill where the road goes down, you could see the town. He said, "Okay, here's Wellsville." There so many Wells lived there. (Laugh) And that's the first I saw of it. And after I got going with

Vernice: No, she was older than me. She was the same age as my one brother. Oh, I knew everybody in Cleveland. Not now. But we used to.

Dottie: So how did you and Loren get together?

Vernice: Well, we knew him all the time he lived here. He always danced with me, but then a year after Lilas died, he asked me to go home with him. That's how I guess I met him. First I knew him personally. I knew who he was before.

Dottie: How long did you date?

Vernice: About three years.

Shirley: Oh, that's quite a while.

Vernice: It was a long time.

Dottie: So how old were you when you married?

Vernice: I was 21.

Dottie: Do you remember how old he was when you married him?

Vernice: Loren? About 29. He was older, but he didn't seem older. He was so near my brother's age as a he was just another boy. But I knew him as being married. I knew them together.

Dottie: What about your children? How many children do you have?

Vernice: We had four together. Dan is the oldest, and then Catherine and then we had John and James.

Dottie: What years were they born?

Vernice: Dan was born in '42, Feb 4th; Catherine on the 29th of December, '45; and John on the 24th of Jan, '50; and James on the 31st of Oct.—Halloween, '54.

Dottie: What about Larna? Who helped him with Larna?

Dottie: What changes came about right after Pearl Harbor in your life? Did your life change quickly as we went into war?

Vernice: Well, I don't know. Then they started on that sugar and tires and gas and all those things that you could only have so much.

Dottie: Did that affect you?

Vernice: It was pretty hard where the men had to drive to work. Loren was working up to

Sunnyside. Is that what they called Kaiser?

(Phone ringing)—pause

Dottie: So, Sunnyside--. That was a long way to drive.

Vernice: Very long. It took a long time for driving up and back. But when the war came, I guess they called it frozen on the job. Then in the first part of August—that would be '42, they took my—both brothers at the same time to go, and that left my dad alone on that big farm, and he was older, you know, so the mine gave Loren a release until fall, and so he went and helped take care of the farm and cattle and everything. Then he had to go back to work, and then in the spring, he had to help what he could because he had to stay at the mine.

Dottie: They didn't give him another release?

Vernice: In July, they let Allot, my oldest brother come back to do the farming, because they needed the farm stuff too. So then he took care of the work down there. Loren stopped on a day off or anything, he'd go down and help. But my youngest brother, he was in England most of the time. He got home in November '45.

Dottie: Was he married?

Vernice: Neither one of them was married

Vernice: I still get along on what I get.

Dottie: Do you remember and did you participate in any of the recycling such as the scrap metal drive and the newspapers?

Vernice: No. Well, we didn't have that much of it.

Dottie: Do you remember, at all, the gathering of milk weed pods for the government to give the milkweed fibers. . .

Vernice: I don't know about that.

Shirley: Did you work with the Red Cross or anything? The Relief Society helping make packages for the men overseas?

Vernice: I don't remember. If I did, I forgot. If I did, it just went along with the . . .

Dottie: Do you recall any other differences in the war? I have read that there were no nylon stockings. Did that make a difference in your life? Or were you used to cotton socks anyway?

Vernice: I don't remember having any demands or anything I suffered from having.

Dottie: Well, that's great! What about the mood of the community during the war? Were they patriotic and enthusiastic or worried and depressed?

Vernice: I think they accepted it pretty good. It was hard, 'cause the boys. My aunt and uncle had five boys and one girl in that service at the same time.

Shirley: Did they all come home?

Vernice: They all came home.

Dottie: What was their names?

Vernice: Ed and Maude Jensen—that's Fred's parents. Fred was one of them that was gone, and after he come back, I get Allot and Jack told him that Larra was cute and he ought to date her.

Vernice: It was horribly bad.

Dottie: Do you remember hearing about when the war was over?

Vernice: Yes. It was a better feeling than we had when it started. (Laughs)

Shirley: Did the town celebrate?

Vernice: You know I don't remember.

Dottie: Do you remember any difference. . . did you feel any difference in your life once the war was over?—work-wise or economy. Did your husband continue working at Kaiser?

Vernice: No. He worked there for a while, then he left and went up to Wattis.

Shirley: How long did he work at Wattis?

Vernice: I imagine. . . I don't know. Two or three years. And then he got a job over to that church mine. That is where he stayed.

Dottie: Until he retired? About what year did he retire?

Vernice: '74—August 4th, I think. Oh, I was so thrilled!

Dottie: Tell us about your married life—having children and where you lived and so forth.

Vernice: Well we lived where Elva Wade's house is, only it looked different then. We lived up to Hiawatha for a while.

Dottie: Did you like that?

Vernice: No. 'Cause I didn't like where the place we lived.

Dottie: Did you live up on the hill that was hard to get to?

Vernice: No. We lived down on the end of town.

Shirley: Where the flat tops were?

Vernice: Yeah. But it was the only place they had, so . . . that was right after Dan was born. We

Dottie: What are some of your experiences after Loren retired?

Vernice: He retired in August and the next year we sent our papers in for a mission call, and it came in November, and we left in January for New York.

Dottie: How was that?

Vernice: Oh! It was a good mission. Different.

Shirley: What did you do on your mission?

Vernice: Proselyting. But it was fun!

Dottie: Great! So how big is your family? What is your posterity? How many people? How many grandchildren?

Vernice: I think it's about 48. I have to count great-grandchildren. There is quite a few of them, and now there's about five great-great!—Larna's. I figured it up one day and it was over a hundred.

Dottie: There is a little sign I saw that was over a family picture and it said, "Because two people fell in love. Because two people fell in love you've got over a hundred people in your family.

Vernice: That includes Larna and her family—but they're no different—our daughter.

Dottie: I know she has always said you are such a wonderful mother. You are just a wonderful person though. We just really appreciate you visiting with us today and sharing that. Do you have anything you'd like to share about raising children or living in this area?

Vernice: Well, I've really enjoyed it. We've been busy. Loren always had a calling of some kind. He was bishop for about seven years. I don't know—the years just flew and so did the callings.

Shirley: Is there anything you would have done differently if you had the chance? Or anything you wish you had done?

