

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

#282

LOUISE MACK

MILITARY SPOUSE

**INTERVIEWED ON
DECEMBER 8, 1998
BY JEFF PAPPAS**

TRANSCRIBED BY:

CARA KIMURA

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Jeff Pappas (JP): The following oral history interview was conducted by Jeff Pappas for the National Park Service, USS *Arizona* Memorial, at the Imperial Palace Hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada on December 8, at roughly 5:30 p.m. The person being interviewed is Louise Mack, who is the wife of Frank Mack, the gentleman I just interviewed. And I asked Frank if he could find you, for you to come here to clarify something Frank had told me, something I found rather interesting. And Frank had served at Hickam Field that day and he had told me, he told me this story, and he also told me that he had been pronounced dead and that you had received notice of his death. Can you tell me about that? How did you receive the message from the military?

Louise Mack (LM): I got a telegram and my mother grabbed it quick because she had a feeling what it was.

JP: Now how long ago was this? Do you remember the date in which you received the telegram?

LM: No.

JP: Do you remember roughly how much time had passed since Pearl Harbor?

LM: It was at least three weeks later.

JP: So you hadn't heard from Frank...

LM: No.

JP: ...up 'til that point?

LM: Well, yeah. We corresponded but, you know, I had no inkling of...

JP: Well, you hadn't heard from him since December seventh...

LM: No. Oh, no.

JP: ...up until that point.

LM: No, so my mother had a feeling what the telegram was and she wouldn't let me see it until she read it first. And then she told me.

JP: Now were you there with your mother when you received the telegram?

LM: Mm-hm. Yeah, I was at home. And she gave me the, let me read the telegram and it said that he was missing in action.

JP: He was missing in action.

LM: And presumably dead. And of course, that, you know, really got to me, naturally.

JP: Yeah. How long had you been married? I did ask Frank when you got married, but how long had you been married at this point?

LM: We probably had been married a year or not quite a year at that time. No, wait a minute. That was '41, wasn't it?

JP: December 1941.

LM: Yeah, we had been married a little more than a year.

JP: Had you had any children yet?

LM: Yes, we had a daughter born in '40, so...

JP: So your first reaction must've been...

LM: Yeah, it was devastation. And here I am, with a little one and it wasn't just me, it was the little one. And of course I was very fortunate in being able to live with my parents until he came home, but then he didn't come home. He didn't see her for two and a half years. He came home...

JP: Now, the letter that you had received, the telegram, that said he was an MIA...

LM: Yeah.

JP: ...presumably dead, did it leave any instructions?

LM: No. No, and then I didn't hear any more until...

JP: Did you make an inquiry?

LM: Yes, yes. My dad was a service person so he knew who to contact and all, but we never did find out. Oh, it was quite some time before we ever found out that he was alive.

JP: So you basically, you had lived with this information...

LM: Oh yeah.

JP: ...for how long until you found out...

LM: Oh.

JP: ...that Frank was indeed alive?

LM: Gee, I can't remember. It was quite sometime before we got word that—I think maybe I got a letter from him or I just can't remember quite how it was, or whether we were contacted again by the [*War Department*], or whoever it was. I'll say [*War Department*].

JP: Now, had you made—were you making plans during this time, Frank was presumably dead...

LM: No.

JP: Did you just...

LM: No, we were just hoping that they were wrong.

JP: And of course you heard from him.

LM: And then it was either I got a letter from him or I got another telegram, but so much of our stuff was lost in storage.

JP: When did you—do you remember when you received notice that Frank was alive?

LM: Oh, it was quite some time.

JP: But do you remember that day? Do you remember when you received the note?

LM: Yeah. Yeah, sort of.

JP: Now was it a letter from him or was it a letter from someone else?

LM: No, I believe it was a letter from him, that he had written and I can't remember just where it came from, but—I can't remember quite how it went, but it was—I wished all of that stuff hadn't been lost but...

JP: Well, you must've been very happy.

LM: Well, yeah. We were very excited to find out that he was alive and, you know, our daughter had a daddy she could look forward to meeting. And she was two and a half when he came back. And then by that time, the war was over, or I guess it was over. I don't know. But you know, it was very trying, rough time. You know, from the time we found out that he was either missing or presumed dead and until we heard different. But I had my parents and so we had, you know, good support.

JP: Very good. Louise, I want to thank you very much for sharing that with us. That's something that Frank had told me and I wanted to get some more information about that.

LM: Yeah.

JP: Thank you very much for coming down here.

LM: You're welcome.

END OF INTERVIEW