

Maureen and Mike

Mansfield Library

UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA

Archives and Special Collections

Mansfield Library, University of Montana

Missoula MT 59812-9936

Email: library.archives@umontana.edu

Telephone: (406) 243-2053

This transcript represents the nearly verbatim record of an unrehearsed interview. Please bear in mind that you are reading the spoken word rather than the written word.

Oral History Number: 168-002
Interviewee: Tom Haines
Interviewer: Gladys Peterson
Date of Interview: April 27, 1987
Project: World War II Home Front Oral History Project

Gladys Peterson: This is an interview with Tom Haines on April 27, 1987. Our main topic will be World War II. Tom, this must be about the third or fourth time I've interviewed you.¹

Tom Haines: I think so, yes.

GP: Each time it's been on a different subject or at least we've concentrated on a particular subject, and this time I'd like to ask you some questions about your business and how the war affected you. But for the benefit of people who might not have heard your other tapes or don't know your background, I'd like to back up a little bit so that this tape will be more meaningful. First of all, I know you've lived here a long time, but you were born in Illinois.

TH: That's correct.

GP: And your father moved out here in—

TH: 1918.

GP: In 1918, and started a grocery business in Clinton—

TH: Clinton General Store.

GP: And you went to school in Clinton for a while, didn't you?

TH: Oh, yes. I went to high school in Clinton. They had a high school there. I took my third year of high school there.

GP: Then you went back to Illinois.

TH: Illinois, and graduated high school there.

GP: Eventually you came back to Montana—

TH: I came back to Montana.

GP: Was that right after graduation from high school?

¹ See oral history interviews OH 131-017, 018 and OH 147-001, 002.

TH: No, I was manager of a store back in Illinois for several years until it burned in 1931, so then I came out, moved out here. My father says, "Come on out here [unintelligible]." Did in 1932. May 1, I opened the O.K. Trading Company on South 5th.

GP: On South 5th. What block would that have been in?

TH: It was 1701 South 5th.

GP: South 5th West, yeah.

TH: It doesn't exist anymore.

GP: I've heard about it, and of course, you've talked to me about that too. That was in '30—

TH: One.

GP: '31.

TH: '32, I bought the store. May 1, 1932.

GP: '32. Okay, and that was in the heart of the Depression, wasn't it.?

TH: [laughs] That's right, really was.

GP: We've already talked about the Depression quite a bit so we won't delve into that a whole lot, except we might just briefly touch on how the Depression affected your business before we move into WWII.

TH: Back in the Depression, of course, there was no money, and that was the chief trouble. Then, of course, welfare [unintelligible]. [unintelligible sentence]. Then there would two or three months, the welfare department would pay us. Then the Missoula Mercantile Company, we'd take these orders down there and sign it over at the Mercantile and they'd give us credit on our account. The Mercantile waited to get their money from the welfare department [unintelligible], so that's the way we operated in those days.

GP: Did they discount your money?

TH: No, no. No way.

GP: They didn't? Well, that certainly was a good business procedure.

TH: Well, yes, the Mercantile Company [unintelligible].

GP: Sure. Well, this probably went on for a period of years, didn't it?

TH: Yes, and it just gradually got better. The Depression hit bottom, and then it just gradually better and better as businesses started opening up in the United States. Of course, we had these...I call them [unintelligible], then they started building the dams and highways and things. Public money went into that, and [unintelligible] the Depression ended. Business got good.

GP: It got good. Now, Fort Peck was a long way from here. I'm sure you didn't feel any effects from that.

TH: Yes, we had customers that worked up there.

GP: Oh, you did?

TH: [unintelligible].

GP: So even the money filtered back too Missoula.

TH: Back to Missoula, yes.

GP: That's interesting. There was a dam program up in the St. Ignatius area too, wasn't there, or some kind of a—

TH: I don't know.

GP: What was that? Was that a—

TH: Nine Pipe Reservoir?

GP: A reservoir, that's it.

TH: [unintelligible] during that time.

GP: Because I think Bob Watt told me he was involved in that up there during the Depression. When things began to open up here, Tom, was there any local thing at all that caused that that you could see?

TH: No, it was just general over the United States. Just general.

GP: Do you think it was because the United States industry at that time was getting into war time manufacturers? Did that have anything to do with it?

TH: No, [unintelligible] think about war at that time. Of course, they called it pump priming and used public works to pay it, building these dams and various things and the Highway Department priming it. That created money, or supply, [unintelligible].

GP: So it was that. Do you think that the CCCs [Civilians Conservation Corps] and the WPA [Works Progress Administration] and those programs...I don't remember what you said your feeling about them was. Do you think that the pump priming was worth it?

TH: Well, the CCC was a great program. Too bad we don't have it today. The WPA program was a flop. It was just a waste of money on [unintelligible] project. CCC [unintelligible] really a great benefit.

GP: But, nonetheless some of that money was in the community as a result of those programs, right?

TH: Oh sure, they're paid. They were paid, and that [unintelligible]. I had some very good friends [unintelligible] CC program. [unintelligible], but of course, it got those fellows [unintelligible].

GP: Then the public works program was different. I'm not sure which one the Montana Writers Project was involved in. It probably was the WPA. I'm not sure.

TH: I think that was one of the WPA...whatever Works Progress Administration, is that what it's called? I think [unintelligible] that program or part of it.

GP: I know that there were a lot of writers who say they got their start, at least were able to maintain themselves, through that.

TH: Well, there've been books published about it.

GP: Yes, yes. Well, we'll move ahead then. So things were pretty well improved by the time World War One...WWII started, and I'm sure that like the rest of us who were of any adult age—I think I was 18 when the war broke out—I can remember it very vividly. How did it affect you? Or do you remember the exact thing you did or were doing when you found out about it?

TH: I remember exactly that I was doing in the store—it was on Sunday—typing a letter. I had a radio on and got the first flash. That time somebody came around the back door of the store and wanted it. So I went and let him in. He wanted cigarettes or something. Then I said to him, "Pearl Harbor's just been attacked."

He says, "Oh, is that so?" Went on out. When he got outside, he went and came back in. [laughs] He finally soaked through what had happened. [unintelligible sentence].

GP: Was that during the day that you found out about it?

TH: [unintelligible] must have been about 11:00 in the morning, sometime in the morning.

GP: Well, I guess the country knew about it in the morning that. I didn't because we didn't have the radio on during the day. Found about it in the evening. But anyhow. What was your immediate reaction to that?

TH: Well, I knew we were in a war. I knew that...I didn't realize that we'd have rations and all those things, [unintelligible]. But of course, I knew that it would be a big war. [unintelligible sentence]. And I knew [unintelligible] two-front war. But I realized that the United States was big enough to fight them. Like in the [unintelligible], "attacked a sleeping giant."

TP: That's right. Did you have any inkling before Pearl Harbor that this might happen?

TH: Oh yeah, we knew that they were fussing around. Knew the Japanese delegator was in Washington talking to [unintelligible] trying to arrange a peace of some kind. That was [unintelligible] attacked Pearl Harbor.

GP: Did you have the sense immediately that the Missoula people—the ones that you were in contact with—felt that the situation had been handled correctly by Roosevelt, or did they blame Roosevelt?

TH: Well, I think they did, yes. I think they [unintelligible]. [unintelligible sentence]. They called it Roosevelt's war.

GP: Well, I was I grew up in the Midwest, and I was aware at that time that there were isolationists around. What was the feeling about them in Missoula?

TH: Oh, I don't know.

GP: You don't recall that there was any kind of a movement here?

TH: No, [unintelligible].

GP: There were two or three major figures at that time. In fact, there was an organization that I think Charles Lindbergh was involved with and people like that, but that wasn't the situation out here. They were not—

TH: [unintelligible].

GP: —not influential at all.

TH: No, at least [unintelligible] encounter it [unintelligible].

GP: Well, we all know that that date is December 7, 1941, and the next day Roosevelt talked to the country and declared war.

TH: The Congress declared the war.

GP: Yes. Yes.

TH: The U.S. Congress.

GP: Yes, I remember hearing that speech where I was working. Do you remember that...see, this was '41, that everybody listened to it locally in Missoula?

TH: I don't know. [laughs] I don't remember. I suppose they did. [unintelligible sentence].

GP: Did you hear the talk?

TH: I can't remember whether I did or not. Seems like I did, but I'm not sure about that.

GP: I see.

TH: The talk during the war that everybody made a point to listen to was when Winston Churchill talked. That was [unintelligible], and powerful [unintelligible], I thought.

GP: Yes. Well, do you remember, Tom, how long it took before your store was affected by the war?

TH: Well, I don't remember. I was really affected when they started rationing, and they had the Office of Price Administration [OPA]. Of course, there was [unintelligible] around at that time that Eleanor [Roosevelt] had gone over to England and saw they had rationing there. She came home and told Franklin that would be nice to have in the United States. So Franklin, of course, was afraid of her, and we had rationing in the United States. Didn't have rationing in Canada, didn't have it in Mexico. Of course, as later events came about, years later, it proved that Eleanor did have...cracked the whip over Franklin. [unintelligible sentence]. So that's how we had rationing. It was the most ridiculous thing we ever had in this country as far as I'm concerned. Gas might have been a good thing to ration, but ration gasoline, shoes, coffee, canned vegetables and fruit and meat. There was always a [unintelligible]. And sugar.

GP: Flour they didn't?

TH: [unintelligible].

GP: They didn't ration flour.

Well, how did this affect your customers?

TH: It made liars and thieves out of everybody in the United States. Dishonest, everybody was dishonest. Had to do that to live. Black market, a black market immediately sprang up. [unintelligible] sides of beef, and the price was set by the Office of Price Administration. I'd go into the cooler of the proprietor, and we had a bet. He'd bet me about the weather, and I always lost ten dollars. I always lost, and that's how I got a side of beef. I'd [unintelligible] the OPA price, plus ten dollar bet. That's how I got a side of beef.

GP: Isn't that interesting?

TH: [unintelligible]. I had a lady on the Flathead, living on the Flathead. She and her husband every Friday, brought me in 50 chickens. Chickens, they weren't rationed, but they had an awful price on them, the Office of Price Administration had set. I had to pay this lady in black market price. I had to sell them for a black market price, and of course, I didn't have no help. I couldn't [unintelligible] the chickens. Put the chickens in big jug [unintelligible]. So the women that didn't have the raw chicken, I'd call them in, take them into the meat block and show them how to boil a chicken. Of course, those chickens were all sold the second they came to the store. So people could get more meat. They didn't have enough red points to get bacon, ham, or beef or whatever it was. They were desperate for meat. Of course, I was violating the law. People who bought them were violating the law. Everybody was dishonest, but that's the only way you could operate.

GP: You took them in the cooler, and you showed them how and they gave you—

TH: I took them back to the meat block, showed them how to [unintelligible] a chicken.

GP: They paid you extra at that time for that service?

TH: Not for the service but of course from then on, I didn't [unintelligible] any chickens. See, the chickens would come in, it wasn't [unintelligible], selling the chicken—the whole chicken—and they had to draw the chicken themselves. Prior to that time, we always knew the chickens for the housewife. Same with turkeys and geese and everything.

GP: Well, I'm trying to figure out how you got enough money out of them to get around the OPA, though.

TH: [laughs] We just... [unintelligible]. We'd tell them how much it was, and they paid it. No charge, [unintelligible].

GP: I see, and you had to ring that up. The OPA was pretty strict.

TH: Oh, sure, but it didn't show what it was. It was just general sales.

GP: What about the people you were dealing with? That must have been a little complicated, too. I mean your—

TH: Well, customer, they knew the whole thing.

GP: Well, I mean like this lady that you got the chickens from. She had to keep her records, too.

TH: I don't know how she handled it from there on. When I handed her the money for the chickens, that would be the end of the deal as far as I was concerned.

GP: Now, what about with the producers like Armour's and Swifts? Do you have any direct dealings with them, or was it through a wholesaler?

TH: Oh, yes, sure. Yes. We'd buy the ham, bacon, and stuff. We'd taken the points—the red points. We deposited those in the bank. So we wrote a check against those. See, it was handled just like money, those red points or blue points or whatever. Of course, towards the end of it—towards the end of the war—it had gotten so ridiculous that people didn't bother to...they'd just hand us the whole book. They had thousands of points stacked up. The whole thing was ridiculous. The only thing that I was really tight on was sugar, but we had all kinds of corn syrup—cans of corn syrup. But sugar, we were very tight on that, and finally I had to go to the OPA, or the rationing board, and request the additional sugar so they gave me several hundred pounds of sugar.

GP: Sure, because at that time I imagine the women around here were still making their own jellies and jams.

TH: Oh, yes. Oh yes, sure. Oh, yes.

GP: Canning their fruit. They'd need sugar for that, which was really a war effort to be able to do that on your own.

TH: That's correct. That's what they encouraged you to do. Coffee was another item that was very tight. Of course, everybody wanted coffee, and they couldn't get enough coupons to buy enough coffee to fit their needs, so they'd do everything to get...had to watch those points—coupons—very carefully because people...[unintelligible]. If they didn't give you the coupon, they'd say, "[unintelligible]." Now, butter, we used to have butter [unintelligible]. We had to finally move that back into the meat case, because people would just help themselves to butter. They would be happy to pay you for it, but didn't have the points to buy it. Now, when they rationed meats—the red meats—we had to take an inventory on our sales and they [unintelligible] the rationing board. By that time, I had gotten [unintelligible] so damn patriotic

as far as that [unintelligible]. So I figured my inventory, so I'd have 10,000 extra red points. Well, I went down, and I got the points from the rationing board. The next day they called me up, "Come down here, and let's figure this thing."

So I thought, well, [unintelligible]. So I went on down [unintelligible].

"[unintelligible] should have 10,000 more points." So between the two, I had 20,000 extra red points. [laughs] It was thievery, dishonest, but that's the only way you get out of it. Then, of course, they'd had people go around and inspect the stores—the rationing board volunteers. [unintelligible] sheets with prices and everything on there, and they'd change the prices on the shelf to correspond. One time, two of them came in and inspected...had their sheets to inspect what the prices were. As she was switching them, I had a friend in the store, I said, "Stick around a few minutes."

So, when they were started out, I said, "I want to see that sheet." Well, they didn't want to show it to me. I said, "Show me the sheet or I'm calling the ration board or the county attorney." So then they showed me the sheet, and they mispriced everything. So I said, "Stay right here [unintelligible]." So I call the rationing board, I said, "Get out here, I'm calling the county attorney." So the rationing board came out, [unintelligible] fussing around there about it. I said, "I'll let them go. I'm not going to make a complaint to the county attorney." But I said, "Don't ever darken my door ever again. [unintelligible] be sure they're honest."

GP: Do you recall any business people who got in trouble with the OPA?

TH: Gosh, I can't.

GP: I know that—not locally—but they did prosecute because my husband was in the Air Force and I was working for the legal branch of the OPA in Oklahoma City. I recall seeing these briefs and documents. In fact, I typed up quite a few of them, and I know the damages were troubled damages on some of these suits.

TH: I can't recall anybody being prosecuted or [unintelligible].

GP: Not locally. That's good.

TH: But, I [unintelligible] around here. Of course, the old Missoula Mercantile Company was the one where everybody turned to if they had trouble with the rationing board or the OPA. They'd smooth things over.

GP: It's just amazing how the Missoula Mercantile Company just seemed to be kind of the patriarch of the community.

TH: And they were.

GP: Was this all due to Mr. McLeod?

TH: That's correct.

GP: The senior Mr. McLeod?

TH: Senior. He was a great man. He's the one that helped get me started in business. I borrowed money from my father. I didn't have any money. Borrowed money from my father, money from the Missoula Mercantile Company, and [unintelligible] Mercantile. I had a heck of a time paying my bills. Mr. [unintelligible] was the [unintelligible] manager down there in the treasury. I'd go down and see Mr. [unintelligible]. He'd call me up and say, "We need to have a talk." He'd help me along a little bit [unintelligible] or line of credit. Of course, finally, I got over that and paid my bills. Finally it got to the point where I paid for everything on the first of January each year. On my financial statement, I'd write bills, pay them on [unintelligible].

GP: That was a good feeling, wasn't it?

TH: It was a good feeling and Mr. [unintelligible] told me one time, he says, "There's only one other person who has money that does that besides you."

GP: Is that right? Well, that's interesting.

TH: Mr. McLeod was a brilliant man, a brilliant business man. I remember, I finally got out of the hole, and I had brought my financial statement down the first year to show him. I think I had a net worth of about 7,000 dollars, so [unintelligible] at that time. So I walked in, he looked at it, too. Then he put his arms around my shoulder, and he gave me a bear hug, like he'd do, and he said, "That's a good job, Tom." I always thought about that. He was a great, great man.

GP: Really had a keen business sense, didn't he?

TH: Oh, he did. Certainly a keen business sense.

GP: Well, I'd like to ask you now about your customers in the store, Tom. Surely, you were in contact with many, many people who were affected by the war. Do you remember family situations?

TH: Oh, yes.

GP: Are there any that stand out in your mind about boys going into service, or even girls for that matter?

TH: Oh, yes, I remember one girl went to Spokane and had...she was a young wife. Had her picture taken in the nude. Now, this actually happened. In the nude. And gave it to her husband. He was going to the Pacific. She said, "If these black girls start getting too white, [unintelligible], see how it's done at home." [laughs] That actually happened. It was pretty funny. Pretty funny. There was some...see they had those disciplinary barracks out here at the fort [Fort Missoula], you see. The soldiers—the guards—of course, they [unintelligible]. Then they got to the point where this, [unintelligible]

GP: Who were interred?

TH: Interred, yes.

GP: Interned, not interred.

TH: Interned.

GP: We'd better get the right word there.

TH: They were turned loose to work in the businesses around town.

GP: Oh, they were?

TH: Oh, yes. Of course, some of them got in trouble with women around town, and some of the wives around town got to playing [unintelligible] around town.

GP: I'd never heard that before.

TH: I know we had one young woman out [unintelligible] that had been married, and she had two children [unintelligible] and had a baby by him. When her husband came home, it was fine and dandy. They went right on living together and had another babies. [unintelligible].

GP: I didn't realize that they were working in the stores. That's very interesting.

TH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. There was a captain, a ship captain of the liner, and he worked at the Mercantile Company drug department. Real nice fellow, got well acquainted with him and liked him very much. He had a [unintelligible]. He didn't want to play with her, but she fell in love with him and—

GP: Now, these were actual prisoners of war, weren't they?

TH: No, they weren't, they weren't prisoners of war. They were interned from...See now, this fellow was a ship's captain. These ships were in port here at the time the war started. Of course, they were all taken off. They weren't prisoners of war, they were just sent out here.

GP: I see. Now, this man who has the little grocery at Broadway and Madison [Broadway Market]—

TH: Cipolato [Alfredo Cipolato]?

GP: Yes. Wasn't he involved somehow in that?

TH: Gosh, I don't remember now.

GP: You don't?

TH: Cipolato was a brother to Mrs. D'Orazi, an old-time family here. I can't recall what happened. If he was ever involved or not. I don't know.²

GP: For the most part these were ship personnel, then, who—

TH: Yeah, ship personnel, yes. [unintelligible] took over the ship. Of course, the crew, they just sent them out here.

GP: Was it mainly or only Seattle? I don't suppose you remember that.

TH: These came from back East.

GP: They did?

TH: I think this ship's captain was in New York harbor.

GP: Is that right? Well, isn't that interesting? What about the Japanese? I suppose they were not released, were they? They stayed out there?

TH: I don't know, [unintelligible].

GP: [talking at the same time] You didn't see them in the community, so they must have been—

TH: Few old Japanese here who worked mostly on the section. Old, old men, you know. I don't know whether they were [unintelligible] or not.

GP: Were there some Germans out there at Fort Missoula?³

² Alfredo Cipolato was an Italian internee at Fort Missoula during World War Two. He remained in Missoula after the war and married Ann D'Orazi.

³ Yes.

TH: No, at least...The primary purpose of Fort Missoula was they'd bring these men in the service who had committed crimes. This was a barracks. And they said that most of these fellows had been in trouble with the authorities before the war started. They were drafted, and they continued to get in trouble right away and so then they were sent here. Every once in a while, one of them escaped. The first thing, they'd always be a motorcycle and a side car on would come and dash down the corner of Fifth and Catlin where the store was. They'd get out their guns, looking around. I don't know why they did that, but such a long way from the fort. Then of course, one time, a kid escaped from the fort out there, and went over on the Maclays up the valley [Bitterroot Valley] there.

GP: Oh, is that right?

TH: Oh yes, that's quite a story about them. If you want to find out about it, ask David Maclay. David Maclay, he can tell you all about it. It'd be a good story there.

GP: It certainly would. Well, I'll have to remember that. Well, let's see. I asked about the Germans. I was wondering, around town, evidently these Italians made quite a few friends and girlfriends and whatever. How did the people feel about these Italians being in the community? It didn't bother them?

TH: It didn't bother them as far as I can see. It didn't bother them.

GP: For the most part. I was wondering, too, if you remember. I do remember this from being in Illinois at the time that there was quite a prejudice against the Germans if they had German accents, and there was a lot of people-

TH: That would prevail right about during World War One, but I don't think it was so bad going into WWII. At least, we didn't have difficulty here about in Montana [unintelligible]. But World War One, [unintelligible], the Kaiser and all that. [unintelligible].

GP: Yes. It's possible that there were more...There's no question but what there were more foreign-speaking people in Chicago. Therefore, there'd be a better place for such prejudice.

TH: Of course, in Montana we had a lot of...I guess you'd call them foreign...but they were foreigners—Swedes, Norwegians, some Germans, and French too. There were quite prevalent here in Montana. We always called them old country people. Now, you never hear this old country accents anymore.

GP: No, you don't, do you? No, because it's now second- and third-generation people.

TH: That's right, and usually the first generation didn't want to learn the language of their parents. They were ashamed of it. They didn't like to have people think that they weren't first generation. Then, later on in life they wished they had learned the language or something.

Hugo Aronson [governor of Montana] was one of the last to have the Swede accent. I always used to kind of like to hear it because I had many, many friends who were Swedes.

GP: Well, my grandfather was born in Sweden. He had that. I can recall it was very quaint.

TH: Oh, yes. Hugo used to say, “[unintelligible].” [laughs] The time I got the colored margarine bill through the legislature, [unintelligible] in the ground in the state, I just jumped the gun and started selling colored margarine before it was the law—Hugo hadn’t signed the bill. Hugo said, “You’re violating the law. I used [unintelligible] sign that bill.” [laughs] Hugo wasn’t going to sign it. He got home to Rose and talked to Rose, and she said Hugo was wrong and so he signed the bill. Yeah, he was not going to sign it. [laughs]

GP: That was in the ‘40s, wasn’t it?

TH: ‘40s. No, it was my second session of legislature. I went in ‘51 and ‘53.

GP: Oh, the ‘50s.

TH: See, I was elected in ‘51, and then I introduced colored margarine bill in ‘51 and a greenhorn put me on agriculture, and of course, they killed it right out. [unintelligible], and this [unintelligible] tax at that time on white margarine. So I went to speak to them and I said, “How about floating that bill in on taxation on Ways and Means [unintelligible].”

GP: Now, what about your own family? Your son—was he in WWII?

TH: Oh, no, he was too young.

GP: He was too young.

TH: Yes, he was 14, I think, and he got a special permit from the highway department to drive a [unintelligible] trucks. Of course, he spent his life in the military.

GP: I knew he did, but I wasn’t aware of his age.

TH: Retired colonel. [unintelligible].

GP: Yes, he would be too young.

TH: And he’s a retired colonel. He lives in Honolulu.

GP: Yes. Do you recall any other stories about the people—

[Break in audio]

TH: He hated this rationing. He was manager of the Missoula Mercantile Company wholesale grocery. So, one day, I think it was [unintelligible] 50 cases of Hershey's chocolate syrup came in, and they were in gallon cans—containers—6 cans to the case. He knew it wasn't [unintelligible] for him, or thought it wasn't. So it wasn't rationed. So I happened to be down there, he says, "Tom, if you want that, take it. There's not enough for us to divide amongst everybody, but if you want those 50 cases, I'll give them to you." So I loaded the truck [unintelligible]. [unintelligible] these gallon cans of Hershey's chocolate syrup. In half a day, it was gone. People were just flocking. Maybe we didn't [unintelligible] it wasn't the right season, there wasn't no OPA on it. But then, about two or three months later, Harry got a letter from the Hershey Chocolate that the chocolate syrup should have been sent to Canada [unintelligible]. Harry laughed about that, and he thought that was funny.

GP: [laughs] It was their mistake.

TH: [unintelligible]. They was a lot of funny things happened during the war. Of course, our customers, most of us were on a friendly relationship. We knew them all, and it was [unintelligible]. Just before the war started, frozen strawberries started coming to market. People raved about them, loved them, [unintelligible]. So then, we were rationing. In the summertime sometime, I'd get my allotment of several cases of those frozen strawberries. Instead of selling them, I'd take them over to the Missoula Mercantile Company frozen food department over there and keep them until Christmas. I'd bring them out and my customers all had frozen strawberries and no place in town could get them.

GP: Isn't that interesting?

TH: Just kind of a sneaky little trick.

GP: It's interesting you didn't have a frozen food place in your own store.

TH: Well, I had a frozen food case, but there was so many, you couldn't put them in there with the frozen food to put in there. Several cases, but they had plenty of space over there in that old Merc. [laughs]

GP: Well, that was using your head too, wasn't it? [laughs]

TH: And then another thing, see, cigarettes was the worst thing we [unintelligible]. We had to ration those things. We got so many cases, and people would—especially women—they'd just abuse us over these cigarettes [unintelligible] try and ration them out.

GP: Were they for themselves or for their husbands?

TH: Oh, sure, for themselves. One pack of cigarettes was all you could ever sell at one time. Of course, we got an allotment. Another thing that was troublesome was bananas. We'd get bananas about maybe once a month or such a matter. I'd take and divide the bananas up, and I'd give two bananas to each customer.

GP: Isn't that interesting?

TH: Two bananas, that's all we rationed. Two bananas.

GP: But, that was your own rationing system?

TH: That was my own rationing. That was to satisfy my customers. My own rationing.

GP: Did they accept that pretty well, your customers?

TH: Yes, they accepted it. They knew the story and they accepted it, and they were real happy that I would do that for them because those two bananas meant a lot to them. They'd go home and make pudding or something out of them. It was something different.

GP: Did you know a lot of people who went, say, to Seattle to work in the war industries?

TH: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Many of them went to Seattle and worked for the shipyards down there. Then the other projects around—a lot of them went to Seattle.

GP: What about women working?

TH: The women down there went to work in the shipyards, too. I knew several that did. They were building those Liberty ships at [unintelligible].

GP: Yes. Do you recall that the job situation changed locally as far as women were concerned at that time?

TH: I guess. I can't remember.

GP: You don't remember too much about that?

TH: No. I know help was awfully scarce around here. You just couldn't get anybody to work for the store. I turned myself into a jack of all trades and worked long hours. My son, of course, doing the delivering [unintelligible] he was 14. [unintelligible]. A lot of those kinds of things to help out [unintelligible]. Had to keep the wheels rolling.

GP: Can you think of any other things you'd like to add to this, Tom?

TH: Well...I can't [unintelligible] sit around and think about it. But it was quite an event, that WWII—the things that happened and the way the families were disturbed and some families broken up and couples would get married and get in a fuss, start playing around a little bit, break up, things like that. All of that went on.

GP: I'll bet you saw a lot of that. You knew so many families.

TH: I knew so many families, and that's happened in every war. Happens every war. Goes back to the Civil War.

GP: Marry in haste and repent at leisure.

TH: Illegitimacies. Lots of illegitimacies. Yes, so what I remember about my own family here [unintelligible]. Things happened. They always will, I guess, when you have a war.

GP: Well, you probably saw a lot of changes then, as the war ended, too, in your business. Of course, the OPA did—

TH: First of all, yes. When the war ended, the rationing and OPA were gone.

GP: Just overnight practically.

TH: That year, our business almost doubled in Missoula. People were hungry for everything, they'd buy anything in sight almost, just to get something. Then, the next year, [unintelligible] went down with what they were satisfied.

GP: I see. Did it take quite a—

[Break in audio]

GP: A lot of new products came in right after the war, then, too. One I remember is frozen orange juice. Wasn't that a post-WWII product?

TH: Oh, yes. Of course, strawberries and frozen fruits of various kinds—peaches and things like that—all came on the market. They were just [unintelligible] starting it. Started before the war, but then of course, then it boomed after the war.

GP: I imagine people began buying automobiles as fast as they could. Is that correct?

TH: Well, I think so, yes. In fact, I remember I got the first new Mercury that came to Missoula. [unintelligible]. I can't think of his name now, but he's a Mercury dealer down here. My wife and I had more or less raised his wife, and so I wanted a new car, so I got the first Mercury that came here. All that it was is a sort of a glorified Ford. [laughs]

GP: Well, yeah. That probably was what, '47, '48, something?

TH: Somewhere around in there, '46, something. Somewhere in there. It must have been '46 at that time because after the election in '46, I went down to California and used that car. When did the war end, what year did the war end?

GP: '45.

TH: '45. Well, it was '46 because I remember '46, I was county chairman. The Republican Party won that year, we elected a United States senator that year, [unintelligible]. So then, after the election, I drove down to California to see a cousin of mine down there in '46. I remember that [unintelligible] died—she was my vice-chairman, or she was [unintelligible]. While I was gone, had a stroke, and she died just a few days after I got back [unintelligible]. Did you ever know her?

GP: No, I didn't.

TH: She was a brilliant woman. Brilliant.

GP: No, we moved here in 1965, and that was late—

TH: Where did you live in your life?

GP: Chicago.

TH: Chicago, [unintelligible]. In fact, Margaret and I were on a drive back there this year, [unintelligible]. [unintelligible every two years, and I still have a lot of friends back there and relatives [unintelligible]. We like to go back.

GP: Sure. That's quite a long drive, too, isn't it?

TH: Yes, it's quite a long drive.

GP: Well, Tom, is there anything else now that you would like to add to this before we stop?

TH: Well, I'll tell you something [unintelligible] sometime, is about the election of 1946. Dewey came here. There's quite a story about that.

GP: Now, I think you told me that, unless this is more—

TH: Maybe I did. I don't remember.

GP: About going to Spokane—

TH: Spokane, yes, and the train breaking down and coming back. Dewey was late, and he had all these policemen with him—New York policemen. Made him late, got to the University [of Montana] with his speech and the whole thing.

GP: Yes, now, I'm pretty sure that—

TH: I probably told you this.

GP: You said that he was late because there was a railroad hold...delay.

TH: Yes, the train crews bragged about it. They broke the train down, but it wasn't broke down [unintelligible].

GP: Yeah, I think we have that on one of the tapes, Tom.

TH: Probably have, yes.

GP: I can check on that, but if I remember it, it must be on a tape.

TH: That election that year, of course, that was '48. I'm talking about '48. We were so sure [unintelligible] my god, [unintelligible] my wife then, she'd say, "Tom, you're too anxious about this. You're too cocksure." So, that evening, she came downtown, I'd been down to headquarters all day, and Molly Planter (?) was a secretary [unintelligible]. So, we all three went into the hotel—the Florence there—and had dinner. The returns were starting to come in, and [unintelligible]. Kept getting worse and worse. Gladys Knowles (?) was having a victory party upstairs. They had all kinds of food there and all kinds of booze, and it kept getting worse and worse. Poor Gladys set there in that chair, tears on her cheeks. She was a national committee woman. She spent all this money and time and effort. I really felt sorry for her, and I felt sorry for [unintelligible]. The Republicans really took a beating on that. The next morning, Molly Planter and I, we had that office all closed up and go on [unintelligible]. No sign of it.

GP: What do you suppose caused that? Why did he lose, Tom?

TH: Well, I'll tell you. He was so sure of election that he just strutted around the United States and showing himself off like a crown prince or something like that. He was just an S.O.B. from what I recall. I couldn't stand him. And of course, I had been the delegate for the Republican National Convention [unintelligible] nominated me. So, I'd gone back as a Taft, and I was bitterly opposed to Dewey back then.

GP: Tom, I'd like to ask you a political question. I know you've been a Republican probably all your life.

TH: That's right. Born [unintelligible].

GP: How do you feel about a candidate like that? Now, I mean as a Republican, do you feel that now that you can look back that Truman was the better person for the job? Do you feel like that now?

TH: In some ways he was and he wasn't. Truman was a great president because he called a spade a spade. Dewey was a very brilliant man, no question about that. But he lacked something. He lacked something. I felt that even when he came to Missoula. I rode the train over with him, and he made me very—

GP: Yeah, you told me that story. But it just makes me wonder—it's something I've wondered about for a long time—how can a party person like you justify a person like Dewey?

TH: Well, I don't justify him. But the party—if you're going to have party politics, which we have in the United States, you've got to go along with your party. I voted for Dewey. Didn't think I should, but I did because I'm a party man. Same for the Democrats, they should have voted for Truman. The party system is flawed and restrictive in the United States today. People don't follow the party. If you want to have good politics, you've got to have party discipline. The party's got to stand together, and that's the reason you'd got to go out and support your party. Of course in Montana it's worse, because we have an open primary In Montana. Terrible thing, this open primary. I've tried to convince [unintelligible] get rid of the open primary [unintelligible]. See a closed primary, you would vote for your party. That is, in the primary. In the general, you vote for whoever you want to. Closed primary promotes party discipline. When you register, you register your party, and then when you vote in the primary, then they give you that ticket. That's the way you vote. When you vote in the general, you vote for anybody you want to. See, that's the difference.

GP: I'm going to turn this off, then, Tom. Thank you very much for our talk about WWII.

[End of Interview]