

Interview with Jean Chapin Dolat

Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Program

August 15, 2008, Anchorage, Alaska

Interviewed and transcribed by Janis Kozlowski, National Park Service

This interview is part of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Oral History Project. The interview with Mrs. Dolat was recorded with her permission on a digital recorder. Her husband, Bernie Dolat, and daughter, Jackie Dolat, also participated in the interview. Copies of the audio file are preserved in mp3, wav and wma formats and are on file at the offices of the National Park Service in Anchorage, Alaska.

The transcript has been lightly edited.



Bernie, Jean and Jackie Dolat, Anchorage, Alaska. August 15, 2008. NPS photo.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok, it's August 15th, 2008 and we're in the National Park Service office. And could you please say your name ... the people that are in the room here please?

Bernie Dolat: Sure, I'm Bernie Dolat and my daughter's here and my wife's here.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Jean Dolat.

Jackie Dolat: And Jackie Dolat.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:00:26] And I'm Janis Kozlowski. And is it ok if I tape the conversation today?

Jackie Dolat: Sure.

Bernie Dolat: Sure.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yes.

Janis Kozlowski: Ok. Great. Alright, well, ... let's see, just to get started here.

[0:00:41] What ... what was your first thing you remember about World War II?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Pearl Harbor particularly, but actually going back [to] when Hitler invaded Poland in 1939. I was in ... I can't remember ... I was about 12 years old and it was a very serious time and unfortunately, most Americans still remembered World War I and did not want to become involved. And so, we really were a nation of ... majority isolationists, we called them. Franklin Roosevelt as President, had to find a way to help England. He did a job, a thing called Lend-Lease, I remember that, where we loaned them equipment and money and so on to help them combat Hitler.

The Canadians fought a lot. My family physician was a Canadian and so his wife worked very hard with my Mother and they had a Maple Leaf Organization and they raised money. And they knit all kinds of socks and sweaters and scarves and everything and sent it to Canada and then that was sent over to England.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember people around your community doing that?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh yes, oh yes. Everybody wanted to become involved in helping, one way or another. One of the friends that I play tennis with later on – and I didn't know her at that time, but I found out about it later – was a pilot. And she was able to relieve a man from flying the planes from Canada to England for the war. But, things like that happened, everybody had to find a way to pitch in. That was the deal.

Janis Kozlowski: You were very young, so ... did you even have those feelings at that young age?

Jean Chapin Dolat: [0:02:48] Oh, we talked about it a lot.

Janis Kozlowski: As a family?

Jean Chapin Dolat: As a family, yes. And I think the vast majority of people did. I mean, it was on our mind all the time, it was in the paper everyday: the pictures, the news. We always went, you know, to the movies and you had these Pathe News – RKO [Radio–Keith–Orpheum Pictures, later RKO Pathe produced theatrical newsreel, *Pathe News Film Library*] Pathe News with the rooster crowing ... pictures of the war were very very tragic. And so you saw those as children. So you knew, you know, war was a terrible thing. But, those are the early memories.

[0:03:25] Later on, when Pearl Harbor struck in 1941 ... that, of course, I was home, it was a Sunday and my Dad was listening to the radio. And he said, “Oh my gosh!” you know, and he called us all in. We listened all night and ... all afternoon and all night – a long time. We couldn’t believe, you know, what was happening. It was a very, very terrible thing. And, of course, the draft occurred and they were mobilizing. My brother was three years older than I and he graduated from High School in 1941. He went to college ... actually ... yeah, ’41. So he went to college and spent a year but after he finished the first year, he turned 18 and so he enlisted. And so, again, that was another incentive to do more. He served in Germany, went through the Battle of the Bulge and all that. But he survived. He did very well.

Janis Kozlowski: Was he in the infantry then?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yes. He was just in the old infantry. He had some pretty good stories. [laughing] But, in any event.

[0:04:43] That’s another thing ... my mother, of course, after the Canadian ... which she continued to do. She found that they had a Defense School for men and women who were not going to serve in the armed forces. It was a night school and she went to that first and became an aircraft worker. She became a tool and dye maker and she worked all through the war at an aircraft ... at Columbia Aircraft [Valley Stream, Long Island, New York], where I eventually went.

I was in the 9th grade or something like that when it first happened. And then in ... by 1943 I was a senior and that’s when I decided that I could go to work because I was 16. I went to Defense School at night, so it was from 6 to 11:30.

Janis Kozlowski: That’s long!

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, yeah. Every ... four nights a week – not on Friday which was wonderful. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: They gave you Friday's off.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, they gave us Friday night off. And I had a neighbor friend who would drive me home. He was a teacher there, so it was easy.

[0:06:03] But I had to, you know, go to school all day and I had to go an hour early because I had the two classes. And I stayed afterwards because I had the two classes: history and English.

Janis Kozlowski: What were the two classes for?

Jean Chapin Dolat: English and history to double up. That six months from September until January I had to take two English – first semester and second semester, and two American history – first semester and second semester.

Janis Kozlowski: And why were you doubling up?

Jean Chapin Dolat: So that I could graduate in January rather than in June. So it gave me six months before I went to college. And I was able to work in the aircraft factory.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that a general practice at the time? That students doubled up and got done early?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Only for the boys. I set something up I guess [laughing]. We had a big fight with the principle and the Superintendent and all the teachers getting a hold of me and talking to me – “You don't want to do this. You don't want to do this.” [laughing] And so on and so forth. But my Mom and Dad were very supportive. If that's what I wanted to do and I was adamant that that's what I wanted to do. So finally they had to say yes.

I started that earlier, before June was up because I had to start in the fall with those double classes. I don't remember exactly when I started the fight but it took a little while. But the boys were doing it and they were letting the boys do it who had the credits so they could graduate and they could enlist or before they were drafted which was always better because then you had a better choice of the branch of service that you went into. So they said yes, I could do it and I did. And it was great.

Janis Kozlowski: **[0:07:53]** So then when did you start in the defense classes?

Jean Chapin Dolat: The defense classes I started probably the end of October of '43 and I went through until ... and I don't remember they stopped probably the second week in December and that's when I finished. And then when I finished my classes which was in January, that's when I went to work.

Janis Kozlowski: Went to work where?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I went to work at Columbia Aircraft, the same company that was in Valley Stream New York. And they were building the J2F, nicknamed the Duck. And they had been building that some time. It was an air-sea rescue plane and [had] a large pontoon. They could land, it was such a tough airplane, it could land in pretty good seas. And they took them mostly ... most of them were in the Pacific. And pilots who were shot down would wind up in those rafts floating around in the sea and they'd finally locate them and a ship would take one of these planes ... they had them on the back of the destroyers, I think, or the cruisers, I'm not sure which and definitely on the aircraft carriers. But they had them and they had a big crane and they could lift them up and put them in the water and they would fly off and find this pilot, land near him. They had seals or men who could swim and were dressed for the water to ... if they needed to go get them. Some of them were injured badly and they would, you know, would go get them and bring them back over.

And the big pontoon had a door that opened up enough so that – it was still very low to the water – it was easy to bring the wounded or just the flyer into the pontoon and then off they would go and take them back to where they came from.

Janis Kozlowski: They put them in the pontoon?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, yeah, because the pontoon was set up. The pontoon was not the kind of pontoons you look at out here in Alaska for the float planes – the little float planes. This thing, half the plane was a pontoon – the whole bottom. I mean it was big and narrow in the middle and then the flight part was above that. It was an interesting, tough plane and did yeoman service. It was very good.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:10:19] So you ... it sounds like you knew a lot about what the planes were used for during the war. Did the company kind of tell you about them or did you read about them in the newspaper?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I think I learned more talking with my parents then. But I probably read a lot too because we always had the paper come everyday and I read that. But, they didn't explain that kind of thing. We also ... living on Long Island with so many aircraft plants we were ... well, even from the '30s I was always aware of planes flying overhead because they were around. And they were testing them and so on. The P-38s were made there and we used to love to see them fly in their line, they looked like a ladder. The

Thunderbolt was built there as well, P-47 I think it was. So we'd see them flying a lot. They were testing them too. I mean, you had to have them tested.

The J2F they tested right there at our field. And in fact, my mother loved to fly and she knew all the pilots and the pilot said, "You want to go for a test flight Aileen?" And she said, "Sure!" And so she had several flights when they were doing the testing. So, she loved it. I never got that, they wouldn't give me ... I never could get one. I was so mad! I was too young. You know, I was 16 when I was working there. They were very protective and I guess I was the only girl that young.

Jackie Dolat: [0:11:57] Tell them how you got hooked up with Pete.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Well I was ... that came long after I ... first, you know, when you started, you don't start out riveting. First, they send you for a bucket of propeller pitch or ... you know, all kinds of ... you know, they try to ...

Janis Kozlowski: More menial chores?

Jean Chapin Dolat: That's right. So you start out putting little parts together and I started on a stabilizer. I had the big long curved end of the stabilizer and I would put it together. You had boxes that you'd put in and you had to wrap a waterproof coating around it. You had to put it just so and it had to be in a particular area because otherwise the drills on the rivets wouldn't be in the right line, that kind of thing. As long as you did it correctly, you know, after I did that for a few weeks, you know, you pass that one, they move you on to something that's a little more interesting. Then they started drilling holes in them. They had what they call a jig. This would fit into it, you'd clamp it in, and you went through all kinds of shenanigans to get it to hold it right exactly firm. Then the drill bit would drill holes so that later on that's where the rivets would go. You learned all kinds of things with the tools while you did that. That was my second job.

Then, they said, "Ok, I guess we're gonna teach you to rivet." My mother, you know, I told everybody "Hey, she has friends in every department." She'd been there several years. She started working in '42. Of course, I didn't start working until '44 when I was 16. So she had friends all over.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:13:45] What did your Mom do at the plant?

Jean Chapin Dolat: She was a tool and die maker, that's what she wound up being. They have three levels and she wound up the top level. She was very artistic and she could draw very well. And she was also very mathematical. So, math was good and easy.

[0:14:03] So anyhow she found a little old guy, his name was Pete and he was a little short man. He had the biggest brown eyes you ever saw and he was just the sweetest guy

-- a little heavy but a very good mechanic. So she lined me up with him because when you rivet you have a partner. And you stay with the same partner because you learn how that person uses the tools. I handled the gun, the riveting gun. But the hardest job is bucking the rivet and Pete bucked the rivet. He could tell how my gun hand was going whether he should buck hard or a little easier because he wanted to get the rivets bucked just the same squashed distance for each of them so it makes it uniform and it's stronger. So he was a great guy. He was very, very good. And he didn't allow any of the younger guys to come near me. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: He was your protector.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, he was my protector, that's right. Because he had word from my mother I know. I found much of this out later. It didn't bother me. I still could play softball with the guys at 12 o'clock. [At] lunch time we had a half an hour off and we'd go out in the yard and play softball.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:15:40] Were there other ... very many other women working at the plant with you?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh yeah, there were other women, yeah, quite a few women.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you know what percentage of the plant were women at the time?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Boy, that's a tough one. I ... definitely was not half. It was less than half, that's all, that's about as good as I can say. I'm thinking of each department that I was in. Each department usually had somewhere between five and 10 people in it. And in each department I might have been one of the gals and there might have been two others. And I don't remember.... When I got into the riveting and on the line there were more women. I remember there were more women running the guns than there were men -- running the rivet guns. I hadn't really thought about that that much. But when I think back and look at the assembly line, where we all were and all the gals I knew. And these were tough women, I'll tell you. They were ... they worked hard.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:16:52] And was the company and the people that worked there, were they accommodating to women or was it difficult?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, yeah. They were accepted 100%. There was ... as far as I ever knew, I never saw any discrimination or any put downs of the women workers. Now that could be that if a woman didn't measure up they moved her into something that was an easier job, that's all. It was a time when they appreciated having the women working and it opened the door for a lot of people to get into business or whatever, you know. They found that they could do those things. At the time you didn't even think anything of it though. You just went, "Well, this is the way it is. We'd better do this, we have to win this war!"

Janis Kozlowski: Whatever it takes.

Jean Chapin Dolat: [0:17:53] Yeah. It was a good time. I never got sorry. As I say, my Mother worked 10 hour days and I worked 8 hour days.

Janis Kozlowski: What shift were you on?

Jean Chapin Dolat: We worked from 8 till 4, I worked from 8 until 4:30 and Mom worked from 8 to 6. And so I'd just go out in the parking lot and freeze, read a book for an hour and a half until she was finished.

Janis Kozlowski: Were there very many other young people like you, 16 ... under 18?

Jean Chapin Dolat: No.

Janis Kozlowski: And you didn't have any trouble getting a job there, it sounds like. They ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, gosh no. [laughing] If you went through defense school and you did ok there, pfssh, you had a job. I mean, that was it. You could say which company you wanted to work for. That's the way it was, they needed us.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:18:41] Well, it sounds like your life was pretty busy at that time.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yup.

Janis Kozlowski: Did you have any time for recreation?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh yeah, Saturday night movies. [laughing] Actually, I had a bike. I rode all over the place.

Living on Long Island, the ships coming out of New York Harbor followed the deep channel which was parallel to the south shore of Long Island and Long Island was pretty well populated, even then. And the lights from all of the houses allowed the submarines to see, to spot these ships coming out in silhouette with the lights. So what they did was, they had what we called a black out; everybody had to put curtains on their windows, the street lamps were painted half ... there was only a little tiny hole for the light to come down. Your headlights were half covered with black paint; you could not drive your car without that. You could not have big headlights. Air raid wardens went through each neighborhood and checked all the houses every night to make sure no light was showing, that kind of thing.

Janis Kozlowski: They actually came down your streets and checked?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, my mother was an air raid warden too. And she'd go out at night and walk the streets.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that a volunteer job, or..?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh yeah, all volunteer jobs. But we had to do that because the ships were being sunk.

Now Jones Beach is a very famous beach on the south shore of Long Island. It's a big one, it's about 14 miles from our house and my friends and I on Saturday or Sunday would ride our bikes down there because we couldn't drive. We only had three gallons of gas for recreation. So you rode your bike if you wanted to go any place. And we saw the results of before the blackout and after the blackout. The ships were sunk and the oil and the debris and even sometimes ... I saw a life preserver one time with the name of a ship on it. The only problem was you couldn't take it home because we were on bikes and we had 14 miles to go. [laughing] But we did see a lot of debris.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:20:58] How did that make you feel...?

Jean Chapin Dolat: You knew that these people were being killed all the time. You'd read it in the papers and you knew these ships were going down. You just hoped it wasn't somebody that you knew. I mean I did lose some close friends from high school. One boy lived two blocks down. He was a pilot on an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. He was the golden boy of Baldwin High School. He did everything just right, he was a handsome, young guy, very smart. Anyway, he was shot down.

And, oh there was another one two blocks over, Georgie Moore, he was killed in the Army in Europe. And then we had others that were fine, came back.

Janis Kozlowski: So the war did hit close to home?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, very close to home. Very personal, it became very personal.

Jackie Dolat: [0:21:54] Did you receive letters from Uncle Dana?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh yes, yeah. I always wished that we had the letters. I mean I wrote to him regularly because they loved to get mail. Mail was important.

Janis Kozlowski: Where was he stationed?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Pardon.

Janis Kozlowski: Where was he stationed?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Well, he went to Germany, he went to England. He started out ... he was in Minneapolis and at first they sent him to school but then they needed him in the infantry and they took him out and got him shipped over as they needed to get more and more trained soldiers. And because he had one year of college it wasn't too long, he became a Sergeant.

He was in England, I think, six weeks before he went over to Germany. And, as I say, they worked ... he was not in D-day. But he was in the troops that came over afterwards and he went through. And as I say, he was in the Battle of the Bulge which was one of the big disasters – we lost a lot of people.

Janis Kozlowski: So he was lucky.

Jean Chapin Dolat: [0:23:07] Yes, he was lucky. He was ... there's something about him, he was lucky. Because he could sleep through anything and he....

One time he was in a farmhouse, upstairs sleeping and it became the target for the artillery for the Germans. That darn stuff, they were terrible shots, they must have had untrained men. That's all Dana said, "They had to be untrained" because he didn't get ... his farmhouse didn't get hit. All the rest of the guys downstairs had gone out. They didn't know he was upstairs sleeping and finally he woke up, you know, and came out and the guys [said], "Dana were you in there?" [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Lucky for him they weren't good shots.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yup, it's amazing he came out of it. Anyway that was luck. You just don't know.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:23:57] And was the mail that you got from him, was it ... did it flow pretty smoothly or was it a long time period?

Jean Chapin Dolat: It came sporadically. Usually you'd get two or three letters at a time.

Janis Kozlowski: Censored?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Uh, yeah, I'm trying to think. I don't think he wrote me anything that would get censored. He might have to my parents, but he did not talk a lot about it to me. I was his little sister, you know. [laughing] So, but ... I think he probably wrote more to Mom and Dad and I really don't remember whether they had the censored letters or

not. And I was away at school when he was there going into that. That was after I finished ...[0:24:43] I went to school in September of '45.

Janis Kozlowski: Was that after you worked at the aircraft factory?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yes. I worked at the aircraft factory from January till June and I had a previous commitment to work at a camp in the summer so I didn't work through the summer and then I went to school in September. And by that time things were beginning to look a lot better. We had D-day and we were on our way, you know, going through.

[0:25:14] But mom, of course, was still working. She worked for a couple of years after the war too.

Janis Kozlowski: At the same plant?

Jean Chapin Dolat: No, after she ... they didn't make as many Ducks after that so she had an opportunity to move over to Republic and that's what she did. As a matter of fact, she worked for my husband's uncle. [laughing] It just happened to be that way. We had never met then. We met in school, in college.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, you did, not at the aircraft factory?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Not at the aircraft factory, no.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:25:46] What school did you go to?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I started out at Sargent, which is part of Boston University and I transferred when there was lots of legal difficulties between Sargent and Boston University. It was a lot of turmoil, so I was advised by my high school teacher who was really a mentor to move over to Cortland State, which is a state school of New York University and that's where we met.

Janis Kozlowski: Did the war have ... influence any decisions that you made in life, like what to study in school or anything like that?

Jean Chapin Dolat: No, I had made up my mind when I was in the second grade what I was going to do.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, really? [laughing] And what was that?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Well my aunt was a physical education teacher and I loved sports. I was in every sport I could think of. And I said, "Well, that's what I'm gonna do!" And so that's why I went to Sargent because my aunt went to Sargent. But I happened to be there

at a time of turmoil. There was a very serious turmoil. The student body hired lawyers, the faculty hired lawyers, half the faculty left, it was a very serious time because Boston University changed the rules, I should say. That's one way to put it. [laughing] Anyway, it was so much turmoil. It settled down and it's fine now.

Janis Kozlowski: Changed the rules about who they admitted or...?

Jean Chapin Dolat: No, about the traditions of Sargent being carried on. Dr. Sargent started this school back, oh boy, early 1900s, I'm not sure exactly when. I couldn't give you that date. But there were a lot of traditions, it was an old school when I went there. When my aunt went there it was an old school. She graduated in the year I was born, 1927. It ... the traditions were very important but Boston University wanted Sargent to be a part of Boston University because they were given ... the school was given to Boston University when Dr. Sargent died. They wanted it to be Boston University. Even though they had agreed that they would allow all the old traditions to go on. And that's what caused the hubbub. They finally got it straightened out. But anyhow....

I never regretted the time I spent working there. But I never even thought much about it being ... you know, you don't think that far ahead. My mother told me, "Sometime you'll tell your grandchildren about this." Yeah, yeah. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: You probably didn't believe it then, though.

Jean Chapin Dolat: No, I didn't. [laughing] Grandchildren?? [laughing] Great-grandchildren?? Nope, I don't think so! [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Well, I'll give your voice a rest for a minute. I'll ask Bernie a couple of questions. What do you remember about the war years, what was your life like?

Bernie Dolat: [0:28:39] Well, my mother ran a boarding house and some of the boarders worked at Grumman Aircraft and some of them worked at Ranger, some of them worked at Republic. Republic came along after Seversky, Seversky started the company. Then it emerged into Republic.

I remember the day when they changed from Seversky to Republic – or if it wasn't the day, it was the week or whatever when they changed the ownership. There was a plane circling over – I lived a couple miles from the airfield. There was a plane circling overhead and he kept circling and I said, "Hmm, that's not right." So I got on my bike and I went up to the airport and unfortunately he was trying to get in for a landing and he came up short and hit the scrub oak and turned over and he was killed. I had ridden my bike into the woods close to where it was and I saw it and turned around and got out of there because there were lots of other people coming in there then.

[0:29:56] But, oh yeah, you know, I heard about a lot of things that Jean talked about because of the fellows that all worked there. In fact, I was just ... she mentioned the J2F, it before Grumman moved to Bethpage – before they made the new plant over in Bethpage – they were up where Republic built the Thunderbolt. They had a plant up there.

Janis Kozlowski: Do you remember what town that was?

Bernie Dolat: Farmingdale ... it was in the '30s. I went up ... I think they moved in 1940s sometime to Bethpage. Anyway I ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: To Valley Stream.

Bernie Dolat: No, they didn't move to Valley Stream.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, oh.

Bernie Dolat: Valley Stream ... Grumman started way back when in a garage actually. And he built pontoons before he ever had Grumman aircraft. But Grumman was in ... had their plant in Farmingdale and then they built the new plant over in Bethpage.

[0:30:59] So when they were in Farmingdale I could ride my bike up and that was when I ... I was by the doorway and some of the boarders said, "Do you want to come in?" Sure, so I would go in and watch them work. Jake Swirbul was the General Manager, he, Jake Swirbul and Leroy Grumman ran the place. And they [said], "Jake's coming, Jake's coming! Quick get in here!" So I'd jump into the J2F and get down in the pontoon.

The big pontoon was right under the fuselage of the airplane. The fuselage of the airplane, the engine on the front and below it was this great big pontoon and the wings were out on the side with little pontoons on the edge of the wings. So anyway, I would jump in there and hide and then they'd say, "Ok, Jake's gone, Jake's gone, you can come out!" [laughing] So, I'd come out.

[0:31:45] But, they were building there. And, of course, during the war all aircraft companies licensed other people to build the planes. For example Grumman allowed Columbia Aircraft, where Jean worked, to build part of the airplanes over there – the J2F. And there were other places where they built control surfaces like ailerons, or flaps, or rudders, or whatever in different plants all around the place and then they bring them together and assemble them. But anyway, I was involved, heavily.

[0:32:25] Then, my aunt, my mother's sister, worked as a Secretary in the engineering department at Grumman. They opened the new plant, plant 2 in Grumman in 1941 – the end of '41. And I went over to the open house. They were building the torpedo bomber, the TBF, the Avenger in there. And I went through the plant and we came home and got

out of the car in the backyard and the people across the street said, "Pearl Harbor has been bombed." And that was December 7th, 1941.

[0:33:13] But as Jean was saying, Long Island had a lot of the early plants for airplanes so they were around all the time.

Jackie Dolat: You must have seen a lot of the test flights overhead?

Bernie Dolat: I saw a lot of them. In fact, the forerunner ... Grumman's forerunner to the Wildcat, the F4F -- which is famous in the Pacific in World War II -- they had a F3F which was a biplane. I remember the boarders coming home saying they tried a test and he test dove it and he was pulling out and the engine fell off and the wings collapsed. And they said it's up in Melville, which was a little bit north of where the plant was. We went up there and took a look and of course it was this big hole in the ground where the engine went in and "boom!" you know. The plane went down someplace else out in the woods. But, yeah, they lost the test pilot. But....

Another one went in ... a guy was a test pilot -- I can't remember his name, my mother used to babysit for him -- and he was coming in at Bethpage at the plant. One of the flaps collapsed, the plane flipped over and he was too close to the ground to make any correction and he went in and was killed. There was a lot of stuff around at that time.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:34:48] So how old were you at that time?

Bernie Dolat: I was a young whipper-snapper. [all chuckling] I was born in '28 so, I was ... I didn't get out of high school until '45 I guess I got out of high school in '45. But, I worked in the summer and I worked in plant 2 in Grumman in the summer time, working on final assembly.

Janis Kozlowski: On what type of aircraft?

Bernie Dolat: That was the F ... it was a twin engine plane, it was an experimental plane and it never really worked on the carriers. It was a twin engine, it just ... they gave it to the Marines to use as a ... but they flew it off the land. That was one I worked on final assembly on. Before that, one summer, Aunt Evelyn got me a job....

Janis Kozlowski: Was it this, the Tigercat?

Bernie Dolat: Yes. The Tigercat, F-7.

Janis Kozlowski: Um-hmm. F7f.

Bernie Dolat: Yeah, F7. And I worked on that. Up inside I put in the covers on the over where the gas tank was. They had gas tanks in those days that were, they were – I forget what the material was, rubberized something and a bullet could go in but ... it was called self-sealing tanks. The bullet could go in and it would seal itself. I put the covers on up above. You had to seal them up and I worked on the nacelles on that thing, putting the nacelles around the engine.

I had a good time. And I played softball at lunch time with the department team. Didn't ... you really didn't eat any lunch. [laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: That's right. You eat it as you ran to the field, you ate your sandwich.

Bernie Dolat: That's right. [all laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: [0:36:44] Did you make pretty good money there?

Bernie Dolat: For that time it was pretty good money. I don't remember exactly what it was, to tell you the truth.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I'm sure he made more than I did. [all laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: We don't even have to ask that, right?

Jean Chapin Dolat: That's right.

Bernie Dolat: I have no idea. I don't know, maybe \$35 a week, something like that.

Jean Chapin Dolat: That was a lot more than I did.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:37:16] What did you both spend your money on?

Bernie Dolat: I ... the only think that I really spent money on, I would go to baseball games and see the Giants at the Polar Grounds. I'd buy a ticket on the Long Island railroad and go into New York, take the subway up to, I forget, 100 and something street. I'd go to the Polar Grounds and see the Giants play a night game, come home, get the last train out of Penn Station for Long Island, which got in like 1 o'clock in the morning and get up in the morning and go to work. [laughing]

But that's just, you know, I don't remember spending a whole lot of money – usually tried to save because everybody wanted to save to go to college or whatever.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Tried to.

Janis Kozlowski: How about you Jean, what did you spend your money on?

Jean Chapin Dolat: [chuckling] I told Jackie this last night, I would get a check for \$27 or \$28 and 18 cents, 25 cents, 37 cents – whatever was left over I saved for spending money – the odd change. The rest of it went in the bank. Then if I needed a little more, I'd [say] "Hey Mom...." [laughing] "I ran out of money this week, you got a quarter?" But I didn't spend a lot of money.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, a quarter was a lot ... could you see a movie for a quarter or...?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, yeah, it was 10 cents for a long time. I mean and if you were under 12 I guess it was 10 cents. I looked under 12 for a long time because I was so little [laughing]. And even a movie was usually about a quarter. And that's what I very often ... that's what I needed the quarter for. Because you had to see the Saturday afternoon matinee, that was the big deal. I didn't spend a lot of money.

Remember you could get penny candy and you could get a nickel coke. And a nickel coke, if you asked for a chocolate coke or a cherry coke it didn't cost you anything extra, they just put that soda in it and stirred it up. So it was very little that ... my Grandmother always had Coke in the refrigerator and I cut her lawn so, you know, I could go over there and get my Coke. I didn't have to spend my own money. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: [0:39:30] Well that kind of brings up another question, what about rationing ... do you remember that?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, rationing was for sure. I mean, you didn't have much ... there was certain meat ... there were meat tickets and you had butter tickets and you only got that much, period. So you didn't always have a lot of that ... of meat or butter that you might have wanted.

Gasoline was, you know, three gallons a week for personal use. My mother had a "B" ticket because she was a certain number of miles – I think it was, it was under 20 but more than 10, so it had to be somewhere around in there – to the plant and so she got a "B" ticket with a certain number of gallons per week. And you had coupons that you had to give to the gas station when you were pumping gas, you could get as much as you needed that way.

Janis Kozlowski: So was that sufficient for people to get to work and the other things they needed to do or did they carpool?

Jean Chapin Dolat: To get to work they either walked or, you know, if they didn't want to use their gas, they either walked or rode a bike. A lot of people rode bikes then, it's too

bad they went back to the other after the war because they just couldn't wait to get back in the car. I still use my bike! [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Good for you!

Jean Chapin Dolat: I live in a place where it's easy to do so. There was a lot of rationing, but, you know, we were aware of it and we had to be careful but it wasn't painful.

Janis Kozlowski: It didn't feel like a hardship?

Jean Chapin Dolat: No, it wasn't painful, you knew why you were doing it. We got very upset when people cheated.

Janis Kozlowski: How did they cheat?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Well, there was a black market for coupons. Either they got stolen or stores – you never know what the employees could do to kind of lift a few of them and give them to somebody for money and that kind of thing. There's all different ways to cheat, as you know. Almost any place you go there's a place for ... if somebody's going to cheat they will cheat, unfortunately. But it's a ... I didn't know anybody specifically who did. I know my relatives were in the same boat that we were as far as meat and butter was concerned. Those were the big things that were rationed.

Janis Kozlowski: What kind of meat did they give you?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, hamburger, whatever you wanted to buy. You were rationed by the pound I believe. I'm not quite sure about that, do you remember?
I think it was by the pound.

Bernie Dolat: The ration was not by the cut of meat.

Jean Chapin Dolat: No. Right.

Bernie Dolat: Not by the cut of meat, so you could buy....

Jean Chapin Dolat: You could get whatever you wanted to get.

Bernie Dolat: But a lot of the cuts were not available, because a lot of them were used by the armed forces.

Jean Chapin Dolat: That's right. Remember, each person in a family had a book of coupons. And if you had children they didn't eat as much and so ... or they didn't like it or whatever, so they ... that's why we never felt any real hardship as far as rations was

concerned. It was just a matter of planning. It wasn't something we really complained about, nobody that I remember complaining about it.

Janis Kozlowski: So, did either of you ... [0:43:11] how would you characterize your life during that time? What were ... when you look back how did you feel about it?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Well, always in the back of your mind you worried about the servicemen, your family, anybody that was overseas, anybody that was, you know, in hazard. But other than that, life went on: you went to school, you rode your bike, you had your fun, you saw the movies. You compared notes with friends who had relatives overseas – where are they, what are they doing, that kind of thing.

I think everybody pulled together is I think the way I feel about it. It was a time when almost everybody's thoughts were "let's get this war over with." "Let's do everything we can to make our soldiers be the victors." We would worry when we had a turn around or when things went bad or a battle was bad or a ship was destroyed or whatever, you really felt badly but you still had, everybody felt together. It was a, kind of a friendly time, almost. I can't ... I don't remember anything that was upsetting particularly, other than if you heard of someone being lost. It was great.

[0:44:49] One thing I wanted to add about the Duck. It had wheels in the pontoon so it could land on land as well as in the water. And that's why it was called the Duck. Because when it taxied, it waddled. [laughing] It went like [imitating a waddle]... It was the funniest thing you ever saw, walking ... coming off the line because at Columbia Aircraft the testing was all done from a landing strip. So we could see them go off. Going out to the end of the landing strip, those things were [imitating the plane] really, it went like this! You'd think, "that pontoons gonna break ... no not yet." [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: That was a real appropriate name for that airplane and the others in the line: the goose and the widgeon. They all waddled like that so those were good names.

Jean Chapin Dolat: That's why they called them, yeah.

Jackie Dolat: [0:45:45] So, it seems to me that their wasn't a lot of leisure time. I remember Grand daddy worked from when to when? And your mom was working...

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh yeah, not much leisure time.

Jackie Dolat: ... six days a week that Grand Daddy worked.

Jean Chapin Dolat: They had worked from ... well, he worked in Brooklyn during the war. He wasn't in Hoboken then, but he worked in Brooklyn, he took the train in and,

you know, he worked ... he probably worked a 10-12 hour day. He was gone at least 10 to 12 hours, taking the train and coming back.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:46:16] Where did he work?

Jean Chapin Dolat: He worked in Brooklyn. He was a Superintendent of a paper box company – corrugated boxes. And they made the boxes that they packed the ammunition and the guns and all the rest of the, you know, all the military equipment that had to be shipped. But he had been there sometime, a long time.

Janis Kozlowski: What was your father's name?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Harry Chapin.

Janis Kozlowski: Chapin?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Chapin, yes. Lot's of Chapins in New England. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: And how about your mom, what was her name?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Her name was ... her maiden name was Hubbard, old mother Hubbard she used to call herself. [laughing]

Bernie Dolat: She had an unusual first name Aileen.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Aileen, I told her that before.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:47:08] Now, I understand that during the war, you know, those aircraft companies, all of them, were really under pressure to put airplanes out really quickly.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, yes.

Janis Kozlowski: So, how did ... did you feel pressured there to...?

Jean Chapin Dolat: No, everybody worked. It was not much slacking off. I mean, we had a nickname for them, we called them "slackers" if there was a person who did not work.

Janis Kozlowski: Would they fire them if they were slackers?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I don't know. I, you know, I wasn't involved enough to know. And I don't ever ... I never got very close to anybody in the plant other than Pete and Webby – the guy with the paralytic ... infantile paralysis, the bad leg.

Janis Kozlowski: He worked at the plant too?

Jean Chapin Dolat: He worked there too, yes. And I worked with him in the first department where I was putting everything together and learning how to drill and run the drill motor and, you know, sharpen the bits and all that kind of thing. But, he was a nice guy, he was good. He worked! I tell you, that guy worked. I mean, he had one heck of a gait walking. The one leg was a little bit shorter and it was like a toothpick and he didn't ever use crutches. And he had to walk from one end of that plant to the other, many times.

Janis Kozlowski: What did he do there?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Well, he was a Superintendent of one of our little areas, I don't know what they called them, Crew Chief? I can't remember what they called them. He was my boss, that's all I ...

Bernie Dolat: Foreman.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Foreman, yeah, he was a Foreman. So he had a lot of walking to do but you never heard him complain. Never heard him complain, never heard him say, "Sorry, I was tired" or whatever, he just worked!

[0:48:52] And Pete, gosh, I mean, we never stopped. We never stopped. At 10 o'clock we got 10 minutes and 3 o'clock you got 10 minutes and it was like clockwork. Nobody took more than 10 minutes but they always took their 10 minutes. You needed a break, you really did.

Janis Kozlowski: So there wasn't a lot of time for people to chit chat while they were working?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Not a lot. It was noisy, you know, where you are. I mean, the plants are wide open, so you've got departments that are, kind of delineated. I don't think there was even any paint or lines on the floor but you kind of knew where your department was. But there was one after the other. Some plants were noisier than others depending on ... you know, rivets are not silent and the motors are not silent, the sanders are not silent.

Jackie Dolat: No hearing protection, no gloves, no.... [all laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: **[0:49:49]** Women had to wear bandanas in their hair. They could not have ... they had to have a bandana around their hair. And they had these special kind ... Mom was good at it. I never figured out how she could wrap it around and she'd have

two colors and she'd twist it and she'd have this little braid across the top of her head. And I tried it and it was a disaster. [laughing] So I just went, rrrrh, and tied a knot, you know, like Aunt Jemima. [laughing]

Jackie Dolat: They tried to keep your hair out of the machinery.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Right.

Jackie Dolat: That's it.

Janis Kozlowski: That's why you see the posters of Rosie the Riveter with the bandana.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Always with a bandana on.

Janis Kozlowski: What about a uniform, did you have a uniform?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I did, I had a Columbia Aircraft uniform. They were coveralls ... overalls, complete coveralls: pants, jacket, I mean, pants, suit, the whole thing was one piece thing and it said "Columbia Aircraft" on the back. I thought that was great. I always carried them in the car. They were great because if you had a flat tire you could put it on over your good clothes. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Keep yourself clean. [0:50:53] Did the plant have high security there or did they take any precautions to disguise the plant?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Well, you couldn't get in without a pass.

Janis Kozlowski: So you had to be a worker?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yes, nobody could come in off the street and just go into the plant. And it was all fenced. So you had to go in the gate and show your pass and then you parked, and then you walked into the plant and you had a little ... you had a ticket that was in a bank – you've seen these time clock things, you know, you take the card and you punch the clock and you put it over there. Then when you go out you do the same thing. So that's how they tell your hours for your paycheck.

But Mom had a pass to get us in the gate. I didn't have my license yet so I couldn't drive. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: So they didn't disguise the plant from the air or...

Jean Chapin Dolat: No.

Janis Kozlowski: ... or take the markings off of it or anything like that?

Jean Chapin Dolat: No. No. We were not overly concerned about being attacked. It was a long way away from Europe. And ships did not have – even submarines – didn't have long range kind of pinpoint and we were ... Long Island was ... yes, it had a lot of aircraft plants but it was a suburban community, you know, with houses and that kind of thing.

[0:52:20] We also had, over the Atlantic, dirigibles that scouted whenever the weather was clear those dirigibles were up there. And there was a friend of ours that taught with my husband....

Bernie Dolat: They were blimps, like you see today over the golf courses.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, right.

Bernie Dolat: They were blimps. It's like a big air bag. Go ahead.

Jean Chapin Dolat: And they have ... they scouted and they could see submarines if they were down not too deep. And they never ... as Bernie Henry said, they never sunk any ships when his blimp was up there, never sunk any ships then. Those blimps really patrolled the Atlantic.

Janis Kozlowski: So you felt pretty safe?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, yeah. I didn't ... but we did have.... The Coast Guard had the men walking the beach, because we had a big, long shoreline that was not inhabited. Long Island, Jones Beach and the Fire Island, this area was really not inhabited very heavily at all and we did have sailors from Germany put ashore. They caught some, and they caught some after they got to New York or some place because they thought they had a good accent but they didn't, you know. They got spotted but they did have the.... But, you know, again, the incidents were infrequent and we didn't feel threatened. But we did feel alert. I know we never went down to the beach at night because we couldn't drive down there anyway. But when we went they were always patrolled.

Bernie Dolat: The aircraft wardens were trained to use sand to cover the incendiary bombs...

Jean Chapin Dolat: That's right, that's true.

Bernie Dolat: ... that were used by the German's on England. And so if we were gonna get bombed and the incendiary bombs were going to be used to light fires, you couldn't put them out with water so they were trained how to cover them with sand. So your mother went through that kind of training.

Jean Chapin Dolat: We had buckets of sand, I remember that too.

Bernie Dolat: Almost every house would have buckets of sand...

Jean Chapin Dolat: I'd forgotten about that.

Bernie Dolat: ... stored someplace. Because you were aware of it.

Jackie Dolat: That's pretty close to home.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Jean Chapin Dolat: But, you know, you really weren't frightened because they didn't have the capability of flying across the Atlantic. They did not have the aircraft carriers, you know, that they have today, in the Atlantic, like the Japanese had. So, you know, it was not particularly ... not a frightening time for us at all. You never felt frightened you just felt you want to win this war and everybody wants to pitch in and do their part.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:55:28] Was most of the news that you heard from the European Theatre? Did you hear much about the Pacific War or anything about Alaska? Did you know what was going on up here?

Jean Chapin Dolat: We did not know a lot about what was going on in Alaska. We certainly did know what went on in the Pacific. We got a lot of news about that. I remember there was a time when Alaska – the Aleutians – were attacked, there was some kind of bombing or whatever. But, just ... I can only remember very little about....

Bernie Dolat: We knew about the invasion of the Aleutian Islands by the Japanese.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, that was it.

Bernie Dolat: But things in between there wasn't really a lot of action there so the action at the ... in the Pacific where we did the island hopping on our way to Japan got more coverage.

Jean Chapin Dolat: That's where the coverage was.

Bernie Dolat: But we did hear about when there was action up here, when we went in to take back the islands from the Japanese later on. But certainly the emphasis was more on if we were going to be talking about the specific emphasis, it would be more on the island hopping on the way to ... or way back in the beginning was Guadalcanal got a lot of ... and so forth.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, there were some big, horrible battles over there.

Bernie Dolat: That's right.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Lost a lot, lost a lot.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:57:07] Bernie, in the plant that you worked in, was there pressure in your plant to work harder to get those airplanes out?

Bernie Dolat: It wasn't so much the pressure of ... the war effort was understood by everybody. So, we have a war effort, and this is what we're gonna do and.... Jean mentioned earlier, now 10 hour days was the norm. Everybody worked 10 hour days. Some of the plants only worked two 10 hour shifts. The third shift was used to bring in more parts or repair the machinery that had been ... needed repair during the day so that they could continue production later on. Some places though did run three shifts; 10 hour shifts ... two 10 hour shifts and then whatever to get the work done. Usually the third one was for maintenance. But people just knew you had to work. And if you didn't work, you were gone.

Janis Kozlowski: They fired people if they weren't producing?

Bernie Dolat: Oh yeah, if you didn't work you were gone. And remember if you were of draft age, there was a lot of incentive. That's right. If you were of draft age and were working in a defense plant that was because the draft board – the local draft board said yes, you're exempt from the draft because you're working in the defense industry and we need the airplanes and you're a key person in this particular production. So, you know, in the back of the mind of anybody that was of draft age, if you didn't produce here, "good bye" and where are you going next – you're going next in the Army. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Europe or wherever.

Bernie Dolat: Or where ever.

Jean Chapin Dolat: See, remember, they didn't draft everybody. Here's a block of young men 18 to 27 was it?

Bernie Dolat: Well, in the beginning it was 45.

Jean Chapin Dolat: 45, that was in the beginning. 18 to ... anyway there is this huge block of men. Well, they can't take them all in at once and so they all were assigned a number when they registered and in each area they picked up numbers and if it was your number you were drafted. So they didn't all get drafted so while they weren't drafted then

they worked. And if you could work, get a job in a defense plant and become important and needed then you worked pretty good, that was your contribution.

Bernie Dolat: Well the draft board made a decision.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Right, the draft board decided.

Bernie Dolat: These draft board would look at things and make a decision, say, “yes, this guy is needed at the plant and we need the airplanes and therefore he won’t go into the army as a private, he’ll stay here as a whatever.”

Janis Kozlowski: [1:00:07] Did you have women working at your plant?

Bernie Dolat: Sure.

Janis Kozlowski: What percentage of your plant do you think was women?

Bernie Dolat: I ... it would be a minor percentage. If it was ... if it was 30% that would be about right, I would say. That would be my guess – a very uneducated guess, just from observation, walking around and in some areas, a lot more. For example, in the engineering department where my Aunt was most all the stenographers and all the secretaries were women. If you get down in the plant where you have heavy work most of them are gonna be men ... you know, where there’s gonna be heavy lifting or whatever. And you go to another department where you have riveting, why, Rosie the Riveter was very common. You’d see a lot of women riveting. And of course, you realize the skin – the covering – on the airplane was metal and so you had to have a lot of riveters to put all the covering on the airplane.

Janis Kozlowski: Sure. How did the men feel about women working down in the assembly area?

Bernie Dolat: The usual bias was there with the men. And if they had a bias against women they didn’t like them being there. But they didn’t have much choice. They hired them and the foreman says this is gonna be her job and you’re gonna work with her well, that’s the way it is. You may not like it and grumble about it but I don’t remember ... I don’t remember a whole lot of remarks about dissension or anything of that type either. You just worked along side of them and got the job done.

Now remember I wasn’t involved in hiring or that kind of thing, it may have been quite different in that aspect of things.

Janis Kozlowski: [1:02:20] And how about ... did your plant have any kind of security measures or disguises?

Bernie Dolat: Oh, yeah, sure. All defense plants, you had to have a badge in order to get in.

Jean Chapin Dolat: You wore your badge.

Bernie Dolat: You had to wear the badge. You had to wear a badge and it had to be seen and you wore it all the time. But it's interesting, you know, when you go into your part of the plant, everybody knew everybody. So if there was a stranger in there, the word was, "what's he going here?"

Janis Kozlowski: Who's that?

Bernie Dolat: Yeah, right. But out at the gate when you have thousands of people coming in why, obviously the guard didn't know them, he just looked to be sure you had your badge.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I don't remember any particular instances of sabotage, do you?

Bernie Dolat: If there were, they were not publicized.

Jean Chapin Dolat: We talked about it.

Bernie Dolat: There were no bombings or that kind of thing that you see today in the Middle East or wherever.

Janis Kozlowski: And people then wouldn't have turned a blind eye to a stranger in the plant.

Bernie Dolat: Absolutely not.

Jean Chapin Dolat: No.

Bernie Dolat: Somebody that didn't belong in your department somebody would want to know or would go to the lead man and the foreman and say, "what's he doing here? Or, what's she doing here?" And somebody would find out. [laughing]

[1:03:46] You might find out that somebody was after a bucket of propeller pitch. [all laughing] And, of course, if that were true then everybody went along with it.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, right.

Bernie Dolat: Sent them to the next department and then to the next department. Oh, we're just out of it. You better take your bucket and go down there [laughing].

Jean Chapin Dolat: That was initiation.

Janis Kozlowski: Are there any other memories of things that ... or stories that happened during that time period that you'd like to relate? Maybe not things that I've asked about? Or Jackie can you think of anything that you talked with them about?

Jackie Dolat: No, I think you've covered the gamut for that period of time.

Bernie Dolat: [1:04:31] My mother worked on airplanes in World War I.

Janis Kozlowski: Did she really?

Bernie Dolat: In Farmingdale. And I ... when you were redoing your airplane [talking to Jackie] I remember mentioning to you my mother told me about, she did the rib stitch. Which I didn't know anything about and we went over the museum here and the man showed us how he's doing rib stitching and later on you did that on your own airplane.

But my mother in World War II ran a boarding house. She worked from 6:30 to midnight in a defense plant. She worked with Uncle Eric down there.

Janis Kozlowski: You mean during World War II now, right?

Bernie Dolat: Yup. In World War I she worked – I don't know the plant, or where, but she ... I was always told that she was sewing on the fabric on the airplane.

Janis Kozlowski: But, it was in New York?

Bernie Dolat: It was in Long Island. I remember Long Island had Curtiss, the plant where Jean worked at Columbia I think Curtiss Aircraft was there way back. Remember Curtiss?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, it was Curtiss before Columbia.

Bernie Dolat: And before then Curtiss was there and he was one of the pioneers.

But ... yeah, my mother worked in World War II, she ran a boarding house, made the lunches for all the guys to go to work, fed them breakfast. Then she worked and fed them dinner and then she worked from 6:30 to midnight in the defense plant during World War II.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow, which plant did she work in?

Bernie Dolat: She worked in Farmingdale and I can't remember the name of the plant at the moment. It was ... they built control surfaces for Grumman Aircraft: ailerons, flaps, rudders. I can't remember the name of it at the moment.

Jackie Dolat: [1:06:26] And Uncle Eric worked as well.

Bernie Dolat: He was in the same plant.

Janis Kozlowski: That was your brother?

Bernie Dolat: My Uncle was my Mother's sister's husband – Uncle Eric.

Jackie Dolat: Kind of like your dad.

Bernie Dolat: But, he was like my Dad, yeah. My Dad left when I was 11 weeks old and Aunt Evelyn and Uncle Eric were very close. In fact, Aunt Evelyn and Uncle Eric came over and ate dinner at our house after their 10 hour day. My mother would have their dinner ready and then she'd leave at 6:30 to go to work at 6:30. Aunt Evelyn would do the dishes, for them and for the boarders.

Jackie Dolat: Uncle Eric worked at the Grumman factory?

Bernie Dolat: He worked in the same factory that my Mother worked in, in Farmingdale and they made control surfaces.

Jackie Dolat: He worked there all his life, though. I mean he was basically in aircraft....

Bernie Dolat: No, he ran ... during the depression.... [1:07:17] Which, incidentally, you were asking about people spending money, remember that just before World War I was a depression.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Right.

Jackie Dolat: Before World War II.

Bernie Dolat: I mean before World War II there was a depression and most people were not in a spending mood. You ... if you had extra money ... I'm sure there were spendthrifts but most people wanted to save, somehow, if they could. But....

Janis Kozlowski: They didn't know when that might happen again.

Bernie Dolat: That's right. I wish some of my children would remember that. [laughing]
Not Jackie, she's very good.

Jean Chapin Dolat: She's frugal.

Bernie Dolat: She's the most frugal one of all. She's even better than I am. [all laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: [1:08:02] What was your mom's name?

Bernie Dolat: Mildred. Her first ... her last name before she got married was Piat, P I A T. [She was] Supposedly from somewhere around the border of France and Switzerland. And Dolat came from some place around Alsace Lorraine so it depends on who won the war whether they were German or French ... [all laughing] at that time.

Supposedly ... remember, we had immigrant people that came in in the early 1900s and thereabouts. Uncle Eric came from Sweden, his name was Carlson. He was a ... by trade he was trained back in Sweden as a carpenter. Of course, he just worked with tools and he got into the aircraft.

[1:09:00] I was thinking of that when you were talking about ... you asked about how I spent and you were mentioning, you know, it was 10 cents to go to the movies and what not. Because way back in the depression 10 cents bought you a loaf of bread. You can't get 10 cent bread today.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, no, not even close. [all laughing]

Jackie Dolat: Not even close.

Janis Kozlowski: I don't what you can buy for 10 cents anymore.

Jackie Dolat: Not even a phone call.

Bernie Dolat: Remember when you used to put a dime in the toll?

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Bernie Dolat: Can't do that anymore either, can you? [laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: For the telephone we always had a dime in our loafers.

Bernie Dolat: In your loafer you put a...

Jean Chapin Dolat: In penny loafers you always carried a dime.

Bernie Dolat: Remember penny loafers? You used to put a dime in the top here.

Jean Chapin Dolat: So you could make a phone call home if you needed help. [all laughing] Different times.

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, they were.

Jean Chapin Dolat: But, you know, each generation has different times too.

Janis Kozlowski: [1:09:53] Do you think that living through World War II had a big impact on your life?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I don't know, it was just part of living.

Bernie Dolat: Sure.

Jean Chapin Dolat: But it had to have made a....

Bernie Dolat: Absolutely had a big part ... influence on our life, yes. You know, if you live through rationing, it's a ... you didn't just go out and buy anything you wanted to buy. If you worked in a plant you had this thing ... after the war they weren't quite so particular about that. They kind of backed off and now, of course, we're back in that era where you're very particular, even more particular than I think maybe they were then.

[1:10:34] The plants were surrounded by fence and in the beginning of the war they had a sentry post – a raised area where there was a sentry at the corners. Wherever there was a corner on the fence and they were manned at that time. But later on when things were ... we had lived through so much turmoil and so forth and they didn't have problems why they took them away. They needed them someplace else.

[1:11:17] The Battle of the Bulge your brother was in training for, I forget, what. But they had people who were in pilot training at that time, pilot training. They were in the beginning of their training to become pilots and the Bulge happened and they needed infantrymen and they just pulled them right out of pilot training, put them on the boat and sent them over there. These poor suckers didn't have a whole lot of training in the infantry. They gave them a rifle and put them in there and said, "survive." But, they had to you know. You learn fast. [laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: Necessity.

Janis Kozlowski: You are forced to grow up a lot quicker too. Those were young people.

Jean Chapin Dolat: You think about the pilots of the B-17s. These guys were young kids and they were responsible.

Bernie Dolat: 19 and 20 years old.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, they were responsible for 9 or 10 crew members and a huge airplane and, I mean, they grew up fast. That's right. I think it's true, we did grow up fast. I mean, when I was 16 I felt I was grown up, I really did. I'm working and, you know, sure I'm going to college for

Bernie Dolat: I think maybe that's one of the things that ... you grew up a lot faster.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I think that's the impact of anything. Right.

Bernie Dolat: You took on responsibility because you had to.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Right.

Bernie Dolat: That's a good point Jean. A very good point.

Jean Chapin Dolat: [1:12:45] I never lived home again after I was 16 more than two weeks at a time.

Janis Kozlowski: Really?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Right. I'd come home on vacation: Christmas vacation, spring vacation, spring break. I worked in the summer, I went away in the summer. I'd come home in between the end of school and going to work. I mean, it was part of ... I was independent.

Bernie Dolat: I went away to school at 17 and never came home to live again.

Janis Kozlowski: [1:13:10] And then when did you two get married?

Jean Chapin Dolat: We were 21 when we got married. 1949.

Janis Kozlowski: Finished with school?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yup. I was teaching. I taught a year before. [1:13:21] He was home because he had been in the Service. He went over to Japan with the ...

Bernie Dolat: Occupation.

Jean Chapin Dolat: ... occupation troops. He had to volunteer because he still ... the draft was still on. The war was over but the draft was still on. By volunteering he was able to get a certain deal, whatever it was, I don't know.

Bernie Dolat: Well, I volunteered ... you could volunteer for 18 months, you could volunteer for 2 years. You could volunteer for 3 years. If I'm gonna volunteer I'll volunteer for 18 months and see what happens. [laughing] And I went over to Japan.

We came into Yokohama on the troop ship and there were still sunken ships all over the place, big cranes on the side where they'd been bombed and so forth. The firestorms that the B-29s started, that burned from Yokohama to Tokyo burned everything out. The only thing standing when we went through on the train were bank vaults and they made their chimneys not with bricks like we usually make ours. They make theirs with reinforced concrete and so there would be standing chimneys and there would be bank vaults. The rest was burned out.

The sides of their factories were made of corrugated metal and so what they did was they blew out. What they did was, people took these and they made lean-tos and they were living under these lean tos.

Janis Kozlowski: That's all they had left.

Bernie Dolat: That's right, that's right.

[1:14:57] And then we went up into a factory - I was in the division of artillery in 1st Cavalry -- and we went up into a place where they made landing gears for Zero fighters. This was a plant. And we took it over. And here's this plant, 20th century plant, and outside you saw the rice paddies and they were cultivating the rice paddies just as they did 1000 years ago. There was a man and a woman and they had this rack with all these wooden prongs on it and they swung it back and forth like this. And on one swing they lowered it and dragged the little pegs through the ground and cultivated the soil between where the rice plants had been put down and then they would take a side step forward. This thing would raise up, run back, take a run through, raise it up, another step through, up and down the rows. And they planted around a B-25 that had been shot down and crashed there and they just planted the rice around it. [all laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: Just left it there.

Janis Kozlowski: [1:16:14] So what was your job there, what were you doing?

Bernie Dolat: I worked in the message center. I always looked around to see what kind of good job you could get, you know. [all laughing] I worked in message center. They had this gadget you used to try to decode things and what not and so forth which we

almost never used. You had to learn how to use the dumb thing but we never really did much in code, we just sent out the orders and away we went.

[1:16:45] I was there during a flood. The river flooded and came in the gate and they said get your stuff, get everything on the second floor, everything you can. By the time we moved about half our stuff the water was coming in the front door [all laughing] and in the windows. We got it all on the second floor and so.... It went down in about a day or two so the message center in the mean time takes two and half ton trucks and we delivered everything by hand to all the Division of Artillery and all the other places that were stationed all around. It was interesting.

Janis Kozlowski: [1:17:25] Did you have much contact with the Japanese people?

Bernie Dolat: You could go into town if you wanted to. I never did, I didn't bother going into town. I stayed on post.

Jean Chapin Dolat: You had somebody do your laundry.

Bernie Dolat: Well we had some people, Japanese, that worked for us and I'd give them my laundry and I didn't want to give them, the Army, laundry, they'd just wreck your stuff so I'd give it to him. You'd say, "how long?" He'd say, "oshta oshta oshta" which is tomorrow, tomorrow, tomorrow. That was three days! [all laughing] We'd come back in three days.

Janis Kozlowski: [1:18:05] Did they treat you very well there?

Bernie Dolat: The Japanese we had almost no contact with them. All trains had cars that were just for servicemen. None of the Japanese could go in there. We used those so we could go down, go around, which I almost never did. I went down to Tokyo. I called you from Tokyo once.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah. He made a phone call to the sorority house. It came at 1 am. You had to make the appointment, what, a week ahead?

Bernie Dolat: You got 5 minutes and you had to make the appointment a week ahead of time and they would give you a time. You could make your phone call at this time. I forget what I paid, \$10 or \$20 or something like that.

Jean Chapin Dolat: 20-something.

Bernie Dolat: So I made the appointment and I hitched a ride down with somebody going to Tokyo – it was 60 miles to Tokyo. Somebody was driving down there so I hitched a ride on the truck. He was delivering something down there. I went down, made

the phone call to you and then he came back from picking up whatever he was picking up, I jumped back in the truck and went 60 miles back up. [laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: The phone rang at 1 o'clock. Of course, the whole house knew, I was in a sorority. Everybody knew he was calling, you know. The whole house came down the stairs and were hanging over the ... [laughing] Once I started talking they all disappeared. [all laughing] That was something.

Janis Kozlowski: [1:19:39] So how long did you spend there, the whole 18 months?

Bernie Dolat: No I spent a year overseas. I was on the troop ship in December.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Christmas.

Bernie Dolat: And I went over Christmas, that's right. And I was on the troop ship in December.

Jean Chapin Dolat and Jackie Dolat: [simultaneously] Christmas!

Jean Chapin Dolat: Both times coming home.

Janis Kozlowski: Geez.

Jean Chapin Dolat: You left in September.

Janis Kozlowski: [1:20:09] What was your life's profession then? What did you do?

Bernie Dolat: Well, oh, my life's profession, you mean after the Army?

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Bernie Dolat: I'm a teacher. I was a teacher. I was a physical education teacher.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Started out that way.

Bernie Dolat: And then I went into ... I got my degrees and stuff and then I went into the State Department of Education in Connecticut. I was there for what, 23 years, something like that. And I ended up in Administration. I ran the administrative part of the department. We had 14 vocational technical schools run by the State Board of Connecticut. And so, we did all their budgeting and all their accounting and their personnel work all came out of sections under me. That's what I did. Then I retired. Now I'm very busy with golf. [all laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: And visiting.

Bernie Dolat: [1:21:10] I'm on the golf advisory committee to the Board of Sun City. We have two golf courses and I'm on the green committee for the two golf courses. I rate golf courses for the South Carolina Golf Association -- which is not playing. You do all the ratings by USGA standards with lasers doing all the measurements and so forth.

Janis Kozlowski: Oh, about the greens.

Bernie Dolat: You measure how wide the green ... how wide the fairways are from where the ball would land for a bogey player or a scratch player and how wide it is there. How far to the outer bounds, how far to the trees, how far to the water if there's water, etc. etc. Lots of ... the team probably takes 2000 laser measurements and we do that in the morning and we convert ... after we do that then we convert from the yards to weighted scores in a table. We do that all and hand it in to the USGA and that's how you get your handicaps for the golf courses.

Janis Kozlowski: So you're the guy, huh?

Bernie Dolat: I'm the guy that starts it off anyway. [all laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Are there any other memories of the war time that you wanted to relate?

Bernie Dolat: You pretty well asked good questions.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I think you did.

Janis Kozlowski: You're probably exhausted by now, huh? [all laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: [1:22:48] It brings a lot of memories back. Some of them, you know, they're kind of suppressed when you haven't talked about them but then all of a sudden you realize, yup, that's right, I was there.

Bernie Dolat: I guess one of the things you didn't realize at that time, because we were with airplanes, we didn't realize how many guys were killed bombing Germany. About 20% of the guys in the Air Force -- in the 8th Air Force -- they went over Germany bombing and never came back. 20 %, that's 1 in 5, your chances of not coming back. That's pretty high. And, we knew people that didn't come back and that's the way it is.

[1:23:44] It's funny how adaptable Americans ... human beings are. It's amazing how adaptable. You can live in almost any conditions and somehow or other survive. Some people don't survive as well as others, some people dwell on the negative, but I don't know about you but most of the people I knew were not depressed. I mean, you might be

unhappy about something but it's not something that's going to dominate how you feel inside. It's amazing how pliable human beings are.

Jean Chapin Dolat: You're adaptable.

Bernie Dolat: Yeah, that's it. And I think that's true.... We haven't experienced that since World War II. We have not been united as a country like we were then.

Jean Chapin Dolat: No.

Bernie Dolat: Unfortunately I don't think we've had the leadership since that time.

Jean Chapin Dolat: [1:24:58] I'm sure you've had it said before too that if you lost a serviceman, there was a gold star in the window – you've heard all that I'm sure. I mean that was something that ... if you drove by somebody's house and you saw that you just had to, you know, ache for them.

But if you had a son or a relative in the service you didn't have a gold star but you could put up a.... You could put up ... what could you put up?

Bernie Dolat: I don't remember.

Jean Chapin Dolat: It was a blue star.

Bernie Dolat: I don't remember. I remember in the front....

Jean Chapin Dolat: ... to let them know you had somebody in the service.

Bernie Dolat: If your plant made it's production schedule...

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, yeah! You got an "E" for excellence.

Bernie Dolat: You got an Army/Navy "E" for excellence.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh that was always great. You could fly that from your flag pole.

Bernie Dolat: It was a big pennant that you could fly out ...

Janis Kozlowski: Above the plant?

Bernie Dolat: Above the plant.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah.

Bernie Dolat: A big pennant that you could fly out there in front of the plant and it was very important to have an Army/Navy “E” for excellence.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I forgot, that’s one of those things that ... that brings up that ... they made the shells down about a mile from our house. They got an “E” for excellence and that was a big plant, that was down on Milburn Avenue – you don’t know Baldwin but -- down there they made the shells.

Janis Kozlowski: Baldwin, New York?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Baldwin, Long Island, New York, yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: And what was the company’s name, do you remember?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I don’t know. They made the shells.

Janis Kozlowski: The big ones that ...

Jackie Dolat: Artillery.

Bernie Dolat: [1:26:26] You realize that at that time with the way things were going they would just come in and say, “we need to use this facility to make something.” And they would take it over. For example, I went down with Bill Kummerfeldt to Linden, New Jersey, which was a automobile plant for General Motors, I believe. And that plant was taken over and they built Grumman Aircraft. They were licensed to build the F4F and later on I guess they did the F6, I’m not sure. They did the F4F anyway, which is the Wildcat. They were licensed to do that and they built them down there.

So Grumman had its plant and it was building airplanes but we needed more planes than they could make so they took this automobile plant and just turned it into an aircraft plant. People were there, they had the skills and so instead of making wheels for an automobile you made wheels for an airplane, or whatever.

Jean Chapin Dolat: They did the same where they made the shells and I can’t remember what they made before they made the shells. I was really little when they had that.

Bernie Dolat: It gives you an idea of how united things were.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, right.

Bernie Dolat: You just said, “we need these, “ took it over and people changed production of whatever they were making. It’s amazing.

Janis Kozlowski: No quibbling about it, just do it.

Jean Chapin Dolat: That's right.

Bernie Dolat: And people accepted it and said, "yeah!"

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, yeah. If that's gonna help, good!

Bernie Dolat: Don't get me wrong there were negotiations that went on all the time about, you know, "All right what are you guys gonna pay us?" Or, "how are you gonna fix the plant up when you leave?" – or whatever. But it happened. [laughing] There was no question about it, we're gonna build planes there. We're not gonna build automobiles there we're gonna build planes. Ok.

Jean Chapin Dolat: [1:28:19] I think you can talk to anybody who lived through it would know exactly what they were doing on December 7th afternoon. They would know exactly where they were. I don't think there's ... I've never talked to anybody that didn't know what they were doing.

Bernie Dolat: When they got the news.

Jean Chapin Dolat: When we got the news, you know, everybody had that same kind of experience. The same with D-day. When D-day happened we knew that was coming, we didn't know just exactly when. But when they did, it was, "Oh boy, finally we're gonna get into Europe." And then what a job those guys had.

Bernie Dolat: We lost a lot of people.

Janis Kozlowski: How quickly did you hear about the casualties after D-day?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Pretty often.

Bernie Dolat: The coverage was ... there was a lot of secrecy, naturally.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, right.

Bernie Dolat: The coverage on casualties was not kept secret the way, unfortunately, it's kept secret today where you can't take pictures of bodies of people coming back from the Middle East via Presidential or that kind of thing. It's ... there was, naturally, some things that were secret but.... We knew there were going to be heavy casualties going in and we had reporters going in that would say, "I'm with the such ... I'm here and we have heavy casualties." They might not tell you exactly how many, but they'd tell you

heavy casualties. Or, “We were lucky, we were light and we got in and we’re on the high ground, “or whatever. And it would be reported, but, of course, it wasn’t television, it was radio.

Jean Chapin Dolat: [1:30:13] But we had the news of Dunkirk with all of the ships coming across the canal with ... rescuing as many as they could when we had that huge retreat. Everybody who had a boat in England went across the English Channel, I mean they had little dinky boats and big boats and sail boats, everything they could take, everything that floated went over there to rescue these soldiers who were being beaten back into the water. And they saved ... it was an amazing rescue.

[1:30:45] But we saw the movies of it in the Pathe News, in the movie theatre.

Bernie Dolat: Remember people got ... we got movies ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: Within a week.

Bernie Dolat: It was common to go to the movies on Saturday night.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah.

Bernie Dolat: And so there was a ... there was moving pictures of the battles and the news in the theatres.

Janis Kozlowski: Before the movie?

Bernie Dolat: Before the movie, yeah.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah. We always got that.

Janis Kozlowski: And it was only maybe a week late?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: That’s pretty good!

Jean Chapin Dolat: Very good, very good.

Bernie Dolat: Yes.

Jean Chapin Dolat: They didn’t keep it quiet. I’m sure they censored some of the things but we saw a lot. We had a pretty good idea of what was going on. I think that’s part of what made people pull together. They saw how bad it was, they needed – they needed the help. They needed everybody to work as hard as they could. I mean that Dunkirk was an

absolute disaster turned into a success because they saved so many troops that would have just been taken prisoner or killed. I mean, these people who had these boats. That must have been some expedition. And the pictures of it from the air. I mean the whole place was filled. You tell me that the Kenai River gets filled with fishermen. [all laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: Nothing like that though.

Jean Chapin Dolat: It had to be wall to wall boats practically, going across to save these guys. Some boats could only take four or five soldiers. Hey, that's four or five that didn't die!

Janis Kozlowski: yeah.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I mean it was just an amazing thing and again, the English even came together, I think, even more than we did if you can say so. What they did, to survive.

Bernie Dolat: [1:32:24] We're telling about how it was around us. The politics of the time were still divided with the isolationists of the Midwest part of the United States who did not want to go to Europe and fight a war. They remembered World War I and they didn't want to get involved. And so, politically when you think of the times, there were people who were against the war and against our getting involved particularly in the beginning, through the '30s and early '40s. But once Pearl Harbor came along there became a big turn around. You still had people in Congress that were against it but the vast majority, even politically, turned around at that time.

Janis Kozlowski: That upped the ante considerably.

Bernie Dolat: It sure did. People understood that.... And especially then, right after Pearl Harbor when the British were gonna have a great Navy and we took the two big battleships ... the Japanese sunk the two big battleships of the English down in the Southwest Pacific and knocked them off with the aircraft carriers. That changed the whole complexion of warfare in the Navy where the carrier became the capital ship and not the battleship of World War I and prior to that. And we lost island after island after island: the Philippines went, Corrigedor with McArthur getting out of there, going to Australia. And we lost a lot of the stuff until we got down into New Guinea and then things began to stop. But even there they got ... some of the major ports in New Guinea that the Japanese took. Then we had to start working our way back out.

[1:34:53] Had a ... Vosburghs, one of the boys ... one of the Vosburghs' boys was a coxswain on a landing craft. So, you know you go through one island invasion, that ones over, you're still a coxswain on one of these things and you've got another island to do.

And then you do that one and you've got another island to do and you just work your way up.

Jean Chapin Dolat: And hope you're not one of the ones who gets blown up.

Bernie Dolat: That's right.

Janis Kozlowski: They saw a lot of that, for sure.

Bernie Dolat: And they'd come home, they would get leave after an invasion. They may get leave to come home and they'd tell people in town about what they did and what it was like and how many people they lost and was it a successful thing or did they screw something up or what. They would be very open about telling people about it.

Janis Kozlowski: Anything else come to mind?

Bernie Dolat: You've done a very good job.

Janis Kozlowski: Well I didn't, it was you two! [all laughing]

Bernie Dolat: You drew us out very well.

Jean Chapin Dolat: It's always interesting to think back on it. You don't really get a chance to talk about it much. You don't think about it. It's just part of your life.

Janis Kozlowski: Well, thank you very much. I appreciate you taking the time out of your vacation to do this.

Bernie Dolat: This has been very interesting.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Very interesting. It's a good....

Interview end at 1:36:26

Begin interview, part two

Interview restarts when we realize we've missed a major topic in Jean's life. The conversation begins in mid-stride...

Jean Chapin Dolat: '47, '49 – didn't have any kids, you know.

Jackie Dolat: Are you recording?

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah.

Jackie Dolat: [0:00:07] So we want to talk about your athletic prowess. [laughing] So, first, field hockey.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yes.

Jackie Dolat: So you worked your way up to ... what was the top?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Well, U.S. team was the top.

Bernie Dolat: She made the U.S. team in field hockey.

Jean Chapin Dolat: It was ... you had a club team, you had a local team, and you had a sectional team and then it went to nationals. So you played in each of those tournaments. And then, that was field hockey.

Lacrosse didn't have as many players and so it was a local ... local sectionals was all one and then you went to the nationals.

I had three; you were two [referring to Jackie's age] ... two or three. Was Steve born? No, I don't think we had Steve, so. It was just ... I had two when I made the Lacrosse varsity.

Jackie Dolat: The U.S. Lacrosse?

Jean Chapin Dolat: U.S.

Jackie Dolat: U.S. Lacrosse team.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah.

Jackie Dolat: The highest team in the country for women's lacrosse.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow.

Jean Chapin Dolat: That was ... but I had two then.

Janis Kozlowski: And raising a family as well.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah. [laughing]

Jackie Dolat: And the field hockey, which you played since college. You went up and played in the U.S. field hockey, which actually went overseas.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I didn't go overseas.

Jackie Dolat: I know.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I couldn't go overseas. I had too many kids at home. [laughing]

Jackie Dolat: So you made the U.S. team. How many years did you make that?

Jean Chapin Dolat: '47, '49 ... and '57. There was another one in there someplace and I can't remember.

Lacrosse was '60 – it was the year before we moved to Connecticut. We moved to Connecticut in '61, so it had to be '60. Or was it in Connecticut?

Bernie Dolat: Don't remember.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I can't remember. It was either '60 or '61 [laughing]. I forgot.

Jackie Dolat: [00:02:08] And I remember she'd always bring her whole entourage of us kids along to all the tournaments [laughing].

Jean Chapin Dolat: I almost always had one with a harness on and a long rope tied to a tree if there was any water around. [all laughing] You had to measure it off, you know, because I couldn't rely on the other kids to keep an eye on the toddler. [laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: I'm amazed you had the time to practice and keep yourself in shape with all the kids.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, I used to ... I wore ... I ran the wheels off of one stroller. [all laughing] I met a judge once, a friend that lived down the street from us, we met him at a party. He said, "You know the lady who runs that baby down the street? If she can run, I can run!" [laughing] And he started running. [all laughing]

Bernie Dolat: [00:02:58] The way it's organized, the U.S. Field Hockey Association ran a national tournament, ran a regional tournament and there were local clubs that made up. And so Mom would play in the regional tournament in the fall and they would pick a regional team – a New England team or Northeast team. And then you'd go to the national tournament. We went one year with you guys, we took you to Chicago.

Jackie Dolat: Yeah, I remember.

Bernie Dolat: And we stayed with friends of ours and Mom played in the U.S. team out there ... I mean, in the U.S. tournament ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: No, I didn't make it that year. That was ...

Bernie Dolat: ... in the tournament out there. And we all got in the car after the last game and we drove back all night to Westbury on Long Island and they dropped me off at school. And I walked in and I said, "Line up!" And everybody looked at me and said, "We're not gonna get out of line today." [all laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, that was a lot of fun.

Bernie Dolat: But that's the way it was organized. Lacrosse was the same way only not as large as the U.S. Field Hockey.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Right.

Bernie Dolat: So you played in the National tournament and then they picked a U.S. team and they picked a U.S. reserve team.

Jackie Dolat: [00:04:15] It's amazing the positions you were playing were: center, half and left half, right half.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, well.

Jackie Dolat: The one's that run the most -- [Jean laughing] right in the middle of the field ... defense, offense.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I liked to run. [laughing] My dad was a track man, he set some records in his high school and college.

Bernie Dolat: Brooklyn Poly [Polytechnic Institute of Brooklyn. Now called Polytechnic Institute of New York University].

Jackie Dolat: Yeah, I have those medals.

Jean Dolat and Bernie Dolat: [simultaneously] You have those medals?

Bernie Dolat: Is that right?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Good. Somebody's got them.

Janis Kozlowski: [00:04:40] Is that what inspired you, you think?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I don't think so.

Jackie Dolat: You just liked to run. [all laughing] Sports.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I always like to run. When I was a little kid ... third grade I started running to school to see if I could run the whole way. It was only a half a mile. And there was a traffic light, so I would run in place until the traffic light changed so I could say I ran all the way. [laughing] And I ran all the time, I liked it.

Probably it started because my Dad got home late for dinner. He usually got home on the 6:30 train and my brother and I were getting hungry and antsy and so on and so forth. And Mom would finally say, "Go out and run around the block." [all laughing] And that's what I did! I'd keep running around the block till Dad came home. It was something I just liked to do.

Janis Kozlowski: [00:05:32] And how long did you ... were you in athletics like that and how old were you when you quit?

Jean Chapin Dolat: I was 33 the last time I made the team.

Jackie Dolat: She still hasn't quit. [all laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: That was the time to quit.

Jackie Dolat: She wins the women's seniors golf tournaments now.

Janis Kozlowski: Really?

Jean Chapin Dolat: At the local community.

Bernie Dolat: Sun City.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Sun City. Just Sun City. There's no ... no way State.

Jackie Dolat: She's playing ... she competes with people who are 20 years her junior.

Janis Kozlowski: Wow.

Jean Chapin Dolat: They're all my friends. [all laughing]

Jackie Dolat: They're 20 years her junior [all laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh, I just like to do it, that's all. It's fun. We live in a great place. There's so much to do.

Janis Kozlowski: And then the Lacrosse and field hockey you quit because you had too many kids? Just too much?

Jean Chapin Dolat: No. It was time to quit. The young kids could go faster. I knew I'd lost a step. It was just time, you know. I ... it was a lot of work. I mean I continued to work out.

Jackie Dolat: So you quit when you were in your what ... mid 30s? late 30s?

Jean Chapin Dolat: 33 I was. I had made up my mind. That was probably when I would stop. And I'm sure Mary Conklin had something to do with that. She used to say, "Well, you know, you don't want ... you don't want to go too long. That's when you're injury prone and you got things to do."

When I made the U.S. Lacrosse team that was -- because that was the first time I made it -- I had always just had a kid when I got into the nationals on that. And I was never quite fast enough, I know, and a lot of times that was part of the deal, you know. Where you ... after I had you [referring to Jackie] I was so badly injured and I tried to play that year and I ... oh ... that was ... she was a tough kid. [all laughing]

Janis Kozlowski: She gave you a little trouble, huh?

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, yeah.

Bernie Dolat: [0:07:13] I'll tell you a funny story. They played one of the tournaments at Smith College in New England. And the kids were along, as usual. And they went under this bridge at Smith College and unbeknownst to Jean or any of us, Patty put her name -- and I guess you guys did too -- put their name under this bridge on the campus. It was not a great big bridge but a fairly good size bridge.

Well, later on Patty went to Smith College.

Jackie Dolat: For college.

Bernie Dolat: To college. And she decided one day to go down there and take a look and sure enough her name was still there. [all laughing]

Jackie Dolat: Under the bridge.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Still there. [all laughing]

Jackie Dolat: Yeah, we would get into all kind ... we had all kinds of, you know, rope to hang ourselves during ... when she was playing in these tournaments. We would just go off and....

Janis Kozlowski: Yeah, it sounds like you guys were a handful. [Jackie and Jean laugh] She had to put harnesses on you and everything! [laughs]

Jean Chapin Dolat: I never put a harness on them. I also had a lot of friends, you know, that kept an eye on them. So I kind of knew what was going on. With all the [word unclear], you know, people on the sidelines they'd keep an eye to...

Bernie Dolat: We went down ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: ... Only the baby would be in a baby carriage, harnessed in with toys. And they'd dump the toys back in or give him something to eat or whatever. That was Steve, I guess, but.

Bernie Dolat: [0:08:27] We went to church in Philadelphia in between ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: Oh...

Bernie Dolat: ... games

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yes.

Bernie Dolat: ... with all of them.

Jean Chapin Dolat: This is now ... Jackie was two or three. I had Jackie before Steve.

Bernie Dolat: This is in a very nice section and at that time people ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: Elite, expensive.

Bernie Dolat: ... came to church with fur, ok. And ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: Memorial Day with fur coats.

Bernie Dolat: ... fur collars. Can you imagine? Anyway, showing things off, you know. And here we are with these kids and some other players were also with us.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Sitting in back of us.

Bernie Dolat: Sitting in back of us. And the next thing you know – it was you, I believe ...

Jean Chapin Dolat: Yeah, it was Jackie.

Bernie Dolat: ...and said, “My shoe is stuck.”

Jean Chapin Dolat: She got her foot caught in the kneelers – between the kneelers. And she says, “My foot’s stuck! My foot’s stuck!” – louder and louder, you know.

Bernie Dolat: In the meantime the priest is up there trying to, you know.

Jackie Dolat: It was still in Latin.

Bernie Dolat: It was still in Latin. Yeah, you know...

Jean Chapin Dolat: I bent down and I’m pulling the shoe off. I’m trying to get the shoe off her foot. And I ... rmmmh ... I get it off and the darn things scoots off [laughing] two pews down. [all laughing]

Bernie Dolat: Back, ok.

Jean Chapin Dolat: I have to turn around and say, “Have you seen a little girl ... could you see if you can find a little girls black patent leather shoe?” [all laughing]

Bernie Dolat: Of course these people are all looking down their nose.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Here it comes, over the heads. [all laughing]

Jackie Dolat: Oh, some people were very holy! [laughing]

Jean Chapin Dolat: Iris Carnell was laughing so hard in back of us. You could just see her shaking. [laughing]

Anyway. It was fun, we had good times.

Janis Kozlowski: [0:09:59] I was just thinking, you know, one of the big stories at the Beijing Olympics that’s going on now is that women swimmer who’s now swimming after she had one baby ... and you had several of them and you still kept going! [all laughing] She’s not doing anything new.

Jean Chapin Dolat: Nope! I just liked to do it. Anyway ... so I have to fill out something. What do I ... where do I ... did I do it?

Interview end at 0:10:22