

Interview with
LEONA (BLASER) WAINSCOTT MARCK

September 19, 2018

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INDEX

Agnews [state hospital, Santa Clara, UT]	17
Army	5, 15
Bahrain	26
Basic training	11
Bethesda, MD	12, 14
Blaser, Mary Agnes (Steele) [mother]	9
Blaser, Robert [father]	5
Boot camp [served in NY]	10 - 12
Boulder City, NV	5
Boulder Dam, NV [worked on it as an engineer]	5, 15
Cache County, UT	5
Chester, ID	5, 9
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The [Mormon]	7
Corps of Engineers, [United States Army]	5, 15
Corpsman	13
Depression, The Great	6
Driving	9
Elko, NV	5, 7, 9
Gulf Air [airline]	26
Homofar [equivalent to a sergeant]	25
Hospital ships	14
Hunter College, NY	11
Iran	24 - 26
Logan, UT	5, 7
Marck, Joseph "Joe" [husband]	5, 20
Marck, Leona (Blaser) Wainscott	8
Mather Air Force Base [Sacramento, CA]	19
Medical corps	12
Navy	10 - 13
Olympia, NY	23
Pocatello, ID	6

Rexburg, UT	9
Ricks College, Rexburg, UT	9
Sacramento, CA	14 - 17, 19, 22
Samovars [equivalent to a sergeant]	25
San Antonio, TX	22
San Francisco, CA	12 - 14, 17
San Jose State University, San Jose, CA	18, 19
Santa Clara, UT	16 - 18
Shiraz, Tehran	25, 26
Shoemaker Naval Receiving and Discharge Hospital	12
Snake	5
St. Petersburg, FL	22 - 24
Tehran	24, 25
Trainer Link	24, 26
Wainscott, George Lewis [first husband]	5, 15, 16, 20
WAVES [Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service]	13, 15

LEONA (BLASER) WAINSCOTT MARCK

Leona (Blaser) Wainscott Marck was interviewed by Randall J. Bunn on September 19, 2018 at the Southern Utah Veterans Home in Ivins, Washington County, Utah. She related her World War II experiences. Brady Fronk also participated.

- RB: Before we get to World War II, tell a little bit about your growing up experience before the war. Where did you grow up?
- LM: Mostly in Logan [Cache County] Utah during my first years, junior high school and started high school there. Then I moved to Elko, Nevada [and attended] high school there.
- RB: Is that where you graduated from high school?
- LM: I graduated from high school in Elko. From there I went down to Boulder City, Nevada and worked with the [United States Army] Corps of Engineers on the Boulder Dam. The dam was finished at that time. It was built [inaudible].
- RB: [Did you have] a good childhood? Did you enjoy growing up?
- LM: No. [Laughter]
- RB: [Laughter] Why not?
- LM: [Laughter] Well, because at the time we were on very small acreage and my father [Robert Blaser] was storekeeper in the little town of Chester, Idaho. We lived right close to the south fork of the Snake [River]. In fact, it was one side of our farm.
- RB: You said your father was a farmer at times. What did he farm?
- LM: [He grew] sugar beets, potatoes, sugar beets and potatoes. [Laughter]
- RB: [Laughter] You were born in 1924 so a big part of your growing up period was during The [Great] Depression. [Leona was born March 5, 1924 at Pocatello, Idaho.]
- LM: That is right.
- RB: What was The Depression like in your life?

LM: In my life it was a matter of killing rabbits and butchering them for sale. We raised a lot of rabbits, killed them and sold them. That was the most that I recall because that was very hard for a young girl.

RB: I can imagine. Were your parents able to always put food on the table for you?

LM: Oh yes, we always had food.

RB: Did you feel at the time that things were rough for your family?

LM: Definitely. We never had any money or anything. Eggs were very precious because they brought in money.

RB: Did you have chickens on your farm?

LM: Yes [and] pigs.

RB: [Did you have] any cows for milk?

LM: Yes, always cows, pigs and some horses.

RB: Did you learn to ride a horse?

LM: Yes. It's a wonder that I did. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Did you help take care of the animals on the farm?

LM: I herded cows a good deal.

RB: Did you have to milk the cows?

LM: No, I didn't have to. My hands were too small. My sisters [Ruth and Dora Blaser] did. I can't remember too much that I did. I remember we played [with] angle worms — tied them in knots and untied [them]. That was kind of entertainment for us.

BF: [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] What other kinds of entertainment did you have growing up? Did you play games? Did you have friends that you did things with?

LM: No, not really. When you are in a situation [like] we were in, we didn't have money. My father worked at the store for his brother who owned the store. We went to church and that was it.

RB: Did you grow up as a Mormon, [a] Latter-day Saint? [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.]

LM: A Latter-day Saint.

RB: Was that a good experience for you?

LM: I don't know. I never knew of any other church. The fact is, I didn't know there was another church until I moved to Nevada. That is when I found out there was another church.

RB: You said [that] going to school in Logan, Utah and going to school in Elko were like two different worlds.

LM: That is correct.

RB: What do you mean by that?

LM: In Utah, at the time I was there, we would take all religion classes [and] get credit for it; newspaper, we would get credit for it; sewing, cooking, everything but the necessary classes. When I moved to Nevada I didn't have any science. I had no history. I had no English.

RB: So you were a little bit behind [the other students].

LM: I had no science. I was a senior in high school with no requirements. I had to have a foreign language.

RB: What language did you study?

LM: I went to the principal. He said this is what we are going to do. Every day after school was out I would report to him and he tutored me in languages. He went through Latin because it was a rote type of thing and I had to memorize it. I wasn't much good at memorizing, but I had to. [Laughter] That is how I was able to graduate with his help, his kindness. I didn't make good grades, but I was able to graduate. I graduated with my class of thirty-three [students]. That was very important. From graduation, a week later, I went down to work in Boulder, Nevada.

RB: How did you end up with a job down there?

LM: I don't really remember. All I know is I got on the bus, went down there, went in for an interview and they hired me.

RB: What was your job?

LM: Typing orders.

RB: [Did] you know how to type?

LM: Yes.

RB: Did you take business classes or something in high school?

LM: Yes, I took business and accounting.

RB: Shorthand?

LM: No, I didn't attempt [that], I knew my limitations. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Were you working in an office?

LM: Yes, I worked in an office down there.

RB: Did you like it?

LM: Yes, I did. I enjoyed the bookkeeping and all of that.

RB: Was the war was on then?

LM: Yes. The [World] War [II] had started, but not really. They were drafting some of the young people. Of course, my brother was caught in the draft. He was gone.

RB: Was that your brother Robert [Blaser]?

LM: No, James [James Blaser].

RB: James, Ruth, Dora were your siblings. So James was drafted. How long were you in Boulder?

LM: Just one year. I went back to help my father. He called me on the telephone and wanted me to come back and drive [the] truck so I could help him move from Elko back to his "dream" in Idaho.

RB: [Did] you know how to drive?

LM: Yes.

RB: When did you learn how to drive? Were you [quite] young?

LM: I was very definitely young! [Laughter] Yes, I did [do] a bit of illegal driving.

RB: I would imagine on the farm you needed to know how to do that.

LM: Yes.

RB: So you were a truck driver? [Laughter]

LM: [It was a] pickup truck.

RB: Not a long haul truck. You are back in Elko helping your father move back to Idaho. Did you move back to Chester?

LM: No. We moved to Rexburg [Idaho]. We moved back to Plano [Idaho] which is about twelve or thirteen miles from Rexburg. That is where he had the farm.

RB: Would have this been about 1943?

LM: No, it was still 1942.

RB: You graduated from high school in 1942. After you [went] back to Rexburg, or Plano, were you working outside of your farm or business?

LM: Yes and no. I went to Ricks College [in Rexburg]. My father said if I worked on the farm that when school time came he would pay for my tuition. So I started working and going to school. I went two semesters. The third semester, which was [in] the spring, my father said he didn't have enough money to send me back to school. So I had to quit. It just so happened that [the] spring before I was working on the farm, [my dad] and mother [Mary Agnes (Steele) Blaser] went back to Elko for another big trip with the pickup truck. I was on the farm with the pickup. He had a new calf and I was there to take care of that. I knew they were coming home that night so I did the washing.

At that time we didn't have electricity. We didn't have water. We didn't have lots of things. I had to pump the water, put it in the reservoir in the kitchen, heat it up, carry it out, put it in the tub, wash the clothes, rinse the clothes, hang [them] up on the line — that type of thing. That day I was very busy with the laundry because I wanted to have clean sheets for mom and dad when they [came] back. Very good girl! [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] I can see that!

LM: To make a long story short, this is one of the experiences you have when you are on a farm. Your hands are wet. You are working the pump handle. When dad put the pump in he didn't put the point down right so that the handle could sit back up, instead of tipping down. The point had to be a certain way. Do you understand what I am saying?

RB: Not so much, but I understand.

LM: My hands were slick and I was tired. It was my own fault. I went down with the pump. The handle slipped out of my hands, came up, hit me across the face and knocked all my teeth out across the front. Knocked me out, naturally! Anyway, when I regained consciousness I took care of the calf. I was a good girl! I got in the pickup and drove down to my aunt's house and honked the horn until one of the [youngsters] came out and discover my mouth. She went in the house and called the dentist and we went to town. He worked on my teeth that night. So goes it.

RB: Your teeth were actually knocked out?

LM: They were broken off. My father and mother came home. He yelled at me from the house and gave me a bad time because I didn't have lamps lit. I wasn't about to light a lamp. He came in the bedroom where I was sleeping. I pulled down the sheet. He took one look at my face and told mama, "Mary, don't come in now. You can see her in the morning." That was my broken mouth. That along with the trouble [about] getting money for school and everything, I decided to join the [United States] Navy.

RB: This would have been 1943.

LM: This is 1942 or 1943. I had to be twenty [years old] to enlist in the Navy.

RB: [Did] women have to be twenty [years old]?

LM: Women had to be twenty [years old]. When I turned twenty, in March, I had enlisted and I was on my way to boot camp in New York.

RB: If you were born in 1924, it would have been 1944.

LM: It was 1944.

RB: Okay. You went to Hunter College in New York City [New York]. Was that your basic training in the Navy?

LM: Yes.

RB: Was basic training hard?

LM: Can I give you a little experience?

RB: Yes, please.

LM: You go in and you line up. Everyone is standing there and they are yelling names off at you and you answer. They yelled a name at me. I did not answer. So they

yelled the name again and I didn't answer. The third time the lady was a little bit perturbed at me. She came up to me, stood in my face and said, "Your name is Leona Blazer." Oh no, I was Leona Blaser [pronounced Blaah-zer]. I didn't correct her loud enough. I was scared spit-less!

RB: [Laughter] I bet!

LM: I ended up with a toothbrush scrubbing down some of the marble stairs in the hotel. There was a lady upstairs who just moved here and she is in [apartment] nine and she is an ex-Navy [veteran]. We were both in the boot camp at the same time. We are both the same age. I met her on Monday. We just were joined. She had the same trouble, the name mispronunciation. [Laughter] She ended up scrubbing the bathroom with a toothbrush. I was luckier than she. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

RB: How long was boot camp?

LM: About six weeks.

RB: Were you able to figure out how to survive?

LM: Oh, definitely! We survived nicely, walked nice and tall. Did everything they yelled at me.

RB: What was your uniform like?

LM: It was wonderful.

RB: The Navy has great uniforms.

LM: They were navy blue. We had white shirts and little fancy ties we had to tie a certain way. It was nice. I enjoyed it.

RB: Did you wear a skirt?

LM: Yes, and [while] in the hospital corps. From there I was sent to Bethesda, Maryland for hospital training. Why they put me in the hospital corps, I have no idea.

BF: When they have boot camp for men they teach you things like weapon proficiency. Did they ever teach you things like some of the men would have learned? Or was it more along lines of [a] typist and how to do auxillary services?

LM: I was evidently selected for hospital work. My sister had gone in a year before I did.

RB: Would that have been Dora?

LM: Yes. She went in a year before I did because she was twenty before I was. She was in secretarial work.

RB: You were selected to be in the medical corps?

LM: Yes.

RB: What did they teach you at Bethesda?

LM: Everything [from] giving shots to standing up and saluting.

RB: How long was the training for [the] medical [corps]?

LM: I think, as I remember correctly, it was four weeks. Then we were shipped back out to our station which was Shoemaker Naval Receiving and Discharge Hospital. It was a 3,000 bed temporary hospital. It was south of San Francisco [California]. [Camp Shoemaker was also known as Fleet City in addition to the hospital it was home to the Naval Training and Personnel Distribution Center.]

RB: So you had to go all the way from Maryland to California on a train, I assume, a long trip.

LM: Yes, a very long trip.

RB: Was that a pretty large hospital?

LM: Yes. It was a very large temporary hospital. When the war was over we all were discharged because we were not regular Navy. We were temporary.

RB: I recall learning about the WAVES [Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service]. Were you [in the] WAVES?

LM: Yes, I was.

RB: What does that stand for? Do you recall?

LM: Women's Active Volunteer Emergency Service. [See correct name above.]

RB: You were a volunteer, not regular Navy, so it was temporary. Tell about your experience at Shoemaker?

LM: Shoemaker was very, very hard. It was excellent. I really enjoyed my work in the wards. I had a very good experience there. The executive officer lost one of his corpsman. I was called a corpsman. When the corpsman was called back to active duty, they needed a replacement in his office for him. [They] went through the alphabet. Being a B on the roster, going through, they ran across a Blaser. They said here is someone who knows how to type. They sent me up to his office [and] he accepted me. So I ended up being secretary to the executive officer of this big hospital.

RB: Instead of being a nurse or a ward nurse, you became the secretary to the big boss.

LM: That's right, one of the big bosses. So I had a wonderful time.

RB: What did you do for him?

LM: I did all his typing, signed all his discharges. [Laughter]

RB: He didn't sign them? You did? Why not? No one will now!

LM: [Laughter] Shame on you! Those were just some of the things I had to do. I really enjoyed it. He was an excellent man to work for. Very nice.

RB: Was he good to you?

LM: My career in the Navy finished up beautifully. When they closed down the hospital he had me transferred to Balboa Park [in] San Francisco which was a discharge area for WAVES. I was doing clerical work discharging WAVES until my number came up. When my number came up I was gone.

RB: By that point was the war over?

LM: Yes, that was in 1946.

RB: Were you in from 1944 to 1946, two years?

LM: Just two years.

RB: When you were at the hospital, were there wounded soldiers coming back?

LM: They brought them in to San Francisco Bay [on] hospital ships. From there they moved into cattle cars. It sounds crude, but that is what they did and they sent them out to our hospital. This was the time [when] the Asians had really just massacred our troops.

RB: Yes. Did you see some [very] injured troops?

LM: Yes, a lot of them. Very, very bad.

RB: How did it make you feel when you were working? Was it tough?

LM: It would hurt. You did everything you could for them

RB: You did medical things, but were you also there to provide some moral support and talk to them?

LM: We did.

RB: Even if that wasn't your job. Did you have some good experiences helping some of the troops?

LM: Yes.

RB: Did you enjoy that?

LM: Yes, very much.

RB: I can imagine. You kind of grew up pretty fast.

LM: I grew up extremely fast in two years. By the time I [was discharged] I was well educated.

RB: By that point you had just two semesters of college.

LM: That was all.

RB: And training in New York and in Bethesda, but then you learned on the job.

LM: Yes. When I [was discharged] I went to Sacramento [California] for work. We had an apartment, Dora, my sister, and I.

RB: Had Dora been in California working as [in the] WAVES?

LM: She had been in Washington DC.

RB: Did she come out to Sacramento?

LM: Yes, she came out to Sacramento. She [was] discharged before [me] because she had gone in the year before. I kind of [trailed] along behind her which was wonderful for me.

RB: This was 1946 and you didn't get married until 1948. So what was your life like in Sacramento?

LM: It was wonderful. I got a job with the Corps of Engineers because I had been working at Boulder Dam. Sacramento had an office and I [went] to work there. It was great.

RB: Did you live with your sister?

LM: We lived together, yes.

RB: When did you meet George [Lewis Wainscott]?

LM: I had a cousin and he thought that George was the man for me. This cousin wasn't very sharp. George had been married before, had two boys by his first marriage. I knew nothing about that.

RB: He didn't tell you.

LM: No. He was supposed to be paying support to his ex-wife, but he wasn't. Those are some of the surprises that you get in marriage.

RB: When you met George, did you like him?

LM: Yes, very nice man.

RB: Had he been in the war too?

LM: Yes, he was in the [United States] Army.

RB: So you had something in common.

LM: I guess you might say that. [Laughter]

RB: Like a lot of people in the 1940s.

LM: He was very, very charming. He took me out to dinner, bought me wine and polished me up and everything. He was a really nice [fellow]. I thought he was wonderful. Then I found out that this was his drunken side. His sober side was very, very nasty.

RB: When he would drink he was charming?

LM: He was charming. We went out to dinner. We had a great time and everything went well.

RB: Did he ask you to marry him?

LM: Of course.

RB: Were you in love?

LM: I think I must have been. [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] After you married your eyes were opened and saw him a little more

LM: A little more alive.

RB: You had five children with him. Where were you living?

[Leona's children: 1, Robert Lewis Wainscott, born May 13, 1948; 2, Rosemary Jennifer (Wainscott) Banks, born October 13, 1949; 3, Glory Lena Wainscott, born February 19, 1952; 4, George Lewis Wainscott, born July 1955, died at age thirty-six; 5, George Stewart Wainscott, born November 24, 1956, died at age forty-four.]

LM: In Sacramento.

RB: Were you raising your [children] there?

LM: In the little town of Santa Clara [California].

RB: What did he do for a living?

LM: Nothing. He did not have a job per se. One of the best jobs he had was dog catcher.

RB: He was a handyman, dog catcher and he drank for a living.

LM: And his father drank for a living. His father came and lived with us and would drink gallons, gallons of vodka. He and his son quarreled quite a bit about the vodka. That was alright. They were having a good time.

RB: So how did you survive that ten years? Was it hard?

LM: Very hard.

RB: What finally happened that changed that relationship? Did you decide to leave or did he?

LM: No. He made a mistake. He had cirrhosis of the liver. The doctors in Sacramento suggested that I take him up to the Veterans Hospital in San Francisco. I didn't have to have papers or anything; just drive him up there and they couldn't say no. They had to accept him. So I took him up there and he came home in December. They had done surgery and all sorts of [treatment]. I thought we would make it. I really did. But then he didn't stop drinking it and continued. It got pretty bad. I

had been advised to go on welfare, ADC [Aid to Dependent Children], welfare for needy children. They check on you frequently, come by and check the house, and make sure you are doing well.

One day they made the check at the wrong time because my one son, George, had gone out to the garage. His father threw an electrical cord, the mechanical kind that has the prongs on it, and hit the boy on the head. He came running in, blood down his face. I had had it. About that time the doorbell rang and here was the lady checking on me. I went out on the front porch and she said, "You look really disturbed." I said, "I am." She said, "What is the trouble?" I said, "If that man touches another one of my children I am going to kill him." I meant it. I was forced to. There was no doubt in my mind. I could kill him at that point. She said, "Calm down." I said, "I am perfectly calm, but this is it." She left and came back later with the sheriff. They picked George up and took him to a place called Agnews [State Hospital] in Santa Clara.

RB: [Was] it like a mental hospital? I think I have heard of it.

LM: They took him in there.

RB: Is it a state hospital?

LM: Yes. Three or four weeks later they had a hearing. I went to the hearing and my one older sister, dear Ruthie. Ruthie was my mama. She went in and gave some experiences she had had with George, history and his drinking. Anyway, they came to the decision. The judge sat right there in front of George and everybody and said, "You have a choice. You can keep your children in the home, but you have to divorce your husband. Or you can keep your husband in the home and we will put the children in foster houses."

RB: That wasn't going to happen.

LM: Not in my world.

RB: [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

LM: So I put in papers and divorced him. Then I was accused by my brother who lived about four blocks away of kicking a man when he is down. The neighbors didn't think I was very nice, but I survived.

RB: You did. That must have been kind of a hard time. Was that about 1958?

LM: Yes.

RB: You are living in Santa Clara at this time [and] you graduated from San Jose State [University, Sam Jose, California] in 1961. You did go back to college?

LM: I took a good look at where I sat. In my seat I had to have a job that I could perform and take care of my children. I decided I would go to school and get a teaching credential. That way I could teach while the [youngsters] were in school and [it would] all come out in the wash.

RB: Did you have the GI Bill to go back to school?

[GI Bill of Rights, also known as the Serviceman's Readjustment Act of 1944, was a government bill for veteran's education after World War II.]

LM: No, I didn't use it. I went back to the junior college. I went to the Bank of America to get a loan and they kind of laughed at me.

RB: Why did they laugh at you?

LM: I was a woman with five [children]. Why do you think they laughed at me? [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] Okay, [it was] a different time in 1958.

LM: I needed to take care of my [children] and I was.

RB: Did you get the loan?

LM: You are darn right I got the loan! I borrowed \$10,000.00 from the United States Government. That is where I [received] the loan. But I hit the Bank of America in to giving me a loan to buy a home.

BF: You would have to twist some arms over there at Bank of America.

LM: [Laughter] I got the loan, [but] I had to chew out some [fellows].

RB: Nobody was going to fool around with Leona!

LM: No. And that has been my motto!

RB: Good for you. You seem like a very strong —.

LM: I have been very ornery, persistent and strong. I wear a smile, [but] don't let it fool you. That is the way I am.

RB: I can see that from your upbringing. Some of the things you had to learn at a young age made you strong.

LM: Made me very strong. My father and I never got along, to speak of, because we were so much alike.

RB: You would clash. [Did] you study literature and education at San Jose State? [When you received] your credentials, where did you start working?

LM: I got a job, would you believe, at Mather Air Force Base [in Sacramento] teaching dependent children all day.

RB: That [was] with the military again. [Laughter]

LM: I really enjoyed it. I was working with the Folsom City School District, not the Sacramento [School District]. They had the school on the base, so that is where I worked.

RB: Did you like being a first grade teacher?

LM: I loved it.

RB: All the little children?

LM: All thirty of them, sometimes thirty-three.

RB: That was a big class!

LM: There were big classes back then. We didn't [receive] much money, but we had money and we had work.

RB: I think I was in first grade in 1961. So you would have been teaching my peers. [Laughter]

LM: That was the year I started teaching. That was the year George passed. George Jr. [and] George Sr. [Wainscott] passed, both on the same day. They both died in the hospital.

RB: Why? What caused George Jr. [to die]?

LM: Alcoholism.

RB: Was George Jr. your son?

LM: No, that was my husband.

RB: And his father died [the same day] of alcoholism and problems with the liver.

LM: George Jr., George III and Francis [the latter two being Leona's sons], both died from alcoholism.

RB: [Was this] later on in life?

LM: Yes. They got into the 1970 and 1980 group. I sent them to college and they did a great job of collecting cans, empty beer cans.

RB: That is a shame. You ended up marrying Joseph ["Joe"] Marck. When was that? How did you meet Joseph?

LM: The wife of one of his buddies kept giving me a bad time about his daughter. So I said to her, "Why don't you put some time to looking into a husband for me." I really needed a husband. I had been alone fourteen years.

RB: You divorced in 1958 so would it have been about 1972?

LM: [It was] 1970.

RB: Who was it that hooked you up with Joseph?

LM: One of his sergeants. Then I went on a blind date and I made a mistake. We went to the local club and on the menu they had Mr. and Mrs. Steaks. You know what I did? I said, "If it is good enough for you it is good enough for me. I'll have a Mr. Steak."

BF: [Laughter]

LM: He should have learned something from that. [Laughter] But anyway, that is how we met.

RB: Apparently it was a good match because you were with him for forty-one years.

LM: Forty-one years before he died, yes.

RB: Was he a veteran also?

LM: Of course!

RB: You have had military connections all through your life. [Laughter]

LM: Once I started.

RB: Did he have children from another marriage?

LM: Yes.

RB: Did you get along with his children?

LM: No, they were spoiled brats. When you have five, they had assignments. Of course this is LDS training. We had a chart on the wall and the [youngsters] were to] do this this week and next week it changed. Then you add three more to it.

RB: His [youngsters] didn't get that training somehow?

LM: They never got it.

RB: [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

RB: Were you active in the church in the 1960s and 1970s raising your [children]?

LM: Yes, I was.

RB: Was that a good experience for you?

LM: Yes and no. It was good experience to a certain extent and then when I became a widow or divorcee, however you want to put it, I didn't get the connections that the church had with a spouse.

RB: Yes, I see. Because you were a single mother and that didn't fit in so well?

LM: No. What happened was that at that time they started changing policies in the church. They had a night class for the boys for scouting. They had changed that from a night class to a day class and I wasn't told.

RB: But you worked.

LM: I took my [youngsters] over to the night class, drop them off and go pick them up. That was great for the boys. They liked that.

RB: They were on their own. [Laughter]

LM: Anyway, that was the sign.

RB: Did you and Joseph live together in the Sacramento area most of the time?

LM: Yes.

RB: When did he pass away?

LM: [In] 2011.

RB: Did George die in 1961?

LM: Yes.

RB: You are here in St. George. How did you end up here?

LM: When my husband passed I was down in St. Petersburg, Florida.

RB: What took you to Florida?

LM: He wanted to go to Florida. So we sold our motor home and went to Florida into a little apartment there. We were doing the senior thing. He up and died on me.

RB: How old was he when he died?

LM: [He was] eighty-seven [years old]. He had a good life.

RB: Yes, that still is a good long life. Were you in St. Petersburg on your own?

LM: [Laughter]

RB: Did you bury him there?

LM: No, no. His son claimed the body and buried him in the cemetery where he already had a grave. His first wife was buried [there and] he was buried with her.

RB: You were with him longer than he was with her. As things happened the son took him back [to where]? Is that located in California?

LM: [He took him to] San Antonio, Texas.

RB: Another military town. [Laughter] You were in St. Petersburg, [but] you didn't want to stay there?

LM: I didn't have any reason to be there.

RB: Where were you going to go from there?

LM: I had no idea. I had no family left.

RB: Were your sisters already gone? What did you decide?

LM: My son decided for me. Robert [Blaser] was living up in Olympia, Washington. He called me on the telephone and said, "Mama, I am going to come down and get you. You are going to come and live with me." I said, "I cannot come right away. I have a surgical date." I went ahead and had my surgery done. Then "Bob"

came just before Thanksgiving to get me. That day the doctor found that I had an infection inside of the surgery. So they had to go back in and redo the surgery. I spent the month of November in the hospital in St. Petersburg. My husband died. I was operated on October 30, [2011]. When they finally discharged me, I got myself on the airplane and flew out to Washington.

RB: [Was this] to Olympia to live with your son for awhile?

LM: Yes. They decided they wanted to go to Texas so we all moved to Texas. Then they decided they wanted to move again in Texas so we moved again in Texas. Then they decided they wanted to live in Utah. So they came to Utah to this area. They bought a house and they moved me out here. While I was living with them there I fell in the house and broke my shoulder. [I] ended up here at [the Southern Utah Veterans Home, Ivins, Washington County, Utah in Ward] Nine [for temporary rehabilitation]. That was when we found out I was a veteran and could get on the list here. They put me on the list. After I had gone back to their home again, they found a bed here for me.

RB: Do you like it here?

LM: I love it. This is a dream I have had all my life. You just don't know how wonderful it is.

RB: What is so wonderful about it?

LM: The security, the comfort. The people working here are just fabulous. It is just amazing. I really love it here. I can't do anything, but praise it. I am not a disabled veteran so I don't get enough support from the Veterans Administration that most of the veterans here get. My son has to pay a little bit extra money every month for me. He is willing to pay that, so I am willing to accept it. [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

RB: [Laughter] That is a wonderful story. I appreciate your sharing [it] with me. You have had quite an interesting life.

LM: I skipped the two years I spent in Iran with my husband.

RB: Were you in Iran?

LM: For two years. We were there the year they took the hostages.

RB: [Was that in] 1979?

LM: Yes.

RB: Tell about that story.

LM: Do you want to hear that?

RB: Yes. How did you end up in Iran? Was his [Joseph's] job that took him there?

LM: He was an expert with this Trainer Link. He was discharged. When he was discharged, Trainer Link in Florida found out that he had been discharged. They asked him if he would go to Iran as their representative —

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

LM: — and teach the Iranian soldiers how to fly the machine. He said [to me] what do you want to do? I said, “Well, I will quit my job.” [Link Trainer was a flight simulator made by Link Aviation Devices, Inc.]

RB: Is that when you quit teaching?

LM: Yes, that is when I quit teaching. We went to Iran in 1978 [and] 1979.

RB: Where did you live?

LM: We had to find our own [living quarters]. We were not sponsored by a company. Most are sponsored — like General Electric is sponsored there. All of the big companies sponsor their employees. But we weren't from a big company. We were just individuals so we had to find a place to live over there. That is one reason we got hung up there when they took the hostages.

RB: Were you living in Tehran?

LM: No, we were down in Shiraz. We lucked out. Tehran was where the hostages were and that is where they had their biggest trouble, up in Tehran. It is about 900 miles away. Down in Shiraz they cut out the airport completely.

RB: You couldn't get out?

LM: We couldn't.

RB: [Laughter] Were you scared?

LM: Of course not.

RB: [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

LM: I have been known to tell lies! [Laughter]

BF: Because of the revolution going on, did you ever have issues with the revolutionaries? Did you see the Ayatollah's minions?

LM: All the time, the Ayatollah — you can't describe it. They are holy and they are holy. They have holes all the way through them.

RB: You are living in Iran, but did you speak Persian?

LM: No.

RB: Did they speak some English?

LM: Some of them did, yes. My husband had a "Homofar" which is sergeant in their area. His sponsor, you might say, lived with us, but he didn't.

RB: Did he help you out?

LM: He spoke English. He worked with my husband on training the "Samovars" which were sergeants. Their language was very limited. They didn't know how an airplane flew. They didn't know anything like that. They kept saying to my husband, "Ask the computer. The computer will tell you." Well, the computer only told you what you told it to tell you. We had quite a bit of trouble trying to get them to understand our language. It was difficult.

RB: What was the food like?

LM: Terrible. It was rice.

RB: Did you go shopping in the market for food?

LM: I would go shopping in the market for some food. We could have chickens. They would sell it to you. They would put the chicken on the scale and tell you how much it was. If you wanted it killed they would tell you how much. It was quite "handy". It was a nightmare. [Leona rolled her eyes.]

BF: [Laughter]

RB: Were you in Iran two years?

LM: Two years in Iran.

RB: Were there some good times?

LM: Oh sure. We did square dancing. There was an American club and that is where most of the partying went on, you might say, if you want to call it partying. They had food there that was American food. There came a time when — poor "Joe"

had an awful time. He ran out of his money. The money that Trainer Link was supposed to send to us had to go through channels. We didn't get our money on time — we were running short to pay our rent. I went to the lady [who] ran the American club and asked her if I could work there. She said, "Sure." So I ended up tending [whisper] bar.

RB: [Laughter]

BF: [Laughter]

LM: My experience in Nevada was very useful. My sister worked in the commercial hotel [as a] secretary. She would help me get a job running drinks and so I learned how to tend bar. I got a bartender job with her. So "Joe" would go down and square dance with the ladies. I would go up in the bar and get the fellows drinks.

RB: What a life! That is a really good story! How did you get out of Iran?

LM: Gulf Air brought in a load not to Iran, but to Bahrain. Bahrain was about a half an hour over the water from Shiraz. Gulf Air came in and unloaded their passengers. They were told about the situation of about 100 of us in this room in Shiraz. There were some children with us. They volunteered to come in and pick us up. They volunteered on a dead airport, no lights, no help from anybody. Just fly in, land, open up your door and yell run. We ran. That is how we got out.

RB: You said goodbye to Iran and flew back to the states.

LM: No, Bahrain. Then we had to find a place to get passage back to the states.

RB: What an adventure!

LM: It was. I learned a lot.

RB: [Laughter] Thank you. I am glad you shared that story with us.

LM: I hope I was verbal enough.

RB: Absolutely. You took me back seventy years to hear what it was like. I appreciate it.

LM: It was pretty rough.

RB: Thank you.

LM: Thank you.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]