



ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM
INTERVIEW ABSTRACT

CONSULTANT: Margaret L. (Myers) Livingston

DATE OF BIRTH: December 31, 1931 GENDER: Female

DATE(S) OF INTERVIEW: July 11, 2000

LOCATION OF INTERVIEW: Livingston residence, Lordsburg, New Mexico

INTERVIEWER: Mollie Pressler

SOURCE OF INTERVIEW: NMF&RHM X OTHER _____

TRANSCRIBED: Yes: March 12, 2001

NUMBER OF TAPES: One

ABTRACTOR: Sheila Klug

DATE ABSTRACTED: April 23, 2001

QUALITY OF RECORDING (SPECIFY): Good

SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE: Mrs. Livingston, who was still in school during the time in question, relates her memories of life in Lordsburg during World War II, including the town's attitudes toward the camp, social life in the town, items made by some Japanese detainees, and some of the work done by the prisoners of war.

DATE RANGE: 1942-1945

ABSTRACT (IMPORTANT TOPICS IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE):

TAPE ONE, SIDE A:

Mrs. Livingston first heard about the camp early in 1942. She remembers the men looking forward to having jobs, while she thought it was great to have “somethin’ goin’ on in town.” After the camp was there a while, there were so many boys gone from town, either because they had joined the service straight from the CCC and WPA camps or because the National Guard had called them up (many in the National Guard ended up in Bataan), that the farmers and ranchers began to use some of the prisoners as workers.

Her only contact with the prisoners was to go to the edge of the camp to “see what was goin’ on,” seeing them in town when they were building houses and doing work, or when her mother drove out there to borrow a friend’s car. She felt the camp was good for the economy. She did not hear much about the way the prisoners were treated except that there were some escapees once. She didn’t think the prisoners were being coddled, but they were watched very closely.

She describes her delight in receiving wooden and felt sandals from a Japanese detainee. The same person gave a friend of hers a little wooden stool, and her mother received a toolbox with Japanese writing on it. Mrs. Livingston still has the toolbox. She felt the Japanese seemed pretty happy and were well treated. They had small gardens at the camp.

She feels that because she was raised near the border and was used to Spanish and American Indian people she did not feel it was un-American to have the prisoners of war working in New Mexico agriculture. In school, however, the children were cautioned to stay away from the prisoners. She did hear of some gunfire out at the camp, but she believes that was when the Italians were there.

Although there was not much land under cultivation in the Lordsburg area then, the farmers around Virden and Deming employed Italian and German POWs in the fields. German prisoners also built houses. She mentions the construction of the Howard Lunt house and relates how her cousin rode his bike to the building site one day. One of the prisoners asked to ride his bike, and he let him. The American soldiers told him to take the bike home, as they did not want to take the chance of a prisoner’s escaping.

Mrs. Livingston describes some dances for the USO in the Knights of Pythias Hall, which the older girls attended. In addition, Lordsburg was a “jumpin’ little place on a Saturday night with all the bars they had up an’ down the main street and . . . dance halls.”

She also talks about the duties of the local Civil Air Patrol and describes the nightly curfew at 9:30, which was signaled by a siren. Young people were not allowed out on the streets after that time without a note from their parents.