

**Homefront:** LAMB, Bobbie C.  
**Service Branch:** U.S. MARITIME COMMISSION  
**Interviewer:** Chamblin, Marie  
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Interviewer: This interview will consist of information about Ms. Lamb prior to, during, and after World War II. Where were you born, and how many brothers and sisters have you had?

Homefront: I was born in Meridian, Mississippi. I was an only child—no brothers, no sisters.

Interviewer: Did you grow up there?

Homefront: I graduated when I was 17 and went a business college for a couple of years, so I was in Lauderdale, Mississippi, for 18 or 19 years, but I was born in Meridian. Lauderdale is a little suburb.

Interviewer: What did your parents do for a living?

Homefront: My father had an automobile agency, and then he had mechanics that worked for him. My mother was a school teacher. She had taught 17 years before she married my father.

Interviewer: Can you give me an example of everyday life at your household while you were growing up there?

Homefront: I guess you could say I was born with a silver spoon in my mouth, but then the depression days came along, and it was yanked out pretty quick, so it was pretty rough living, in a sense. The good part about it was that everybody was in the same boat, so you didn't realize you had less or more than anyone else. In a small community like that, everybody knew everybody, so it was pretty interesting living.

Interviewer: What kind of education did you have prior to World War II?

Homefront: Just high school and business college.

Interviewer: Do you remember where you were when you first about the war and how you heard about it?

Homefront: Yes. I had gone to Jackson, Mississippi, to visit some friends there, and we were on our way back home to Meridian and Lauderdale when the news on the radio came on that Hawaii had been bombed by the Japanese. In those days, as young as I was, that didn't seem like anything too terrible. I didn't think too much about it, but it didn't take you long to realize that it was a very serious thing.

Interviewer: Did your life change immediately after hearing about it? What did you do differently?

Homefront: I guess you would say it changed quite a bit. When this happened, I hadn't finished high school at that time, but all the boys were beginning to join the service and leave. Everybody was beginning to be real war conscious—wanted to learn to do what they could to help the war effort, including myself. I tried to learn to do welding, but I couldn't do it. I wasn't cut out to be a welder, but that was one thing right at the first of the war that women wanted to do, because it paid more than anything else you could do. Everything was going along pretty smoothly before the war broke out, and after that everybody we knew practically, young people, were being drafted and leaving. Girls married if they had a sweetheart, because they thought they had to before they left and might not get to see them again, but my daddy talked me out of that. He said, "No, try to think about this. You may be left with a child, plus your husband could get killed. If you're smart and you love that boy enough, you'll wait for him."

Interviewer: Did things inside your family life change any?

Homefront: Not too much in that respect, because like I said, I went off to business college shortly after that, so there really wasn't too much change other than me going to school and trying to learn to be a stenographer and bookkeeper.

Interviewer: Did you have a job before the war at all, other than school?

Homefront: No, nothing.

Interviewer: What did you think about when you first heard about the war? How did it make you feel?

Homefront: Like I said, it sounded so far off. Hawaii sounded like it was in another world. We had heard in those days very little about Hawaii or the Japanese. That and Japan sound the say way—way far off. That was something other people were doing, and it didn't seem to phase us too much at that time.

Interviewer: How were you involved in the war effort?

Homefront: I hired on at Alabama Drydock and Shipbuilding Company as a welding accountant thinking that this was to be in the welding department as a bookkeeper. Well, it turned out that was not the case at all. When I went in to go to work, I was dressed in a white suit and the best clothes that I had at the time, and the man that I was to report to looked at me so curiously and he said, "Why are you dressed like you are?" I said, "What do you mean?" I was kind of taken aback, and didn't know quite what he meant, and he said, "You are supposed to be climbing all over these wellments that these people have put together and checking the amount of footage that they have done in a shift's time." And I said, "Oh, that was not my understanding when I hired in. I thought I was to be a bookkeeper." I told him that I had just finished business college before I came to Mobile. He said, "Well, I need a secretary, so come on up to the office." So, he put me to work in his office, and that was the beginning of my career.

Interviewer: When did you first hear of rationing? When did that come in?

Homefront: That was pretty soon after the war began, because everything that you could think of that you really needed was needed overseas, and so they had to ration us to where we couldn't be very extravagant. That happened in the early part of the war.

Interviewer: What kind of things were rationed?

Homefront: Shoes, sugar, meat, some of your clothing, cigarettes. I smoked at the time, and boy, that hurt. I couldn't get cigarettes. Those were the main things that were rationed. There was also very little gasoline that you could get. Of course, very few of us had cars, so that part didn't make any difference, but we would save the gasoline stamps and get a tank of gas if several of us were going to the beach for the weekend.

Interviewer: Was there a system in rationing?

Homefront: They gave you a book that everybody was issued for shoes, meat, sugar. I can't think of all the things now, but those were the main items, including gasoline and cigarettes. When you bought anything, you just handed them the book and the money, and they'd tear out the stamp. When that book was gone, you didn't get any others until they could reissue you one.

Interviewer: What kind of advertisement was going on during the war?

Homefront: Mainly trying to get people to take on war effort jobs and also trying to get people to volunteer for the service. Most of them were going to be drafted anyway, so a lot of them went on and volunteered, but there was a lot advertising for particularly women to join the military.

Interviewer: Do you recognize these photos that we're looking at now? Can you explain to me what they're of?

Homefront: I remember the picture. It says "We Can Do It," but that was what we all thought anyway. I remember so well the bandana that the girl has on her head, but that's what this was for. They were advertising for women to join anything that was like shipbuilding or whatever it was in the war effort.

Interviewer: What about this one?

Homefront: It says, "When You Ride Alone You Ride With Hitler—Join A Car Sharing Club." Back in those days, none of us had enough money to buy a car. You could buy it cheap enough if you had the money to do it, but none of my friends had cars. We did know some of the men that we worked with in the shipyard that

had their cars, and they were very good about picking us up at our homes and taking us to work and then back to our homes, where we gave them gas ration stamps in order to be able to do this. Everybody shared a car to ride, or if you didn't you had to ride the bus or take the ferry to work.

Interviewer: Did you know anyone that was in the war at all?

Homefront: Oh, yeah. All the boys that I had graduated with from school and a lot of them before then. Those were the ones that I remember the most.

Interviewer: Did you ever write letters to them?

Homefront: Oh, yeah. In fact, I had two boyfriends, and I made the bad, fatal mistake of getting them identification bracelets for Christmas. When I mailed them, I mailed the wrong one to the wrong boy, so that ended my relationship with either one of those boys. And I wrote friends back and forth—not a whole lot, because I was busy in those days. There was a lot of work to do, believe it or not. You wouldn't think maybe it was a lot of work, but a lot of typing because that guy had me keep records of all the work that was going on in the shipyard. He was being made by the U.S. Maritime Commission.

Interviewer: How were you updated on the war and events that were going on?

Homefront: Radio was all we had in those days and newspapers. I don't remember that we subscribed to a newspaper, but we listened to the radio, and if anything that was real special happened, they'd always put an 'extra' out on the streets. If that happened, you'd buy a paper and read what was going on.

Interviewer: What was the attitude of the men working around you toward women at the time?

Homefront: They were very protective of us. I think they liked that they had a good time, and they realized that we had a good job, and they were as proud of us as we were of them, in a sense. They were all very nice people that I worked with.

Interviewer: So, they didn't show any resentment at all to any women?

Homefront: No, not that I remember at all.

Interviewer: Were there any job restrictions for women?

Homefront: Very few. I can't even think of any that there would have been.

Interviewer: Before the war started, do you know if there were any divisions in labor according to sex and any examples of that?

Homefront: Before the war, I'm sure there was just mainly men that worked. I doubt seriously that there were any women except maybe in the offices doing secretarial work, but there wouldn't be any women out building the ships at all.

Interviewer: Before the war, did society portray women as relying upon their husbands at all?

Homefront: Yes, pretty much so. That kind of goes back to the old days. The man is the provider, and you stayed home and took care of the children in the home.

Interviewer: Can you recall any headlines for papers or radio broadcasts or advertisements that portrayed women as reliant upon their men?

Homefront: No, not really. I can't think of anything in particular.

Interviewer: Did the views of this portrayal change during the war?

Homefront: No, not too much. I think, there again, the soldiers were proud of the women that kicked in to do their part to help take care of them. I think they were just proud of us for doing the work.

Interviewer: Have you ever heard of the Women's Bureau?

Homefront: No.

Interviewer: What they did was they wanted more women to go out and participate in the war effort and began new policies for employment for women. What did you think about that during the war?

Homefront: I think that was a good idea.

Interviewer: Did your wages change from the time prior to the start of the war?

Homefront: I was hired in as a welding accountant, which made a lot more money—if I remember correctly, it was about \$1.20 an hour that you got as a welding

accountant. If you worked the midnight shift, they gave you a nickel bonus, so that would make you a \$1.25 an hour to work as a welding accountant, which was hard work outdoors, climbing on ships, and all of that. But when I was hired, my boss said, "I won't change your rate of pay," so I was real lucky. I made \$1.25 an hour when secretaries were making only at \$.30 or \$.35 an hour.

Interviewer: Did you ever work the midnight shift at all?

Homefront: Yes, I did. I started off on the midnight shift, and I worked that for possibly at least a year. I liked it.

Interviewer: Where were you living at the time?

Homefront: I was living out in a residential area of Mobile, and shared a room with a friend. She was on one shift and I was on the other one, so we slept in the same bed but not together. She was sleeping when I was working, and I was sleeping when she was working.

Interviewer: Did you hear anything about buying war bonds at the time? When was the first time you heard about that?

Homefront: Of course, there were signs all over the shipyard to buy war bonds, and that they would help the war effort, plus by buying them you would, in time, get some interest on them. You saw that everywhere you looked.

Interviewer: So, you bought some of them yourself?

Homefront: Yes. About every other payday, I bought I think a \$25 bond, and at that time that cost me \$12.50. When I cashed them in, I got the full \$25 for them.

Interviewer: Do you remember any slogans or anything about doing your part?

Homefront: Of course, you saw those kinds of signs everywhere, but I can't relate to any one in particular. They were just everywhere.

Interviewer: What kinds of signs would you see everywhere?

Homefront: Just printed big signs on the sides of the buses. You went to the theater, and there'd be billboards in the lobby of the theater. Restaurants were the same way.

Everywhere you went, you were reminded that you needed to do everything that you could to get our boys back home safe and sound.

Interviewer: Can you tell me what a sponsor of a ship is and what it involves?

Homefront: If you sponsor a ship, at the time that it's ready to be turned over to be outfitted, they launched the ship into the water. They choose someone, usually a celebrity of some kind, to sponsor it, and it's quite an honor. When you do that, you break a bottle of champagne on the bow of the ship and name it.

Interviewer: Were you ever given the chance to do that?

Homefront: Yes. The last ship that was built at Alabama Drydock before the war was over was to be a side launching. Most of them just lid down the way into the water, but this one was to be cut and turned on its side when it was launched, so that was an exciting thing, too. They said right at the end of the war that they would give the employees an opportunity to sponsor one of the ships, so the way they were going to do it was to have a contest by election, so I was one of the contestants, and I tied with another girl for first place. By that time we'd had the election going for so long that they said we didn't have time to run off another election, so we'd have to gamble to see who would be the sponsor of the ship, so we cut a deck of cards, and I cut the ace of clubs, and that made me the sponsor and she was the co-sponsor.

Interviewer: Can you explain to me what life was like after the war?

Homefront: Of course, the boys started coming home. You were excited every time you heard about a friend that came back home. A lot of them came home sick. One in particular I remember was a friend of mine that I had thought quite a bit of. He had malaria, and he was in the hospital at my home so I went home to see him, and I didn't even recognize him when I saw him. I looked in the room and didn't even see him, because he didn't look the same. It was quite different. Things began to settle down a little bit, and there wasn't quite as many jobs available as there had been. A lot of people were going back home after the war, and things settled down pretty much to normal after awhile.



Interviewer: Were certain things hard to find after the war?

Homefront: Yes, it took a long time before you got everything back like it was. I'm thinking mainly of business machines, because I went to work for Remington Rand, and they built adding machines, every kind of calculator, every kind of business machine you can think of—typewriters, bookkeeping machines, whatever. There was such a demand for those during the war that they never did catch up with what they really needed to build, so it was a long, long time afterwards, sometimes six months to a year, before people would get them after they were ordered. It was the same with clothes, guns, and anything you can think of that was mechanical.

Interviewer: Did advertisements change after the war? For example promoting more men back to work, and the woman as the role model back at the home.

Homefront: I don't remember that too much, but men were looking for jobs, and all the jobs were mainly gone after the war after they came home. They had to settle down to do whatever they could find to do for awhile.

Interviewer: Did you have any trouble keeping your job after the war?

Homefront: No. I went right to work from Alabama Drydock to Remington Rand. My boss was going back to New York after the war, and his wife was the office manager in Mobile, and he asked me if I'd like to have the job. He first asked me if I was going back to Mississippi, and I said I hadn't really decided what I was going to do. He said, "Well, you can have that job if you want it." So, I took her job. I worked nine months for Remington Rand after I married. I married in '48, so I guess I was with them close to three years.

Interviewer: Did your pay change at all from one place to another?

Homefront: Yes, I got a little bit more money working for Remington Rand than I did in the shipyard.

Interviewer: What did you do at Remington Rand?

Homefront: I was the office manager, and the only girl in the office so I did everything—answering the phone, doing all the ordering, and we had several branches, so I

kept all the books for all the branches, plus they repaired business machines for anybody in the city, like companies that had machines that needed to be repaired. I kept all those records.

Interviewer: When did you first hear about the end of the war?

Homefront: I guess I heard it on the radio—I can't really remember now, but I know everybody was so happy and thrilled. Everybody went into town to celebrate.

Interviewer: What did you personally think about the end of the war?

Homefront: I was glad it was over. It was a terrible thing. The older you got, the more you heard about it you realized how awful it was. I was thrilled to death that it was over.

Interviewer: Do you think anything should have been handled any differently throughout the war?

Homefront: Of course, at that age I didn't have any idea what I could do to correct the situation. No, I can't say that I did.

Interviewer: During the war, was there a certain policy that you had to be at your house by a certain time or any kind of time restrictions given to you at all?

Homefront: Like curfews? No. You were strictly on your own. They didn't make any demands of you, and you didn't have to follow any kind of rules like that.

Interviewer: Was there any kind of warning system for Americans? Did you practice anything at all?

Homefront: No. I don't think we ever thought that it could happen here in our country. The war was all over there.

Interviewer: What did you think of the president's reaction to the war? Do you agree that he did the right thing, or do you think that he could have done something else?

Homefront: Well, it was a horrible thing that they did, but it had to be done. There was no doubt about it that they had to end it some way or another, and that was when

they bombed Hiroshima. That should have been done probably long before it was.

Interviewer: Do you think the war was, per se, a good war for us?

Homefront: No, not really. No, I don't think it helped us in any way. Might have made us a little proud of what we had after you stop and think that life was so cheap in those days.

Interviewer: When did you move to Crosby?

Homefront: Moved here in 1978.

Interviewer: Were you working at the same job when you moved?

Homefront: Oh, no.

Interviewer: Where did you work in Crosby?

Homefront: I hadn't worked since I married. I worked for nine months after I married, and that was the end of my business career, and I married in '48, so that was a long time—'48 to '78.

Interviewer: What made you want to move here?

Homefront: I didn't want to move here. We had been out here to dinner at the country club, and it was beautiful, and I loved the area, not ever thinking that we would live here. But then when my husband decided that we needed to find a place that we could enjoy living when he retired and afford it, we remembered this place, so we came out and bought some property, and a year later we started building on it.

Interviewer: How did you meet your husband?

Homefront: I met him in Mobile. It was his first day and night there. At that time, he was working for a company in Atlanta, Georgia, and he was calling on a friend of mine that I had a date with this particular night at Turner Supply Company, and he asked me if I could get this young man a date. I told him I'd try, but it was Friday night and probably wouldn't be anybody that I knew that wouldn't already have a date, but Clara had gone to the beach and she might get home early

enough. Sure enough, she did so I got Boyd a date with Clara. We went dancing and ended up that I was seated at the table with him talking, and my date and Clara were jitterbugging.

Interviewer: What was your first thought about him?

Homefront: I thought he was probably a married traveling salesman. {Laughter}

Interviewer: We're gonna go to the book you gave me earlier on, and we're gonna look at some of pictures in here. Can you explain to me what they're of? We're looking at Page 1 right now.

Homefront: I've lost a lot of the pictures and things out of it through the years—that's been a long time ago. But this is the card that I cut the deck for that determined that I was the sponsor of the ship.

Interviewer: Now we're looking at Page 2. What's this of?

Homefront: These girls are sisters, and I was rooming with them at the time. This was the invitation for them to be on the ship for the ceremony.

Interviewer: We're looking at Page 3 now.

Homefront: That was just a picture of the launching of the SS *Acura*(?).

Interviewer: Now Page 4.

Homefront: This was sponsor—that's my name...Bobbie D. Campbell.

Interviewer: Page 5?

Homefront: This is the picture of the sideway launching. The ship almost went over completely to the water. It caught it before then, but it was going over sideways.

Interviewer: Where are you in this picture?

Homefront: There was a wooden launching stand built. This is it right here. We were not on the ship, we were just in front on this part here.

Interviewer: Next page?

Homefront: That was the minister that gave the invocation for the program.

Interviewer: Next page?

Homefront: This was a young lawyer that was a friend of the other girl. I don't remember his name, but he was the lawyer friend of hers, and he made a little speech telling about the two of us.

Interviewer: The next page?

Homefront: That's a picture of me, and this was made before I broke the champagne bottle and launched the ship.

Interviewer: Next page?

Homefront: This is my co-sponsor—the two of us. She had the hatchet, and was the one that cut the rope that turned it loose. We had to be pretty strong to do either one of those jobs. I like to have never broken the bottle, and she liked to have never cut the rope.

Interviewer: And this one?

Homefront: This is the picture of me breaking the bottle. I must have hit it four or five times before I finally broke it. I remember that the champagne sprayed all over me. This man was a disk jockey in Mobile that I knew real well, and he said, "Honey, you couldn't smell better."

Interviewer: The next page?

Homefront: This is the president and the vice president of the shipbuilding company and myself. This was after the launching, and this is where it was built. The ship that was launched was just the shell, and they had to outfit it later putting in all the nice stuff of the ship—kind of like decorating a house.

{Miscellaneous photos continue to be discussed. Transcriptionist has elected NOT to capture interviewee's remarks about each photo, but will instead, from this point on, transcribe only remarks of real value to the interview.}

Homefront: Usually when they had sponsors for the ships, they would be movie stars and people like that. I can remember Martha Raye and Dorothy Lamour. And if it wasn't movie stars, it would be somebody that was real well known. Not the president's wife, but something on that order.

Interviewer: Did you ever get to meet any of them?

Homefront: No. I saw them, but I never got to meet them.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you would like to share with me before I conclude the interview?

Homefront: No, other than just to say it was an exciting several years. A lot of hard work, and I enjoyed it. I don't think I missed but two days of work the whole time the war went on. I was interested in my job, and it paid off for me, too. I got to be Queen for a Day.

Interviewer: This is Marie Chamblin, is this is now the conclusion of the interview I have done with Ms. Lamb about her life prior to, during, and after World War II.

{END OF INTERVIEW}