ORAL MEMOIR EXCERPTS

OF

ANNA GLADYS JENKINS CASIMIR

A Series of Interviews Conducted
22 June–6 July 1995

Interviewer:
Lois E. Myers

Baylor University Project

Baylor University
Institute for Oral History

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in Missouri, one in Norbonne and one in La Grange. And then he came back to his hometown of Oak Ridge and pastored that church. And then he went to Marble Hill, Missouri, and pastored that church. And—(pause) it was in 1908 that my mother’s health became poor, and the doctor thought that she had tuberculosis. And so they advised my father to take my mother to a drier climate and that is the reason we moved to Texas. And we came in October of 1908 to Eagle Pass, Texas, and my father pastored a church there. We left Eagle Pass after about a year and a half and went to Del Rio where he pastored the church. And we left Del Rio and went to San Marcos, where he was associational missionary for Hays County. And at San Marcos my older brother and sister went to the San Marcos Baptist Academy, where Dr. George W. Baines was the president, I guess you would call him. And then in 1913, after my brother had graduated from the academy, we moved to Waco in order for him to go to Baylor. And my father was associational missionary in Navarro County, where Corsicana is, and then also—I don’t know what the county—where Lampasas is. I think it’s Lampasas County, but—MYERS: I think so.

CASIMIR: —I know the town. And my older brother, of course, entered Baylor, but when we lived out on the border at Eagle Pass in Del Rio, he had seen soldiers on horseback, and it was during the time of Pancho Villa in Mexico, and he wanted to go in the army. And he almost threatened to run away from home and join the army, and my dad persuaded him to go on and go to school, and said if you want to go be in the army, we’ll see about getting you an appointment to West Point. And so he joined the national guard there in Waco—I think it’s the 143rd Infantry brigade or something of the Texas National Guard—and trained once every week with them. And so when the First World War broke out in 1917, in the spring—April, I believe it was—the national guard was called out—well, before that, the national guard had been called out for duty on the border, and he had been in active service on the border at different towns, Donna and Pharr and places like that.
And they were brought back home from the border in the spring of 1917, and he reenrolled in Baylor in his junior year and only went to school one week until President Wilson declared war, you know, on Germany, and they were called out for active duty again. And so the Thirty-sixth Division, of which the Texas were, trained at Camp Bowie, but my brother, by that time, was a sergeant in the national guard, and they took him away from his outfit and took him to Fort Sam Houston over at San Antonio to train officer candidates in what you’d call the rudiments of military life which these young, college graduates wanting to be officers knew nothing about. And at the end of the three months of training for those officers when they were all commissioned, my brother was given a commission as second lieutenant. But he was not sent back to the Thirty-sixth Division, he was reassigned to a new division which was being formed of the Texas and Oklahoma drafted men. They wore what they called a T&O shoulder patch representing that. There were lots of Indians in the drafted bunch from Oklahoma. And those drafted men trained in San Antonio the rest of the summer of 1917, trained all through till 1918, and then they were sent overseas. They rode the trains from San Antonio to Hoboken, New Jersey, where they were put on troop ships to go up to France.

And this Ninetieth Division was in the fighting on the St. Mihiel sector first. If you know anything about the First World War, the St. Mihiel sector was kind of a triangular wedge stuck out where the Germans were in it. And the Ninetieth Division, along with several others, was given the task of straightening that line out—pushing that triangle back. And it was their first experience to be in the front-line trenches. You go into the third trench first. And then you go through little connecting trenches and you’re in the second line. And finally, you get to the front line. And in the front line, you’re supposed to be completely silent because you’re very close to the enemy’s front line. And the order went down that they were to go over the top at four o’clock in the morning into what’s called no man’s land, where there was a lot of barbed wire entanglements and things. And they were told that they would be given three days to clean out that sector.
And when they went over—they were told to go over the top very quietly, but when they went over, all those Indians began to give their war yells, and they wiped out that section. Instead of taking three days or whatever it was, it was done in just a few hours. They just—they didn’t use their guns as much as their bayonets—the Indians, you know, just killed them right and left. And then the—that Ninetieth Division was pulled out and was in the Meuse-Argonne section for a while. And when the armistice was signed on November 11 of 1918, that morning early they were given orders to advance so far, and at eleven o’clock, they were to stop. They really didn’t know that the armistice had been signed. They didn’t know why their orders were—and where they stopped, they were in marshy land, and it was November, and it was cold, and there was ice on top of that water, you know, and—thin ice, but they broke it as they walked through it. And they stood there, and to show how cold it was, my brother had two frozen toes as a result. But afterwards, his division was part of the army of occupation in Germany, and he didn’t get home till July of 1919 even though the armistice was signed in November of 1918; see, it was July.

And when he came back, the first thing he did was to go to Baylor to try to reenroll. And Prexy [Samuel Palmer Brooks] was so good to all the returning soldiers. My brother—while he was in Germany at the army of occupations—had gone six weeks to a school in France, and so Prexy counted his work in San Antonio instructing those officer candidates and the work that he had done in this school in France as enough to finish out his work and gave him his diploma in the summer of 1919. He said—as I told you, we lived close to them and he knew him, and my brother’s name was Broadus. He said, “Broadus, go rent you a cap and gown and march in the procession,” which he did. And that’s the way he got his diploma. He didn’t really finish his work, but he was proud of that diploma.

And my sister finished in 1920, and she married in July after she got her degree in end of May or first of June—whenever it was. She married James Leo Garrett, who was
MYERS: Um-hm. Um-hm.

CASIMIR: And then we got out and walked the—you know, the other part. And, oh, there were slides, there were swings. I guess there’s a fountain there now, but it was just a natural spring. We’d go to it, you know, and drink water and have the best time. And everybody carried great big baskets full of food, you know, and they’d spread it out. They had what you call them? wooden horses and make a flat table with boards on it. Everybody put their food out, and you’d go up and down the table and eat everybody’s food you wanted to. That was a big event in our lives, at least in my childhood life, even though I was twelve years old—older when we were there. But—and I don’t remember anything else especially.

MYERS: What—you’ve told me about your brother’s involvement in World War I. What things were going on at home that made you conscious that the country was at war?

CASIMIR: Well, for—the first thing was the flu epidemic in 1918. And my sister Grace—Mrs. Garrett or Mrs. Kee, as you knew her—got the flu and it went into double pneumonia. And, in addition, she had mastoid trouble in both ears, and the doctor gave her up for—couldn’t live. And I remember hearing in the night my father phoning to Missouri for them to make arrangements to bury her, that she wasn’t going to live through the night. And I cried all night because I thought my sister Grace was going to die, but she didn’t. The next morning when Dr.—and his name was W. A. Wood, I think—when he came and saw her, and he was amazed that she was still alive, and he asked my mother to bring him a teacup, and she didn’t know why he wanted a teacup. And do you know what he did? She had double mastoid, and he punctured her eardrum and drained out more than a cupful of pus from each side. And, of course, with that out, she began to recover. But, see, she was in school and couldn’t—had to be out of school all of that fall term.

And after she began to get well, then my younger sister took the flu, my mother took the flu, my younger brother took the flu, my father was home, and he took the flu.
Everybody in the family had it except me. And you know what I had to do? I had to milk the cow, which I had never done in my life, and I was scared of the cow. But she had to be milked. And my father said you give her so much hay and you give her so much oats and you sit down and you suppress the milk. I got about a quart of milk out, and she’d eaten up all of her food, and she began to be restless. And I was scared she was going to kick me. But I had to milk the cow for about two days, and I know the old cow was as tired of me as I was of her. But see, it had always been my older brother’s job to feed the cow, and he was in the army and away from home, and so my mother or father, one, was milking the cow. And I was so glad when one of them got well enough to take over that job because—and every time I look at a cow now, I think, Ooh, I’m glad I don’t have to milk you.

MYERS: I’ll bet you do. We’re about at the end of this tape. How are you feeling?

CASIMIR: Now?

MYERS: Uh-huh.

CASIMIR: Fine.

MYERS: Do you feel like going on for a little while?

CASIMIR: Yes. It’ll be all right. Yes.

MYERS: Okay. Thank you. I’ll change the tape then.

CASIMIR: Okay.

(tape 1 ends; tape 2 begins)

MYERS: This is tape two of interview one with Gladys Casimir. We’ve been talking about your growing up and your early life in Waco. I’d like to know more about your school experience at Waco High. What were some of your favorite classes?

CASIMIR: Latin. I had a red-headed teacher named Miss Rawlins, and then I had Miss Annie Forsgard. I took four years of Latin, and it was one of my favorites. But going back to this Miss Rawlins, I grew all of my height—I’m five-nine, which is tall for a woman—when I was in the ninth grade. In the eighth grade, which was high school then,