



JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH: HAZEL RINGER

CONDUCTED BY: INEZ LYON

DATE: JULY 30, 1984

PLACE: CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

HAZEL RINGER

Hazel Hoover Ringer came to Cedar Rapids as an infant about 1890 and has lived here her entire life. She remembers Mamie Doud Eisenhower and the Wright brothers and she was a classmate of Marvin Cone and Grant Wood. Mrs. Ringer joined the staff of The Cedar Rapids Gazette in 1933 where she remained for 25 years. She was on the staff of the Gazette when Verne Marshall received the Pulitzer Prize. She also served on the Camp Fire Girls Board and was active in the formation of Camp Hitaga.

INTERVIEW TOPICS
CEDAR RAPIDS: THE EARLY DECADES OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

I. PERSONAL LEAD-IN QUESTIONS

- When were you born? Where?
- 1--How long have you lived in Cedar Rapids?
- What are your parents' names?
- 4,8--Where did you go to school?
- 12--Are you married or single?
- 7--Did you raise a family? How big?
- What has been your occupation (career) during your adult years?

II. COMMUNITY TOPICS

A. Technology in the Community

1. Transportation

- Railway travel (Union Station, trips to Iowa City on Crandic)
- 5,6--Trolleys (the Interurban)
- 10,14,15--Horses and First Automobiles
- 14--Mud roads and the seedling mile
- Hunter Airport and the first planes
- Cedar River (ferries, floods, dams)

2. Communications

- Newspapers
- Radios
- Advertising
- Telephones

B. People in the Community

1. Amusements/Recreation

- 18--Motion Pictures
- Cedar Rapids Parks
- 11--Dances
- Carnival Week
- Chautauqua
- Community Theater
- Little Gallery
- Symphony Orchestra
- 10,11--Circus
- Greene's Opera House
- Amusement Parks (Alamo)
- Camps
- Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)

2. Famous Characters

- Cherry Sisters
- 17--Grant Wood
- 18--Carl Van Vechten (The Tattooed Countess)
- 18--Marvin Cone
- 2,3--Wright Brothers
- 14--Mamie Eisenhower

- 4. Business and Economy
 - Local Factories (Douglas Starch Works, Quaker Oats, etc.)
 - Local Brewing Companies
 - Retail Businesses /Department Stores
 - Professions
 - Banking and Finance
 - Restaurants (Greek Restaurants in 30's)
 - 3--Businesses that no longer exist (old groceries, drygoods, icehouses)
 - Farmers Market
 - Mills on Cedar River
 - Buildings Erected
 - 4--Manual Labor/Types of Jobs
 - Companies (Labor Unions, Strikes, Pay)
 - 4--Chimney Sweep
- 5. Attitudes/Values
 - Children/Discipline
 - Sex/Petting
 - Charity
 - Divorce
 - Work
 - Working women, Voting Rights for Women
 - Patriotism (World War I)

D. Historic Events in and Outside the Community

- 1. Catastrophic Events
 - 22--Clifton Hotel Fire (1903)
 - Douglas Starch Works Explosion(1919)
 - Bank Closings (1933)
 - Lyman-Stark Building Collapse(1913)
 - Public Library Murder(1921)
 - 22--Quaker Oats fire
- 2. National Historic Events
 - Womens' Suffrage
 - 16--World War I
 - Roaring 20's
 - Prohibition
 - 24--Great Depression

3. Lifestyle

- Life before air conditioning
- Winter Activities
- 19--Holidays (Memorial Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas)
- Clothing
- Toys
- Saloons/Taverns
- Farm Life

4. Family Life

- Household Help
- Women's Roles
- Childrens' Activities/Behavior
- 20--Sunday activities (Church life, Sunday Blue Laws)

5. Ethnic/Minority Life

- Immigrants (Czech, Greek, German, etc.)
- Indians
- 20,21,22 --Segregation of Blacks
- Jobs Available

C. Organizations and Institutions in the Community

1. Education

- 4,8,9,13,17,20--Cedar Rapids Schools
- Coe College
- Mount Mercy College
- Cornell College

2. Government

- City Services
- Streets/Roads
- Relationship with Marion (Courthouse Dispute)

3. Medical

- Hospitals
- Patient-Doctor Relationship
- Broken Bones
- Polio, TB, Debilitating Diseases
- House Calls
- Home Delivery of Babies

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- Horses and First Automobiles
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- Hunter Airport and the first planes
- Cedar River (ferries, floods, dams)

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- Newspapers
- 3-7 --Radios (Gazette-Marshall-Pulitzer Prize)
- Advertising
- Telephones

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1--Camps

- Community Centers (YWCA, YMCA)

1,2--Camp Fire Girls

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- Grant Wood
- Carl Van Vechten (The Tattooed Countess)
- Marvin Cone

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--Life before air conditioning

9,12,13--Winter Activities

15--Holidays (Memorial Day, July 4, Thanksgiving, Christmas)

--Clothing

--Toys

--Saloons/Taverns

--Farm Life

9--Cutting ice on Cedar River

4. Family Life

--Household Help

13--Women's Roles

12,13,15,16--Childrens' Activities/Behavior

--Sunday activities (Church life, Sunday Blue Laws)

5. Ethnic/Minority Life

--Immigrants (Czech, Greek, German, etc.)

--Indians

11--Segregation of Blacks

--Jobs Available

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--Cornell College

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--Home Delivery of Babies

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- Farmers Market
- Mills on Cedar River
- Buildings Erected
- 15--Manual Labor/Types of Jobs(Iceman)
- Companies (Labor Unions, Strikes, Pay)
- 11--Horse driven cab 16--Bakery Van

5. Attitudes/Values

- Children/Discipline
- Sex/Petting
- Charity
- Divorce
- Work
- 3-7--Working women, Voting Rights for Women
- Patriotism (World War I)
- 3,4--Sexual Harassment

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IL: This is Inez Lyon. You've lived in Cedar Rapids a long time, Mrs. Ringer?

Ringer: All my life.

IL: All your life. So you came in about 1890 or something? What's the first thing you remember about Cedar Rapids?

Ringer: I don't know what it would be.

IL: Was it something about one of the grocery stores? Those were different from what they are today. Where did you live?

Ringer: I lived on 6th Avenue, between 8th and 9th Street.

IL: You lived across the street from where Mercy Hospital is now. Mercy Hospital wasn't there then.

Ringer: No, it wasn't there.

IL: What was there then, do you remember?

Ringer: Yes, I do just faintly. It was a great big, white house--kind of a deserted. It was on a hill or a little slope--all sandy. We kids used to slide down it. It was funny along 6th Avenue, 9th Street ended there. There isn't a 9th Street along there now. Down from Mercy Hospital, between 9th Street and 8th Street on that same block, it was more than a half a block to the alley, were two little houses that were never painted, as I remember now.

Lately things aren't as plain to me as they were a year ago.

IL: Yes, that's all right.

Ringer: They were unpainted and in one of them lived the Wright brothers.

IL: Oh, yes.

Ringer: And then in the other one lived Patsy Holcomb. I knew, but I can't think for the life of me--she played a coronet and she was on Broadway under an assumed name.

IL: Her stage name?

Ringer: Her stage name. I can't remember. I used to know.

IL: Did you know the Wright brothers?

Ringer: Yes, well they were big boys, you know.

IL: Well, that's true. They were ahead of you.

Ringer: Oh, yes, way ahead of me, but the most fascinating yard they had-- full of boxes and kites. They would fly their kites in back of their house in the vacant space. We used to go over there. They didn't like it too well, but they would tolerate us if we'd sit on the steps and watch.

IL: Watch for how they flew their kites?

Ringer: Well, watch for what they were doing. They were doing all kinds of things that were--I don't know now what they were--but their father was a United Brethren minister. They didn't live there

for very long.

IL: They went to Washington High, old Washington High, didn't they?

Ringer: I don't know because I wasn't around.

IL: I'm putting you too far back.

Ringer: They must have been 18 or 19 when we maybe were seven and eight. I can't tell. It was very short. They didn't live there very long. I don't think they were here more than a year or two.

IL: And you were one of the children in the neighborhood who liked to watch them?

Ringer: Yes, a whole gang of us. That neighborhood was the same until we got through school. We all had fun together.

IL: Who were some of the ones in your gang? Do you remember in your group?

Ringer: Yes, well, let's see--the Bruner girls, and the Sillito kids. They lived in Independence now...and Chub and Ruth Massey. O'Meara, he was the principal one. There was real good neighborhood of kids. Talking about grocery stores, there's one on 6th Avenue that goes end on 10th Street. Right there is a grocery store. It was Wilt's grocery store. If we had a penny to spend, we would go there. We used to sit up there on the curbing, where the old hangout was. Did you know the chimney sweep?

IL: No, I never did.

Ringer: He lived in a lean-to house, made out of tarpaper out on Mt. Vernon Road. He would chimney sweep. Everybody had a stove in those days. The chimneys got full of soot and you'd get the chimney sweep. He'd come in a black thing with a high hat on and sing to the top of his voice while he was doing that. We used to visit him every Saturday, the whole gang of us. Well, he'd tell us whose chimney he was going to sweep. Then he'd say, "Well, I'll say hi ho John," that was his horse, "and you kids all listen 'cause I'll sing to the top of my voice." We'd listen and sure enough, the teacher would shut down the windows. He came along to the St. Louis Fair. He was going to the fair. We could hardly wait until he got back to tell us about what he had seen there. The greatest part of it was, he only spent \$5.

IL: From here he went to the St. Louis Fair and back and enjoyed it for \$5?

Ringer: Well, I don't know if that included the fair, but that's what he spent....at the fair. He also saw everything. In his little lean-to house, he had boxes with planks along that we would sit on. He'd spin the yarns to us.

IL: From this area, you went to Polk School, you said?

Ringer: Oh, no, Jackson.

IL: Who were some of those in school with you? You mentioned a while ago--did you say Hilda Turner?

Ringer: She was a teacher.

IL: You said my mother was there, Mrs. Jackson, the Wallace girls?

Ringer: The Dolby girls, Dawley girls?

IL: The Dawleys, Judge Dawley's daughters.

Ringer: "Oh, yes. I got a picture of all of them. I was the smallest one in the room.

IL: Were any of Dr. Crawford's sons in school?

Ringer: They were older, quite a lot older.

IL: Do you remember any of your teachers?

Ringer: Oh, sure.

IL: Who were some of them?

Ringer: Well, Hilda Turner was one and Mrs. Cherry. I've forgotten her maiden name. Mary Wright was the principal. Mrs. Ellwood taught there, when I was going. Miss Witwer taught first grade. I don't remember any others right now.

IL: Well, that's good. I can't remember my teachers and I'm not nearly as old as you are. I think your memory is marvelous.

Ringer: Oh, yes, it is and it's too good.

IL: Did you ever ride the streetcars?

Ringer: Oh, yes.

IL: And where did you go on them? Were those the horse-drawn trollies?

Ringer: No, they had the thing up there, the trolley. Well, the principal one was Bever Park Sunday school picnic. They had an open one with seats on and no sides. That was a big deal. Getting back to school, you know where Memorial Drive turns off of Bever? Right there was Broady's farm. Brodys lived there. They had a big farm. They had a whole peck of kids. They used to come to school in the surrey with the fringe on top...all of them with a bucket with their lunch in. The highest ambition I had was to take my lunch to school in a bucket like that. My mother phoned over to the school to see if they would let me, but, no they wouldn't--only the Brodys.

IL: Did you live too close to the school? Is that why?

Ringer: Yes, I only lived three or four blocks.

IL: And you had the Sunday school picnic at Bever Park and you rode on the trolley?

Ringer: Sit on the big rock and eat. Mrs. Coquillette was Bernice Grout. She was Bernice Grout then, and she got to be Bonnie Grout and then Bonnie Coquillette. She lived on the same block as your folks, at the other end. We used to go to high school. St. Elmo Coquillette boarded and roomed in the house on Fourth Avenue, about the middle of the block. Therese Marshall and I used to always walk to school together. We walked behind him and made fun of him. He'd just come in from the farm and his pants were

way up here. This ~~Th~~Therese got to be United States District Attorney in California. When she came back to visit about twenty years ago, she couldn't believe that St. Elmo Coquillette was president of the bank and Bernice Grout was Bonnie. They lived next door to your relatives. Who was the publisher?

IL: Brewer?

Ringer: Brewers, yes.

IL: Oh, did they live in that block?

Ringer: Yes. They lived this side of the double house. Her mother sewed for people. I know my mother used to take alterations there. Then she also boarded the teachers--they roomed and boarded.

IL: You've raised a family, your daughter?

Ringer: Yes, I have a daughter.

IL: Is she your only child?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: And she lives here with you?

Ringer: Yes. She teaches special education.

IL: After you were through with Polk School (I'm kind of jumping around here)...

Ringer: Jackson.

IL: Jackson, you went to Washington?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: And some of your teachers there--do you remember any of those teachers?

Ringer: Oh, sure, Miss Fordyce and Alice Rudd. Miss Schmerman lived down on this corner. Miss Palmer. Miss Abbott.

IL: Miss Abbott was the principal, wasn't she?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: Everybody who ever came in contact with her just loved her. She was a marvelous woman.

Ringer: She would certainly get after the kids. I can see her standing up there to the window. You know then, Greene Square, you didn't dare to step off the walk. She would stand up in the window when the kids were coming to school and watch to see who would step off the sidewalk into the grass. Would they ever get a going over. Now all the bums live there. She had some tough ones to contend with that year in my class.

IL: Do you remember who they were?

Ringer: Yes, Leo Kadgin, Paul Breck, Red Shean (He became a millionaire and he was one of the worst kids that ever lived.) We'd get down to Boyson's, which was on the corner of the Iowa Theatre, down in the basement to get ice cream. They had these tables that you'd sit at. They would screw the glass top down and put

their wares in there for display. Those boys would unscrew it and take their things out of there. They'd go to the shoe store. One boy would need a new pair of shoes. They'd take the other boy--Red Shean and Paul Breck for instance--and they'd get the fellow to show them all of the shoes that he had, about, and then they'd still want to look at another one. While he was down there, the ones that they wanted, the other one would sneak out with them. They had the money to spend. Oh, they were holy terrors! Once we had teachers' assembly from all over the county or state, or some place, it was covered with teachers. We had an assembly at Washington and all at once everybody started to sneeze. They'd put red pepper down the conditioner and they had to dismiss the group.

IL: This was at Washington?

Ringer: Yes. Alice Rudd said, "I loved every one of you. You're full of the devil, but you sure were nice kids." Barbara went to her when she was at Franklin.

IL: I went to Miss Rudd and Miss Ellwood. They were still teaching when I came along.

Ringer: Did you go down there?

IL: Sure. I went to Buchanan, McKinley, and Washington. I went to Johnson for a couple of years while they were building Buchanan. Sure, I went to them and those teachers were still there when I was there. You were telling about Mr. Haskell's

car. Was that when you were young?

Ringer: Oh, sure. It was the first car in Cedar Rapids...very first one. I laughed when I saw it. He'd take three kids and himself. There'd be 75 cents a load and it would chug, chug, chug along to Central Park Church. He'd dump us and go back and get another group.

IL: And that was a quarter? That was an expensive ride in those days.

Ringer. It was. It was, but it was new, you know, and boy we saved (I don't know what we got for an allowance) but it certainly got us down to the bottom of our pocketbooks.

IL: Did you see any horses on the way? Did you pass any horses in the car?

Ringer: Oh, I don't remember. I was on the seat and there was another one sitting on my lap. I know all the horses were scared of automobiles when they first started. When we got our first one, a Ford with the curtains, and we paid \$1,200 cash. It nearly broke our hearts. It would only go 35 miles an hour and my husband got it out on this mile on Mt. Vernon Road and said, "Now, I'm going to make it go 35 miles an hour." I said, "Well, if you do, you let me out. I don't want to go that fast."

IL: Do you remember circuses?

Ringer: It was right up here on the corner of 13th Street and First Avenue, years and years and years ago. They had the Ringling

Brothers Circus. My dad took me and I rode with my feet around his neck. Every place we walked nearly, I still lived on Sixth Avenue when I met my husband. He lived on Fifteenth Street. I think, boy, he must have been in love. He walked clear down there to get me and then walked if we were going to a dance--the younger set we used to go to--and we'd dance all evening. He'd take me home down there and then walk clear home.

IL: Where were the dances?

Ringer: Lattner's auditorium.

IL: Where was that? Is that where the Lattner Building is? Down on Fourth Avenue and Third Street?

Ringer: It's Second Street and Fourth Avenue.

IL: That's where they had the dances?

Ringer: Yes. It was a high school affair. It was every two weeks and you had to have an invitation. You had to be accepted. I went with Miss Putmann's dancing class. It was held up there, I believe.

IL: Miss Putmann's?

Ringer: Yes, and you had to go by invitation to her dancing class. It was only for dancing, but you know then we walked down there. You had your shoes on. You carried your slippers in a bag and taught the boys to help you remove your shoes and put on your dancing slippers and the etiquette of dancing. Anybody who went to her class really knew their stuff when they got through.

IL: What was your name before you were married?

Ringer: Hazel Hoover.

IL: What was your husband's name?

Ringer: Dave Ringer. He was a buyer for Armstrong's.

IL: Back to the circus, right Eighteenth Street and First Avenue?

Ringer: Yes, where the old Cherry home is. The Blakes used to live there before the Cherrys did. They built it.

IL: The Blakes did? Some how I thought the Cherrys did. This was before the Blakes built the house?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: Do you remember the streetcars that went all through town?

Ringer: Yes, they went down First Avenue to Marion. I believe they had two tracks, one on both sides of the post that held up the trollies. Then there was the Bever Park, and it didn't go clear to Bever. When Westminster Church (I belong to Westminster) and St. Paul's were built within the few years of each other, everybody wondered why they wanted to build way out in the country. That was about as far as Cedar Rapids went at that time.

IL: Do you remember about what that date might have been?

Ringer: I haven't the slightest idea. My church was down in back of the Gazette office where the radio station is now.

I can barely remember when this was built, but I know that everybody was disgusted because they built it out so far that they could never get there.

IL: When you think back, looking at it now, isn't that amazing. The trains went through so often.

Ringer: Oh yes, wasn't that wonderful?

IL: My mother used to tell about that (of course, she was older than you) ball that they had when the Union Station was new. Do you remember hearing anything about that?

Ringer: No, I never heard that. Isn't it a crime that they tore that down and Washington High School, likewise. They could have used it for something.

IL: I think Washington High School would have fallen down pretty soon.

Ringer: Too bad it didn't fall down a long time ago.

IL: I went to Washington, too. The steps inside were just like this!

Ringer: I had to laugh at Hazel Brown. Well, you know how funny she talks. In Miss Fisher's history class and there were only about a dozen in the class and here came this new girl from out of town. It was Hazel Brown. Of course, all the kids began to snicker. She was about this big around. She started to talk funnier than ever. Right out of a clear blue sky, Miss Fisher said, "Hazel, you take Hazel Brown with you all day today

and show her around." Of course, all the kids were laughing about her--the size of her, and I was about this big around. She talked so funny that we couldn't understand her. I wonder where she is.

IL: I think she lives up in those apartments on 28th Street. I don't know whether she's still there or not.

Ringer: I tried to get her one day. You know, she takes her hearing aid off and she doesn't hear the phone. There were some noted kids who went to Jackson--a lot of them. Howard Hall went to Jackson.

IL: Mamie Eisenhower?

Ringer: Yes, Mamie Eisenhower. She lived once on Third Avenue, right back of the school. Then also across the street, where they lived afterwards. She had an older sister who had a harelip. She was terribly disfigured. She wasn't quite as old as I, but I think she was in the grade below. She got typhoid fever or scarlet fever or something that was contagious and died when she was over there.

IL: Before you got your first car, did you ever get stuck in the mud with a horse and buggy or anything like that?

Ringer: No, but we did with the car.

IL: Where were you when you got stuck?

Ringer: We got stuck in the mud between here and Iowa City on a dark night. Mud clear up to here and not much to do. I don't know how

it turned out, but it was terrible. We got stuck in the mud several times. We thought we were the "bell of the ball" with curtained car. A lot of our friends--Weaver and Hettibel Witwer used to go in that crowd. At that time, they didn't have what they have. They lived in a little bit of a house over here and we lived on 20th Street between Bever and Washington. Your dad used to take me home every night, dropped me off there.

IL: You were talking about Weaver.

Ringer: They wished that they could have a house like ours. I used to go with Howard Hall once in awhile--date him. He went to Jackson School, too, and his sister, likewise. One night, after school, he and another couple wished we could go to Bever Park. He had a car--Howard did at that time and none of the other kids did. We got our bread, hot dogs and a can of beans and went to Bever Park. We built a fire. We had to be home by six o'clock. We didn't know any better. We set the beans, in the can, on top of the stove. Those darn beans exploded and we were all burned. To his dying day, he had a mark right here on his face from those hot beans.

IL: Do you remember the Hunter Airport?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: I'd like to have you reminisce some more about the earlier days. The Chamber of Commerce, that was where the Roosevelt is now?

Ringer: I was in it when it was over in the American Building. It was on the entire sixth floor of the American Building. Then they moved over--I was in it when it was there. Then I got married

and quit. I was the secretary to Mr. Conners. We moved over to the building where the Roosevelt is. I believe that burned, didn't it?

IL: I think so.

Ringer: Then, when the war broke out, my husband enlisted and Mr. Conners wondered if I didn't want to come back. He'd like to have me. I went back and I stayed almost the duration. The war was over in November and I stayed until about the middle of the summer. My husband was with the Army Occupation. It was over in November and he didn't get home until the next August. Jim Good came from Washington. Of course, he always kind of headquartered in the Chamber there. I said to him, "Isn't there some way that I can get my husband out?" He said, "Knowing Dave, I know that he wouldn't want to be released when the rest of his outfit was not." I said, "I'm getting tired of this. All these single guys, they get home and he wants to come so bad." He says, "Well, wait a month or so. If you don't hear or he doesn't get home then, we'll talk about it." He says, "You write me." So, when the month was up, I wrote him and I got a phone call back from him saying he'd cabled for his release. That very day he was released over there. He didn't know what had happened. He couldn't figure it out. I was always grateful to Mr. Good for that. Well, you forgot one person in high school-- Grant Wood. I sat behind him for a whole year. When we'd first go to Washington, the west side kids all came too, you know. They didn't have any school then. You know where Room C was, down in the basement, was a great big, huge room.

IL: I don't remember that particular room.

Ringer: Oh, it was huge and there was always a study room, too big for classes. They'd put all the newcomers down there and mix them up. Well, I got in back of Grant Wood and his hair was about the color of straw. His complexion was almost as white as your blouse. He wouldn't look to the right or the left. He wouldn't look at the girls. All those crazy kids I was telling you about, they were egging me on to do something to him to get him. They were all sitting around me, egging me on to do something to him. There's a crack between the seats and I put my foot. I said to Dr. Peterson one day, talking about Grant Wood, I said, "I bet you don't know anybody who tickled his fanny." He said, "What!" I said, "I did!" He would just turn fiery red and you couldn't get him to respond at all. He wore a celluloid collar. I used to scribble all over the back of it. He'd sit there just like a dead person. All the rest of the kids would laugh all around. He, too, was kind of a "hickish" looking kid with his pants way up. I know some people in Stone City that lived there and they don't think much of Grant Wood. They think that he's commercialized.

IL: Some people feel that way?

Ringer: Yes. He drew a picture on one of my books once, and I destroyed it. Just imagine.

IL: If you still had it, you would be a rich lady.

Ringer: Yes. Who knows who is going to turn out?

IL: Do you remember when the movie houses came to town? Motion pictures?

Ringer: Yes, well yes. All the neighborhood kids used to go down together to one on Second Avenue there. You know where the old post office was. Back in that same block, there was one.

IL: Was that the Isis....or the Palace?

Ringer: Something like that. We used to go. We didn't go very often. My mother thought that we had plenty to do with our own neighbors.

IL: I was thinking about the area. The grocery store you said that you used was there on Fifth Avenue when you were a child?

Ringer: On Tenth Street and Fifth Avenue. It's still there, the building--Wilt's Grocery. We'd buy--a pennies worth of this and a pennies worth of that, until we'd spend our nickel.

IL: You weren't very far from downtown.

Ringer: No, not too far. It was a nice neighborhood then, but, oh, it's terrible now.

IL: Was Carl Van Vechten in school with you in Jackson?

Ringer: No, I think he went to Polk.

IL: Could be...and Marvin Cone?

Ringer: Oh, yes. Marvin Cone was in my class, too.

IL: That was a famous class. Lots of famous people in it.

Ringer: Yes, they were all pretty good people, but they were all devils when they were still in school.

IL: I wouldn't have liked to have been a teacher for them. What do you remember about, say the Fourth of July? Were there big celebrations on the Fourth of July?

Ringer: I never went to one. I remember one Fourth of July, though, it was so cold that we had to wear our winter coats and our mittens to shoot off firecrackers. I've got a picture of that and my dad standing out there. My dad was a railroad conductor.

IL: Then, you probably traveled on the railroads on passes?

Ringer: Yes, we did. I used to go to Miami every winter, about.

IL: You don't go down there any more?

Ringer: I never want to see it again. It's terrible down there. I have a friend who lives there who is a doctor. It's just terrible.

IL: Do you remember hearing stories about saloons and taverns?

Ringer: No, I don't know anything about them.

IL: When you were growing up, on Sundays, you went to Sunday School?

Ringer: Oh, yes, yes we did.

IL: Did you have family gatherings and things like that?

Ringer: There wasn't any of our family here. There was just my mother and father. They all lived up in the northern part of the state, near Minnesota. I had a break in our religion. My folks were all Methodists and the teacher I had I disliked. It was a personal thing. Every Sunday, we'd have a hassle. I wouldn't want to go. All the neighborhood kids went to Westminster. I went along with them once or twice, and then I wanted to go all the time. My mother and dad opposed it. She thought we ought to stay as a family in the Methodist. My dad said, "What was the difference. If she doesn't want to go, let her go where she wants to. The main thing is to go." So I got to go.

IL: You got to go to Westminster?

Ringer: Not in age, but in membership, I'm next to the oldest. Jim Yuill is the oldest one.

IL: That's another prominent name in Cedar Rapids.

Ringer: Yes, Yuill. His aunt, Miss Wright, was the principal at Jackson School all the time I went there, until the last year, and then Miss (she was Gertrude Ellwood's sister) Prescott was the principal. It got so bad that Miss Wright couldn't handle it any more. The kids were so rambunctious and Miss Prescott would settle their hash. I used to go see her every once in a while in her last years. We used to talk about the things that she put up with. They were devils!

IL: Do you remember the situation as far as the blacks were concerned--the colored people in Cedar Rapids? Would you ever

run into any bias or anything like that?

Ringer: I did. We didn't have any at Jackson School, except there was a restaurant down on First Street. The mother was white and the father was black. They were very respected citizens.

END OF SIDE ONE: BEGINNING OF SIDE TWO

They were considered good citizens. I don't believe that anybody objected to their presence. This family had boys and girls. I remember when we played out, whether they played with us or not, but I think they must have. Anyway, in the last twenty-five years, I used to have to make a trip--when the Rocket was still going to Minneapolis--I used to have to go about every four or five weeks to Minneapolis to straighten out my aunt's affairs. This porter on the train, I couldn't figure out whether he was black or white. He was always so attentive to me, see that I got my luggage off, here and there. He took excellent care. I couldn't figure it out. Well, about two years ago, here came out in the paper his picture. He'd retired. He was one of those kids who went to Jackson School. I figured that he must have remembered me.

IL: A good deed pays back.

Ringer: Most of the time. On the other side of it, the Douglasses when they lived in their house where Turner's, they had two colored girls who lived, Fern and Ida Martin, and they'd walk down Tenth Street after they got through, about six o'clock, to go home. We got in a fight with them oneday, the gang. Then we decided that we'd hurry up and get our dinner over

with in the evening, get up there and sit on the curbing to wait for Fern and Ida to go home. Then we'd have a fight. There wasn't any of the kids in our neighborhood who would go any place alone, down by their house. Our grocery store was down that way. If they had to get down there, they wouldn't go alone. The night that Quaker Oats burned, we thought that the fire was over on Fifth Avenue and we'd go. It was maybe about dinner time or shortly after. We went. It wasn't there and we'd go over another street. It wasn't there. IC Church used to be where the telephone office is. We got down to that corner and went to turn the corner and we ran up face to face with these two gals. They slapped us, and slapped us, and slapped us and pulled our hair! They just gave us a mauling over like you never had. Well, we got ourselves together after they left and went to the fire. That was such an immense thing, you know. We were so taken by it. We never thought about home. After a while, we got to thinking, well we'd better go home. We walked clear back home from Quaker Oats to where Mercy Hospital is. Nobody was in the neighborhood...not a soul was home. Everybody was at the fire. Then we got frightened. We didn't know what to do, whether to go back or to stay home. We decided on going back, so we went back. We were crying for our folks. We didn't know what to do and it looked like the whole world was going to burn up. Pretty soon we met one of the neighbors and she yanked us over and said, "Now you sit down on that porch and don't you move until I come back to get your mother." That was about midnight, all this was going on. The great big things were flying through the air--the fire, right

over your head. It was a frightening affair.

IL: Did you ever have to go to the hospital? Was it a good experience? Were your babies born at home? Did the doctor make house calls? Do you remember what it was like when you were sick when you were little? You were never sick?

Ringer: I wasn't very much. I do remember the mumps.

IL: I think we all remember those.

Ringer: I did everything to get Barbara. She's never had them. She had everything but the mumps. I took her where they had mumps and she didn't get them. Is your daughter grown and married?

IL: Yes, and she lives here in town. She has a son, John, 17.
Do you remember when the Clifton Hotel burned?

Ringer: Yes. My dad was coming in from a run to Minneapolis that night. He was late getting home. We didn't know the fire was going on. He, of course, stood and watched it. He saw that waitress jump from the top floor to the ground and was killed. Then we, of course, all got up and the sky was just like daylight. It was a terrible thing.

IL: Do you remember when Women's Suffrage?

Ringer: I don't remember anything about that.

IL: Prohibition, Roaring Twenties, none of that? The Great Depression?

Ringer: Oh, yes, I remember that.

IL: Were you caught in it?

Ringer: Yes, sure. We've had some disasters in our family from that.

We did have. The Essers from Rockford, Iowa. They were the president of the bank. They had a farm that had been homesteaded in the early days and had never been out of the family. The bank was closed and they lost their farm. Corn was ten cents a bushel. People who had the mortgage couldn't even pay the interest on that. It was terrible.

IL: Someone said that you built a lot of houses around Cedar Rapids. Have you built several?

Ringer: Who told you that?

IL: That was in the notes that were given to me.

Ringer: I built two.

IL: Where did you build them?

Ringer: One before we got married. It was 363 South Twentieth, between Bever and Washington. That's where I lived then. Then we sold it after the war and made quite a lot of money on it. We built one on Twenty-first Street between Park and Washington. We lived there a lot of years. Then we sold it and I didn't build any more. I didn't build any more. Helen Palmer used to live next door to your...

IL: Yes, I remember her. She was...

Ringer: She was one of my best friends.

IL: She was Mr. Palmer's daughter by his first wife.

Ringer: She was real nice to Helen and Helen wasn't nice to her.

IL: What did you say?

Ringer: Mrs. Palmer, the second one, Helen was never nice to her. Mrs. Palmer was so nice to Helen. She used to invite her friends over for dinner and they used to be nice. Helen would always have something spunky to say. I used to say, "Helen, you're wrong."

IL: Can you think of anything else that you'd like to say about the olden days of things that you remember?

Ringer: We've covered Grant Wood.

IL: Now, I don't want you to get too tired. I certainly think that this has been a good interview. I'm glad to get all of your memories down on tape.

Ringer: Grant Wood and Marvin Cone. There were a lot of successful people in that class. My pal, Clarice Marshall--there was a Goodyear-Marshall Publishing Company. Her father was the Marshall. He wrote arithmetics for schools. She was a United States District Attorney in Southern California, where she died.

IL: Was Dave Turner in your class?

Ringer: Oh, no, much older. His wife was my teacher. Virginia was a very good friend of mine--Virginia Turner. She was a lot younger, but she always has come to see me. She'll drop in about break-fast time on the second donut.

IL: Well, I certainly do thank you for letting me come and interview you.

Ringer: Well, you're welcome.

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

INTERVIEW WITH: HAZEL RINGER

CONDUCTED BY: INEZ LYON

DATE: AUGUST 28, 1984

PLACE: CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA

JUNIOR LEAGUE OF CEDAR RAPIDS ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

IL: It's August 28, 1984. This is a second interview with Hazel Ringer. This morning you started to tell me about your working with the Camp Fire board.

Ringer: Yes, I had a Camp Fire group at Westminster Church...Janet Coquillette and girls of that age. It was really a lovely group of girls. They were older ones. They were starting to talk about Hitaga at that time. So we decided that the group would work towards the fireplace. We picked up all the big stones with the help from some of the older members. We made enough money to help for the fireplace.

IL: When would that be?

Ringer: That would be about 1932, I believe, or 1933.

IL: The late twenties, maybe?

Ringer: No, I would say the early thirties. Miss Burr was the...

IL: Oh, yes, Altana, wasn't that her name?

Ringer: I think so. They wanted somebody with an active Camp Fire experience to be on the board. So they chose me. Then Louise Knapp and I--they wanted to raise some money to help. We had the city-wide Camp Fire donut sale. Each group took the orders and Louise and I supervised it. Colonial Bakery did that. Where was I?

IL: You and Louise were going to supervise.

Ringer: Well, we had another one and there was a lady down on Seventeenth Street. They wanted the job to make the donuts. Did we ever have one heck of a time getting enough donuts. They worked all night and all day. We had to fill all the orders, you know, but we made quite a little money at that. That was our end of it, of helping out there. I used to go out with a bunch of kids (I'd be afraid to do it now, to be out there alone with a bunch of young girls) and we used to go out and stay overnight and cook.

IL: Out at the camp?

Ringer: Yes. It was when the camping season was over.

IL: Oh, that was fun and I know the girls loved it, too.

Ringer: Yes, they did. All the girls could ask a friend--that made more.

IL: Were the cottages done yet or did you all stay in the lodge?

Ringer: We stayed in the lodge, slept there and cooked there and everything. It was fun back then. It wouldn't be now.

IL: Now, about your twenty-five years at the Gazette. When were those years? When were you there?

Ringer: My husband died in 1933. I went then, shortly afterwards. I was walking downtown one day when I met Vern Marshall. He says, "Hazel, what are you going to do? I understand that you've had terrific expenses at Rochester with Dave." Then, we didn't have

any benefits of any kind. We had a nice home up on Twenty-first Street. We had to sell it and we had to cash in our insurance in order to keep our bills paid. That went on for seven years.

IL: That was in 1933?

Ringer: From then on. No, before that. He died in 1933. Verne knew about it. I was in school with Verne and Jim. I knew both of them very well.

IL: Jim?

Ringer: Walsh. He says, "What are you going to do, Hazel?" I said, "Well, Vern, I've got to get a job." He says, "Well, you're qualified." He says, "If I can help you out any, be sure and let me know." I thanked him and went on. When I got home, I was home just a little while when Jim called me. He said, "Hazel, why don't you come down and talk to me?" I said, "Well, I'll be glad to." I went down and he had a vacancy and he wanted to know if I wanted it. He put me in above other girls who would be promoted to that, which made it rough for me to begin with. I was there for twenty-five years. I probably would have been there longer, but the man I worked for was Mr. Hammer. He got way up into his eighties and had to be retired. They hired a younger man, who was a bum if there ever was one. The first thing I knew, he was arrested for drunk driving. Then the next thing I knew was I caught on that he had a couple of lady friends out of town. One night he came up after I got home from the office, drunker than the Lord and he was going to stay all night. I said, "The heck you are! You're going to get out of here quick or I'm going

to call the police. I don't care if you're my boss or who you are. I don't have to work for you."

IL: And that's when you left the Gazette?

Ringer: No, that wasn't. So I told Jim about it. I said, "Do we have to be bothered at home with that kind of business? If it is, I don't want any part of it." He says, "No, I'll talk to him." So he talked to him and, of course, that didn't set too well. It was pretty bad for me after that. He wanted to get rid of me. The morals of the Gazette were very good when Mr. Miller was alive. Did you know John Miller?

IL: I just met him. I know his daughter very well. I know Jane very well. I play bridge with her and see her every week.

Ringer: Well, Jane's an awful nice girl. I knew her father and mother both quite well. When John Miller was there, there was no monkey-doodling around. He said, "They can do all they want when they're off duty, but when they're on, nothing doing." I know two fellows he fired because they were messing around with some other women.

IL: Well now, you were there when the Gazette got the Pulitzer. Wasn't that the Pulitzer Prize?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: You were there at that time. Wasn't that pretty exciting?

Ringer: No, not a bit for us. The most exciting time was when Verne Marshall wanted to be president--foreign wars. He just went

wild. He almost bankrupt the Gazette. Before that, he was always after some criminals. There was something going on in Sioux City that was crooked. I can't remember what it was.

IL: That's what he got the Pulitzer for. Was it the Pulitzer?
That's what he got that award for.

Ringer: Well, then we were threatened no end, Mr. Miller told me, by people who said what they were going to do to the Gazette. I sat on the streetside; right across from the library steps was a fellow sitting with a gun in his side. On the other side, the Presbyterian side, there was another guy over there. Verne didn't let his kids out of his sight, because they were threatened, too. When Claude would come after Verne, he'd have to take the whole pile of them up with him to get him. He didn't dare to leave them in the car. It was really serious, and we were in a little office back of the main office, and he told us, "Now, if anyone comes in here that looks strange to you, get out quick and don't think about the money or anything. We have lots of money in there. Just forget it and get out." We never had any trouble. They put extra wire on all the basement windows, everything was securely locked.

IL: That was all day?

Ringer: All day, yes, and all night, too, because they worked nights, you know.

IL: This was about 1940, '41, in there? That America First thing.

Ringer: Yes, it would be in the 1940's, sometime.

IL: Do you remember the girls who used to write the society page? Do you remember Frances Westerfield?

Ringer: Oh, yes, very well.

IL: She was in my class. Edith Knox?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: I see her often. Adeline Vavra?

Ringer: Yes, I knew her well. How sad she writes about being alone. I've seen in the paper about...

IL: Eddie?

Ringer: No, Adeline.

IL: Adeline's husband?

Ringer: Yes, John.

IL: Well, do you know what he does. One of the things he does, he loves to sing. He loves to sing and he goes to nursing homes and sings for the patients.

Ringer: Isn't that nice. He was so nice to his mother. She used to be my neighbor. They were such nice really Bohemian family. They were so close with John. John was a golfer and I can never understand why he got out of it.

IL: Maybe there wasn't any money in it.

Ringer: I don't think he needed any.

IL: You know, he has a rose garden.

Ringer: Yes, that's what I read about. The Gazette was fine when Verne Marshall was there. There was no monkey-doodling around. Or Jim Falks or John Miller.

IL: Do you remember when they would have "extras"? The special editions.

Ringer: Yes.

IL: Did you know Alex Fidler?

Ringer: Did I know him! He used to come in to me with a sack of money and he'd say (in the late afternoon), "I'm going out with the gang tonight and I suppose I'll spend all of this." I'd say, "Alex, you better let me have it until morning." "Well, I've got to have a little to spend." I said, "No, you don't. You've got some change." He'd have a big sack of money, about like this and finally I could talk him into letting me take care of it in the safe all night.

IL: He'd gotten it from his street sales?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: Didn't he sponsor a lot of boxers?

Ringer: He did more for those kids on the street. He'd buy them a nice warm coat or a cap with the ear laps on or mittens or whatever they needed and couldn't get it from home. He did more good than anybody I ever knew for kids.

IL: Were you at the Gazette when the Republican was still in operation?

Ringer: No. Your uncle was editor or owner of it.

IL: Luther Brewer.

Ringer: Yes, on Fourth Avenue. I faintly remember, I think it was McKinley, the President, passed through here on his train.

IL: I don't think it would be McKinley, because McKinley was built in about 1922.

Ringer: Well, they got off there and they spoke from this porch, from their porch.

IL: Wasn't that Taft?

Ringer: Maybe, I don't remember, but I do remember a President being there.

IL: I think that was Taft.

Ringer: Dr. Whelpley lived on one side and on the other side lived Johnsons. I think that they lived in that lovely house that was different. Their father was an architect.

IL: Do you remember Belle Bever?

Ringer: Yes. I sure do.

IL: She was with the Republican. Do you remember any of the stories about her?

Ringer: No, I don't, but I remember her very well. She lived on First Avenue.

IL: You mentioned Cyrenus Cole the other day when we were talking. Did you know him? He was the one who got your husband out of the Army.

Ringer: No, that was Jim Good.

IL: Didn't Cyrenus Cole talk to Jim Good? Wasn't that it?

Ringer: No. I talked to him. He was up to see her Dad, his brother-in-law, and he knew how it was getting me down. I was losing weight all the time because everybody was home and he was stuck with the Army of Occupation. I said, "Can't you get him out for me?" He said, "Well, I think that Dave would rather get out himself. I think it'll only be another month or so. If it's more than a month, you give me a letter." I did and I still have a copy of the telegram and a copy of the cablegram that he sent overseas in my bank box. It turns out right away quick the next day! He didn't know what happened to him.

IL: Do you remember watching them cut ice on the river?

Ringer: Just once. I used to skate a lot--my husband and I used to skate a lot and we watched them once. Boy, that was dirty ice.

IL: And to think that we had it in our refrigerators.

Ringer: Well, we had it in our iced tea and our ice glasses. It's a wonder we lived. That's the reason that I wonder sometimes all

these things about germs are really true...when we lived through all that.

IL: What is it you have--three pecks of dirt during your lifetime? We had two pecks of it then. What interesting things do you have in your book there?

Ringer: These are just some of the things that I thought about. My memory isn't as good. This says, "Milk, cat food, orange juice and eggs."

IL: That sounds like a grocery list.

Ringer: I'm afraid that I'll forget. Here it is. Well, we covered Camp Fire. McKinley School--there used to be a farm, they called it a farm, but it couldn't have been a very large one. The meanest man in Cedar Rapids lived there. His name was "old man" Barger. He and Chubble O'Meara (you know who Chubble O'Meara is)...

IL: The father of Bob O'Meara?

Ringer: Yes, Bob's father. We all played together all of our young lives. He and his mother were old. My mother used to say, "I have Chub O'Meara for breakfast, dinner and supper. I have to say, 'Go home, Chub!'" It's time to eat. Chub had a dog that the kids all liked. This "old man" Barta, he didn't like dogs or kids either. He was always doing something to Chub's dog. Finally, he killed it. He gave it a dose of poison. Then we did have it in for him. He used to shoot a gun--it must have been an air rifle--at us to scare us to death. We really beat it home quick.

IL: What did you do to him on Halloween? Anything?

Ringer: Oh, we didn't dare to go that far away from home. Our mother used to go out with us on Halloween. Then, that Mr. Surcey. You've seen pictures of cabs driven by horses. He had one of those where he sat up on top like you see in the movies.

IL: With a top hat?

Ringer: Yes. They were very aristocratic colored people. They didn't have anything to do with the black people. They went to church and they neighbored with the white people. She was a lady if there ever was one.

IL: What was their name?

Ringer: Surcey. I don't know how you spell it. They were an interesting figure around here. Then I was thinking about the old railroad station down there. When all these lovely trains would go through here, you couldn't find a seat in the depot proper. Everyone would be filled and a lot of times you would have to stand up to wait.

IL: I can smell that place to today! Can you smell it?

Ringer: No. It's so sad to me to think of them tearing down a place like that. They could have used it for something. I also felt the same way about Washington High School.

IL: I don't feel that way about Washington.

Ringer: Why?

IL: Oh, Hazel, those steps were all just like...

Ringer: I know they were. They were when I was there.

IL: And those wooden floors. Do you remember those wooden floors?
They weren't too smooth.

Ringer: Well, they can put new floors and steps in. That was such a
pretty building.

IL: It was an interesting one with those towers.

Ringer: Miss Abbott used to stand up in that window in her office and
watch to see if any of the kids stepped off the sidewalk in the
grass. If they did, they really got it! You didn't dare step
on the grass and look at it now. It was a beautiful place.

IL: I don't feel bad about that. I do feel bad about the station--
the railroad station. I think that something could have done
to that. I would have been fun. Do you notice any difference--
say sixty or seventy years ago--in families and the way that
they are today?

Ringer: Oh, yes. Don't you?

IL: Well, yes. I do.

Ringer: I've tried to be close and have the home the center. We used
to have more activities in the home. Now, like when I was
growing up, my mother'd say, "Invite all the kids here that
you want." My mother was a very good skater and she used to
go (My dad was out of town a lot.) and she'd meet us up at
Jackson School. My brother could invite a guest and I could

invite somebody to go, but they couldn't go unless they were supervised. My mother would take her skates and skate right with us.

IL: Where did you skate?

Ringer: Up to the slough.

IL: Up back of the hospital?

Ringer: Yes. They never skate there any more. Oh, that would be just black with kids...a lot of them from that bad end of town up there that would make a big whip, you know, and knock the little kids down. That's the reason that my mother would never let us go without she going and she went every opportunity she had. My husband and I skated a lot and we also skied.

IL: Do you notice any difference nowadays than in those days, the way the women are treated?

Ringer: Yes, I'll say.

IL: Do you. In what way?

Ringer: You know, they're treated just like another man would be, almost, because they're put on an equal basis. I don't think that that's the way it should be.

IL: Now, it wasn't that way when you were young?

Ringer: Oh, no. My mother would be right home and you can't go out and leave your children with someone else. When my husband died, my mother and father vacated their house and rented it and

came and stayed with us to raise Barb. Then, before they could get all the arrangements made, an aunt who was a widow came and stayed with Barb and I and looked after Barb. Now, they drop them off some place in the morning, pick them up at night. How does a kid know who's who and what's what? No wonder things are like they are. Now, Barb was a little devil. She was expelled from school twice before she was in the sixth grade.

IL: I'll bet her teachers hated to see her coming. I can't imagine that she was expelled!

Ringer: I knew the principal of Johnson School real well. One time when she called up, she was laughing. She said, "I'm going to send Barbara home with her books." She said, "I'm still laughing, but I had to set an example." She said, "She can come back tomorrow."

IL: I'm trying to think of the name of the principal.

Ringer: I am, too. She lived with Canfields. Oh, I know her so well and she used to come up and eat lunch with me once in awhile.

IL: I'll bet I was in school at the same time that Barbara was. We had to go to Johnson for a couple of years when they were building Buchanan. So I was probably there at the same time and should know that principal's name, but I don't.

Ringer: I do, but I can't think of it.

IL: Miss Thompson.

Ringer: Oh, yes, Laura Thompson. She was quite a character, too.
Oh, Barbara ran away and did everything under the sun that
you ever heard of. I thought I was losing my mind!

IL: What else is in your book? Any more anecdotes?

Ringer: No, I don't think so.

IL: Any more that you want to tell me about?

Ringer: Well, any more questions?

IL: A lot of these things we've already talked about on the last...

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Ringer: You think back over your life--and when we lived across from
Mercy Hospital when we were growing up, things were so dif-
ferent from now. I always went with a crowd that was Pauline
Amen and Bickels. We had a club all through high school. Miss
Rudd said that it was the most popular crowd that she ever had
of girls. We had lots of fun. I don't know how we did it.
We had a kitchen, a dining room, and a living room and a
parlour. My mother, in the wintertime, always shut the doors
of the parlour, and when Christmas would come, they would do
all the doings in there behind the doors. When they'd open the
doors, it'd be the tree covered with candles--real candles with
fire. Now, you know, you'd burn up the town!

IL: You really would. You'd get hauled into jail.

Ringer: Yes. We used to make our own fun. We didn't have to have all
these things on TV that they're talking about. I don't under-
stand. We'd enjoy the ice man when he'd come. We'd go out

and wait for him.

IL: Did you ever ride in the wagon?

Ringer: No, but the bakery man would come around in a covered-kind of van, only smaller. He had a coronet and he'd play a little tune. We'd all rush out and buy what we needed--bread, rolls and cakes and pies. The electric light man would come along and he'd wind down the electric thing in the street and put a new something in it.

IL: Mr. Matier.

Ringer: We'd wait for him and we'd pick up what he left. We were so busy playing games. We couldn't think about all of this rubbish that they think about now days. The parents are pushing them into everything so fast. They don't have time to think up some things to do that they want to do. I have a relative that lives way out on Fifth Avenue in an old banker's home. They have four small children. They're always thinking up things for them to do...take them to a miniature golf course, take them to this and that and the other thing, when they should be home inventing their own games. What are they going to use their brain for when they get older?

IL: They have to have a brain to work the computers.

Ringer: Yes. I'm scared of them.

IL: I'm going to Kirkwood to a class to learn about computers. I think it'll be kind of interesting.

Ringer: Oh, it definitely is.

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Ringer: Jim was gone and John Miller was gone or it never would have been that way. I couldn't take it after having worked before I was married and afterwards. A great many people knew me because I was at the Chamber of Commerce for years, for several years before I was married...then after I was married, during the war.

IL: What did you do?

Ringer: I was a bookkeeper up there.

IL: Where, at the Gazette?

Ringer: No, at the Chamber of Commerce.

IL: What did you do that you just retired from?

Ringer: Oh, I took charge of all the monies of the Circulation Department. That's all the money that comes in from the papers and all the paperboys.

IL: Now, this was the Gazette? You said that you worked until your late eighties. Were you still at the Gazette then?

Ringer: When this affair came up about the fellow wanting to stay all night, it was so miserable for me. I got ornery, too. I got out of there. Well, I thought I'd retire. I was pretty close to the age. I was in my early sixties. I found that I wouldn't take it and then I heard about a job. I went out to Canada Dry. I had always worked in a big office and I thought I'd

like to work in a one-horse operation. Well, there was a young man operating it. A bunch of fellows owned it from Peoria. I wasn't quite so smitten on the job. I didn't think I wanted it. He wanted me. Nell Rayman was living then.

IL: Oh, yes, I knew her.

Ringer: Yes, we were very much friends. Nell was a lovely person. Well anyway...

IL: You retired from the gingerale company?

Ringer: He persuaded me to come out and look over it. So I went out and I said, "No, I don't want this. I don't have to work absolutely. I've worked so much of the time that it's terrible not to be." When I was at the Gazette, the clubs that I belonged to arranged it so that I would have a day off. Then on my day off, I belonged to a sewing club with Bea Thomas.

IL: Bea has moved to Davenport--you knew that?

Ringer: No.

IL: Her son is there, you know. She got sick last spring and reached the point where her son and his wife were coming up here so often that they decided that it would be best if she went down there. So she lives down there now.

Ringer: Well, Mabel Ross called me a few weeks back.

IL: What you most recently retired from was the pop company?

Ringer: Well, I said, "I don't want any part of this. It's too complicated." You had to keep track of all the empty bottles

and all the full bottles and the whole caboodle all over town and all over the little towns around. I said, 'Life is too short!' A few days after that he came down and made me a better offer. He says, 'I've got to have you! You're the one I'm looking for.' I realized that afterwards. I said, 'Well, it seemed like such a big job. I could do it--learn a new set-up .' So I went and I worked it out.

IL: Was this Hlloway?

Ringer: No. They were 7-Up, weren't they?

IL: I don't know.

Ringer: Well, he wanted me then after that. Well, any way, I stayed. This young man needed a lot of help because it was his first full-time job and I was used to being almost the head of the department and I could handle this. We had men to deal with and I was the only one in the office, which I liked. I never had that experience. I always was in a big office. Well, he finally decided that he didn't want to stay here. He was from Texas and he went back. I stayed on and we got a new guy. I didn't like him. Oh, I was about six weeks getting rid of that job. They'd come once and look at it and they didn't want any part of it. Finally, I got rid of it! Then some more people bought it out--some new people--and one day I was retired and real satisfied with it and kind of getting used to it again. A telephone call came and she said, 'Oh, are you Mrs. Ringer? I'm in so much trouble! Would you come down some day and help me?' I said, 'Well, what's your trouble?'

She says, "Well, I never knew how to keep books and I'm keeping the books and my husband is doing the other part and he doesn't know the other part. We're having troubles!" I said, "What in the heck did you buy a blame thing like that when neither of you knew anything about it?" So, I went out. I said, "I'll come out and look over and see what's the trouble." Well, you know you have charge accounts and all the money that comes in on the accounts, she'd put in the cash drawer and ring it up. Then they had to decipher who all had paid.

IL: Is that the company that you stayed with until you retired?

Ringer: Yes.

IL: What company was it?

Ringer: Canada Dry. Their daughter got married not long ago. I just got a letter from her today. I said, "Your name should have been Canada Dry because her mother always kept the books and she always--Ann, from a little baby, was out there."

IL: Well, I think that we've just about talked ourselves out, don't you?

Ringer: Now, don't you get home and think you've got another one!

IL: I can't think of another question. Can you think of anything else that you'd like to say.

Ringer: Oh, I wouldn't like to say any of it!

IL: Well, you've done a real good job and it's been lots of fun visiting with you.