

MAMIE JONES

April 14, 2005

Interviewed by Micheal L. Minthorn

Transcribed by Paula Helten (12/27/2011)

[Mamie's daughter, Gere Jones Zacharias is present for the interview.]

I: This is an interview with Mamie Jones conducted on Thursday, April 14th, 2005. I know you're busy. Can you tell me your full name?

MJ: My full name?

I: Yes.

MJ: Mamie Adelin Jones. Do you want my name before I was married?

I: Yes.

MJ: Alright, Mamie Adelin Carland, C-A-R-L-A-N-D, and then the Jones.

I: Jones. And what's your-- when were you born?

MJ: Uh, August 28th, 1900 in Broken Bow, Nebraska in a sod house.

I: Is that right?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Um, who were your parents?

MJ: Um--

I: Who was your father?

MJ: James M. Carland and Llewellyn M. Carland.

I: Did they bring you to La Grande? How did you get to La Grande?

G: Well, she and my dad moved to La Grande during the Depression in 1932.

I: So, you-- you-- I know you weren't born in La Grande,--

MJ: No.

I: but you came to La Grande--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: about 1932?

MJ: 19-- 1932.

I: Do you remember that?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Tell me about that moving to La Grande.

MJ: Well, I-- I-- I uh--

I: Do you remember the move?

G: With a steam _____.

MJ: Ah well, I came on the train of course. I had to ride the train you know.

G: Oh, that wasn't when you moved though.

MJ: No?

G: That was a visit that you had.

MJ: That's what?

G: That was when you visited your dad.

MJ: Yeah.

I: So, your parents already were in La Grande, and you came to visit them?

MJ: My pare-- parents were separated.

I: I see.

MJ: Uh-huh, and my dad lived in La Grande. So, I decided to go to La Grande to-- after my mother passed away, I decided to go to La Grande to be with him.

I: Okay.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And um, so that was about 1932--

MJ: Right.

I: you came to La Grande,--

MJ: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

I: and then you stayed there the rest of your life until you moved to Pendleton?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: Well, I moved to La Grande. I worked in the bank in La Gr-- in uh, Union, Oregon. I worked there and _____--

G: You worked in Union for about, what?

MJ: Twenty years.

G: Twenty years.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: And I worked in the bank. I retired from the bank there. It was mandatory that I retire at sixty-five, so I had to retire at sixty-five. And I worked in the bank, both in La Grande and Union, but longer in Union.

I: Did you meet your husband in La Grande?

MJ: We went-- we went to school together.

I: You did?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Where?

MJ: High school.

I: Were you already married when you came to La Grande?

MJ: Was I, Gere?

G: Yes, yes. She married um, my dad, LaVelle Jones uh, in high school. And then after high school he was in World War I

MJ: Mm-hm,--

G: And when he came home--

MJ: in 1920. I was married to him in 1920.

G: And then they didn't move to-- then they moved to uh-- well, they lived in Wyoming for-- I was born there. And then they moved to La Grande in 1932.

I: So you all moved to La Grande in 1932.

G: Yes.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Okay. Where did you first live in La Grande, or in Union County? Did you live in Union or La Grande? Do you remember when you

G: You lived there on Russell, Mom.

I: first came to La Grande?

MJ: Yeah, we lived down on Russell Street in La Grande.

I: In La Grande.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And did you--

MJ: We had three acres, three acres, and we raised a big garden. And we had lots of fruit, and uh, lived down at the-- at the end of the street there.

I: On Russell?

G: Yeah.

MJ: Mm-hm, on Russell.

G: It's about where the on or off ramp comes where they-- well, they took out the house--

MJ: Yeah.

G: when they put in the freeway. So um, that part's all gone, but it-- we were about-- what-- about a block from the river.

MJ: We were down close--

G: About that.

MJ: to the river 'cause it-- that was a city dumps, wasn't it?

G: Mm-hm.

MJ: The city dumps-- it come down a block from our place. And they also-- my dad and some of the neighbors um, put up ice in the winter. Uh, part of the river separated and didn't flow and so it would freeze. So the neighbors got together and got a bunch of sawdust. An old building, and they had uh, made their own ice. [chuckles]. We had our-- we had our own ice all summer.

G: It was cold enough there that it would freeze, and they'd get these great big blocks about eighteen inches square and put a layer of rocks, then a layer of sawdust, and a layer of rocks. This whole building was full, and then all during the summer they had ice.

I: Was this a job? Was this a--

G: It was--

I: business?

G: No, it was a neighborhood.

MJ: No, it was just a neighborhood project.

I: I see.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: I see. Did you-- did you work when you first came to La Grande? Weren't you raising a family?

MJ: Well uh, I didn't work in La Grande, did I?

G: No. Well, you had the acreage, and you worked hard there. And--

MJ: I had to manage a garden.

G: my dad bought um, little grocery-- a neighborhood grocery store across the street from Greenwood School.

I: Did you work in that too?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Tell me about that.

MJ: Well, it was just a small gr-- Mom and Pop grocery store.

I: What was the name of it?

MJ: Jones' Grocery.

G: No, Greenwood Grocery.

MJ: Huh?

G: Greenwood!

MJ: Oh yeah, Greenwood Grocery. Later on we had a gr-- bigger grocery store. [chuckles]. You could go in there with a dollar, and buy a pound of coffee, and a dozen eggs, and a quart of milk. What else, Gere?

G: Well, I don't know, but for twenty-five cents you could buy um, pound of hamburger and a pound of sausage. One of them was ten cents and the other was fifteen. [laughs].

I: Uh-huh!

G: And oranges were five cents a dozen.

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: How long did you have that store, the Greenwood Grocery?

MJ: We had it quite a little while, didn't we Gere?

G: They had it until about 1938 or '3--

MJ: 1926, or somethin' like that?

G: Well, you-- no, 19-- from about 1932 'til about 1938, I think.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And then what happened?

MJ: Well, then we got a larger grocery store.

I: Where--

MJ: And it was across-- it was across from the Riveria School.

I: It was?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: What was the name of that store?

MJ: Just Jones' Grocery.

I: It was?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And was it bigger than the store you had before?

MJ: Oh yes, quite a bit larger, uh-huh.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: Yeah, we have-- we had a nice business there. They had a-- what kind of a mill was that? Uh, in the-- out in the country, and um--

G: Do you mean Bowman-Hicks, Mom?

MJ: Huh?

G: Do you mean Bowman-Hicks?

MJ: No.

G: There was a Bowman-Hicks uh, Lumber Mill out uh--

MJ: Well anyway, a good many customers from there would take at our store.

I: I see.

MJ: A good many of them didn't pay their bill. [laughs].

I: Did you-- did uh-- tell me about that. Did you let them have credit? Did customers have credit then?

MJ: Ah yes, uh-huh.

I: Was that uh, all um, maintained by you, or--

MJ: Yeah.

I: your husband--

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: would keep track of that?

MJ: Yeah, mm-hm.

I: Mm.

MJ: Tell you find what it was then I went to work at the bank. A lot of these people say they'd-- you know, they just didn't have the money, couldn't pay. And then when I went to work at the bank [chuckles] I just--

G: It was different. [chuckles].

MJ: It was a different story come back. [chuckles]. They'd have money in the bank so it was like a credit union. I got-- I'd take a-- they leave money in the bank you know, because they uh, knew I knew they had some money.

I: Mm-hm. How long did you have this Jones' Grocery?

MJ: Oh, how long did we have it, Gere?

G: Well, you sold it in about 1942. Right in the-- yeah, right-- right after World War II started because it got so complicated with the paperwork--

MJ: With the rationing.

G: and the rationing and everything. And it was hard on Mom's health, and they sold it. And then she went to work for the bank.

I: I see. Let's back up some. When did you meet your husband?

MJ: Well, we went to school together.

I: Yeah, tell me a little bit about that.

MJ: Well, he played on the football team, and of course that-- that was really-- you know I thought that was somethin' for him [chuckles] to be able to play on the foot-- he was a pretty good football player. He was small, but he'd go over the line somehow or other when--

I: What-- what school did you go to? Do you remember?

G: Probably just Broken Bow.

MJ: Broken Bow, uh-huh, High School.

G: 'Cause it's a small town.

I: And what state was that in, Nebraska?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Mm-hm. And when did you get married?

MJ: Uh, December 22nd, 1920, wasn't it, Gere?

G: Mm-hm.

MJ: I worked-- I went to work at the telephone office. I worked in the telephone office. I went to work when I-- I wasn't quite sixteen. And uh, I was-- I worked extra you know, but I worked during the summer

vacation. And then later on I'd go to school, and then go down and work from 5:00 'til 9:00 at the telephone office. And I worked there then up until-- until I got married.

I: How many-- how many children did you have?

MJ: Just the one.

I: Mm-hm, Gere.

G: Mm-hm.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Mm-hm. And so you all came as a family to La Grande?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And began with the little grocer?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And then moved into the uh, larger grocery store?

MJ: Yeah.

I: So that takes us to about 1938. Were you still living in the same house on Russell?

G: Mm-hm.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And uh, tell me about your garden.

MJ: Oh, we had a big garden, and we raised lots of strawberries. And we'd pick strawberries and take them to the store and trade those for, um, sugar and flour you know.

G: That was before we-- just before they got the store.

MJ: Uh-huh. And I raised chickens.

G: The bar chickens.

MJ: Yeah, and I fried chickens and raised chickens. And of course I thought it was wonderful because in Nebraska for cooking we had to use coal, and they used corn cobs to start the fire and then put the coal on. And after we moved to La Grande, had all this wood you know. And it was nice and clean, and it was all together different.

I: They didn't have-- they didn't have a lot of wood in Nebraska apparently.

MJ: Oh, no.

I: I see.

MJ: No, 'cause they raised-- it's a corn country. And they raised lots of-- you know you'd soak the corn cobs in a can of kerosene [chuckles] to light your fire, to get the coal going.

I: That's a--

MJ: It got real cold there in Nebraska.

I: Did you-- did you enjoy the weather in La Grande better then?

MJ: Oh, yes!

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: Much better.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: It was quite mild to-- compared to Nebraska weather.

I: Uh, what happened then next? Were-- we've been to-- we've done the two grocery stores, and World War II has begun, and you say they uh-- you gave up the store because the paperwork was--

MJ: Yeah.

I: difficult. Tell me about that.

MJ: Well, my husband didn't like to fool with that um, taking care of the rationing and everything you know.

I: Can you talk to me about the rationing that was going on then?

MJ: Well uh, uh, we didn't-- it wasn't a hardship for us because we had-- I'd always made a lot of jam and sugar and uh, jelly you know, and I had sweet things. And then of course we raised our own pigs. We'd have _____ bacon and ham so it really wasn't a hardship on us.

I: Was meat rationed?

MJ: Oh yes, everything was rationed.

G: And meat and coffee, uh--

MJ: Mm-hm, oh yes.

I: What else?

G: I can't remember what else. I know that if you wanted toothpaste-- the tubes used to be metal, and you had to take in an old tube to-- in order to get a new tube of toothpaste.

MJ: And stockings you know, for ladies.

I: Right.

MJ: And they would really know 'cause I had-- my boss at the uh, bank would uh, find out when Penney's would get a shipment in and tell us. And toilet tissue and all that stuff was all rationed. [chuckles].

I: Was it?

G: Well, it wasn't rationed. It was just that it was a shortage, and you had to-

MJ: Yes.

G: stand in line to wait, or know somebody that's-- [chuckles] be somebody that would tell you it was there.

I: So, you had a ration card to buy these things?

MJ: Yeah, a little book, a little book. I've got the Shell one down there yet. I still have one.

G: I wanted to take-- they had little um-- little tiny stamps in it that you gave a stamp.

MJ: That they'd pull out.

I: Oh, maybe we can look at that some time.

G: I-- yeah, if you're coming back, I-- I know where-- I think I know where mine is. I could bring it up.

I: Okay, mm-hm. Then, any-- any hardships about that then? I know you said that you were pretty well off because you-- you raised a lot of your own--

MJ: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: your-- your own _____.

MJ: It really wasn't a hardship on us, uh-uh.

I: I see. Were there any other things about rationing that-- did you ever have to uh-- did you ever have to seek uh, approval of the board for anything?

MJ: No, my husband--

I: The rationing board.

MJ: was on the rationing board, wasn't he Gere?

G: Yeah, he was on the rationing board.

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: But I don't think you ever have had to ask for anything else here.

MJ: Uh-uh.

G: But the gasoline--

MJ: But the gasoline-- gasoline was uh, rationed. And um--

G: But we didn't have to-- you didn't have to go very far--

MJ: No, uh-uh.

G: so you didn't-- you didn't use a lot of it you know.

I: So your husband served on the rationing board for Union County?

MJ: Mm-hm, mm-hm.

I: Tell me his name again.

MJ: LaVelle, L-A-V-E-L-L-E--

G: Capital L, capital V.

MJ: Jones.

I: Did he have a middle name?

MJ: Thomas.

I: Thomas. Uh, when was he born?

MJ: Uh, now let's see, he was two years older than I was, and he was born in Falls City, Nebraska. I don't know where that was.

I: Do you know his birth date?

G: It was June 11th.

I: June--

MJ: June 11th, uh-huh.

G: It was 1898. Wasn't it 1898?

MJ: Hm?

G: He was born in 1898, wasn't he?

MJ: He was what?

G: Born 19-- 1898?!

MJ: Yes, uh-huh.

I: Did he live his life out in La Grande?

MJ: Yes, he passed away here in La Grande.

I: When did he pass away?

MJ: Uh, November-- wasn't it November--

G: Uh, it-- it-- it was--

MJ: Twenty-- twenty-second.

G: 22nd, I think. Was it, or the 20th?

MJ: It was something like that, uh-huh.

G: It was 1973.

MJ: Mm-hm.

[7 second delay]

G: Uh, so he came to Oregon, and she--

I: Who did now?

G: My grandfather-- her father. Uh, James Carland is his name.

I: Yes.

G: And he came earlier to Oregon, and he settled there. And then he built this house, and he bought these two-- three acres. So, he wanted some help, and Mother and Daddy were having a little problem with the Depression too, everybody was. So, they moved to Oregon, and uh, they lived on the same acreage. There were two houses, so he lived in one of them.

I: And so this was your father's house that you lived in when you came to La Grande?

MJ: Well, he built it for me.

I: Right.

G: But he would build it, yeah.

I: Okay, so now what were we just gonna talk about here?

G: Oh--

I: We're gonna--

G: Seven was plowing.

I: Yes, tell us--

G: We were gonna look at that horse.

I: about that. We're plowing in the garden, and what happened?

MJ: Well, I found this round cannonball.

I: Do you know where that cannonball came from?

MJ: Hm-mm, we had no idea.

I: And where is that cannonball now?

MJ: It's in the museum there in Union.

I: Union County Museum?

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: Yeah.

I: That's very interesting.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And so your grandfather was already in Union Co-- err, I'm sorry, your father was already in Union County.

MJ: In _____-- in La Grande.

I: But he wasn't from here. He moved from Nebraska also?

MJ: Yeah, along, uh-huh.

I: Before you did?

MJ: Oh yeah.

I: Yes, okay. Now we're sh--

G: He was _____.

I: Was he?

MJ: Oh my goodness, yes. He had fish all the time after he-- we came to Oregon.

I: Was that a-- was that as easy to get where you came from? Was it easy to get fish for--?

MJ: No, we didn't have many fish in uh-- in Nebraska. They didn't have many rivers. And they used to fish by uh-- I think they called it a seine. Something that they'd catch 'em all-- a lot of them together you know.

I: I see.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Okay, so we're now-- now we're about the early part of World War II. Um, are you still living in the same house?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Yes. Now the-- where did you go uh-- what did you do after the grocery store then? Is then when you began to work at the bank, or did you do--

G: Yes.

I: something else?

G: She worked at the bank, and my dad, LaVelle worked for Zimmerman's in La Grande. And then the Zimmerman's-- it-- now he worked for a little while in the office at the Railroad, but he got a job at Zimmerman's. He liked that better. And then uh, Mr. Zimmerman had a store in Union that the young man who was managing it was going into the war, uh, to the service, and so he needed a manager. So, my dad went out to Union to manage the store. So, they bought a house in Union, and then she moved to Union and worked in the bank there.

I: Where did you live in Union?

MJ: On Chestnut and Dewey Street [chuckles] down near the Stock Show grounds, great big eight room house. We had a whole block. We had a red barn and chicken houses and-- and a three-hole outhouse. [chuckles].

G: They had indoor-- indoor plumbing, but they had a real nice, little, outhouse--

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: that was nice when you were working in the yard and stuff like that.

I: And how long did you live there?

MJ: I lived in Union there about twenty years, didn't I _____?

G: I think so.

I: So, did you go to work at the bank then after you moved to Union?

MJ: I worked a little while. I started in the La Grande. I went in the bank one day, and--

I: Which bank was it?

MJ: First National.

I: In La Grande?

MJ: Then-- then-- then later they named it First Interstate.

I: So, you went into the bank in La Grande, and what happened?

MJ: Then well, and the manager wanted to know if I wouldn't like to work in the bank. And I said I didn't know anything about a bank, or the only time I was ever in there was when I had-- went in to cash a check, you know my husband's check. And he said, "Oh," he said, "You've uh-- by having the store," he said, "You've had a little experience, and you know how to make change." So, he said-- so, I started in the bank, and worked in the statement department and cancelled checks and filed 'em. Kept learning you know to do things and pretty soon I went in the window as a teller.

I: What kind of things did you do in the statement department? What exactly does that in-- involve?

MJ: Well, that-- the people would come in and want their statement, and you'd get out their sheet. And-- and then all their checks, count 'em each-- and count the checks and put it on the sheet. And then you'd count the checks

to see if they agreed you know. And put them in an envelope and give it to 'em.

I: Uh, was that the main job? Did you do other things than that?

MJ: Well, I-- yes, I learned to uh-- to um-- um well, I took care of the safety deposit boxes. People would come in and want to go in there you know. And then I would uh, collect-- go up and down the back of the bank tellers and collect their checks and everything, and-- and make uh-- separate 'em. And we ran what they call batches. You know, we'd put all the-- the uh, credits on one side and debits on the other side and check that and run batches and balance those out and everything, mm-hm. I would balance out at night. And my banker said um-- one thing he said, "To make a crook out of a person was to um, if you'd-- if you had a little money over." You know, sometimes you'd open up a row of money, and maybe there'd be an extra dime in or maybe it'd be short a dime. So, you'd put it either in the shorts or over's, and I had a good record on that.

I: You didn't have any shorts or over?

MJ: Well, yeah--

I: There'd be some?

MJ: you'd have 'em. You'd have 'em quite often, but they never were-- you know they'd balance out.

I: They'd always--

MJ: Yeah.

I: balance out. So, then what did you do? After you worked in the statement department, then you said you went to another department?

MJ: Well, I went into the window. You know, where I cashed people's checks and-- uh-huh.

I: Tell me about that. Was there--

MJ: Well--

I: anything--? Go ahead.

MJ: That was interesting you know. You just uh-- and then we paid-- I can't remember what company it was, but we paid some kind of insurance. We'd take that and pay that for them at the--

I: For the customer?

MJ: Uh-huh, for the customers, mm-hm.

I: What kind of insurance was it?

MJ: I don't remember what it was, uh-huh.

I: But they could pay that insurance at the window--

MJ: Yeah, at the window,--

I: when they came _____?

MJ: uh-huh.

I: So, you basically collected premiums--

MJ: Yeah.

I: for an insurance company--

MJ: Yes.

I: as well.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: How long did you do that with the bank?

MJ: Well, I worked there in La Grande-- how long did I work there in La Grande, Gere, a couple years?

G: Yeah, two or three. I don't know when you--

MJ: _____.

G: went to Union.

MJ: And then we moved to Union, and I-- I just worked part time in Union for awhile. And then finally I went to work and worked all the time.

I: Was this the same bank, First National?

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: In Union?

MJ: First Interstate, uh-huh.

I: And so, what did you do in Union at-- at the Union bank? Were-- were-- same thing?

MJ: Yeah, I worked at-- yeah huh, I was the teller there for years. I knew-- we probably knew every customer that ever came in. [chuckles].

I: And uh, any-- any interesting or out of the ordinary experiences that you can tell us about in the bank?

G: Didn't-- didn't somebody try to rob it one time at night?

MJ: Yeah, but it was such a-- that was the old bank.

G: Oh!

MJ: The old bank, they tried to rob it. That-- I wasn't working there then.

G: Oh, okay.

MJ: And um, they tried to blow it up, but it was such a strong, big, old uh, vault that they couldn't-- couldn't get into it, so.

I: That was in the La Grande branch?

MJ: In-- in--

G: In Union.

MJ: in Union.

I: Oh, in Union.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: They tried to do that?

MJ: Yeah.

G: And that's where the museum in Union is now.

MJ: Yeah.

G: It's in the old bank building.

I: That's down-- the robbery?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Mm-hm, any other interesting or out of the ordinary experiences with the bank?

MJ: No, I can't remember much of any. Uh, I had a real nice boss to work for. He was real nice to work for.

I: Do you remember his name?

MJ: Vern White, mm-hm. He later moved to Roseburg.

I: So, about what time did you uh-- when you stopped working at the bank was that because you retired?

MJ: Yes, I-- it was mandatory that when you were sixty-five you had to retire.

I: It was bank policy that you--

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: had to retire?

MJ: Yeah.

I: And did you uh-- were you pensioned with them?

MJ: I didn't for awhile. I got um, well, it was a hundred and seventeen dollars a month--

G: A month.

MJ: from Social Security or something like that. It wasn't very much. I got a little bit of-- I still get-- now I get a little bit of a pension from 'em.

I: From the bank?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Mm-hm. So, what other things did you do in Union while you were there? You worked at the bank. You bought a house there that was a large house it sounds like--

MJ: Oh, yeah--

I: with a garden.

MJ: great, big, _____, house.

I: What other kinds of things did you do?

MJ: Well, we just raised a garden and-- and uh, I learned to can fruit.

G: You belonged to a lot of things in Union. Uh, and you kind of helped with different organizations.

I: What-- what organizations did you belong to?

MJ: The main one I belong to is the American Legion Auxiliary.

I: Um, was that because your husband was a veteran?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And what kind of things did you do with them--

MJ: Oh, we uh--

I: with the Auxiliary?

MJ: we made ditty bags. And they're little bags, twelve by fourteen inches for the veterans. And we made um, sewing kits, and afghans, and we donated all those to the uh, veterans. And then, you know they have the-- Legion has their own poppy?

I: Right.

MJ: And they pay the veterans in the hospital two cents for each poppy they make. See, the VFW has a little, plastic, poppy. So, they um-- and they use that money for helping different people if they're in trouble and needed money. Why, they would-- you could go to the Legion and get money.

I: Now, I'm familiar with uh, the Legion selling those poppies. I'm a veteran, and I've bought them before.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: So, you say the veterans would make these? The veterans that were in the hospital would make these?

MJ: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: And then--

MJ: You know, they're-- they're made out of little paper. The Legion poppy is.

G: I think-- I don't know--

I: Yes.

G: if they still are, or not. I haven't--

I: I haven't seen them for awhile, but I'm-- not too long ago I bought one.

G: Yeah, but I can't remember if they were-- lives with me, but I don't remember if they were paper or uh, fabric. [chuckles].

I: Yeah, I can't either.

G: And the-- the uh, uh, VFW ones used to be plastic, but they're kind of a fabric now.

I: Mm-hm.

G: And uh--

I: So, did you sell those, or--?

MJ: Oh, yes.

I: You sold those for the VFW,--

MJ: Uh--

I: or American Legion?

MJ: American Legion, uh-huh.

I: American Legion. Do you remember um-- is there a Am-- was it the American Legion in Union, or was it in La Grande?

MJ: It was in-- in La Grande.

I: In La Grande it's--

G: No, you did it in Union too. Remember,--

MJ: _____.

G: it was in that school building?

I: Do they have a Legion office in-- in Union--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: as well?

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: It was in an old school building.

I: I see.

MJ: And I was president there one year of it.

I: What did you do as president of the Auxiliary?

MJ: Well, you um-- you had your uh, meetings, monthly meetings. And uh, like I say, they did-- they uh, would make the ditty bags for the veterans, and afghans. And then they'd-- about once a month they'd bake cookies and put 'em in coffee cans and mail 'em over to the veterans. Christmas time-- well, in the fall we always had a bazaar. So, anything that was left over we'd send over to the Veterans Hospital. And the men there at the hospital, they'd-- had a kind of a store. They could pick out gifts and things for their family at home for free. And the ladies would Christmas wrap them, and then the men would mail them for free for them.

I: And--

MJ: They did a lot of good for the-- the Legion did a lot for the veterans.

I: So, do you still belong to the American Legion now?

MJ: Oh yes, uh-huh. I've belonged for uh-- I think this is either my sixty-eighth or sixty-ninth year.

I: Goodness.

MJ: I still belong.

I: Do you attend meetings here in Pendleton then?

MJ: There-- there is no meet-- there is no Legion here.

I: Oh, there isn't?

MJ: Mm-mm.

G: I don't think so.

MJ: Mm-mm.

G: I think the one on the reservation is the only one, and I think maybe Athena or Adams has one.

MJ: We don't.

I: Yeah, that's right.

G: We don't have transportations though! [laughs].

I: Oh! I see. Um, would you be involved with them if you had an opportunity--

MJ: Oh yes!

I: still?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: I think I might know somebody to tell about that.

G: I'm not sure how much she could do because she goes to bed at [chuckles] 6:00 o'clock. Well, about the time-- about 7:00-- 6:30 or 7:00 o'clock she's in bed. [chuckles].

I: Well, they-- they might-- they might just be interested in having you--

G: Of having her.

I: around as a figurehead.

MJ: [laughs].

I: Because uh-- because of your seniority status.

G: _____.

I: Um, alright so um, what other organizations did you belong to besides the American Legion or help out with?

MJ: I wa-- I'm not a joiner so that's the left only thing.

G: You used to help-- now, is it-- was it through the Legion Auxiliary that you used to help during the Union County Livestock Show and go do hamburgers and stuff over at the--

MJ: Well, I used to help over there.

G: guys outside? I didn't know if it was through the--

I: Was that--?

G: Auxiliary, or--?

I: Was that a Legion Auxiliary event--

MJ: No.

I: when you did that?

G: Oh, okay. Did you used-- but you used to u-- belong to um, well--
[recording interruption - no delay]

I: This is a continuation of the interview with Mamie Jones, April 14, 2005.
[recording clicks - no delay]
Alright, let's continue with the Home Extension. Tell me wh-- what organization was that now?

G: Well,--

I: This uh--

G: it's the-- it's-- it's still in existence, but it's like the-- uh, the office that uh, you know has 4-H. And they have these-- they have these Home Extension meetings where they meet in the homes usually. And they um-- um, they have programs like-- she learned a lot of things like how to um-- um, make corsages, and how to decorate cakes, and flow-- and do flower arrangements. And uh-- did you learn to make soap during that, the home extension?

MJ: I don't remember when I learned to make soap.

G: Uh, anyway, but you did flowers, and you did uh-- uh, other things.

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: I remember you did flower arrangements and corsages, and you did cake-- cake decorating some.

MJ: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: What--

G: All kinds of stuff like that.

I: So, you-- you took classes from Home Extension?

MJ: Yeah, then-- then later on I worked at 4-H and taught 4-H how to um-- well, cooking you know. Made like baking bread and uh-- and sewing, doing things like that.

I: Did you work-- did you enter any of your work in the fairs?

MJ: Oh yes, uh-huh. They got some prizes on the some of the things we took to the fair. One year I had a Dr. Stanfield couldn't go, so I took their daughter, oldest daughter. And we took a coat that she'd made down to the State Fair, and she got a prize on it.

I: Did you help her make that, or teach her how to make that?

MJ: Well, I helped her. I never-- I didn't do any of the work. I just would help them.

I: Right.

MJ: They'd come to the house, and I'd help them.

I: Did any of your work in particular win?

MJ: If so, I didn't enter any for myself.

G: Not-- well, you did later. You-- you-- you won a-- a first prize on your soap.

I: Did you win for your soap?

MJ: Oh yes, I won. [chuckles]. I made homemade soap. I saved um, all my bacon grease, the old grease you know, and I'd wash it. Poor brine water over it and let it set where it was cold and wash it out good. And I'd learned how to make soap. I don't know just exactly how I learned to make soap. And I got first prize on it at the fair.

G: You made soap until about what-- about five years ago was when you quit making soap. [chuckles].

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Did you actually use this soap or sell it, or what did you do with it?

MJ: Well, I sold some of it, and-- do you have some Gere?

G: Yep, I was just gonna go get it.

MJ: Yeah.

I: So, your soap was popular?

MJ: Oh, yes! It's really good because-- see it-- the soap you buy, they take out all the glycerin out of it and everything. And it dries up your skin, where this isn't. And now I use it to wash my skin, and--

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: well, I don't use anything else. I still don't.

I: I see.

G: I found a soap for you. [chuckles].

I: How, uh-- and where did you learn to make this soap?

MJ: I was-- I was trying to remember just where, but I can't remember just where. It had-- they had a little store in uh-- in the uh-- in La Grande had a little store like we have down here at the Senior Center. And I'd put a couple bars of soap in a little plastic bag and sell it for fifty cents. [laughs]. And I sold quite a lot of soap because people wanted it once they used it.

G: Yes, it's very mild. Uh, would like to have a bar of soap?

I: All right, yes! Let's go take a picture of this for the project.

MJ: [laughs].

I: Well, that's interesting. So, you sold this soap for income?

MJ: Well, you get um--

G: A lot of it was for fun. [chuckles].

MJ: Yeah, just for fun.

I: The heck of it?

MJ: Mm.

I: Um, what other things did you make and-- and either sell or do for the heck of it?

MJ: Well, I used to do all the girl's sewing. I made all our clothes. They always had a new Easter outfit.

G: That means me and my daughter who is an only child too. [laughs].

I: Uh-huh. So, you sewed clothing rather than bought it?

MJ: Mm-hm, oh yes.

G: She did beautiful things.

MJ: I'd go to the store and let them see what's in style and one that I could go home and remember and copy it and make it for the girls.

I: Would you make your own patterns and--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: just remember that in your head?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Did you make anything for men,--

MJ: No.

I: or the boys?

MJ: Well, I didn't have any then except my husband, but I didn't have any men.

I: I see.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: What other kinds of organizations did you belong to or-- or were you involved with, or--?

MJ: Well, like I say, I wasn't a joiner so I didn't join very many things.

I: It still sounds like you did quite a lot.

G: She did.

MJ: I was busy all the time, but I didn't-- I wasn't-- I-- I wasn't _____.
'Course I didn't want to join into anything.

G: She was active uh-- I mean after she moved back to La Grande in um,
1965, wasn't it?

MJ: What?

G: You moved back to La Grande in 1965, didn't you?!

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: And then she was active after that too. Uh, she did all kinds of things for
the Senior Center and stuff.

I: So, you would have been retired in 1965?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And then you moved back to La Grande?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Where did you live when you moved back to La Grande the second time?

MJ: At 1903 Cedar.

I: 1903 Cedar.

MJ: Next place in, uh-huh. And I used to work out at the um-- well, it would--
had a Senior Center then. And we made things. Uh, we had a group that
worked together, and we'd uh, make things to sell, to give to the Center.

G: We've got--

MJ: And we brought several things to the Center. We brought 'em furniture
and um-- 'cause we had a lot of fun getting together making things.

I: Are you saying that you-- you helped the Center by buying some furniture
for them and--?

MJ: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: What about--?

MJ: Yeah, our group made uh-- made things to sell there you know, and so we gave it to the Center then. We bought uh, several things for the kitchen and bought 'em a meat slicer and uh-- um--

G: They had a little store.

MJ: And they had a little store there.

G: They made all these things so it was to profit for the Center, and they'd buy all these _____.

MJ: You could make pot holders and afghans and different things. Then you gave um-- they'd sell them for you, and you gave them ten percent for selling them for you.

I: So, you would get this money and-- and they would get a portion of it to help the Center out?

MJ: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: Mm-hm. How long did-- have-- have you uh-- did you belong to that for a long time?

MJ: Well, until I moved over here.

I: Uh-huh. Now, you're over here now. Uh, my understanding is you're a very frequent visitor to the Senior Center here in Pendleton.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Do you like it there?

MJ: Yes!

I: Tell me about it.

MJ: Well, I go down there. We take the bus. We pay a dollar.

I: And you have your dollar out, I see.

MJ: Uh-huh.

G: [chuckles].

MJ: And the bus picks me up and takes me down to the Center. And they have music down there. Today they're having Hawaiian music. Sometimes they have people to sit too. And I usually dance. I have a couple partners that I dance with down there. And uh, I sit at the first table that's closest to the kitchen so they bring my meal to me and several others, but mo-- the rest of 'em, they go to the kitchen and get their own ca-- their own um, plate.

I: They go through the line--

MJ: And they go through the line,--

I: like that?

MJ: uh-huh.

I: Mm.

MJ: And you pay two-- two fifty for your lunch.

I: Is that right?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Is that open to the public? I remember it used to be.

MJ: Yes, uh-huh. Yeah, sure. You're-- you could go down there and have _____.

G: But if you're younger, you have to pay a little more. But if you're over sixty, why, you can get the--

I: I used to-- I used to go there with my-- my late aunt.

MJ: Did you?

I: From time to time she would go down.

MJ: Uh-huh.

G: _____.

I: Is this your ride?

G: Oh, I bet it is.

I: Uh-huh.

G: Hi!

O: Hey, you two!

[recording interruption - 3 second delay]

April 16, 2005

Transcribed by Paula Helten (12/29/2011)

[Mamie's daughter, Gere Jones Zacharias is present for the interview.]

I: This is a continuation of the oral history interview with Mamie Jones, and today's date is Saturday, April 16, 2005.

[recording clicks - no delay]

Now when I complete this interview I'm going to consult with Eugene Smith because today at this interview I've been given a news article that err-- well, I will get a copy of it. A news article that talks about Mamie's 100th birthday in the year 2000, and they've shared some photographs with me, but I think we ought to try and get copies of for the record. I have a picture of Mamie who was sixteen years old taken in Broken Bow, Nebraska in 1916. A picture of the late, Mr. Jones uh, with their dog, Twister in 1942, and also a picture of their daughter who was posing as a mascot for a school game it looks like in Wyoming.

MJ: University of Wyoming.

G: Yeah, the university.

I: The University of Wyoming. And we'll try to get a copy of those. We can take those for the record. And there's some other pictures in a picture album here that I think we ought to try and get copies of for the record as well. So, that's just my particular note. Hello, Mrs. Jones. Let's start again today. Um, picking up where we left off, I'd like to come back and talk a little bit more about this uh-- about the first grocery store that you had in-- in La Grande. And now, did you own this grocery store? Did you and your husband own that grocery store?

MJ: We didn't own the building.

I: Um, but the store was yours?

MJ: Yeah.

G: They held the store.

I: Okay and you rented the space--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: where you had the store?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Um now, tell us about that. In the neighborhood uh, working that store and that sort of thing, I understand you conducted some sort of trade with your customers rather than money, is that true?

G: Mm,--

I: Or was that--?

G: that was before that store.

I: Oh.

G: It was before they got that store, and when they just had the garden. When they used to take vegetables or especially strawberries to one of the stores there, or some of the stores, and then trade it for uh-- that was during the Depression. And they traded for uh-- well um, flour and sugar and things like that that they couldn't-- that they didn't have on their acreage.

I: I see. Did you uh-- did you allow credit with some of your customers at that store?

MJ: Ah yes, uh-huh.

I: How did you-- how was that conducted?

MJ: Well, we just had a book you know that we kept track on everything. And of course a good many of them didn't pay. [laughs].

I: Right. Um, but what was the regular procedure? You would allow them to charge there?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Tell me about that.

MJ: Well, that's all I know. They just would charge whatever they wanted to buy. You know, like coffee, and--

G: And you hoped they came in and paid it.

MJ: Yeah.

I: Did you uh-- did you issue bills for this or just keep records in the book?

MJ: Just kept records.

I: And did they come in at regular times to pay their-- to pay their tab?

MJ: I know some of them did. Some of them were pretty good, but others uh, they didn't pay their bill 'til after I went to work in the bank. 'Cause they

always said they didn't have any money, and then after I went to work in the bank. [chuckles].

I: Then you knew better?

MJ: I knew better. [chuckles].

I: I see.

MJ: And uh, hadn't I got-- I corrected that a little bit.

I: Now this was the-- the store that you had that was by Riveria School?

MJ: No, Greenwood.

I: Greenwood?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Okay. Uh, did you do that in a similar manner with the store by Riveria that you had talked about?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Which store was first, Riveria or Greenwood?

MJ: Greenwood.

I: Uh, what was the name of that store?

MJ: It just was Greenwood Grocery, wasn't it Gere?

G: Yes, uh-huh.

I: How about the one by Riveria?

G: You called it the Riveria Grocery, didn't you?

MJ: Just Jones' Grocery.

G: Oh, Jones' Grocery.

I: I see. And did your husband work in that store, or--?

MJ: Yes, uh-huh.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: He opened it up, and then sometimes we'd deliver. You know, somebody would want something, and he would deliver the groceries if they needed it.

I: Did you do that routinely, or was that a special service?

MJ: That was kind of special service.

I: I see. And now, would-- were the procedures the same when you uh, moved over to the Greenwood Grocery?

G: Greenwood was the first one.

I: The Greenwood was the first one, and the Riveria was the second one?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Okay. Uh, was it similar at both stores, these procedures that you did?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Mm-hm. Can you tell me anything about uh-- about--?

[recording clicks - no delay]

So uh, what-- what buildings were in that neighborhood that aren't there anymore? Do you-- are-- do you have a recollection of uh, the changes that took place in terms of La Grande and that sort of thing? Do you remember buildings that-- that were-- that seemed like they were there forever, and they were gone in your lifetime?

G: Remember Mom, there was a grocery store right behind your store? Lee's, I think it was.

MJ: Oh, right-- right behind it, uh-huh.

G: Yeah, and uh--

MJ: It was an old house.

G: Yeah, but it was a gr-- a lot of the grocery stores then took the living room of their house--

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: and made that as the store room and lived in the back. And that Greenwood Grocery had been that way too, and so there was an apartment there that-- they uh-- the original gr-- grocery owners lived in. But we didn't because we had our own home. Uh--

MJ: And there was Senden's.

G: From Sen-- down about two blocks was uh, Burger's Grocery on the corner.

MJ: Uh-huh.

G: And across the street from them was Senden's. So, there were four grocery's within three blocks.

I: Did you know the owner's of these stores?

MJ: Oh yes, uh-huh.

I: Did you?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Uh--

MJ: And we all got along well.

G: Yeah, it was friendly competition.

I: That's good.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Um, how about-- how about some-- how about some things that came into being when you were first in town. For example, I think that um-- uh, talking movies would have come around after, either before or during. Do you have recollections of going to the movies or-- or that sort of thing in town?

MJ: No.

G: We had talkies when we lived in Wyoming. At least, they every holiday had talkies when we were in Wyoming because I remember you taking me to movies. I hated movies--

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: as they scared me. And I remember the talking.

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: Then when we moved to La Grande there, you know were a lot better movies. I mean better quality.

MJ: Yeah.

I: Do you have memories of going to uh-- to the pictures-- to the films?

MJ: Yeah, but we had to walk in quite a ways so we didn't go too often.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: Because it was quite a ways for us--

G: To walk.

MJ: to walk.

I: You didn't have um-- you didn't have a car, or--?

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: I see. What else can you remember about downtown La Grande, or even Union? Were gonna move to Union next--

MJ: Mm.

I: here, but how about La Grande?

G: There were three theaters in La Grande.

MJ: What did you say, honey?

G: There were three theaters in La Grande on Main-- on Adams Avenue.

MJ: Was there?

G: Yeah, there was uh, Granada, and the Liberty. I can't remember what that other one was.

MJ: Let's see, what were their names?

G: Well, Liberty and Granada were the two main ones. The other one was closed for awhile, and the-- and I can't remember its name. But it was in the middle of the block between--

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: 4th, and what's that-- Depot Street, I think.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Huh.

MJ: Then there was uh, Wright's Drugstore.

G: There were about five drugstores--

MJ: Yeah.

G: in town. Uh, there was Moon's, and Wright's, and um-- uh-- oh-- well, oh Glass Drug! And the one we used to have so much place I can't remember.

MJ: Oh well.

G: The one we used to have-- and Red Cross.

MJ: Yeah, uh-huh.

G: There were about five grocery, um-- drugstores on Adams Avenue.

MJ: When we were young, mm-hm. We could go and get sandwiches.

G: Yeah, and three of them had-- oh-- yeah, three of them had sandwich-- you know, lunch counters for sandwiches and a fountain. And it was always fun to go get fountain stuff.

I: Okay. Tell me about um-- now when I was here the other day uh, we talked about how you came out on the train to visit your father--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: um, before you moved to La Grande. Can you tell me about that trip coming to-- coming to La Grande?

MJ: Well, it was quite an experience. I loved to ride the trains. And [chuckles] it's a wonder we didn't get food poisoning because we'd fix a lunch you know. Take-- fix a lunch, and usually fried chicken. [chuckles].

I: They didn't serve uh--

G: We tried _____--

I: meals on the train?

G: We couldn't afford it!

MJ: Yeah, there was like--

G: Most people couldn't afford 'em.

MJ: Most people couldn't afford 'em.

I: I see. And so tell me about that trip. You came from-- did you come from uh--

MJ: Broken Bow.

I: Nebraska?

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: Do you remember uh--?

MJ: That's about the middle. Broken Bow's right in the center of Nebraska.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: Casper County, mm-hm.

I: Do you remember what that might have cost for you to come over on the train then?

MJ: No, I have no idea.

I: Okay.

MJ: Well, I got a pass because my dad worked-- that's the reason I came out on the train is because he worked for the Railroad and got me a pass.

I: So, you didn't pay for that trip?

MJ: I didn't have to pay for it. If you had a-- a sleeper, you had to pay for that.

I: You didn't use a sleeper?

MJ: Once in-- once in awhile I did.

I: Uh-huh. How about on that first trip?

MJ: I don't remember the first trip.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: [chuckles].

I: Now you came out uh, to see your father. Do you remember why? Was that just a visit?

MJ: Just a visit, uh-huh.

I: Uh-huh. How long did you stay? Maybe--?

MJ: I didn't stay-- didn't stay very long the first time, did I, Gere?

G: I don't know. I wasn't there. [chuckles].

I: Mm. Then you-- then you went back to Broken Bow--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: after that?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Were you thinking of moving to La Grande at that time?

MJ: Not really, I don't think.

I: Uh-huh, you were just here to visit.

MJ: Just there to visit, uh-huh.

G: And she wasn't married yet then.

MJ: And she was asleep, mm.

I: Was that a long trip? Did that--

MJ: That is--

I: take a few nights?

MJ: quite a long trip, uh-huh.

I: Couple of days on the train?

MJ: Uh no, about maybe-- maybe a day and a half or somethin' like that.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: It was quite a little distance.

I: And then you went back on the train?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And what made you decide to come to La Grande when you moved to La Grande then? I think we talked a little bit about this, but--?

G: Wasn't it because Grandpa _____ had built that house and wanted you to come out?

MJ: Mm-hm.

G: And told you if you'd move out he'd give you the house?

MJ: Yeah, he built a little house.

G: For you.

MJ: In Oregon there, and he built a little house. And uh, it had a nice house and garage, and uh, so I moved out to Oregon down on Russell, Cherry and Russell. [chuckles].

G: Yeah. [chuckles].

I: Um--

MJ: That's where we found the-- the cannonball.

I: Right, right. Now, another thing I want to talk about is uh-- I'd like to go back and cover this. There was a difference between how you uh-- how you started fires. You were talking about using-- about using corn husks.

MJ: Corn cobs.

I: Corn cobs for--

MJ: You put them in kerosene. Uh, you know because uh, before we moved to Oregon, and then after we got to Oregon we had wood. But we didn't in Nebraska. You had to-- coal, and it's hard to start so you'd soak your corn cob in the kerosene and then--

I: Would you save these corn cobs then from-- from dinner or--?

MJ: Well no, because you'd get fresh ones you know. You'd just let it burn with the _____--

I: With this corn on it?

MJ: and the coal, uh-huh.

I: Oh, I see.

MJ: Sometimes you didn't-- couldn't afford to buy the coal so you'd go along the railroad track and pick up some that the trains would stop-- would drop. [chuckles].

I: Is that right?

MJ: Uh-huh, and you'd go along and pick up cob-- uh, coal along the railroad tracks.

I: You know, that's um-- then-- so, it was different than when you came to Oregon--

MJ: Mm-hm

I: because they had wood.

MJ: Oh yeah, they had wood. I thought that was wonderful.

I: Uh-huh.
[recording clicks - no delay]

G: Uh, one thing about La Grande, they had uh-- when we first moved here, they had three hotels. They had the Sacajawea-- the Sacajawea Hotel which my grandpa had helped build. And they had the La Grande Hotel which was right where Safeway was-- right on that jog you know--

I: Mm-hm.

G: Adams Avenue. And then they had the um, oh, that other one. Uh, I'll have to think on that. But anyway, the La Grande Hotel was really pretty. You'd drive up that-- well, so was the Sacajawea. But you'd drive up that street and at night it would be all lighted, and it'd be lightin' that side, and it would be really pretty. But somehow, either politics got in the way, and the Depression got in the way, and they tore it down. But uh, my first remembrance of the County Fair was held in that building. It was just more or less the shell, and it had been stripped of all of its furniture. And uh, there was nothing in it so they opened up part of that uh-- well, all the lobby part for fair-- just uh, you know exhibits and stuff. And then later they start putting it up what's now the fairgrounds out, what used-- originally was Bowman-Hicks Lumber Mill. Bowman-Hicks, later it uh, went into disrepair. They tore it down. I don't know for sure when they put the fairgrounds out there, but I remember that old hotel. How they went in the lobby, and I was probably junior high.

I: So, we moved to La Grande. Err, I'm sorry. Then you moved to Union in 19--

MJ: '45.

I: '45, and you went to work for the bank there. We talked about some of the activities that you were involved in with the American Legion--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: and uh--

MJ: Home Extension.

I: 4-H, Home Extension.

MJ: And 4-H.

I: And you gave me a nice bar of soap uh, when I was here the other day that you made. Let's talk about that soap a little bit. Um, tell me how you make that. How did you make that--

MJ: Well,--

I: when you were making soap? Did-- we don't have to go in great detail, but just--

MJ: Well, you use a can of lye. And you use your grease, and a can of lye, and cold water.

G: But you got the grease by saving.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: You saved up the grease?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: How did you do that?

MJ: Well uh, whenever we'd cook anything with uh, grease on it, why, we'd--

G: Let it get cold and skim it off.

MJ: Uh-huh, and then I'd wash it. I'd take and put it in the kettle and poured hot water over it and set it off. I had a _____ cupboard on the outside of my house, and I'd set it out there and let it congeal you know. And then I'd pour that water off, and uh, then run it through a sieve so it would get any little particles out of it and everything, uh-huh.

I: Then how do you-- how do you put the soap together? How do you make it into soap after that?

MJ: Well, you use a can of lye, and uh-- and some ammonia, and uh you dissolve your lye in cold water. And pour it over your grease, and put your ammonia in there. And-- and uh, I didn't have any fragrance except uh, oil of citronella [chuckles] was the only kind I could get.

I: What was that?

MJ: Oil of citronella.

G: It's only used--

MJ: Uh-huh.

G: to keep bugs off.

I: I see.

MJ: It keeps the bugs off 'em, especially mosquitoes. So, I'd put that in there and stir it. And-- and then it'd get like honey, so I would save my milk cartons, you know quart milk cartons?

I: Yes.

MJ: And I'd pour it into those milk cartons, and that would make three milk cartons. I'd have three. And then the next morning it would be congealed so I could take and tear that uh, outside off of the milk carton. And I'd cut it into six pieces and lay it out on a board to dry so they'd get hard.

I: How long would that take?

MJ: Oh, several days.

I: And then what?

MJ: Well, then it was ready to use. [chuckles].

I: Did you sell that?

MJ: Well, I sold a little bit there at the store. We had a store there at the Senior Center, and um, so I'd put a couple bars in a little plastic bag and put fifty cents on 'em. And uh, they would sell it for me, and they charged ten cents which I-- just a percentage you know. So, I sold quite a little bit there through the store.

G: The amazing thing is is that it's very, very mild, and that's all she's ever used on her skin. And she has nice skin.

I: You do.

G: She's used that ever since--

MJ: I've never used anything else--

G: she started making soap years ago.

MJ: so it made nice--

G: But we mean with all that lye, and you'd think they'd say, "Oh, my goodness!" But it really is soft, and I mean really gentle soap.

I: I thought it smelled great.

G: Mm-hm.

I: Um, I-- I-- I let everybody around my neighborhood smell it when I was uh, back home the other day. So uh, would make about-- how many bars would that make?

MJ: It would make uh, eighteen.

I: Is that right?

MJ: Mm-hm. And it would cost-- I figured out the costs would be about-- it would cost you about nine dollars.

I: To make it?

MJ: To make it you know.

G: It's that lye and ammonia and the whole works.

I: Mm-hm, would you get your money back?

MJ: Oh, yes.

I: Okay. Uh, was it popular? Did people like it? Did other people like that soap?

MJ: Oh yes, uh-huh, very popular.

I: I'm gonna try it myself.

G: Tell him about Mr. Saylor.

MJ: Hm?

I: Mr. Saylor.

MJ: Oh, he had um, skin cancer. He was my next door neighbor, and he had skin cancer. And so one of my other neighbors, she thought homemade soap did everything, and I cured everything. So, she said, "Well, try some of Mamie's homemade soaps." So, he got some, and he washed his face good with that uh, twice a day. And when he went to the doctor, the doctor remarked on what a-- how much better it was. He said, "I don't know what you're doing, but you keep on using it." And he said, "Well, he was using my soaps." So, he uh-- he always went on-- he wanted to buy. He wouldn't-- he wouldn't let me give it to him. But he'd-- and he used that all the time then for his face.

I: Um, and you say you use this soap today?

MJ: Oh yes, I never use anything else.

I: You use the same soap here that you--?

MJ: I haven't used anything else for years. I take some down to the Senior Center. I have the-- there's a young men down there that-- that um, plays in the-- he's one of the music. He plays the drums. And he really likes that homemade soap. He says he sure likes it in his shower.

I: Well, that's great.

MJ: So, I-- so, I take him-- every once in awhile I'd-- I haven't taken _____ soaps lately.

I: Who makes that soap now? Do you still make it yourself?

G: No, but we have a friend from Portland. My daughter's partner uh, is a paramedic, and she's taught-- she taught him how to make it. So, now he makes it. Only, he makes-- he makes his by buying the grease or oil.

MJ: He buys it. Yeah, he buys the very best--

G: _____.

MJ: olive oil and uh, oil. And he-- he makes it really good, he does.

G: And he puts real fancy scents in.

MJ: Uh-huh.

G: Oh, it's wonderful. [chuckles].

I: Is this soap that you gave me the other day one that he made?

MJ: No.

G: No.

MJ: Gere brought one.

I: That's one that you made?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: I see.

MJ: I should give out a gift bar to her.

G: His?

MJ: Huh?

G: Of yours or his?

MJ: Of his.

G: I can do that, Mom.

MJ: It's down there in the--

G: I have some. I'll just get one of mine.

MJ: Okay. Yeah uh, of course his is much nicer because he-- see I use the recycled grease to make mine.

I: Right.

MJ: Where he-- he buys the olive oil and different things, and he makes wonderful soap.

G: His is not as hard at first, and hers lasts a lot longer.

I: Did you uh-- you said that in the beginning you didn't have a car. When did you first get a car?

MJ: Well, I never did. I didn't like to drive so I don't remember. But when we came west we had an old Plymouth. And um, we had that for years. Um, my husband was gonna turn it in. We know there used to be. He sold cars for awhile, was a car salesman. And everybody would get a new car every year, and-- and uh, somebody told him. They said, "You know, you-- you'll just be spending money all the time buying a car." He said, "Fix up the one you have and keep it." And so he did. He had ours repaired, and we had it for years. It's lasted a long time.

I: Um, so you never learned to drive?

MJ: I-- I didn't. I learned to drive. I took driving lessons, and I could drive. But I didn't like to because somebody was there always to drive.

I: Where did you take driving lessons? Was that in Nebraska,--

MJ: No, that was--

I: or was that in Oregon?

MJ: in Oregon.

I: Did you have a license to drive?

MJ: I think I did, but I didn't-- I never did use it.

I: You never--?

MJ: I got it so I could if I needed to, but I never did.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: I just didn't care to drive.

I: Now uh, let's talk about your husband briefly. You said that he uh-- did he work? What did he do besides the store?

[audio ends]

April 30, 2005

Transcribed by Micheal Minthorn (06/06/2007)

Transcript revised by Paula Helten (12/30/2011)

[Tape #1 - Side A]

I: This is a continuation of a history interview with Mamie Jones, and the date is April 30th, 2005. Mrs. Jones could you tell me once again what your full name and birth date is?

MJ: Oh, it's Mamie. Do you want my uh, maiden name?

I: Sure.

MJ: Mamie Adelin Carland Jones.

I: And when and where were you born?

MJ: At Broken Bow, Nebraska in a sod house, [laughs] and uh, August 28, 1900. And I was-- I had seven brothers, and I was the only girl.

I: Is that right?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: That must have been um-- that must have been a joyful event for your parents.

MJ: It was because my brothers all took care of their little sister. [laughs].

I: That's good.

MJ: And they're all older, except one. I had one brother two years younger than I was, but the rest of them are all older.

I: Are any of them still alive now with you?

MJ: No.

I: Now you're the only one?

MJ: I've outlived everybody in the family.

I: Now, I'd like you to talk to me again about the-- about what brought you to La Grande?

MJ: My dad lived in La Grande. My dad and mother had separated, and uh, she had passed away. And so uh, he built a little house for me in La Grande, a little two bedroom house on an acre of land. He deeded it to me in about 1920 or somethin' along in there, and so I moved then to La Grande.

I: Um, tell me about that house. Where was it?

MJ: It was on uh-- at 1912 Russell Street [chuckles] on the corner of Russell and Cherry.

I: Can you describe that house for me?

MJ: Well, it was just a little um, two bedroom house. And then it had a little-- little bedroom off to the back. It had a little back porch. And that later when we-- when refrigerators got so you could get 'em you know, why, we put the refrigerator out there. And then we made the other half of the place a little bit of a bedroom.

I: Did this house have electricity?

MJ: Yes, we had electricity, and we had an electric pump. We um, drilled a well in the basement, and we had a little electric um, engine on it to pump the water.

I: Who drilled this well?

MJ: He did.

I: Who's he, your father,--

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: or your husband?

MJ: Uh-huh, my da-- my father.

I: When he built the house?

MJ: Uh-huh. My father could-- [chuckles] my father couldn't build 'em-- [chuckles] pound the nails straight. [laughs].

I: I see. Um, so-- so, you had-- you did have water then in the house?

MJ: Uh-huh, we had water in the house and electricity. And we had a bathtub and a toilet in the bathroom, but no wash basin. We had to use just in the kitchen, we had to use water, and had to use a wood stove which was really nice because in Nebraska we had to use coal. You didn't have any uh, wood like that you know. So, it was really nice to have nice wood to burn.

I: Now, did you uh-- were you familiar with cooking on a wood stove already when you came--

MJ: Oh yes, uh-huh!

I: over here?

MJ: Yes, that's the only thing we had. I didn't have an electric range 'til-- well, I don't know when-- what time it was that I got an electric range.

I: Tell me--

MJ: I thought it was terribly slow. [laughs].

I: Now we previously had talked-- that you learned a lot about cooking and canning and all of that uh-- that you taught yourself.

MJ: Yeah.

I: Uh, tell us about that.

MJ: Well, the government used to put out-- send out um, a little book and some things, and-- and so I would send for all of those. And send for any, you know like a different um, Calumet Baking Powder, and uh-- um, you know baking powder and those would send out little free cookbooks. And I'd always send and get all of those that I could to read.

I: Can you give me some examples of what you might have learned to cook with that? Uh-- uh, would they be like uh, cookbooks for baking--

MJ: Uh-huh, yeah.

I: uh, or-- or um, were there books for canning?

MJ: Yes, there's-- I have a canning book. I think I still have it. And I have some-- I think-- I'm not sure, but I think um, I might still have some uh, little _____ cookbooks.

I: Did you uh-- did you teach yourself how to-- how to cook with these-- with these booklets and things like that?

MJ: Oh yes, uh-huh.

I: How about the canning? How did that work?

MJ: Well, I learned to can. I learned to can everything and make jelly you know, do all of those things.

I: Um, how is that different from the way we can now? Can you describe the-- can you describe the canning process?

MJ: Well now, nowadays they have uh-- uh, water bath. I think they have water bath. They have big kettles that they put the things in, and put 'em down 'til they put the water up just over the top of the jar and cook it for so many minutes you know.

I: How would you do it? How would you have done it? Let-- let's-- what were some of the main things--

MJ: Well, some of the things--

I: you used to can?

MJ: I'd need to cook like peaches.

I: How would you can that?

MJ: You'd take 'em, and um, wash your jars and put 'em in hot water to keep 'em warm. And then you would um, heat your peaches with uh, sugar and some liquid on it you know. And then you'd dip 'em in there, and wipe off the top and put the tops on and seal it. [chuckles].

I: I see. Uh, was there a way of knowing they were sealed then, or did you have to--?

MJ: Yes, because they would um-- the uh, heat would go down. The suction would kind of pull that lid down, and it would pop. And if that lid wasn't popped, it wasn't sealed. So, you had to either do it over again, or use it. You just-- quite often we just ate--

I: Use it that night?

MJ: Yeah we'd use it, uh-huh.

I: How long could you keep uh, canned peaches or things that you had canned this way?

MJ: Oh, I-- I don't know, but a long time.

I: How 'bout uh-- can you describe this uh-- you had told me about um, preserving eggs that you would use later. How-- how did that--?

MJ: Well, they had a-- something they called a water glass. And you-- I have a jar down in the basement. I still have it, which I made sauerkraut in and dill pickles. It was a-- but you'd put this water glass, and it would kind of form uh-- uh-- a kind of solidify a little bit. And it would preserve those eggs. They weren't so good to um, eat you know, to have like scrambled eggs and things, but they were fine to cook with. You know, for baking pies and cakes.

I: Now they stayed in the shell?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And you just put 'em in this--?

MJ: Down into this liquid, uh-huh.

I: Uh-huh. How long could those keep?

MJ: Well, I-- from one season to the other, I guess, uh-huh.

I: I see. Um,--

MJ: We had to use them up.

I: And now you had talked to me about storing vegetables and things like that uh, before you had a refrigerator in the basement or in a cold cellar.

MJ: Yeah.

I: How did that-- how did that work?

MJ: Well, you put-- like we had in the basement, we had three bins. Dad fixed three bins, one for potatoes and one for carrots. And uh-- and then you take-- sometimes he'd dig 'em whole out in the yard. And um, you put some carrots down in there and some cabbage. He'd take the cabbage and turn it upside down. Just have the stem parts you know, sticking up. And store it and it would keep.

I: Then uh,--

MJ: And you'd dig it out in the wintertime and have it.

I: Did-- as you needed it you'd just go get it then?

MJ: Yeah, mm-hm.

I: What vegetables did you grow in this? It sounds like that uh, garden you had at this place was bigger than the house.

MJ: It was quite large, quite a large garden. And we raised-- oh, we had-- we'd have like peas, green beans, and turnips, and uh, radishes, and corn, lots of corn. People liked corn. You know, they'd come to our house and get fresh corn, corn on the cob you know. They liked that.

I: Did you sell some of these items?

MJ: Uh, not--

I: Or trade them, or--?

MJ: A little bit. Sometimes we would, but quite often Dad trade-- we'd trade, you know with more or less that we_____.

I: So, would you help your father out with some of these things? Would you give a lot of that stuff-- do you say he lived across the street, or--?

MJ: He lived in a-- there was another little house on the corner, and he lived in it. Some of the times he lived with us. And when he lived-- he had-- he used a little bedroom off the back porch.

I: Is that right?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Um, how long did you stay in that house?

MJ: Oh, let's see, we lived in that-- we moved there [heavy sigh].

I: Well, how about this. Did use-- did you-- were you living in that house when you moved to Union, or did you live somewhere else?

MJ: Let's see-- no, I didn't live anywhere else. Um, how did it happen? I started to work in the bank in La Grande. One day I went in the bank, and the manager asked me how I'd like to work in the bank. And I said, "Well, I didn't know a thing about a bank." [chuckles]. The time I was ever in there was, you know, to cash my husband's paycheck. And he said, "Well," he said, "I think you'd do all right." So, I went in, and-- and I did. I started working in the bank about 1941.

I: And you-- you didn't know anything about banking when you-- you say he just asked you one day when you walked in the bank?

MJ: Mm-hm. Yeah, he just asked me if I'd like to work there, so I did. And so ordinarily, I started in the base-- in the statement. You know, where they put out the statements every once in awhile and the safety deposit boxes. And then I'd cancel the checks and file those, and I kept learning different things. And usually they had two women that were bookkeepers. And usually before you went into a window as a teller, you had to go through the bookkeeping department, but I didn't. I went right in the back part statement and went into the teller's window. And then when they moved to Union, why, I transferred and worked out there 'til I retired.

I: Right. Now you told me earlier that um, you used to walk to work--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: from this house on Russell Street.

MJ: Oh yes, I used to walk a lot.

I: Tell me about that. Um, what-- how-- was it a-- tell me how-- tell me about the walk?

MJ: It was about a mile.

I: What would you wear? What kind of uh, you know was--

MJ: Well, we didn't wear slacks in those days. I don't know. A good-- good solid shoes and we dressed warm.

I: For example, you might walk in high heels for your--

MJ: Oh, no.

I: business days or--?

MJ: We never walked in high heels, huh-uh.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: No. We wore those only for dress-up.

I: I see. Uh, and it was about a mile. How long did it take you to get to work?

MJ: I don't remember how long, but--

I: Mm-hm. Was it a chore?

MJ: Hm?

I: Was it a chore to walk to work?

MJ: Oh no, I liked to walk. I did lots of walking.

I: Did you walk with others?

MJ: Not very often. I didn't have anybody else to walk to work with that lived up there.

I: That was going that way?

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: Um, would you uh-- did you walk in bad weather as well?

MJ: Uh-huh. Unless it was really, really bad that you couldn't, but mostly we went. We hardly ever-- I hardly ever missed a day.

I: Uh, what-- what kind of uh-- is it different now from when you used to walk in terms of going through that neighborhood? Were there-- are-- did you observe a lot of changes over the years to the- to the neighborhood that you would walk through on your way to work? Did that change a lot?

MJ: I don't know just how you-- what-- how you mean it.

I: Well, I mean uh, in terms of buildings coming and going or housing--

MJ: Oh.

I: or things like that.

MJ: Not too much new building, no, not too many. Uh, there were a few houses along the way, but not too many.

I: I see. I'd like to talk about the grocery. Now which one was first, Jones' Grocery or Greenwood?

MJ: The Greenwood.

I: Greenwood was first?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Alright, I suppose this could apply in either case. What kinds of things did you keep on the shelves _____?

MJ: Well, cer-- cereal and um, coffee. And, uh, you could come in the store with a dollar, and you could buy a pound of coffee and a dozen eggs and a

loaf of bread and maybe some hamburger [chuckles] for a dollar. And we put in- my husband put in a lot of penny candy. In those days, penny candy, little candy bars was about as big as what they sell now for-- I don't know what candy bars are now, but they're expensive. And we put in, and we'd get kids from all over the whole-- on the other side of town. They'd come over there to buy candy.

I: Come to spend their pennies?

MJ: Uh-huh, and then another thing that they'd buy was uh, yeast cakes. And they were little square, yeast cakes kinda like putty. [chuckles]. Some of the kids liked those to eat. And we had a little store in back of us, and somebody said, well, they could go in there and they could get a yeast cake for what, four cents? I think it was somethin' like that, so how come? Yet, they were cheaper over there than they were in our store, but they usually were cheaper in our store, so they'd buy a pennies worth of candy. [laughs].

I: I see. Well now, what was a yeast cake, exactly?

MJ: I don't know. Well, it was what they make-- used to make bread with, but it was kind of soft. And a lot of kids liked to eat 'em-- eat it. I never did, but a lot of kids would.

I: Just liked to eat it like a candy bar or a snack?

MJ: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: Mm-hm. How were they packaged?

MJ: Hm?

I: How were they packaged?

MJ: Just a little square-- just a little square uh, probably an inch and a half square. I don't know if they had-- well, they probably didn't have foil in those days. They were probably just wax paper or something, I don't know.

I: I see. How about coffee? How was coffee packaged then?

MJ: It was in cans, like it is now.

I: Still?

MJ: Mm-hm. Sometimes packaged coffee was in a paper bag instead of a-- a can.

I: How about flour? How was flour packaged up then?

MJ: They put flour and sugar in ten-pound bags.

I: Were they paper bags--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: or cloth bags, or--

MJ: Yeah, and _____.

I: what kind of bags were they?

MJ: Uh-huh. And then later they got so that they put cloths-- you know, cloth bag. And that's where we got our-- took the flour-- flour sacks and made tea towels out of you know.

I: How were these items-- how did your items get to the store? How uh-- did you have one person who brought--

MJ: They had um--

I: these things? Did you get deliveries from several--?

MJ: Well, they had uh, a warehouse, and uh, my husband quite often would go up and pick up what we needed, you know. He'd make a list 'cause we didn't have enough money to store it in great big uh, amounts for them to deliver. So he'd get a broken-- a broken case of something you know, that-- that we sold, and that way he could go and pick it up.

I: So, uh--

MJ: It was all the interior groceries. [chuckles].

I: I see. So, he would go pick these things up--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: um, that you needed?

MJ: And get them on the shelf.

I: You didn't have them delivered for the most part?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Um, what other kinds of things could you buy at this-- at this store grocery market that--?

MJ: That we had at the store?

I: That you had at the store.

MJ: Well, we had some um, canned goods. I can remember when they-- our canned goods sellin' for ten cents a can. [chuckles]. And then Heinz used to put out puddings, fig pudding and some other kind of a pudding, or jellos. And uh, they were kind of luxury item, but then we did occasionally-- we'd sell those.

I: Well, how would a luxury item be different from the others?

MJ: It would be a little more expensive, of course, uh-huh.

I: Um, what um-- what about signage in the store?

MJ: What what's?

I: Signs. What kind of signs?

MJ: Signs?

I: Yes.

MJ: I don't remember any signs.

I: You didn't have advertising signs--

MJ: No.

I: or things like that? Were there items in the store that you would have to package up for customers?

MJ: Well, the only thing would be uh, like sugar.

I: Did you have to pack-- did-- would you package that up for the customer--

MJ: Sometimes, yeah.

I: according to how they needed it? They didn't come pre-packaged?

MJ: Yeah, no.

I: Were there other items like that that didn't come pre-packaged?

MJ: One time we had a basket full of peanuts 'cause we had a cat that liked peanuts. [chuckles].

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: And uh, he'd bite those as they would buy them, you know. Can't remember anything else, and we didn't have paper sacks you know like they have now.

I: Right. What did you use?

MJ: We had-- used a-- we had a roll of paper that you pulled out, and a string, some string. I've got a ball of string down there, sat on a pedestal like thing, and we'd ring it up and wrap it with paper and wind the string around it and break it off. [chuckles].

I: So you-- it would be like making a package then rather than a bag?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Mm-hm. Um, did you have a cash register?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Did you?

MJ: Mm-hm, and a set of scales. And about every so often there was an inspector around that would inspect the scales to be sure that we weren't cheating anybody.

I: Were your scales always on target?

MJ: Mm-hm, we never had any problem.

I: Mm-hm. Um, let's talk again about this record book, this ledger book that you kept uh, credit items in.

MJ: Oh.

I: Can you describe that book how it was? Tell me about the book. It's uh--

MJ: Well, it's just like a sales book you know. You had regular sales books, and uh, you made a list of what they had. And then--

I: It had-- it had columns in it?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: And you added 'em up at the bottom, mm-hm.

I: So, let's say that I came into your store, and you decided to take a chance on me and give me credit. Um, you'd write my name in this book?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Did you-- do you write down the individual items--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: that I take, or do you just put the total?

MJ: No, we wrote the individual items. I had a list of 'em down there, and then you'd add it up. And if there's more than one pay-- it was like a sales book. Oh, you know, not too big.

I: Oh, you-- uh, sort of like um-- um, like a ticket book?

MJ: Yeah, I guess.

I: Sort of uh, palm size?

MJ: Yeah, uh-huh.

I: Uh-huh. And then uh, would I have to sign this, or--?

MJ: No, we just trusted you.

I: I mean, was it carboned? Would I get a copy of it uh, or did you just keep it there? And you--?

MJ: I just kept it there. I don't remember any carbon, huh-uh.

I: I see. And then how would I-- what would I do to take care of that? Did I come in the store? Did you send a bill? What happened?

MJ: You'd come in. Most of the time you'd pay it occasionally you know, at the end of the week. Or when-- see, some of those _____ who work at the mill and work at different places, and when they'd get paid then they'd come in and pay their grocery bill.

I: I see. Um, you-- you have said before that not all of these bills got paid.

MJ: No. You know some of them-- and then when they got in debt to ya, then they'd go someplace else. You know, they'd quit buying from you, and they'd go someplace else and buy groceries. [chuckles].

I: Start a new line somewhere else?

MJ: Uh-huh. So, when I went in to work at the bank--

I: Right.

MJ: some of these same people would come in, and I collected quite a little bit of money after I worked in the bank because they knew that I knew they had some money in the bank.

I: Would they just pay you at the bank then?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Is that right?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Um, did you ever communicate with any of these other stores. Would somebody call you and say, "Mrs. Jones, uh, Micheal Minthorn is here to get credit."

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: It never worked liked that?

MJ: No, uh-uh.

I: You didn't necessarily check with each other?

MJ: No, no.

I: Mm-hm. Then what-- were there any differences when you went to the other grocery, this Jones' Grocery? Was it a bigger store?

MJ: Yes, quite a bit larger store.

I: Now is this the store that was across from Riveria School?

MJ: Mm-hm. Yes, uh-huh. Yes, it was quite a bit larger.

I: What additional items would you keep there in that store?

MJ: I don't remember. We'd have bread. Some-- some of the bread came from-- we had a local bakery. And then we had a, uh, man that delivered bread from Idaho, I think it was, that would bring bread in. And then, if it didn't sell that day they'd pick it up, and they had an outlet for day old bread some place.

I: So you didn't keep bread more than one day?

MJ: No, uh-uh.

I: Did you sell bread in the earlier store?

MJ: I think so.

I: Mm-hm, and would that have been done the same way?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: So, everyday you would get new bread?

MJ: Yeah-huh.

I: Did uh-- was it popular? Did they-- was it just a, uh--?

MJ: Well, you got so you practically knew about how much to buy, so you didn't usually overbuy very much, you know.

I: How often would you order from the bread man, or--

MJ: I think about every day.

I: did you do that on a daily basis?

MJ: He'd come in every day, uh-huh.

I: So, you would know when he came in that day how much to leave?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Mm-hm. Would you get these by the loaf?

MJ: Hm?

I: Did the bread come by the loaf?

MJ: Yes, uh-huh.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: And it came sliced just liked it does now.

I: It did?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: How was it packaged?

MJ: Oh, I think more or less like it is now.

I: They were in plastic bags then?

MJ: Mm-hm. I don't know if they were plastic or wax, but probably, uh-huh.

I: You think it was wax then?

MJ: Probably.

I: Mm-hm. Um, let's talk about the bank for a minute. We've talked about the bank a little bit already. Um, tell me about this way that you knew it was safe to walk in the bank?

MJ: Oh. Well uh, when I lived in Union the manager of the bank would go in earlier than we did. And we'd come down and look in the window. Well, he had a little gadget kind of like that [demonstrates with hands]. You know, small, and he'd put it up in the window someplace, not always the same place. And we couldn't quite see him, and-- and we knew that it was safe you know for him to-- that no one was in the bank! [laughs].

I: Okay, Mrs. Jones has described picking up uh-- she picked up my small tape recorder. And she's described putting that in the window sill as a way of knowing that it was safe to come in. And it wasn't-- would you

know this the night-- did you know this the night before, what the signal was gonna be?

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: How did you know from day to day what the signal would be?

MJ: Well, we knew it. We knew what the signal was. I mean the little thing that he put up there, you know. But--

I: But it just wouldn't necessarily be in the exact same place?

MJ: No, it wouldn't be in the same place.

I: But you knew it would be in the window.

MJ: Yeah.

I: Uh-huh. Did they use this signal at the bank in La Grande as well, or a similar one?

MJ: No, no, 'cause they had more people in La Grande. See, we didn't have very many employees in like-- in Union 'cause that was a small place.

I: I see. So--

MJ: I think it was only about fourteen hundred population in Union.

I: And so that was the way you knew it was safe to go in the bank?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Did-- at any time was that ever not in the window--

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: when you came to work?

MJ: We never had-- we never had any problem. And they always told ya anyone came in and demanded money to give it 'em. And we always had one package of money that was marked.

I: How was it marked?

MJ: I don't know how they marked it, but it was marked somehow or other so they knew and that could be traced.

I: Did-- did everybody have a bag of money at their window, or was there one bag of money that you would give?

MJ: Oh, no. Every morning we'd-- could go in-- we had to-- you had to memorize a lot of numbers, and um, it would take two to go into the vault. Like I'd open up my window, and I knew like on paydays I'd need more money. And so, maybe I'd need two or three thousand dollars, or four, maybe four or five thousand depending on how big a payday it was. And uh, I would know part of the vault signal, and you know to dial their dial.

I: The combination?

MJ: The combination, and then my supervisor would know the other part. And that was changed very six months. You had to re-- renew it. You couldn't write it down. You had to memorize it.

I: You did have to memorize it?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Do you still have any of those numbers in your memory today?

MJ: No.

I: They don't last.

MJ: No, huh-uh.

I: But you changed them every six months?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Now, what I was referring to is this bag of marked money.

MJ: Oh.

I: Was there just one bag of marked money for every--?

MJ: Yeah, uh-huh. You had one little package, and it had-- I don't know what it had. Several little you know uh-- several pieces of cash in there, but I don't know just what.

I: But it-- there was just one marked bag.

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: And so, no matter how many tellers there were, if you were told the--?

MJ: Each one had their own.

I: They did have their own marked bag?

MJ: Uh-huh, yeah.

I: And uh, where would you keep that for example--

MJ: Well, you had a--

I: at your teller?

MJ: See, you had a-- a window that opened, and it had a little spaces like um, a knife and fork drawer, you know divided.

I: Like a cash drawer then?

MJ: Like a cash drawer, uh-huh. And then you had-- and you usually kept your marked money in the last one then 'cause you could use that.

I: Did everybody keep it in the same place?

MJ: Probably.

I: Mm. And you say at no time you didn't have to worry about going in the bank then?

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: And you never were robbed?

MJ: Hm-mm, never did.

I: Um, how about the uh-- let's talk about that house in Union. Now, when I uh, visited your neighbor yesterday she pointed out that house that you lived in Union.

MJ: Great, big, ole, eight room house! [chuckles].

I: That's a monster house!

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: Tell me how-- how-- uh, how did you come buy a big hou-- did you buy that house?

MJ: Yes, paid three thousand and some dollars cash for it. My husband, he knew-- he-- he had a job in Union and was gonna move in Union in 1945. And he saw that um, house, and he liked it. And it had the whole block, whole block of land you know. And so uh, he bought that, and we paid cash for it. And then we had a carpenter. It didn't have um-- it had a sink in the kitchen, and it had a pantry. And uh, at one end of the pantry you had something that was nice. It had uh, a kind of a cabinet there with um, shelves in it. And at the bottom it was a screen, and it opened into the basement and that was cool. And the cool air would come up through and keep-- keep things cool in that--

I: Kind of like your own air conditioning?

MJ: Yes, mm-hm.

I: And you say your-- uh, your husband built that, or--

MJ: No, no.

I: it was built into the house already?

MJ: No, it had-- yeah, uh-huh.

I: How was it that-- that you say he just liked that house. Was that house expensive by the standards of that day?

MJ: No, no, it wasn't. Yeah, it wasn't too expensive. The little old lady that lived there was getting pretty old, and she wanted to uh, get a smaller place. And she wanted to sell it. So, she-- I think she-- I think we paid-- I don't know. Something a little over three thousand or something like that, and when we sold it, we sold it for about seventy-five hundred.

I: Um, and you say you paid cash for that house?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: You-- you just had this money saved up?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And paid for it outright?

MJ: Yeah.

I: You didn't have a mortgage?

MJ: No.

I: Uh, how many rooms was it?

MJ: Eight rooms--

I: What did you do--

MJ: act-- actually.

I: with all those rooms?

MJ: [laughs]. We had three, big, bedrooms upstairs. And they all had-- two of 'em had uh, places where you could have a stove up there, and so in one of the front bedrooms we-- Gere and Dale put uh, a heater in there. So, sometimes we'd want to go up there, why, we'd build a fire and sit in there. Then it also had a little outdoor um, place just about wide enough to put a cot which you could step out the door and look down in the yard and everything.
[End of Side A]

[Tape #1 - Side B]

I: We're continuing the discussion with Mamie Jones, April 30th, 2005.
[recording clicks - no delay]

So, you were telling me about these other rooms downstairs, or the-- the uses you had for these other rooms in that eight-bedroom house.

MJ: Mm-hm. Well, we had a big dining room, so we had a big uh-- and-- and we had a-- a big cupboard where I could keep my dishes. And had two big drawers down below where I could keep my tablecloths and things and that, you know. So, we used the dining room a lot. I had-- and I still have dishes some.

I: So, you uh-- did Gere and her husband live with you in this house?

MJ: No.

I: No? So, what about all those other rooms then? What-- how'd you keep that house?

MJ: Well, my mother-in-law used to come, and-- and she lived with us--

I: Oh.

MJ: quite a bit of the time. And-- and so she lived upstairs in one of the houses in one of the rooms, uh-huh. And then where-- of course when we had company we had a place up there for them.

I: Sounds almost like a hotel.

MJ: [chuckles]. Almost! And then I had a-- 'course I used to do lots of sewing. I made the girl's clothes and everything. I put a sewing machine

up there in that room where it had a stove, and lot of times I could go up there and do my sewing.

I: What about the yard? Did you- did you do another garden in this--

MJ: I did.

I: in this place?

MJ: I did. I liked-- I did it. I enjoyed doing the yard, so I usually mowed the lawn and took care of the lawn, and-- and uh, worked in the garden and raised chickens. I always raised chickens.

I: Did you have a garden at this house?

MJ: In Union?

I: Yes.

MJ: Yes!

I: Would you go up-- what did you raise there besides chickens?

MJ: Oh we raised uh, peas and uh-- and uh, turnips and parsnips and radishes and-- and lots of-- of um, corn.

I: You favored corn?

MJ: Uh-huh, and squash. They were acorn squash and different kind of squash.

I: Now when uh-- by this time in Union I assume that you did have a refrigerator and maybe even a freezer by that time?

MJ: Yes, uh-huh.

I: Did that change the way you-- you--

MJ: Well yes, that--

I: did your canning routine?

MJ: that helped a lot because then you could uh-- like when the chickens would get old enough to-- you know, you wanted to-- to kill 'em and dress 'em up you could uh, do that and put 'em in the freezer. And uh, different things like that that you could keep in the freezer, like uh, asparagus. We had fresh asparagus out there that grew wild.

I: Did you slaughter your own chickens?

MJ: Oh, yes.

I: Who did that?

MJ: Me. [chuckles].

I: You? How'd you do that?

MJ: Put their head on a chopping block and take a hatchet and chop off their head. [chuckles].

I: Well, what would you-- um, many people may not realize that today--

MJ: Oh, I know it, no.

I: that that's how you did that. So, what--?

MJ: But you had to!

I: There was no way-- you didn't pay somebody to come and do that?

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: What happened next after you cut the chickens head off? Then what happened?

MJ: Well, then you had to scald the chicken.

I: What is that?

MJ: Put it in scalding water and pull off the feathers.

I: How long would that chicken sit in the water?

MJ: Oh, not very long. You know you just stick it in there, and get it-- be sure to get all the feathers wet, and then they'd just pull right off. And then you'd pick out the pinfeathers, and then you'd--

I: What are the pinfeathers?

MJ: They're the little-- little pin-- little feathers that are just starting you know.

I: Would there be a lot of those?

MJ: Uh, not too many, just a few, but not many.

I: And did you do this with your hand, or did you have an instrument to get that with?

MJ: I think you used a um-- took um-- oh, _____, you know one of things that you--

I: Oh, tweezers.

MJ: Tweezers, uh-huh.

I: Uh-huh, then what? Then what happens?

MJ: Well, and then you had to cut off the legs and open 'em up and take the entrails out and discard those. You buried them when-- you know, did something with those. And uh, you wash the chicken good, and it's ready to cook. [chuckles].

I: Now then, could you freeze that chicken at that point?

MJ: Mm-hm. Yes, you could wrap it up and keep it for a while.

I: What did you wrap it up with at that time?

MJ: I can't remember exactly. We had regular um, freezer-- what they call freezer paper, kind of a heavy, sort of waxed on one side. And before we had a freezer at home, we had what they called lockers at the meat market and places. And you could take and put your things typically in there.

I: Did they have a locker in Union, or was this in La Grande?

MJ: In uh, Union.

I: They did have one there?

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: And uh, this was your freezer before you had a freezer?

MJ: That was before we had a freezer. But after we had a freezer we didn't use it, but for awhile we did. You'd have to go in there, and oh, it'd be so cold. We'd have Geri stop, get something out of the freezer. She hated it. [chuckles].

I: What did you do, you rented this space in the-- in the freezer?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Were there various sizes of them? Did some--?

MJ: I don't think so. I think they were all just like boxes. You know, stacked in there, and I think they were all the same size.

I: Yeah, and you have your own space in the-- in this place?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: So um, did you trade or sell any of this-- this produce and merchan-- err, items that you got out of your garden when you went to Union?

MJ: About the only thing that we ever sold,-- we gave most of it away, but we would sell a little sweet corn 'cause that was really popular. The sweet corn that we grew, people really liked it.

I: Uh, did you have a barn in Union?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Was there a barn on that lot?

MJ: Big-- big, red-- big, old, red, barn, uh-huh. And it had the stalls for the horses, and then it-- in the back it had a door to our carriage house. Then it had a kind of a _____. I don't know what they stored in that. We never did use it, but it uh, was a place there. Then we had uh, another little building there that we kept feed and things in for the animals, and that's chickens and--

I: What other animals did you have besides chickens there?

MJ: Well, we had a little pony there for a while. And then later, we let some of the college girls um, put their sheep there during the summer.

I: Did you have any other livestock there yourself then?

MJ: No, huh-uh.

I: Mm-hm. Did you use the barn for anything else besides that.

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: Was there-- uh, was it uh, indoor bathrooms, or, did you have an outhouse at this place?

MJ: Well, we had an outhouse. Had a three-holer! [laughs].

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: But we had-- we had our own bathroom.

I: It was already plumbed inside by then?

MJ: Yeah, mm-hm.

I: So uh, were the outhouses functional? They just weren't being used?

MJ: No, they weren't being used. The only time they were used was like if the kids were out in the-- playing outside and needed to use--

I: Didn't wanna come indoors?

MJ: Yeah.

I: So, like--

MJ: It was a nice outhouse. It had a, um-- like I said, it had a three-holer. Had two bigger ones, and down below it had the little one. And then in front of it it had a lattice that came out. And it uh, had a latticed uh-- um-- well, in front of it, so it was quite attractive.

I: Did you, uh-- did you still have that when the house was sold and you came back to La Grande, or were you required to do anything with that over the years?

MJ: No, no, we weren't required to do anything there. We just--

I: So, when you sold the house it was still there?

MJ: Yeah, mm-hm.

I: Uh, you said there was no hospital in Union.

MJ: No, we had to go to La Grande to Grande Ronde Hospital. And we had a doctor there for a little while, but he became so popular and was called into La Grande, that um, he moved into La Grande. So, we didn't even have a doctor in uh-- in Union. 'Course the-- Ann Stanfield I think is, you know-- is the one that-- didn't she contact you or something?

I: Yes.

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: Yes.

MJ: Her husband was a doctor. He was a really good doctor.

I: Was he the doctor that was in Union at that--

MJ: Hm?

I: Was he in Union at that time, or-- or you-- that's where they lived?

MJ: That's where they lived at first, and then they moved into-- they bought a place up on M Street they live in and moved into La Grande.

I: So, you weren't talking about him as the doctor in La Grande?

MJ: No. Well, I didn't-- I had uh-- I used to have a doctor in La Grande occasionally, but I was never sick so I didn't need doctors. [chuckles].

I: But you had said this doctor in Union moved to La Grande?

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: And that left you without a doctor then?

MJ: Yeah.

I: What-- what uh-- uh, were there any um, buildings in Union then that might not be there now? I've heard there was a bowling alley in-- in Union?

MJ: Hm?

I: Do you recall that?

MJ: Not when-- there was no bowling alley when I lived there.

I: How about this uh, Centennial Hotel? Do you know about the Centennial--?

MJ: The old Centennial Hotel?

I: Yeah.

MJ: Yeah.

I: Mm-hm. Had you ever stayed there?

MJ: No, but I ate there when-- you know when it was popular. It was quite-- it was a nice hotel.

I: Tell me about it.

MJ: And um, then later I think it was put into apartments. And uh, we had um, two people that uh, oh, the Davis Cattle Company was a big cattle outfit between La Grande and Union. There were two brothers that had it, R.D. and Pete. Pete was quite a character. But uh, they later then made this uh, hotel into apartments and _____. Oh, they had different things in there. Sometimes they had a beauty school, or a beauty uh-- not a school, but a-- where you go and get your hair done, and things. But uh, it wasn't run as a regular-- like a hotel. It was a real pretty building. And it was right on the creek, Catherine Creek, close by there, and that-- that's the located.

I: You say you used to go there for dinner?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Was that a-- would that be considered an elegant place to eat, or--?

MJ: Oh yes, it was a nice place, uh-huh.

I: Mm.

MJ: But that was in the earlier days. Later on it-- it would-- didn't use it as that. They later, a couple-- young couple took it over and did ceramics. Used it as a-- you know, put ceramics in it.

I: Mm-hm. Tell me about your husband um-- uh, now did you say that you moved to La Grande because he was working in Un-- or, I'm sorry! Did you say you moved to Union because he was working at this hardware store?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Zimmerman's?

MJ: Zimmerman's.

I: Mm-hm. What was his business relationship? Uh, I'm sorry. Did-- was Zimmerman's, uh--?

MJ: It was a hardware store, and they had made or sold hardware and um, paint and wall paper.

I: Now there was one in La Grande also.

MJ: Oh yes, uh-huh.

I: Did the same people own this store?

MJ: Yes, uh-huh

I: Did your husband work for them?

MJ: Yes, Dale Zimmerman, uh-huh.

I: I see. And um, do you know why-- you know there isn't one any longer in La Grande?

MJ: Is there?

I: No. Um, did your husband have a business relationship with them, or was he an employee?

MJ: Well, they kind of put him in out there as manager. Uh-huh, he just managed it.

I: How long did he do that?

MJ: Mm.

I: Did he retire out of that when he--?

MJ: Yes, mm-hm.

I: That was his final job?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: Well, his final job uh, later on was uh, taking the mail. He hauled the mail from Union to Cove, and he dropped about whatever was mailing at Cove, and then he'd take that from Cove into La Grande. And then in the morning he'd go in and get the mail from-- from La Grande and bring it out to-- to Union.

I: So, he was um-- he-- he-- like a contract carrier? He wasn't a postman, but he did rural delivery?

MJ: Yeah.

I: They still have people who do that.

MJ: I don't know.

I: No, they do. My parents have one.

MJ: Oh, do they?

I: Um, yeah. They're not-- they're not really mailmen.

MJ: No, uh-uh.

I: And that's the kind of job that your husband did?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Um,--

MJ: He liked that.

I: Did he?

MJ: Mm-hm. Sometimes I'd go with him, and we'd uh-- you know they take the evening paper and poke it into their mail boxes as well as they like. [chuckles].

I: Was that a different job? Did he get paid for delivering the paper as well, or--

MJ: Uh-uh.

I: was that just a service?

MJ: That was just a service, mm-hm.

I: So, he-- he wasn't working for the paper as well?

MJ: No, uh-uh.

I: Did people get their paper by the mail in-- at that time?

MJ: Mm-hm, yeah. They had a little newspaper in uh-- it-- they printed a little newspaper there and--

I: In Union?

MJ: put all the local news in. You know, if you had somebody to your house for dinner, or [chuckles] went to somebody else's house for dinner. [chuckles].

I: You mean, in Union--

MJ: Uh-huh

I: had their own little paper?

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: How often did it come out?

MJ: Weekly, I believe.

I: Weekly?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Were you ever in it?

MJ: Oh yes, several times.

I: Mm-hm. And you say they told ya who had dinner where, and--

MJ: Oh yes, uh-huh.

I: who took a big trip.

MJ: Oh yes, anything-- any little piece of news like that was interesting--

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: at that time.

I: Would you use that to keep up with your neighbors and people you knew?

MJ: Uh-huh. [chuckles].

I: Um, did your husband work for Zimmerman's in-- in La Grande before he went out to--?

MJ: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: What was he doing at the store in La Grande?

MJ: Well, it was a hardware store and paint and--

I: Well, was he a salesperson, or did he manage that for--?

MJ: No, no, he was just a sales-- he just worked there for the manager.

I: Now, when-- when he took the job in Union was Zimmerman's already there,--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: or did they build it then?

MJ: No, it was there. And the people that uh, were there-- keep thinkin' what happened to them? They went into the service or something, and there was an opening there, and that's how come my husband went out there.

I: Could you say that again? He saw that big house there?

MJ: Uh-huh. And he bought that, and it was great to have it. So, we got it, and uh, I remember being in the store one day and-- into the bank one day, someone came in there and said, "There's that Jones out there who says he owns all that property! He don't need it!" [laughs]. And my boss is out there listenin'-- listened to it you know. He got a good kick out of it.

I: Did you know he had bought that house when you heard that? Did you already know--

MJ: Oh, no.

I: you had bought that house?

MJ: I had already lived there then.

I: Oh, I see. So, they were just teasing you for being in that big house?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Uh-huh, uh-huh. Now, what made you decide to move back to La Grande after that? You-- I assume you and your husband were both retired then?

MJ: Yes, _____--

I: You said you had to retire at 65.

MJ: At 65 I had to retire, and uh, we had bought a little house in La Grande before we moved there. I was um, a believer of buying savings bonds, and actually, I used to buy quite a bit. I always bought one every month, and I had quite a few savings bonds. So, I had enough on it to make a down payment.

I: For example,--

MJ: _____--

I: you bought a savings bond every payday?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Would that be how it worked?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: And you held it for ten years you know, and then it paid out quite a bit. So I um, at one time I had a little heart problem, and uh, Gere told me. She says, "Mother," she says, "this big ole house is too much for ya, and here. She looked-- this little house is for sale, so why don't you buy it?" And so, I looked into it, and uh, it was in the process-- the woman had passed away. And 'course her uh, heirs were anxious to get their money out of it. And the lady that was in charge of it told me what they wanted. Seven thousand five hundred and fifty dollars is what they wanted. But she said, "But you really want it," she said, "you add a little bit to that." So, I put thirty-five dollars-- seven thousand five hundred and thirty five dollars on it, and I got it. And I happened to have enough savings bonds to make a down payment, and then I got a building and loan you know, on it. And I rented it out for seventy-five dollars a month 'cause I wasn't living into it. So, I rented it out for seventy-five dollars, and it practically paid for itself.

I: Did it?

MJ: Mm-hm. And so then that's where I lived until I moved over here. It was a nice cozy little house, really warm and nice. It was well-insulated and a place in town and really a nice place.

I: Has that neighborhood changed since then? Did that change over the years after you moved there?

MJ: That neighborhood there? Uh, I don't know that it changed while I was there or not. It was there we lived close to uh-- there was an ice cream place on the corner. And a paint store across the corner from that. And

then, kitty-corner there was a grocery store. So, we lived in a nice neighborhood.

I: You didn't have far to go for--

MJ: Hm-mm.

I: for simple items--

MJ: No, huh-uh.

I: to keep around the house. Tell me about-- about uh-- tell me about this soap making again.

MJ: This what?

I: Let's discuss your soap making--

MJ: Oh. [chuckles].

I: again. Um, I think that we do have on tape already how you made it.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Tell me about selling it. Um, when did you first start selling that soap?

MJ: Well, we had a Senior Center-- a Senior Center similar to what we have here. They started one, and they had a little corner room that they used for a store. And so uh, I would put two bars of that nice homemade soap you know, in a little bag. And uh, I tried selling it fifty cents a bar, but it didn't sell. So, I put two-- two bars in a bag and put a dollar on it, and I'd sell it. So, I'd go in and-- [laughs].

I: Now what, it didn't sell at the cheaper rate, but when it went up to a dollar it sold well?

MJ: Well, of course it had two bars in it then.

I: Right.

MJ: So I sold quite a lot of soap through the Senior-- through the Senior.

I: Now, uh, you got some of the money from the sale of that soap?

MJ: Yeah, I got all of it excepting, I paid ten percent to the office for selling-- for them selling it.

I: And that's how they made their money to carry on their operations?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Was that a little lucrative business on the side for you?

MJ: Huh?

I: Did you do well with that on the side?

MJ: Oh yeah, mm-hm. Oh yeah, some of those people that bought soap was just wonderful. My neighbor, back when he had um, skin cancer-- since I had another lady over there, and she thought my homemade soap did wonders, you know, cure anything. So, she told Orville, she said, "You get some of Mamie's soap and use it." So, he got some of it, and he washed his face good twice a day with it. And the next time he went to the doctor, the doctor said, "I don't know what you're doing," but he said, "You keep on doing it." 'Cause it helped it a lot.

I: And what was his name? You said it was Orville.

MJ: Orville Saylor.

I: Orville Saylor.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: And--

MJ: Orville and Billy Saylor.

I: Did they uh-- he-- he wasn't cured by this soap, but it did his skin well?

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: Is that what you mean?

MJ: It did it-- it helped it.

I: Do you sell that soap today?

MJ: Hm?

I: Do you sell that soap today?

MJ: No, I don't today. I have a friend in Portland who makes it and sends it to me. [chuckles].

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: Did Gere-- she didn't give you a bar, did she?

I: Yes, she did.

MJ: Did she?

I: Yeah, yeah, I have a bar. I have a bar of that soap and the bar that your daughter's business makes,--

MJ: Oh.

I: or her daughter's business makes.

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: I think your soap is better.

MJ: Yeah? [chuckles].

I: Mm-hm, I liked it-- I liked it more.

MJ: I have uh-- gave my uh-- one of the girls that worked in the office, I gave her a bar. Said she never used soap on her face. You know, a lot of

people used to use cold cream and never washed their faces with soap. And I've always washed my face with soap and water. But anyway, she said, "I just feel squeaky clean!" [laughs].

I: Uh-huh. Did you uh-- was-- was this a project that you enjoyed doing,--

MJ: Oh, yes!

I: or did you actually-- did you actually um--?

MJ: I enjoyed doing it.

I: But you made some money on it, a little bit too, right?

MJ: Made a little bit of money on it, not much, but a little bit, uh-huh. But I used recycled grease which this friend of mine in Portland, he buys um-- you know, he buys special olive oil and different things like it. He makes wonderful soap.

I: How did you make-- what did you make your soap out of?

MJ: I used the recycled grease. I'd have people save me uh-- you know, if they were frying something and it had a little grease, and I'd pour it in a jar and save it for me. One man used to bring me several little cans of grease. And I'd take and put it in a larger kettle and pour boiling water over it and stir it around good. And then I had a little cupboard on the outside of my house, on the wall, and I'd put it out there in that cupboard and it'd solidify. Then I'd take and pour that water out and do that a time or two. Then I'd run it through uh, a little um, sieve to take out any particles or anything like that so I'd have nice clean grease to use to make my soap with.

I: Was it expensive to make?

MJ: No, hm-mm.

I: How many bars would you make at a time?

MJ: Uh, I think it was 18.

I: How long-- did it take 'em long to sell? You said it was popular.

MJ: No, it-- it didn't take it very long to sell. It used to sell pretty good.

I: Did you make other items for the Senior Center, or the American Legion to sell?

MJ: Oh yes, we made a lot of things for the American Legion. We made afghans and-- and uh, sewing bags and what they call ditty bags. Did you ever have a ditty bag?

I: No, I didn't.

MJ: They're a little-- they were twelve by fourteen inches.

I: What were they made of?

MJ: Out of uh, just gingham or material. And um, each veteran was given a ditty bag to put his belongings in, you know. Some of 'em would have a throw away shaver and-- and uh-- a uh, comb and teeth brush and toothpaste, and uh, you know a few items that they used. They'd put it in one of those.

I: Were these for uh, veterans that were in the hospital or the home?

MJ: Yeah, and the Veterans Hospital.

I: In the Veterans Hospital?

MJ: Uh-huh. And then about every so often we'd bake-- bake uh, cookies and put 'em in coffee cans and send them over to the Veterans Hospital. And uh, you know they have their own poppies, and they pay two cents. See, the American Legion poppy makes uh-- American Legion poppy is handmade, and they pay two cents each for the veterans that were in the hospital to make those. And they sell 'em on poppy days, like this year it's in May. I don't know, I got a letter not very long ago. They sell those poppies and then they use that for charity work.

I: But these veterans got paid--

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: so much to make them?

MJ: Two cents apiece. [chuckles]. But they're a little better than get nothing, you know. They're just in the hospital, and there wasn't very many things they could do, so that was one of the things they could. They'd make-- they'd earn a little bit of money.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: Kind of a plastic little--

I: The VFW? Say that again, the VFW poppy?

MJ: Uh-huh, they're-- they're kind of plastic.

I: It sounds like the American Legion poppy is a better quality then?

MJ: Uh-huh. Well, and since it's homemade too, it makes it nice.

I: How about these afghans? Did you-- was this a group effort, or did you make them on your own?

MJ: No, we made-- well we-- sometimes we made 'em together, and then-- then other times we made 'em on our own. Then they would give 'em to the veterans when they went to the hospital um, so they could put 'em down on the bed. If they wanted to lie down on the bed they could put those down, you know to keep the bed from getting soiled. And if they were cold they could get-- they could have two if they needed them. And then another thing, they gave them a little sewing kit so they could mend things. And um, had a needle and couple kinds of thread-- had two, three needles probably. And uh, two _____. One or two safety pins and they had a few little buttons. They'd put those in it too.

I: Now these were kits that you made up as part of your--

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: your auxiliary work--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: for them?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: What else did you do with the-- the American Legion?

MJ: Well, they at um-- at uh, Christmas time-- well, in the fall you know, everybody has a bazaar. So, in the fall they'd have a-- a bazaar to sell whatever people had donated and everything. Whatever was left over, they took it to the Veterans Hospital. And um, they would put it in a kind of a gift shop, and the veterans that are in the hospital could go into the gift shop and pick up items for their family at home if they liked. If they had children, you know. But you had dolls or whatever you happened to have, and uh, they'd pick out things for their children or family. And then ladies would Christmas wrap them, and then the men would take 'em down and mail 'em for 'em all free. We used to do a lotta good things for the uh, Legion.

I: You belonged to that for a long time?

MJ: I still belong.

I: Mm-hm. But there's no lo-- well, there's a-- the tribe has a American Legion Post.

MJ: Uh-huh, but they don't have any here. They have a VFW, but they don't have a--

I: Well, what I mean is the tribe has one, but it's out of town.

MJ: Yes, uh-huh.

I: Mm-hm. You said that your husband had a clothing store in La Grande for a while?

MJ: For a little while, uh-huh. But see uh, Travers which is a men's clothing store was a real good-- but it was-- this had been established a long time and so he couldn't compete. 'Cause he didn't have the money to buy the

kind of clothing, so he didn't-- he-- he closed it up. He didn't make any money on it. I think he lost a little money on it, but he didn't make any money on it.

I: Did he buy that store from somebody else, or did he--?

MJ: I think he just started that. I think he just rented a little building and-- and started it.

I: I heard that the store was over by the place they call Ten Depot?

MJ: Hm?

I: I hear that store was over by the restaurant they call Ten Depot in La Grande?

MJ: Oh?

I: Is that where that--?

MJ: Let's see, Ten Depot, I don't remember.

I: Well, I think that used to be called The Wheel.

MJ: Oh.

I: Oop, I'm getting--

MJ: No, it's--

I: that wrong, too.

MJ: Yeah, it seems like.

I: Um, was it down-- I think it was down by the Post Office somewhere, how about that? No? Oh, we better scratch this part--

MJ: Yeah.

I: of it. Now, you say he didn't have that very long because--

MJ: No. He couldn't compete with it, yeah

I: he couldn't complete with the other stores?

MJ: No, uh-uh.

I: Was it uh-- is that what took him to Zimmerman's next?

MJ: I don't know if he went to Zimmerman's from there or not. I don't remember.

I: What else did your husband used to do uh, when you came to La Grande at first?

MJ: Hm, I just don't quite remember just exactly.

I: Mm-hm. When-- when you moved to La Grande and took your father's house, did he um-- I might be getting this wrong. He didn't work for the railroad, did he?

MJ: My dad?

I: That was your dad that worked for the railroad?

MJ: He did at one time. But he was-- he was getting pretty old, and he didn't then. But um, I think LaVelle worked for the--

[End of Side B]

[Tape #2 - Side A]

I: And we're continuing with the interview with Mamie Jones on April 30th, 2005. So, you said that your husband worked in the office of the railroad for a little while, but he didn't like it?

MJ: He didn't like his job very well so uh, he didn't work there very long. Let's see, what did he do after that? Uh, that's why we went to Union maybe.

I: Did you drive?

MJ: No. I took driving lessons, but I didn't like to drive, so I didn't. I could, but I didn't.

I: Did you have a license?

MJ: Probably did, I'm not sure.

I: Who taught you to drive?

MJ: Well, they had regular people that taught you to drive. _____ took lessons.

I: Like a driving school?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Did you do that?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: But you didn't like to drive?

MJ: I didn't like to drive, huh-uh. Well, I hardly ever-- I liked to walk, and there was hardly ever any need for me to-- because there was always somebody to take me.

I: What kinds of things did you and your husband do for leisure?

MJ: Well, he-- he liked-- 'course he was quite a fan for football and-- and baseball especially.

I: But what kinds of things would you maybe like to do together?

MJ: Well, we ate out quite a bit. We'd go in different feeding places, and do that quite a bit.

I: Anything else that you did, go to the movies or go dancing or--?

MJ: Well, we-- yeah, he didn't like to dance, yeah. We'd go to the uh, movies quite a bit, uh-huh.

I: Was that cheap then to go to the movies?

MJ: Yeah, it wasn't too expensive. And we liked to go-- they used to have what they call the Orpheum Theatre, you know where they have sort of plays and things. We used to go-- I remember we went any place where they could buy tickets, and we went to Denver or someplace like that, and oh, we'd uh--

I: You say there used to be a theater in-- in La Grande called the Orpheum, or was this on a trip?

MJ: That was on a trip, I think.

I: I see.

MJ: Uh-huh.

I: I see.

MJ: We used to could go to Chautauqua. Do you remember the Chautauqua?

I: Yes.

MJ: Mm-hm. They used to have lots of entertainment.

I: What-- what other kinds of things would you do around La Grande or Union County together?

MJ: Well, that's mostly it. We'd-- like I say we ate out quite a little bit, and then we'd uh, watch football and--

I: Did you like to watch football with him?

MJ: Mm-hm, and basketball too.

I: Did you-- did you do this uh, with TV or with radio?

MJ: Well, it was a TV.

I: Did he like to listen to the games on radio--

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: before he got TV?

MJ: Yeah, mm-hm. And one time we recorded. I think it was-- we recorded a game for somebody. I can't remember just who was here, but we recorded a game for somebody.

I: Now did you have a radio when you first came to La Grande in that house on Russell Street? Was that-- you had said before your husband liked to have all the new gadgets for you,--

MJ: Uh-huh, yes.

I: but did you start out with a radio?

MJ: Yeah, we had a radio 'cause my dad used to like to sit out there and listen to the news.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: And then he liked to eat apples so he'd grab this big, long, old, knife that he used for everything. He cleaned his fish, trimmed his toenails, and [chuckles] peeled apples with. He'd sit there and peel apples and eat 'em and listen to the news you know. He'd-- that's just quite new you know, but he used to listen to uh, _____, and Fibber McGee and Molly, and Lazy Aces, and different ones. [chuckles].

I: These came on at regular times--

MJ: Yeah.

I: so you knew when

MJ: Yeah, mm-hm.

I: they were gonna be on?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Mm-hm.

MJ: One Man's Family, you know they'd have kind of stories like that.

I: Like a soap opera?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Did you have any that you liked to listen to on a regular basis?

MJ: Well, I liked to listen to One Man's Family.

I: Uh-huh.

MJ: And uh, I don't remember any others. Yeah. [chuckles]. Yeah, it was something quite new to hear the radio.

I: How about when you got television?

MJ: Oh, we thought that was wonderful. We got that uh-- they used to have uh-- when we-- when we first got the television-- we got that in about 1945, but I'm not sure. Johnny Carson was on there and Tennessee Ernie Ford. They were on there on a noon program-- program. Can't remember uh, what else was on, but those two that we liked.

I: Do you remember much about-- about the hardships of rationing and that sort of thing during World War Two?

MJ: Mm-hm, it didn't bother us too much because um-- 'course it was sugar and uh, what else? Uh,--

I: How about coffee?

MJ: We didn't seem to be bothered with coffee. They had had-- what was it they had, some kind of imitation grain that they used to use for coffee. And uh, I had quite a bit of jelly and jams made so I had sugar you know. So, I didn't uh-- I-- 'course sometimes gave my boss you know, some of my rationed _____ because--

I: Because you didn't need them?

MJ: Hm?

I: Because you didn't need them, so you gave them to your boss?

MJ: I didn't-- I didn't need 'em, uh-huh.

I: How about shoes? Did they ration shoes?

MJ: No, I don't think so. They used to ration um-- seems to me like they used to ration uh, stockings, didn't they? But it seems to me like when my boss would hear that uh, Penney's had some in he'd tell me so I could go and get some stockings.

I: You mean he might get advance notice of it, so you could--

MJ: Mm-hm, yeah.

I: get down there without having to wait in a line?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Did you have a party line telephone?

MJ: Mm-hm. We had a four party-- four party telephone.

I: How um-- how did that work? I mean uh, did people listen in on each other?

MJ: I don't think so.

I: Uh-huh. Did you have a particular ring on yours to know that it was your phone that was ringing in as opposed to your neighbors?

MJ: No, I think it was just a-- I don't remember, but I think it was just a regular telephone, uh-huh. I didn't use it too much. I used to be a telephone operator.

I: Yeah, how was that?

MJ: Oh, I liked it. I was only sixteen when I started working in the telephone office.

I: Did you like that job?

MJ: Mm-hm, I liked it very much.

I: Did you make a lot of friends doing that?

MJ: Mm-hm, uh-huh.

I: That must have been when you were still in Nebraska?

MJ: Oh, yeah.

I: When you were very young.

MJ: Mm-hm. Yeah, I was only sixteen.

I: Mm-hm.

[recording noise - no delay]

We're looking at a picture of Mamie's husband, LaVelle Jones in 1959, and he's got a long whiskers on his chin. Why was that?

MJ: Well, they had just uh, Centennial, and uh, they were supposed to wear whiskers and everything. If they didn't, they had a big tank of water on the street there, and they'd dunk ya in it. [laughs]. He hated it, but he had to do it! [laughs].

I: Um, let's see, this would have been the Oregon Centennial--

MJ: Yeah.

I: in 1959.

MJ: Mm-hm. [laughs].

I: Let's keep that one out for a--

[recording noise - no delay]

MJ: He looked nice.

I: Your husband always wore suits and--?

MJ: Oh my goodness, yes! He didn't like to get his hands dirty either.

I: That right?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: I have a picture of Gere, Kay, and Mother Jones. Would this be your husband's mother?

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: Now, I don't know if this one doesn't have a photo in it.

MJ: Oh.

I: The young girl looks like she's maybe six.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: This would be your granddaughter?

MJ: Yeah.

I: Kay?

MJ: Kay.

I: This photograph says Mother Jones and Uncle Tom.

MJ: Oh, that was her older brother. He lived up in Canada, and he was there to visit us one time, mm-hm.

I: Did um-- did your husband's um, parents live in La Grande then or around La Grande at that time?

MJ: Mm-hm. I can't remember about this one.

I: We're looking at a photograph that um-- it's-- the caption says, "Mansion in Cheyenne, Wyoming." And there's a wrought iron fence and a huge house in there. What? Did you live there?

MJ: In the corner apartment there, uh-huh.

I: There was an apartment in-- this was an apartment house?

MJ: Mm-hm. Well, they'd made it into an apartment house.

I: Well, that's fabulous.

MJ: Mm-hm.

I: That's-- that's an interesting place.

[recording noise - no delay]

Well, I think that we're getting close to wrapping up on this interview. Is there anything else that you can think of we should maybe talk about out of the past?

MJ: I can't remember anything. In fact, we've just about hit on everything.
[laughs].

I: Well, I really appreciate you uh, being patient with me on the second go-through.

MJ: [chuckles].

I: If I have more questions I may have to come back and hit you up again because you're actually a good source of information--

MJ: Well, thank you.

I: on things out of the past there. Thank you very much.

MJ: You're welcome. I've enjoyed it. I don't know if I've been much help to ya or not, but I sure enjoyed visitin' with you anyway.

I: Oh, well, you've been a lot of help! And I enjoyed visiting with you, too.
[End of Side A - Side B is blank]