

## "Man-on-the-Street", Buffalo, New York, December 1941

**AFS 6454A**

### **Cut A1**

Charles Harrell: This is Buffalo, New York speaking. Telling what we think of the Japanese aggression. These interviews are recorded for the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. through the facilities of WBEN, the Buffalo Evening News station. Your name please?

William Patterson: William Patterson.

Charles Harrell: And your address?

William Patterson: 130 Summit Avenue, Buffalo.

Charles Harrell: How long have you lived in Buffalo, Mr. Patterson?

William Patterson: Ever since I was born.

Charles Harrell: And how old are you?

William Patterson: Twenty-two.

Charles Harrell: Are you married?

William Patterson: No, I am not.

Charles Harrell: Have you been in Buffalo during the past two years? By that I mean you look of college age. Have you been away to school?

William Patterson: Yes I have. For the past four years I've been at Brown University.

Charles Harrell: And where is that located?

William Patterson: In Providence, Rhode Island.

Charles Harrell: You have received your degree from Brown?

William Patterson: Yes.

Charles Harrell: Where were you when the news came? Were you here in Buffalo?

William Patterson: Yes I was.

Charles Harrell: How did you react to this news?

William Patterson: I was very much surprised by it. I didn't really think that the Japanese would be so foolish as to attempt this attack which seems that it must end in failure and ruin for them.

Charles Harrell: You were entirely surprised by the turn of events?

William Patterson: Yes I was.

Charles Harrell: You did not anticipate the Japs doing anything aggressively?

William Patterson: No, at least not so soon.

Charles Harrell: At least not to us?

William Patterson: Yes.

Charles Harrell: What did you think they would do?

William Patterson: Well, I thought possibly that they would continue their aggressive moves in the direction of Thailand and possibly down toward Singapore. But I didn't anticipate, as I said, the attack on Hawaii and the Philippine Islands.

Charles Harrell: At what time did you hear the news?

William Patterson: Almost as soon as it was broadcast.

Charles Harrell: On Sunday?

William Patterson: On Sunday.

Charles Harrell: You heard it over the radio then?

William Patterson: Yes I did.

Charles Harrell: And what was your emotional reaction at that time? One of fear? One of, well could you describe how you felt?

William Patterson: Well, after the first surprise I think that I didn't feel any fear. I recognized that all of us here are in for a rather tough time of it. But, I was sure that we would all meet the situation to the best of our abilities?

Charles Harrell: Were you excited?

William Patterson: Well, not a great deal no.

Charles Harrell: You felt fairly calm?

William Patterson: Yes and really confident.

Charles Harrell: How did your family take the news? You're living with your mother and father, are you?

William Patterson: Yes I am.

Charles Harrell: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

William Patterson: I have two sisters.

Charles Harrell: How did they take the news? Your family, your sisters, mother, and father?

William Patterson: My sisters I haven't seen, they're not living in Buffalo. But my mother and father were there and I think that their reaction was much the same as mine: fairly calm and a little apprehensive perhaps of the dangers that we will have to face, but determined to see them through as they had seen them through in the last war.

Charles Harrell: Were they excited?

William Patterson: No, I don't think so.

Charles Harrell: Did they draw parallels between this war and the last one?

William Patterson: No, they didn't.

Charles Harrell: What does this mean to you, this Japanese aggression? How will it affect you personally, as near as you can tell?

William Patterson: Well, I don't know what it will mean to my personal life, yet.

Charles Harrell: What are you going to do?

William Patterson: Well, I've been considering very seriously enlisting in one or another of the armed forces of my country.

Charles Harrell: Have you any preference as to the branch?

William Patterson: Well, not so far, no.

Charles Harrell: You haven't given it serious thought in the point of really moving toward a definite signing up? You've just considered it more or less as a possible line of action for you?

William Patterson: Yes.

Charles Harrell: Is that right?

William Patterson: That's it.

Charles Harrell: What shall we do, here in America? Shall we — what do you think we ought to do as a people now? What's your attitude toward us?

William Patterson: I think we should fight the war as hard as we can until we've won.

Charles Harrell: Fight foul or fair?

William Patterson: Well [*laughs*], I don't know quite what you mean by foul.

Charles Harrell: Shall we bomb undefended cities?

William Patterson: No, I don't think so. I don't think it's — I don't know really, I don't think it's good military tactic. I don't think it's productive of results.

Charles Harrell: Do you have any moral scruples against it?

William Patterson: Well, I don't know.

Charles Harrell: Have you thought of it?

William Patterson: Evidently not. [*laughs*]

Charles Harrell: All right Mr. Patterson, a few other questions. What do you think of the Japs, the people, the Japanese people?

William Patterson: Well, I —

Charles Harrell: Do you hate them?

William Patterson: No, I don't hate them. I was very much interested in a news flash I heard over the radio from the Japanese citizens on the west coast expressing their loyalty to the president and their shock at the action that their country, original country, had taken. I don't believe that the majority of, well I don't know that I can say that, not the majority, but there must be a good many people in Japan who don't believe and don't support this war.

Charles Harrell: Do you think they are racially treacherous?

William Patterson: Well, no.

Charles Harrell: Do you think they are pretty much the same as average Americans in their general relationships to each other?

William Patterson: Well, no.

Charles Harrell: And their emotional and moral background?

William Patterson: Their customs and traditions, of course are much different than ours. I haven't made a study of the Japanese situation —

Charles Harrell: Do you think they, the people, have a sense of fair play?

William Patterson: I wouldn't know.

Charles Harrell: Do you hate Japs individually? If you saw a Jap would you hate him?

William Patterson: I don't think so.

Charles Harrell: Do you hate the Japanese government?

William Patterson: Yes, I think the Japanese military government must be destroyed and so I suppose I hate it.

Charles Harrell: Would you include the emperor?

William Patterson: No, I think the emperor is more or less separate from this government that is made this attack. I don't know that he will be overthrown as they will be.

Charles Harrell: What do you think of our government, the American government, as it is now constituted: the president, the vice president, and so forth, the personnel?

William Patterson: I think it's wonderful. I think it's a great government.

Charles Harrell: What do you think of the American people? Do you think we have the strength to ride through a long war?

William Patterson: Yes, I do.

Charles Harrell: What if our undefended cities are bombed?

William Patterson: Well, even so, the damage that might be done will be repaired as is the same thing has happened in England. And I think that our spirits will be as good as the English spirit has proven to be.

Charles Harrell: And what shall we do with them when we get them at the peace table? Shall we have vengeance? Reattributed justice? Shall we take revenge?

William Patterson: No, I don't think so. I think that the peace conference will have to be, must be, ruled by considerations of all sorts and not of vengeance. Except possibly on the political parties in such of the vanquished countries as are represented. The members of those political parties which have started this war and are continuing it, they probably will have to pay the price.

## **Cut A2**

Charles Harrell: This concludes the interview.

This is Buffalo, New York speaking. Telling what we think of the Japanese aggression. These interviews are recorded for the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C. through the facilities of WBEN, the Buffalo Evening News station. Charles Harrell speaking. What is your name please?

Dorothy Baer: Dorothy Baer.

Charles Harrell: And do you live in Buffalo?

Dorothy Baer: Yes.

Charles Harrell: Where?

Dorothy Baer: 504 Glenwood Avenue.

Charles Harrell: Are you married?

Dorothy Baer: No. I'm a widow.

Charles Harrell: Mrs. Baer where were you when the news came of the Japanese aggression?

Dorothy Baer: We were in our living room waiting for the symphony to come.

Charles Harrell: You say we, does that mean you and your children?

Dorothy Baer: No, my father and I.

Charles Harrell: You live with your father at the present time?

Dorothy Baer: Yes. That's right. Mm hmm [*affirmative*].

Charles Harrell: How did you react to it when you first heard the news?

Dorothy Baer: Well, for a moment we were stunned. We just couldn't believe it at the moment, at first. I mean it didn't seem true and then the more we heard, well I don't know just how you would say it, we were horrified.

Charles Harrell: You believed it might be just a rumor, did you think? Or did you think it was a news flash?

Dorothy Baer: Yes at first, because the reason that we thought that: we hadn't quite finished discussing an article which we had read in a New York newspaper about some planes that had crashed in the Pacific several weeks before. And reading of the screens so-called they had around the Pearl Harbor. Twenty-four hour screen they call it.

Charles Harrell: I see.

Dorothy Baer: And it didn't seem quite possible at the time.

Charles Harrell: Did you feel at the time that this would mean war for the United States?

Dorothy Baer: Oh, if it were absolutely true, yes.

Charles Harrell: How did your father feel about it? What was his reaction?

Dorothy Baer: Well, his like mine, you see it sort of dovetailed in. We were just been discussing it at the dinner table.

Charles Harrell: Did you feel relief?

Dorothy Baer: No. Of course, we knew for some time ever since the freezing of the assets of Japan that something was going to happen. We didn't think it would be anything like that.

Charles Harrell: What does this war mean to you personally? How will it affect your life as far as you can tell now?

Dorothy Baer: Well, that's rather difficult to say. Of course —

Charles Harrell: Are you prepared to make sacrifices?

Dorothy Baer: Yes, we are making them now. We have to. All of us are.

Charles Harrell: Do you feel like that you're ready for anything that might affect you?

Dorothy Baer: Oh definitely [*laughs*] because you see we are fundamentally Yankees and I don't think any [*laughs*] Yankee has any fondness for a so-called yellow race.

Charles Harrell: What shall we do as a nation? Shall we fight this war fair or foul?



Dorothy Baer: Well, they started in sort of foul [*laughs*].

Charles Harrell: Shall we fight back foul?

Dorothy Baer: Well, if fire means fighting with fire then let's fight with fire.

Charles Harrell: You believe then that we should and can bomb undefended cities?

Dorothy Baer: No, that doesn't seem right. Not for them to do it to us or for us to do it to them. That's not —

Charles Harrell: If they do it to us should we retaliate?

Dorothy Baer: Well, we should do something, but I don't believe in defenseless people being the butt of aggression.

Charles Harrell: I see, —

Dorothy Baer: Of course I don't like that word defense anyway [*laughs*].

Charles Harrell: That leads me to the next question. Do you hate the Japs?

Dorothy Baer: No, I don't hate anyone, but —

Charles Harrell: Do you hate the Japanese, dislike the Japanese people?

Dorothy Baer: I don't dislike the people, I dislike the way they do things so often.

Charles Harrell: You hate their manner, their government. Do you hate their government?

Dorothy Baer: Well . . .

Charles Harrell: By that I mean do you make a distinction between the Japanese people and their government?

Dorothy Baer: Well, the contacts that I have had with the Japanese, of course, have been only in friends of mine who've had them as servants and I don't know much about them other than that. But, of course their emperor is simply a puppet. They seem to, all those that I've come in contact with, seem to be well-educated outside of — even those that were servants were.

Charles Harrell: Do you hate the Japs individually?

Dorothy Baer: No.

Charles Harrell: Do you —

Dorothy Baer: But I don't like the way they do things [*laughs*].

Charles Harrell: Do you think that's a racial characteristic?

Dorothy Baer: Yes.

Charles Harrell: What do you think will happen when we get them at the peace table? By that I mean what do you think we should do? Shall we have vengeance? —

Dorothy Baer: I think first we should be very cagey.

Charles Harrell: Do you think that we should be very vindictive about this? What should we do when that time comes?

Dorothy Baer: We should try and be at least one step ahead of them both mentally and every other way.

Charles Harrell: Shall we give them a chance to rise again?

Dorothy Baer: Mm mm [*negative*]. [*laughs*]

Charles Harrell: Stop them now?

Dorothy Baer: Yes, stop them now.

Charles Harrell: All right. What do you think will happen to the American people? Do you think that we'll conduct this war . . . well, let me put it this way, do you think we are prepared for this war?

Dorothy Baer: Well, yes I think we are, but I think we need more preparedness.

Charles Harrell: Do you feel that we are emotionally and morally prepared for it?

Dorothy Baer: Yes. I wish that we had, if there was going to be an offensive, that we'd started it and not been on the defensive. I don't like that word defense.

Charles Harrell: Before the war were you an isolationist or an interventionist? That's a label I realize, but —

Dorothy Baer: Yes. Well, I'm for America first, last, and always [*laughs*].

Charles Harrell: You were then an isolationist before the declaration of war?

Dorothy Baer: You mean by isolationist that I thought we should just be sufficient unto ourselves?

Charles Harrell: That's right.

Dorothy Baer: We should be sufficient unto ourselves if nothing is going to happen to us.

Charles Harrell: And that concludes the interview.