



INTEVIEW SUMMARY AND TRANSCRIPTION

CONNIE MARK

Ref number: ORAL/7/9

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Content summary

Connie Mark remembers British officers coming to Jamaica during the Second World War to recruit eligible servicemen, many of whom were enlisted from the rural inland. Most had never been to Kingston, or set foot on a boat before. She recalls the incredibly tight quarters on board their transport, seen during her work as a volunteer secretary to the Assistant Director of Medical Supplies. During her war work, Mark had to be on duty 24/7. When living with her aunt, she was often fetched in the middle of the night to greet arriving ships. This experience deeply marked her understanding of war, as she witnessed men shipping out “hale and hearty”, only to return wounded on stretchers and in wheelchairs.

[00:00:00.00] CM: Actually, he's interested on the ex-servicemen who came to this country. When war was declared, and when it was very bad in England, you had English officers who came to Jamaica. I can remember as young as I was, that was nineteen years plus, they would go into all the little corners of Jamaica, and they would beg, literally beg you to come and fight for England. Because you see we were brought up that England was our Mother Country, and obviously if your mother has problems, you got to come and help your mother! So we all felt obliged to come, and everybody was very happy to come. And most of the men that came, to England, came from the country parts as I said. Now Kingston is the capital of Jamaica, and most of them had never ever come to Kingston until they were going to the War. And I have actually had the opportunity of going on the ships, was the ships was so crowded, there were four to a bunk, and I wondered how some of these men who had never travelled on a boat before, came in such cramped conditions as well, literally like pushing animals because they really had the ships all crammed to make sure that they get as much of them as they want to England. Well I have found that a lot of people, thank you, a lot of people are not really aware of how involved we were in the war in Jamaica. For instance, I went in the Army, as I volunteered myself, but as a medical secretary, and when these same troop ships came back to Jamaica, because I was secretary to the Assistant Director of Medical Services, when you're in the Army you may or may not know you're on twenty four hours duty. There's nothing off duty. So I used to have my uniform hung up all the while. My mother died so I lived with my aunt, and anywhere I



was going, my aunt had to know where I was because if a troop ship was coming in at two o'clock in the morning, then, the military police would come to my home, knock on my door, and in five minutes flat I had to be dressed to go. If I wasn't there, my aunt would have to say oh she's gone to a nightclub here, and the military police would go and get me wherever I am. And I had to be down at that troop ship stat. And that's when the war really came home to me, cause you saw men leaving, hale and hearty, and you saw them come back on stretchers, you see them come back in wheelchairs.