UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MILWAUKEE

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

VIVIAN SHERIFFS

March 13, 1995

At Wauwatosa, Wisconsin

by

Michael E. Telzrow

for the

THE FORGOTTEN CHAMPS: THE MILWAUKEE CHICKS OF 1944

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Interview and Abstract/Transcription
The Forgotten Champs: The Milwaukee Chicks of 1944

Vivian Anderson Sheriffs Interview

Introduction

The All-American Girls Baseball League was organized in 1943 in response to the manpower demands of World War II. Conceived by Chicago Cubs owner Philip K. Wrigley, the league initially consisted of four teams and a total of sixty-four players. After a successful initial season, Wrigley added two additional teams. One of them, the Milwaukee Chicks, would enjoy a brief but very successful history. By 1948 the number of teams had increased to ten. Situated mainly in the Mid-Western states, and drawn largely from the many amateur and semi-professional women's softball leagues in Canada and the United States, the women of the All-American Girls Baseball League offered fans a unique blend of athleticism and showmanship. At its peak in 1954, the league enjoyed season attendance figures exceeding 910,000. In their inaugural season, the Milwaukee Chicks went on to capture the 1944 league championship. Unfortunately, neither the Milwaukee press nor the public gave significant support to the Chicks. Financial considerations forced the team to relocate to Grand Rapids, Michigan only one season after capturing the league championship.

The young women of the All-American Girls Baseball League were pioneers in the field of women's professional sports competition, and, like their sisters employed in the defense industry, contributed significantly to the nation's war-time readiness and morale. However, the cessation of hostilities and the subsequent return of men from the theater of war brought about a declining interest in women's baseball and a return to post-war attitudes about the role of women in society. Together, these changes, and the increasing availability of new and alternative entertainment sources such as television worked to hasten the demise of the league. By 1954, the eight-team league was forced to shut down, ending a unique era in women's sports history.

Background

Vivian Anderson Sheriffs was born in 1921 in Milwaukee, attended West Division High School and spent most of her young adult years in Wauwatosa. She was an only child. Her parents, both natives of Milwaukee, worked full-time. Her father worked for Uptown Lincoln-Mercury and her mother worked for Gimbel Brothers. Despite her father's wishes, Vivian decided not to attend college upon graduation from High School. Instead she joined her mother and aunt working for Gimbel Brothers. She married a former coach from the West Allis league, and remained married for four years. Vivian was always involved in athletics and developed a love for baseball at an early age. While playing ball in the West Allis, Wisconsin league, Vivian was recruited by the newly formed All-American Girls Baseball League. Her first and only season in the new league was cut short by a serious hand injury. She later recovered, but never returned to the All-American Girls Baseball League. Vivian continued to play semi-pro ball in Chicago,
Illinois and in West Allis, Wisconsin. By 1950, she left the game completely and settled in Milwaukee where she has lived continuously.

Interview

I interviewed Vivian Anderson Sheriffs at her home in Wauwatosa, Wisconsin on March 13, 1995. The interview lasted for approximately one hour and forty minutes. Vivian could not recall many details about the 1944 season, perhaps because, time had taken its toll on her memory. But she was able to reveal the perceptions and experiences of a female athlete during the World War II era. In many ways her interview challenges some of our preconceptions about female employment and the roles played by American women during and after the war era.

Transcription

This document is a verbatim transcription of the interview with Vivian Anderson Sheriffs. The interview is not indexed but an abstract exists listing the topics covered. By consulting the abstract the researcher can easily navigate his/her way through the interview.

Interviewer: Michael E. Telzrow
Narrator: Vivian Anderson Sheriffs

Tape 1, Side 1.

M: Could you tell me where you were born?
V: Right here in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, Milwaukee General Hospital.
M: OK, and your father - what kind of work did he do?
V: My dad was a finance manager for Uptown Lincoln-Mercury right over here on Highway 100. Automobile.
M: Did your mother work?
V: Yes, my mother was a head of fur storage and alterations at Gimbel Brothers.
M: Did you have brothers and sisters?
V: None. I can qualify that by saying that at the year I was born things were not at the best level financially.
M: And what year was that?
V: 1921.
M: Could you tell me a little bit about your education?

V: Ah, all right. I'm a high school graduate. I graduated from West Division High School, but spent most of my high school years in Wauwatosa.

M: And ah, any further education after high school?

V: None. Street smarts is about it.

M: And as a child did you have many hobbies?

V: Not basically, I was always involved in sports. I played hockey, basketball, football, of course until mother put the (makes kaput sound) on that...and baseball.

M: So your mother discouraged you from being involved in football?

V: She decided it was a boy's game and should not normally - when you start growing up...it's not a good idea. I have to go along with her on that.

M: But she had no ah...no problem with baseball?

V: No, No, not until the last years when of course after I broke my fingers then I went to Chicago and played ball and proceeded to get three shiners in a row. Which my parents happened to come and find out about 'em. They weren't to happy about that. (Laughs) I've been a tom-boy all my life this is what it's all about.

M: How about your family social life? Were they also involved in athletics?

V: No. Not really ah....It's hard to explain. My dad was very much involved business, business, business, all the way. My mother was kind of a social person. She like her card playing, she liked her friends and strictly outdoor stuff. Liked doing the yards and things like this. This was her bag. And, oh, very much down to earth and very modern woman considering what her age was.

M: So they were also natives of Milwaukee?

V: Ah, yes. Yes.
M: And - no brothers and no sisters?
V: Uh huh. What you see is what you get.
M: Any special memories that you can recall from your childhood?
V: Umm.....I was pretty normal. My parents were quite open and we discussed things and I never had any qualms about talking to my mother. My father was a little bit more difficult to speak to because he had his mind turned to his business things like that. We're a very work oriented family all three of us had been and I still am.
M: OK. Could you describe your first job?
V: First job....Oh, yes I certainly can. My mother and my aunt both were employees of Gimbel Brothers. So, I decided I should go to Gimbel Brothers and try to get a job. And I worked in the credit and collections department. Which, typical, because I had worked for my dad when he had his own finance business. I just continued on that basis.
M: Did you enjoy working for Gimbel's?
V: Yeah, I did. I actually left there because they didn't give my boss-lady a raise. They gave me one and didn't give her one and I didn't think that was nice. So, I decided (makes phooey sound).
M: What did she say about that?
V: She was shocked.
M: Any other jobs during high school or after high school?
V: Just like I said. I worked for my dad and I went to Gimbel's. Ah, I worked there and then I went to ah, let me see, where did I go? My goodness I kind of flittered around and various sundry different places. Basically all office.... basically all office work.
M: Clerical?
V: I've been a private secretary. I've dealt with credits and collections. I've
been an office manager. You name it...I've even repaired machines on
casions.

**M:** Really! What kind of machines?

**V:** Oh, typewriters and all that good stuff. They go haywire and play around
with them...course I always ended up with more parts than when I started
out with them. But that was neither here nor there.

**M:** Well, I'm curious how you became interested in baseball?

**V:** I really can't tell you that. It was just I, I, watched baseball - watched the
girls baseball a lot. Then I think when I was fourteen or fifteen...watching
baseball and expressing kind of an interest in it. (Pause) And as I said
I'm a tom-boy. So, anything I was involved in obviously had something
to do with being very much on the male-side of the platter.

**M:** Did you (pause) ... When you first got interested in baseball did you have
any idea that you might one day make some money playing?

**V:** Absolutely not. It was pure and simple a sport for me. (Long pause)
Even when I was playing regular baseball getting paid for it, it was still
a sport. The money part of it didn't faze me. I never had a lot of money
so why should I worry about it at that point.

**M:** Ah, did you play in any neighborhood or company leagues before joining
the Milwaukee Chicks?

**V:** Yes. I played for out in West Allis which was kind of the home of girls
baseball. Um, several of my friends and I which a couple of them did turn
out to be Rockford Peaches obviously. Um, we just started playing. I played
for, ah, Ziemers Sausages. I played for Rohr Jewelers. I played for Madecky
Foods.

**M:** And these were all sponsored by local businesses?

**V:** Yes, local business people - exactly.
M: And there was no remuneration, no pay involved?

V: No, absolutely not.

M: Did you follow the Major Leagues... men's professional baseball?

V: Not to a great extent. When I was growing up and playing baseball - course it wasn't like it is nowadays where everybody's out for money. Which I suppose I can't blame them in the long run. But the ethics of playing baseball were far different. I mean we didn't care if we went out there - I ended up in the grandstand on my nose a couple times and things like that didn't ever bother me. It was part of the game. And still is and will be a game.

M: How did...or did it, the start of World War Two effect your life?

V: Well at that time I was married. My husband was in service. Um, when I was approached on this thing I thought it was the most remote thing I ever heard of because, like I said, I was never a star. I just played hard, did the best I could. The only changing around it did I guess in my life was that I made a lot of new friends with the girls on the pro teams from out of town. It was kind of a new world to me.

M: You mentioned your husband was in the military.

V: Um hmm.

M: What branch of service?

V: Army.

M: Did he serve in combat?

V: No. He was in the motor pool and then he became a baker. Don't ask me why but that's the way it was. He was in Germany for just a short while. Then that was it.

M: What was his name?

V: Daniel Anderson. Which is of course why I had the married name of
Anderson.

M: Do you...did you have any children?

V: No. He was in service most of the time of the four years that we were married.

M: So, at the start of World War Two you were working for Gimbels....was it?

V: No at that time I was working for umm...let's see was it A. O. Smith Company. I was A. O. Smith Company. I was with A. O. Smith sometime during the war years. But that was one of those very pious situations where if you needed a pencil you had to turn in the stub and all that good stuff because that absolutely was into the military.

M: Did you notice any increase in employment opportunities for women?

V: Oh, definitely. A lot of my friends went into various industrial manufacturing companies and became quite adept at it.

M: Did they manage to keep their jobs after the war?

V: Yes quite a few of them did. They were that good that they did.

M: OK. Let's talk a little bit about the baseball league. Where did you hear about the league?

V: We were sent a letter. I don't know if this was a scouting venture or whatever. It must have been obviously or they wouldn't know you were in existence. And received a letter if we were interested fill-out the form and send it to them and they would be in contact with us. Which was precisely the way it happened.

M: And when you did that what was the family reaction?

V: Oh my mom was tickled pink and I guess my dad was in a little way. (Laughs) I think my dad always wanted a boy, so it was probably that situation, but he didn't go gung-ho because I was still a girl no matter which way it worked. But, ah, basically quite supportive I would say.

M: And were you recruited to try-out, outside of the forms?

V: Yeah, we were sent to the training camp in Peru La Salle, Illinois.
M: You remember who contacted you?

V: No off-hand that I can't remember who it was.

M: Why did you want to join the baseball league?

V: Obviously my love of baseball.

M: And your try-out was in Peru, Illinois you mentioned.

V: Yeah.

M: Could you explain the circumstances or describe a little bit about that?

V: Yeah, of course we all reported and everybody laid down the rules and of course one of them which we all thought was hilarious was going to a charm school by Helena Rubenstein. And if you ever wanted to see anybody with four left feet, ah - that was it. Walk downstairs with books on your head. Always dress to the (unintelligible). You could not wear shorts or slacks in public. These were the kind of things and of course how to properly sit and how to properly do this that and the other thing and that was a lot of it was that. Of course, plus the normal everyday getting out there and doing your thing and hoping and praying that you made the team.

M: And the try-outs were pretty difficult?

V: Yeah.

M: Do you have any idea how many young ladies were trying out?

V: Oh there was several hundred of them.

M: Did anyone accompany you to Chicago?

V: No.

M: Or Peru?

V: No.

M: Any other women from Milwaukee with you?

V: Not at that time - no. Wait, I should not really say that either because Marge Peters was later a Rockford Peach. She was, of course, being a
good friend of mine she sticks out in my mind the best. (Coughs). The rest of them all seem to have come in a little bit later. But of course, like I said, I didn't really last too long because of busting up my hand pretty badly.

M: I was....I had read something about rules against fraternization with other opposing team players, and you mentioned that Marge Peters was a friend of yours. Did that effect you one way or the other?

V: Well we didn't see each other in public, but we certainly did otherwise (inaudible). To this very day in fact I just talked to Marge a couple days ago. We're still friends.

M: Could you describe the daily routine for your practices and try-outs?

V: Well, we had a morning and an afternoon session. Broke for lunch - had an orange and an apple and a little jug of milk I believe it was at that point. It was quite extensive. Just rudiments of baseball - actions as to how you behave and what's expected of you and, ah - I said try-outs when they started slamming baseballs at you it was something you paid attention to.

M: Where did you learn most of your skills...your baseball skills?

V: Just kind of a normal thing you know some people just fall into something and that's it. And that's been the same was with me with every sport I participated.

M: So there was little....any organization...high school organization that you...

V: (Interrupts) Well, I belonged to the GAA - the Girls Athletic Association. That of course being in sports again that was the thing. And I was a cheerleader so it all kind of put things together in a neat little package.

M: So you, you ah....How were you notified that you made the team?

V: Umm...at the tail end of the session, the training session, they posted the names of ....you are on this team, you are on this team, you are on this team and God bless ya.
M: So, at that point is where you found out you were on Milwaukee?

V: Right.

M: And how did you feel?

V: (Emphatically) Rather proud.

M: And your family reaction?

V: Same thing.

M: Any other experiences or memories specifically from the try-out that you can recall?

V: No, just basically it was exactly was it said to be - a try-out and work your fanny off to see if you could make it. It was a challenge.

M: Let's talk a little bit about the charm school. What were the decorum classes like?

V: Well like I said....learning how to walk downstairs properly and like a lady. Um, and a behavior pattern like when you're out with other people of stature or (inaudible). The way that you should behave and react as a representative of girls baseball, because obviously most of the people that looked at girls playing baseball! This automatically put a stamp on you. You were a kind of a tom-boy and probably didn't have many brains to go along with that.

M: So how did you feel about these classes?

V: I ignored it. I knew who I was and what I wanted to do and that was important to me.

M: Was there any reaction from the other players?

V: No, not basically. Typical of any sports that you're participating in you pull something that's rather stupid and they all come down on you and it's forgotten the next minute and all back to normal again. There was no grudges or anything like that it just kept on going.
M: What was your reaction to the uniforms? Were they...

V: (Interrupts) They were attractive...um, I've always been a short stubby, pudgy person and I didn't really feel that this was something I was going to display. It was there - you had to do it....I was a little bit perturbed when I saw the shorts and realized I was going to be sliding and - oow! I think I still have a few scars to prove that point.

M: Did the other players....

V: They all felt more or less the same.

M: Do you think the uniforms influenced the fan's perception of the players or the league?

V: Well, there were pros and cons with that - a lot of, naturally most of the male people thought well this is a good gimmick to get the men interested in girls and vice versa. But the majority of the people, although they thought as I did they're a little bit impractical, we were used to playing with the long pants and at least to protect a little part of you. But they were generally accepted as being quite neat looking, and they were neat, and they were very attractive.

M: So, getting back to the rules of conduct. You didn't....did you have any problem with any of them?

V: No. Not that I would know of - I mean our private lives were still our own as long as we kept out of the limelight. So we could do basically whatever we felt like doing. As long as you didn't get caught doing it of course.

M: Any other memories or perceptions about charm school and the stressing of femininity?

V: No, I don't think so. It was rather acceptable when you realized what they were trying to do. They were trying to purport women in sports as still ladies and I think they made that very clear. When you figure you have a lot of farm girls that hadn't the foggiest notion about the proper things to do here
there or the other place - Not that they were dummies, but their background, I mean, you're out there doing farm animals and things you don't think about being all dressed up in heels and make-up and all that good stuff. And I presume it was a little bit difficult for them to kind of change away their lifestyle. But, I think that's acceptable no matter which way you go.

M: OK. What was the.....you played in 1944?

V: Umm.

M: What was the length of the season? How many games?

V: I wish you wouldn't have asked that. I can't recall that at all. Like I said, I only got through about half or a little bit better than half.

M: Can you recall how many games per-week perhaps?

V: Well it depended. Obviously if you were on the road to another city you would play two or three or four games or something like that, and the come back home and have a day here or a day there and then come back and maybe play two games or one game - whatever the traffic would bear. I don't really know what the pattern was, it was just be there this is it.

M: What time of day were the games played?

V: We had mostly a sorta like twilight to early evening games. I don't recall if they were, I imagine, yeah, I would assume on weekends there were daytime games. I kinda get that a little bit confused with when I went to Chicago and played semi-pro. Because there almost everything was a night game with doubleheaders on weekends.

M: What position did you play for the Milwaukee.....

V: (Interrupts) Third base.

M: Did you have a pretty good arm?

V: It was good at that time.

M: Did you sign a contract?
V: Um hmm.
M: And what was your salary?
V: We were paid, if I'm not mistaken, one hundred and fifty dollars a week.
M: And how did that compare to what you were making working a regular job?
V: It didn't even start to show of course back then you could trade a couple of dollars here and a couple of dollars here which made you far better than what this one was. It's not like today where you don't start talking until you're talking fifteen, twenty, thirty, thousand dollars. I mean this was actually like peanuts practically. But it was, it was like I say to me it wasn't a matter of the money at all. It was just - I loved the game, I wanted to play. I wanted to make something of myself.....hopefully. And that was the way it went.
M: Were you paid weekly or bi-weekly?
V: Weekly.
M: And what did you do with the money you made?
V: Oh there wasn't much chance to spend it. I think most of it other than my ordinary living expenses that I had to have like toothpaste and all that good stuff. And there wasn't much time for socializing so I obviously - we couldn't go out and do the things that would cost money. Of course the money situation at that time was very ....like if you went to a show like thirty-five, forty cents or something like that.
M: Of course this is during the war.
V: Yeah.
M: Let's talk a little bit about Max Carey.
V: Umm hmm.
M: What was it like being a player for Max Carey?
V: The man was solid heart. (pause) He loved the game and he tried to
teach the fine points of it just as though he were out there playing. You probably realized he was one of the prime bunters and base-stealers for which probably is the reason I can't enjoy baseball today - sliding into first base or sliding into a base straight head-on to have your head bashed does not compute in my book. We were taught how to hook slide.

M: The proper way?

V: (Emphatically) The proper way as far as I'm concerned.

M: How would you characterize his coaching style?

V: He never hollered or screamed at anybody, but he made his point by saying: "I do have something to say about this and I would prefer that you listen carefully or you may have a problem later". So it's all positive, things that he did, very positive man. I like 'em as you can plainly see.

M: So do you think his previous baseball experience had a lot to do with.....

V: (Interrupts) A lot of - yes very much of it had a lot to do with it. But his attitude was the thing that I think made him far more important to us than anything else.

M: Did he control how often you practiced?

V: Umm hmm.

M: And, how often was that?

V: Well, ah, depending on our schedule. I mean if it was a travel and play, travel and play it was just get out there early before the game and throw it around a little, but get loosened up and things like that. There, once the games started and it was a pretty full schedule I can remember there wasn't that much practice unless somebody really needed something on the side. Like if you were a little bit... or were not doing something quite right and you'd go and say, "can you show me if this is the right way to do this" or "how could I do this a little bit better." And he was right there to tell you all about it.
M: Any other memories of Max Carey?

V: He was a nice looking man. He always behaved absolutely as a gentlemen. Which is one of the reasons why when I say *A League of Their Own* - I saw Tom Hanks was it? Oh ho, Max Carey would never, never have behaved like that. In the first place he wouldn't be soused to the gills when he got there or say, "take over I have to go have a drink" or whatever was going on. But that was an exaggerated nineties situation.

M: Did you enjoy that movie?

V: Ah, yes. I did once I got past that first hump. But the rest of it was an awful lot of memorabilia in it. Getting together, sneaking out doing things like this. We all did it. Our chaperones were fully aware of that.

M: Who was your chaperone?

V: Dottie Hunter - she was from Canada. And also the Rockford Peaches' Marie Timm who had been a friend of ours from way back when we were playing on sandlot in West Allis. Two very, very, nice ladies.

M: How did your family feel when they knew there would be female chaperones for each team?

V: Ah..........Like I say my mother and my dad said very little about it other than you know did you win? And everything going well? They were interested but not to the point of saying no you can't do it that way and no that's wrong and that isn't the way these things should be. It's like I said, both of my parents working as they did I think they had far more insight into what is expected out of people than a normal family that just - you know, housewives and husbands that went to work and came home and that was the end of it.
Tape 1, Side 2.

V: (In reference to a question about chaperones) They were kind of like little mother hens for us making sure we were doing things that were supposed to be done properly. And just kind of hovered over us I guess.

M: So a little bit like a mother?

V: Uh huh.

M: What was considered a characteristic of a good chaperone?

V: Well, for one thing they set a beautiful example for us. I mean they were well groomed, they were well spoken people. I guess they were, I knew Marie Timm was in sports for an awful long time. She was a teacher. I believe Dottie Hunter had almost the same background. So that they could basically understand what we were going through and you know we'd get upset about something - just go to them and say, "gee why is this happening - why am I being picked on?" Situation like this. And they always had a very logical and very down to earth explanation.

M: So, how did they handle violations of rules and regulations?

V: Well, they gave you another chance. At that time we never had anything real serious - Yes, occasionally sneaking out to one of the pubs that we knew so well and having a (emphasis on a) drink. We were not all into solid drinking or anything like this. I guess it's just like any other kid on the block. You know you're not supposed to do something but you're gonna try it anyhow.

M: Could you explain some of the situations perhaps?

V: Well we had - when we played in West Allis, when we were home. We had - we did not go to our regular meeting place, we went down a block a piece. And we were just having a good time and we were eating and having
a drink and dancing and doing things like this, and we look up and here stands Miss Hunter. Oh, Oh, - and she just said carry on and walked away - just a perfect lady. And the next morning she said: "you know I could really hurt you girls", but she said, "I wouldn't do that the first time." And believe me we were very careful after that.

M: How did Max Carey get along with the chaperones?

V: Very well. Again a ladies and gentlemen situation because they both knew that. He too - you know if he would sense something that was going on with one of the girls - a personal matter or something like that. He would just talk to the chaperones and say "why don't you just have a little talk with so and so. I think something is bothering her and it's detracting from her being right on the field and doing what she's supposed to and kind of someplace else instead of where she should have been. And I think that was a nice rapport that they had between each other.

M: How did Milwaukeeans receive the Chicks?

V: That's a hard question because we were so used to in West Allis to playing to crowds of ten-thousand and things like this. And I don't think it was the fact that they had to pay to see us it was just - well what makes them so great compared to what we saw in West Allis. So, it took a little while but it was starting to improve but never really got off the ground I would say. See, Milwaukee people generally speaking do not accept things right off the top. It's your same thing with your organized sports now. Unless they are a winner you can forget it. They're very slow to pick up on it to say "yes, this is great and I will back it". Milwaukee people are not like that. They're very right along the line.

M: How did you feel about that?

V: Well, having been born here I was kind of used to it. I thought they should
have accepted us a little bit better but then we looked at the fact - we're women!

This was it.

M: So that was something you were conscious of?

V: Right off the top. I think everybody could say that without qualification. It is just one of those things.

M: The other players - how did they feel?

V: Probably around the same way. We didn't let it effect us to any great extent. Except that you'd sit there and say gee whiz he we are working like crazy trying to give them a good show - entertainment and - eh, lukewarm.

M: When you were here in Milwaukee did you stay at home with your parents?

V: Oh yes! Yes, very definitely.

M: And where did you play the games?

V: We played at Borchardt Field.

M: Where was that located?

V: That was down on, I believe, around 7th, or 8th and Chambers.

M: No longer there?

V: (Nods no)

M: How did you feel about sharing the stadium with the minor league team?

V: As long as there was room for us we were there. They didn't bother us we didn't bother them.

M: Was it a nice field to play on?

V: It was a nice facility back in those days. Now it wouldn't stand a chance it would be like a sandlot.

M: How often did you have games here in Milwaukee?

V: Oh...I'd say a possibility of maybe ten to twelve games a month.

M: Do you have any idea of what the average attendance at home games was?
V: No, it was meager. That I can tell you, but I couldn't even venture a guess.
M: Did your family make most of the games?
V: Yes, they did.
M: And, when you played......When they played the Championship in Kenosha did many Milwaukee fans make the......
V: (Interrupts) Oh yes quite a few. Of course mostly family members interested in seeing are they gonna make it or are they not?
M: Did you attend?
V: Uh huh.
M: How was the series?
V: There again is a foggy memory. I - we did quite well by standards. You know but you get outclassed by certain teams just like now. You know, like the Toronto Blue Jays. Paul Molitor went there because it was a better team and that they were going to win. Sort of written in the clouds that this is the way it was going to go. So you just went and prayed that you could do better than the next guy and hopefully beat them.
M: How did the Milwaukee fans.....or how did people in Milwaukee feel about the Chicks winning the championship?
V: It was kind of unbelievable to them because they didn't really think that they were going to do it. I think between you and me and the lamp post, I think it was sheer guts and wanting to prove a point. Motivation shall we say.
M: You have any memories of that......?
V: Not many at this point, no.
M: How did you travel, how did the team travel from city to city?
V: Well it depended largely on where a location - like if you were going to go to Kenosha or Racine something obviously mostly cars. But we did
have busses occasionally depending again on where you were going or what the story was. If you were going to stay for a few days or what this was all about. All kind of predicated on the schedule itself.

M: When you were in other cities, where did you stay?

V: Oh they were - sometimes they were private homes depending largely again because some of the girls maybe were from this particular city and picked up a couple friends here and there. And inexpensive hotels at that point.

M: In these private homes, how was that arranged - who was that arranged through?

V: Well, like I said of some if some of the girls were involved were friends they'd say will you come home? Mom and dad won't mind if you stay here. And you of course cleared it with your manager and he said it was ok it was ok.

M: You described the Milwaukee fans as somewhat lukewarm. How were the fans different in other cities from Milwaukee?

V: Well, there again if you had a team that was really hot-shotted - again I have to keep saying Rockford Peaches and Kenosha Comets. They were outstanding and quite well accepted. Of course we had an awful lot more competition here with the West Allis league, because that was a favorite for - how many years?

M: How long did that league - the West Allis league last?

V: Well, let see it was still going on when I came back. I started in the West Allis league like I said when I was fourteen, and was twenty-three when I made the list, and it did go on for another couple years after that. I can recall, of course it was starting to seep out and girls getting older, dropping it. Some of them going into the pros. It was just kind of a hit
and miss, then it started to faze itself out like anything else.

M: What were some of the good things you recall about being on the road?

V: I guess just the excitement of being in a different city. We didn't travel a lot as families and things like that. I mean if you went fifty miles out into the country you were really traveling. So going to different cities and seeing different things. Kind of exciting.

M: Recall any bad things about traveling?

V: Not really. When you're tired maybe and things were not going exactly as you thought that they should if you were home in your own comfortable bed, as in comparison to something else. But generally, I think we were all kind of pleased and excited with the whole concept.

M: What was your favorite place, or city to play in?

V: Oh my, Yeah I guess I could say Rockford.

M: Why is that?

V: Wide acceptance of the games. The comparison alone is what made you kind of think - oh wow! We're going here and those people will really like us.

M: So they had a significant turn-out for their games?

V: Um hmm.

M: Any other memories or experiences on the road that you can recall?

V: No, not really. It was all kind of cut and dried issue - we were going there - we arrived there, we set ourselves up, we started to play ball. Wasn't an awful lot of time to concern yourself with what else is going to go on.

M: Do you recall newspaper coverage or radio coverage?

V: Ah, newspaper coverage yeah, in fact all the cities including here. You played and we had our, sometimes like this (indicates size) depending
on what we were doing. (Pause) They did a fairly good job considering. Again, I have to say that Milwaukee or the girls baseball concept, while it was good, was not promoted like the male portion.

M: So when you were playing in this league did you get a sense that once the War was over that things would change?

V: Uh huh. We knew it was just a matter of time. I mean it went on a lot longer in some of the other cities but you know the Milwaukee bunch went to, I believe it was Ft. Wayne. Again a smaller city with more acceptance because there really wasn't that much to do.

M: What did you do in our spare time between games?

V: Oh, we sat around and chatted a lot. We did walk around the cities if we were out of town. Of course when we were home we resumed our normal pick-up with our friends, and chat and do this, that and the other thing. There just wasn't an awful lot of time 'cause if you weren't practicing or you weren't going to something that was happening that you had to be there. So, I think more or less like any sport - you're in your hometown or you're out of your hometown there is certain amount of things that people expect from you and you put in an appearance.

M: Did all of the Chicks go out together?

V: Most of the time we did.

M: Can you recall any specific type of activities that you would engage in?

V: No, I really can't. That's a little bit too far back for my memory to stretch.

M: How did the members of the Chicks get along with each other?

V: I'd say quite well. We developed friendships between each other and tried to help each other. If somebody had a bad day or something - "Hey that's all right". I think as a team they were pretty close and considering again that you got girls from California, North Carolina, wherever, which
is foreign to us as much as Milwaukee was foreign to them. So it was kind of, "I'll introduce you to our type of culture here and you tell me about yours."

M: Were you allowed to go out on dates during the season?

V: I don't really think so. I don't recall off-hand. Of course I was married at that time and not interested in it but I don't recall. Oh, occasionally some of them snuck out on dates - there was no getting around that.

M: How did playing for the Milwaukee Chicks effect your personal life in relation to our husband?

V: Well he was kind of excited about it because he was a coach in West Allis. Which is how I met him and my ex-sister-in-law was also a player. She was a pitcher on one of the teams. It just kind of all folded in together.

M: How often did you talk to your friends and family when you were playing with the Milwaukee Chicks?

V: Not too much, unless we got home. We weren't gone that long to really get upset, or homesick, or whatever. Only if I knew some event was coming up and that I was going to be late or wasn't going to get there at all. These are the kind of things that we - obviously pick up a telephone and say, "Hey Mom, guess what I'm not gonna be there for anniversary."

M: What was the most difficult change in your personal life, your social life, while you were playing with the Milwaukee Chicks?

V: Losing sight of some of my old-time friends who were not baseball players obviously but had watched a lot of it. And the shift that when you were all done playing you couldn't just relax and put on a pair of blue jeans and run around town or do something like that. It was restrictive to that point.
M: OK, I'd like to talk a little bit about the season again. Specifically, what did you think about the quality of the season that Milwaukee had - the quality of the baseball that was played?

V: Gee, I don't know - that's a kind of a touchy question.....Course like everything else if you're winning it's to short and if you're losing it's too long.

M: Well, how about the quality of your play that year?

V: Well like I said, I gave everything I had and if it didn't - wasn't enough there wasn't much more I could do about it - I didn't slack-off.

You have your days just like in the work-force - you know the same problem. One day you're gung-ho and you can do everything right, and the next day no matter what you pick-up is wrong.

M: How did you injure your hand?

V: I sort of caught- I think it was the base and the ball and everything else all at one time. I just rammed it and the fingers went (makes kapooey sound).

M: And that put you out for the season?

V: Yeah.

M: Did that - did not end your baseball career?

V: It ended it as far as the Milwaukee Chicks were concerned. Because, obviously, I mean they had Doris Tetzlaff from Watertown standing in the wings so she came in and took over. Then when I came back to Milwaukee after being told there was a possibility I was gonna lose a couple fingers because these were broken in four places - this way and this way. And it was - they set it this way and then it went the other direction.

So, I had been told that, and I wasn't buying it. So in the meantime, Um, I had some friends who'd gone to Chicago to play semi-pro ball. And I kept in good touch with them and gone to visit them - they said:
"What happened" and I told them. I said this guy wants to amputate and they said, "no way, we have a good doctor here." And, ah, that was it. I just got on the team there and I played for the Chicago Bluebirds and had a ball doing that another couple years.

M: What league did the Bluebirds play in?
V: That was - I don't know. They just called it a semi-pro league. I don't really know if it had a league name or not.
M: That was a Chicago league?
V: Yeah we- I played for the Chicago Bluebirds. That we played evening games and weekend games and we were all provided the opportunity to have a job. And our backer, Mr. Charlie Bidwell, he got jobs for most of us. I worked at Keeshan Motor Express.

M: Was there any competition between that league and......
V: No, I don't think so. Chicago too, I mean you have to realize Chicago is quite a town for sports and things of that kind and they of course had a lot of teams like the New Orleans Jacks and ones like this that came into town, and it was quite exciting. And an entirely different version of the baseball game itself than we were playing. And the people in Chicago were gung-ho. We had crowds there like you wouldn't believe. (Pause) Again, I think it's the acceptance of Milwaukee as compared to Chicago.

M: During the Championship game against the Kenosha Comets, how did the team feel?
V: Well...
M: Did they feel confident?
V: Yeah - they were confident to an extent. It's hard to say, I mean you can go into a game and say, "We can do this..." - which we did, said we can do
this. But deep down inside you say "oh wow, here's that team again".

M: How did it feel to have to play a seven game playoff in Kenosha, and not in Milwaukee?

V: Well, actually being it's close in context. Really wasn't too much of a difference.

M: Talk a little bit about the war. Did you see your role as a professional baseball player as being patriotic?

V: Not really. Kind of figured it was entertainment for anybody and everybody.

M: When playing for the Chicks, did you feel you were contributing to the war effort in any particular way?

V: I don't think so. I figured my husband was contributing.

M: So you - there was no connection?

V: I don't really feel there was. That's my own personal opinion but I couldn't see where it was furthering anything one way or the other, except for providing entertainment.

M: What were other kind of things that you or your teammates did that might have contributed to the war effort?

V: Well they started an organization here in Milwaukee that was called the Navy Girls. Contrary to the fact that my husband was in the army, I went into that pretty solid, and it was just an entertainment venture again. Nothing gala about it - it wasn't dating. It was just being at the meeting place which was down on 26th and Wisconsin, if I can remember correctly. And it was a legion hall or some kind. And they'd have parties for out of town guys, or kind of didn't know what else to do. We'd come, we'd dance and had doughnuts and coffee, and some soda pop, and all that good stuff.
M: A little bit like the USO.

V: More of less. Except on a different plane of course.

M: What did you think the role of women was during the war? Did you take notice of any particular....

V: A lot of them did finally find out that they had to stand on their own two feet. As far as job situation, obviously that had opened up to women. Some of them went into it with well, joy, joy, I'll pick up a couple of bucks while so and so is in the service, and that's gonna end. It's, you know, an affirmative and yet negative attitude when it really came down t it. Nobody really new how long or what this was going to entail - how things would be when they got back. Are we gonna be here or will we all decided it wasn't gonna last that long.

M: How did that change in the post-war years?

V: Well, I think the only thing there was at that point, like I said, I came back and started to play ball in Chicago and then I came in and played slow-pitch ball here in the city. Because I didn't really want to get out of it at that point. But, I paid a little bit more attention to, I think my friends and working. And kind of resuming the life that I had.

M: Did any of your family outside of your husband participate in the service?

V: No - well, like I said my ex-sister-in-law, she is at the present time a, I believe, a Lieutenant Commander in the Army nurses corps. She took it on as a full-time job. Course by now I would presume she's possibly retired too. She's a little bit older than I am.

M: Dorothy Maguire, do you recall......

V: (Interrupts) Dottie? Yeah...

M: Thought she had lost her husband in the war. How did the team react?

V: Tea and sympathy. We all kind of felt for each other - course a lot of
us were married and had husbands. The other girls that weren't - they were just sympathetic.

M: Did any other teammates lose a friend or family member - do you recall?
V: I can't recall if they did. I heard someplace along the line a couple of them had brothers or somebody like that, but I can't pinpoint it because I really don't remember it that well.

M: How did the managers or chaperones handle that news?
V: Very sympathetic. Very helpful. Like I said, they were kind of like moms or dads. You know your own family wasn't there and you gotta have somebody to lean on. You're not gonna cry to your teammates obviously.

M: What was Milwaukee like during the war years?
V: Basically it was life as usual. Except of course for the rationing and that sort of nonsense that went on at that point. But everybody just conformed. I mean, it was just there what are you gonna do about it? Nothing in our power to change it one way or the other.

M: Were your family confident that things would turn out well?
V: Yeah. I'm a very optimistic person to start out with. I always feel things are going to turn out well and if they don't I say "oh well, somebody else did it."

M: After 1944 you didn't move with the Chicks to Grand Rapids - you went to Chicago?
V: Right.

M: How did you feel about leaving the Milwaukee Chicks?
V: I was a little bit disappointed but I realized for awhile there wasn't much I could do about it. And then I just got all wound up in Chicago with a couple of my former West Allis teammates and a couple of them were in the pros