

Maureen and Mike

Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Archives and Special Collections

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: [Archives and Special Collections](#)

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

The following transcript is a scan of the original and has not been edited. For additional assistance, please contact Archives and Special Collections.

INTERVIEW WITH PAUL SNYDER

October 26, 1987

C: I'd like you to tell me about when you joined the service--how old you were and what you were doing.

P: I joined the Navy in 1940, a year before the war started, and went out to the Asiatic Fleet. I was in Manila when the war started on the morning of December 7 and from that point on 5 months or 6 months later I ended up in Australia. It was not until 1943 that I went aboard submarines.

I had never heard of Tokyo Rose in the first two or three years of the war, but as I went aboard submarines it was really the first time I had heard of her. She was well-known in the submarine force in the United States for a couple of reasons, the most important of which was that she played the best music that you could pick up anywhere, and the second reason was that submarines generally were only on the surface at night and the only thing we could get was Tokyo Rose and we could pick her up at night. She would play the best music that you could imagine and her whole idea in playing it was that she assumed that all of us were in love with somebody back in the United States and that all of us must have a favorite song, like "Stardust" or "Harbor Lights", "Don't Get Around Much Anymore," "Missed the Saturday Dance," and so Tokyo Rose would

start out by telling us that we were fighting a dumb war against a brave enemy and that we were the victims of a system and that she really wasn't mad at us but that she felt we ought to know that back in the United States our sweetheart was now being wined and dined by some 4-F. And I can remember her saying a thing about, "Your girlfriend tonight is sitting on the sofa and he's got his arms around her and now we're going to play your song while you think of her in the arms of someone else." And then she would play probably one of those four songs. Usually she stayed with "Stardust" a lot; she really liked that. She had a really beautiful voice. In later years I talked to a lot of submariners about how they felt about Tokyo Rose. I think all of us have a lot of affection for her, strangely enough. We never really looked on her as a traitor. Some of the reasons, I think, for that was the fact that she was so outrageous in what she said and so outlandish and most of us were closer to the truth about what was going on in the war than she was, so we never really took some of the things that she said seriously. I think the thing about propaganda, you have to be reasonably close to the truth to be effective. Tokyo Rose was never close to the truth. One effect--I can remember a program that came on ahead of Tokyo Rose in which there were two men, one I remember had a

distinctly English accent and they talked more about the East Asian Co-prosperity Alliance and why the Chinese and the Japanese and the middle Indonesian people should support Japan more, and they put out some news but they were never really outrageous--they were more political. I never remember that Tokyo Rose was political. She only was on, as I can remember, about 2 hours a night. I would talk to other people that would tell me that she was on in the daytime, but I never heard her any other time than at night. I think another reason why we were never really upset with Tokyo Rose was, when one thinks about Lord Haw Haw they realize that he was a British citizen, he was despised by the British people. Tokyo Rose, while she was an American and she graduated from UCLA--people in those days had a deep dislike for the Japanese, even the American Japanese we never really accepted because we always felt that they were very loyal to the Emperor, so even though Tokyo Rose may have been an American I don't think the American servicemen ever looked on her as anything but a Japanese who was trying to do something to win the war for Japan. Besides, the really other real reason was that she was female, and there were a lot of lonely guys out in the Pacific and that was about the only feminine voice they could hear there, so they used to tune in to her a lot.

C: Did you have any idea what she looked like?

P: No. I saw a picture of her after the war was over.

C: (Unintell.--something about the voice and the picture)

P: She was very articulate but you could recognize the Oriental expressions in her voice. But I never really had a picture of her, never had the fantasy of her. Like I said a little earlier, she was . . . really, her propaganda was outrageous. However, we did get scared a lot on submarines because every once in a while she would mention the name of your submarine and I remember when we left Brisbane, Australia, and we got out on our way to . . . up in the northern coast of Australia when we first picked her up--and she mentioned in this broadcast that the USS Guardfish had just left Brisbane and that our patrol area was going to be around Truk Island and that the brave and honorable Japanese were waiting for us in Truk. I have a friend of mine who was a fella by the name of Ed Hall who was on the Sunfish. The Sunfish fought a heavy battle with four ships and sank all 4 ships, but they were heavily depth-charged and got away, and later on surfaced and heard Tokyo Rose tell everyone that the USS Sunfish had been sunk by Japanese destroyers. There was a favorite submarine, the USS Wahoo, which had a lot of fame during the war and the first instance that anyone ever knew that the Wahoo was sunk was when Tokyo Rose made

the announcement that the Japanese had just sunk the USS Wahoo. I can remember the mention of an aircraft carrier--she liked to use the names of ships that she knew were in a particular area. I heard her in about 1944--I've been trying to get somebody else who remembers but I can't. But I remember in 1944 that the rumor was that Tokyo Rose was really an American spy who was providing Naval information to Naval submarines particularly, because it was uncanny when we would get a message that the Seattle-Maru was at a such-and-such longitude and latitude and we would hit that longitude and latitude and there would be the Seattle-Maru. I do believe, though, after the war was over we discovered, or I discovered, that they had broken the code--the United States had broken Japanese code. Nothing was ever mentioned in her trial about this, but there was quite a prominent rumor about her then.

C: You said she was a smart person for making you feel homesick.

P: Oh, yes, she'd just . . . she had a sexy voice and, after all, we were guys in the Pacific. Many of us were months and months without seeing women. Her voice--and she played on that a lot. This particular thing about telling us that some 4-F was back wining and dining our sweetheart was really almost an every night thing with her. And it was very smart, because

she did figure out that there were only probably 4 or 5 really important songs that everybody would have some feeling for, or relate to some girl. The girl that I was going with at the time, I particularly remember "Harbor Lights" was our song. She played a lot of "Harbor Lights" and--I don't know how effective that was. It didn't seem to bother us. As I say, Tokyo Rose was never really very close to the truth. She exaggerated a lot and, other than the naming of names of ships that were sunk, she never really had much chilling effect on anyone. We really sort of felt more affectionate toward her.

C: Did that have a chilling effect?

P: Yeah, that did. Particularly the Wahoo. And being on the Guardfish when she told us that we had just left Brisbane and that--no one knew that our patrol area was around Truk Island--I don't know how she knew that. I'm sure I know how she knew that some submarines were in the area. We used to dump garbage at night and we tried to weigh it so that it would sink. But I'm certain that some of that information would float to the surface and eventually get back to her, because she would very often tell you what ships were in what area and they were always waiting for us with a whole bunch of ships to sink us. She also at one time offered a reward for the capture of any American submariner. I

remember those things that she said.

C: There's something I've forgotten.

P: There were other propaganda shows around. But I don't think--Lord Haw Haw betrayed his country, Axis Sally to a certain extent betrayed hers--I don't think Tokyo Rose ever betrayed the United States because we never really accepted her as a United States citizen and we looked at her as a Japanese. And even after the fact that she was a citizen or at least a graduate from UCLA, we never considered her a traitor. I can remember when she was first tried, we really didn't care--I didn't--I didn't care if she was tried or not. I never felt any anger about it. I don't think any of the fellas that I've ever talked to felt anger about her.

This past week-end we had a submarine reunion in Great Falls and I asked all the guys there how they felt about Tokyo Rose and they had a lot of good stories about her and how they really thought she was neat and kept them from being too lonely, and all mentioned her great choice of music. It was the only music that we could get in the Pacific. I think if she would have been more subtle with the propaganda she would have been more effective, but she . . . the brave Japanese forces were always winning great battles and we knew they weren't. We just never were really angry.

My organization--Submarine Veterans of the United States--America would like to have her back at a reunion some time. She's almost an affectionate friend in a way.

C: Do you remember when she was tried?

P: If I remember correctly, wasn't there some discussion about whether they were going to try her at all or not? I think in the beginning they were not going to. I can't remember exactly, but it seems to me it was quite a while after the war before they really did try her. And I don't think she got very long. I'm kind of vague about that, but it seems to me that she was not sentenced--was it 25 years and 10 years? But I think she was let out earlier than that. There never seemed to be any harshness about her trial. I can remember reading about . . . at least that I read . . . in the paper, and I really didn't care whether she got tried or not. There was nothing . . . I mean, I didn't like Lord Haw Haw, I can tell you that, and I was glad that anything bad would happen to them, but I never felt the same about Tokyo Rose. She was kind of a friend on a lonely night in the Pacific.

(Discussion about Lord Haw Haw and Jane Fonda being true traitors in his mind. Discussion about Jeanette Rankin voting against WWII and the fact that she was a woman, not a man. Talked about Jane Fonda

being a woman and if a man had gone over it would have been different -- macho society.)

It was the same with Tokyo Rose. She was a female in a macho society, and I think that we had sort of an ambivalent cross-over feeling because she was female, where I doubt that they had that same feeling with Lord Haw Haw. They probably did with Axis Sally more. This is only my own idea, but it just seems to me that the female would get away with it easier in a male world like a war than another male would. I think that may have had some bearing. Certainly, if this would have been Tokyo Joe broadcasting propaganda, the American sailor wouldn't have had the same feeling for him. Not in any way would we have had the same feeling. The fact that she was female and with the ambivalence of a male-female sort of emotional relationship anyway, I think there was a better feeling about Tokyo Rose. I've wondered what we would have done if it had been Tokyo Joe.

C: But there were male commentators.

P: Yes. And I listened to some of them. But I can't name any. These two English guys that came on ahead of Tokyo Rose, at least at night, I couldn't tell you their names. I used to think of them as sort of . . . well I couldn't have because there was no Jerry Lewis-Dean Martin sort of thing . . . but Abbott-Costello,

yeah, I used to think of them in that way. And they were more political. I don't remember that Tokyo Rose was ever political. She was political in the sense that she was trying to get you to love Japan more, or understand Japan more, or . . . Tokyo Rose was more sexy, her propoganda, at least her approach, was more sexual as far as getting to the American serviceman. She gave a lot of historical document about what was, like the Battle of Midway and the various battles, particularly around Guadalcanal. I can remember those. And her claims were outrageous. We were just losing more ships than anyone can imagine. Well, the truth of the matter was that we weren't. But her music was super.

C: You said you didn't think of her as an American.

P: No, we never did. Well, at that time we didn't know she was an American. I didn't really know until after the war that she was a graduate of UCLA. We didn't know that then.

C: Didn't she refer to night spots, nightclubs?

P: In the States?

C: In California.

P: I can't remember that. She sure might have. The thing that I mainly remember about her was the 4-F that was taking over my nest back home. You're probably right about those nightclubs. I just don't remember them.

C: Did you feel homesick or did you feel . . . ?

P: Oh she'd make you feel homesick, boy would she ever. Particularly music. It wasn't so much Tokyo Rose as it was the music she played. We didn't have access to that kind of music. We didn't have VCRs. We had some old record on a machine and that was about it.

I think, though, if we did know that she had come from the United States, yeah, I know we did know that, but I didn't look on her as a traitor.

(Remarks about fear--living with fear makes you lose sexual feelings.)