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Transcription of veterans tape from Madison Public Library.
Ruth Loring interviewed by Rachel Ward
Transcribed by Mary H. Meier

Rachel: Today is Dec. 2, 1984, and I'm Rachel Ward, the interviewer. I am interviewing Ruth Loring in Center Ossipee on her work in the Office of Price Administration. Ruth, I was interested in your work in Center Ossipee on the Ration Board. Can you tell us how you started, how you got the job, where you began and the things you did?

Ruth: Well, I was one of the lower clerks' ratings when I first went in. I think it was a Class Five, or something like that. I did all the typing and worked for each of the members of the different boards which they had when they were distributing tires, gasoline, kerosene, processed foods and shoes. Each board was required to meet to review the applications. I had to check the applications and process them. The Tire Board had an allotment of tires that it was allowed each month to give out. Passenger cars were on the bottom of the list. Ordinary people wouldn't be able to get tires. Sometimes the Board had what was called "recaps." That's what the ordinary citizen got. But if you were an official and had to do a lot of traveling you would be entitled to two tires a year, I think, so that the same people wouldn't get more tires than somebody else. But the truck tires were saved for those people who were in the lumbering business. They needed tires because they had to carry lumber down. There were some people from here who carried lumber down to the shipyards in Massachusetts. They were high priority. And if you worked for Park & Young you were on the high priority list. Then, the gasoline was issued in different types of coupons. There were A coupons, B coupons and C coupons. An A Coupon book was issued to every car owner and he was allowed a very small amount of gasoline. The A stamp would give you five gallons of gas. I think you could have five weeks on one A stamp. Then the B stamps were issued to the people who were traveling on official business. The C stamps were issued to people who had trucks who had to drive long distances to work. Say from here to Portland to work in the shipyard

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there. And then they drove from here to Portsmouth to work in the shipyard there. Many of them couldn't find housing down there, so they traveled back and forth.

Rachel: Were there any buses that went from here?

Ruth: We didn't have any common bus lines at the time. We didn't have any from here that would get them down there. And the train didn't take them down there either, so they had to drive. But they did do carpooling. There was kerosene rationing. Fuel oil for those who had furnaces. Oil for lamps and farm use. These (stamps?) were issued every three months. And gasoline was issued every three months. So applications were reviewed every three months. The processed foods had red stamps for meat. There were also tokens. Red ones for meat, blue ones for food. So many coupons would give you a can of corn or a can of fruit. Sugar was rationed. Each family has a ration book. I think each family member had a ration book. The stamps were supposed to last for six weeks. Five pounds of sugar for each stamp. On top of that they could apply in the summer time to put up fruit and there were recipes which we had at our office which would save you sugar stamps so you could use less sugar. The original sugar stamps and the processed food stamps were issued at the school houses. People had to come in to register. They had to say how sugar or processed foods they had on hand. Most everyone, of course, said they didn't have anything. They didn't declare anything. After this work was taken out of the school it was put into the regular office. Shoes were also rationed. I can't remember now how many pairs of shoes you could have. I think it was two pairs a year for each person. This was a hardship for some of the children because their feet would grow. Their shoes weren't worn out but they had to get another pair of shoes. Sometimes Mother had to give up her shoe stamps for some of the children whose feet were growing fast.

Rachel: Were cigarettes rationed? I know they were very scarce. I know

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there weren't many around.

Ruth: I think they rationed them through demand.

Rachel: Oh, in the stores themselves. I know you couldn't get them.

Ruth: I don't recall ever issuing any stamps for cigarettes. I worked in the office here, which was located in the court house.

Rachel: Is that where the Draft Board was?

Ruth: No, the Draft Board was down in the other building, down where the telephone office was --- in the other side of the telephone office. The office I worked in was located where the convenience grocery is now. We had two rooms in the back. The room in the front had the big safe in it. We had to lock up the coupons every night. We also locked up our books so that in case of any robbery we would still have our our information. Charles Maloon (sp?) was the chief clerk that I worked under when I first came. When he retired I was given the job of chief clerk. Some of the other clerks who worked under me were Greta Dow and Priscilla Grant and Thelma Watson at that time. I was also transferred to the Lincoln office one summer to fill in for a man who had an operation. At that time I lived at home because the office wasn't too far from my home. I also worked in Franklin, N.H. That was a larger board than this one so I was given tires and gasoline. I was that clerk for that part of the Board. After the offices were closed all around the state, everything was transferred to the Concord office and I was assigned to the food distribution center as an administrative clerk. I was the assistant administrator for the state office. Hotels and all of the institutional camps and eating places also had to apply to the rationing boards for their allotments of food that they could serve. All of these records were transferred from each board to the state office and one of my first duties was to get these records all compiled so that when somebody called up we could find their records. The records were piled in boxes most of the time until we could get enough files to put them in.

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Rachel: For commercial use was their rate of sugar use different?

Ruth: Yes, they would have to tell how many customers they had and then we had a formula that we had to work out. It was so many points. I think it would be like .043 or something like that for processed foods. And then they would have so many pounds of sugar using the same figure for service.

Rachel: Did the busses that took people to the shipyards like Portsmouth or Portland get their gas from the same office?

Ruth: No, they got their gas from this office here if they lived in Ossipee. But I think the bus that took the people to Portsmouth was one from Conway. This district included the towns of Tamworth, Effingham, Freedom, Wakefield, Ossipee. This board controlled the whole of that area.

Rachel: So how many ration boards would there be in one county?

Ruth: I don't know. There was one in Wolfeboro, there was one in Conway. I think there were three in Carroll County. The Wolfeboro Board took care of Tuftonboro, Wolfeboro, Alton.

Rachel: Maybe New Durham.

Ruth: No, Durham is part of Stafford County. Another job I had to do was to go around to the stores with a set of questions. There were price freezes on all goods and every month I had to go to all the stores in the area and take down every price they had on their produce. If it was more than they were supposed to be charging I had to write this down and report it to the Concord office. Many times it was quite difficult because I didn't realize how many sizes there were to oranges and grapefruit and so forth. So it was quite difficult to decide. I don't think many people charged more than they should have. They didn't mean to do it. It might have been an oversight or they might have had material on hand and they hadn't changed the price when I came around because sometimes the little stores didn't order produce but every two or three months. The price might have changed in the time between purchase and display. Now this little store up here, Charles Wiggins'

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store, didn't want to take care of this stuff, so he closed his store. My father-in-law did the same thing. He didn't want to handle any sugar or anything that was rationed. So he closed his store. Many of the small stores did. But there was one little store up in South Tamworth. It was Mason's store. He was always very careful about anything that he put on the list and if he wasn't sure of the price he would call me up and find out.

Rachel: Did you have listings of appliances too and things of that nature?

Ruth: No. The only way they were rationed was demand. All the stores tried to get things in that they could, but the shelves were bare most of the time. You put your name on a list for a refrigerator or a washing machine. I know my name was on a list for around two years and a half for a refrigerator and I had to buy an icebox and use ice until I could get a refrigerator. I got it through Frigidaire dealer down in Boston. They took it off some list down there, said they sold it to some store and shipped it up here for Brocky. When Brocky saw the refrigerator and couldn't sell it because he had people on his list. They(?) said we were the ones who were going to buy it. A friend of the family was doing it.

Rachel: I remember about clothing. You couldn't buy any nylon hose or anything because they were making parachutes. We wore something called "leg makeup." Remember that?

Ruth: Yup.

Rachel: It was like a cosmetic. You smeared it on and hoped it was going to look like stockings.

Ruth: You couldn't cross your legs.

Rachel: If you crossed your legs it would smear and get all over you. That was funny. It seems as though we used that quite a while.

Ruth: We had rayon stockings for a while instead of silk or nylon. When I was working in Franklin. Sellaways (sp?) had a stocking factory

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there. They made hosiery. We would go down and get the rejects. That's how I managed.

Rachel: I remember there was no elastic in underpants. You had to have a button. There was no rubber to be found so they used just plain tape with no rubber in it, no elastic.

Ruth: That's right.

Rachel: I remember I had those fluffy cotton slips. Those had buttons too because there was no elastic on their tops.

Ruth: That's right.

Rachel: My family knitted a lot. We made a lot of sweaters, I remember. There was more knitting going on than any time I remember.

Ruth: I also remember that during the war the Red Cross made up bandages. They had to be folded. We would meet I think two nights a week, I think it was, I think at the library downstairs.

Rachel: To do that?

Ruth: To do that.

Rachel: What did you use for materials?

Ruth: The American Red Cross furnished the gauze and the pads and we had to cut them up to certain sizes. They came in great big rolls. Some of the women would do the cutting and some liked to do the folding. After they were folded they had to be put in boxes and counted and wrapped. The Red Cross would pick them up I think every two or three weeks. Some one would come around and pick up the boxes.

Rachel: I was trying to think of any differences in merchandise. It seems to me no rubber boots were made during the War. Do you remember that?

Ruth: We didn't have rubber boots. We had what was called "leathertops." They had rubber soles in the foot and then the top part was leather.

Rachel: Because the rubber was all going for war work.

Ruth: Right. There were a lot of leather boots. They were all leather. If you were working in construction the steel toed boot came into use at that time. Many men were in the shipyard and needed foot protection.

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Also, there were safety clogs workers had to wear and safety goggles.

Rachel: I know a lot of people were trained to be welders at that time.

It seemed that everybody on every street corner knew how to weld.

Before the war it wasn't heard of. Nobody did it.

Ruth: My brother-in-law Melvin learned the welding trade down in Portland and he worked there.

Rachel: Was the school lunch program under the ration board too?

Ruth: There wasn't any school lunch program. The schools didn't have any. Everyone brought a paper bag lunch.

Rachel: No hot lunch program whatsoever?

Ruth: No hot lunches.

Rachel: I didn't realize that.

Ruth: Maybe in the larger schools. Here in Ossipee all the grammar school and high school children were in the same building. So all the children ate in their home rooms.

Rachel: Did your office have anything to do with those savings bonds and savings stamps that children bought in school.

Ruth: No, I think the bank took care of that. A think a bank representative came to the school once a week.

Rachel: I remember we were encouraged to save. That was stressed because if you saved money you were doing your part for defense even if you weren't very old. If you had a quarter and you bought a stamp with it instead of buying candy or such you were supposedly very patriotic. It really worked well teaching children thrift. I can remember how proud I was that I had so many stamps in my book. And I remember helping plant a Victory Garden too. So some of your sugar was to encourage gardening.

Ruth: That's right. That's why we had the recipes. The County extension office would furnish us the recipes. We would request so many copies. Of course at that time the Government Printing Office wasn't printing too many, so we only passed them out to the people who had large

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gardens because they would need the recipes. In those days there were a few freezers but not very many.

Rachel: I remember my mother had a hard time getting guard rings. And when they came they had no tabs on them because that used less rubber.

Ruth: Some were preprocessed rings and your jar ring wasn't as good. You to pull it over the tops as well as you could with a regular rubber ring.

Rachel: I remember how glad my mother was she she saw those ones with the big tab again. They were such a blessing.

Ruth: And you could split open the big tab ones and open the jar rather than have a jar opener. I have a regular jar opener that they used. It has a wire band around the top. You put it over the jar and you pulled on the handle. On the end of the handle was a little knife edge. Many I time I've seen people take a sharp knife to open the jar. It was so dangerous.

Rachel: I'm trying to think of what else was different.

Ruth: You couldn't get a new car during the war. Many of the cars were patched together.

Rachel: I remember servicemen were the first ones to get cars when they did come on the market again. If you were a serviceman you could get one quicker.

Ruth: If you were a serviceman and came home on leave the Ration Board would issue you a permit to buy ten gallons of gas. We had a special form for them to fill out, so the family wouldn't have to use up their A stamps while the serviceman was home. I think there were a lot of local activities too so that people could walk to them.

Rachel: I remember walking a lot. We walked for recreation. We walked to roller skate. We spent as much time walking as skating.

Ruth: There was basketball and baseball games. Those were very popular. They'd get up teams in town. There weren't many boys who were physically fit to play because those who were physically fit were in the service. A lot of fathers who hadn't played for a long time would

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go out. There were father-and-son teams that would play from one town to the next on Sunday afternoons.

Rachel: Your board must have heard a lot of talk. This project is curious about the social treatment of conscientious objectors or 4-F. My brother was 4-F. In our town he was the last boy in his high school class because all the others had dropped out to go to war. He wouldn't go to his graduation because he was so ashamed of being the only boy. He said he wouldn't be the only one to walk into the program. He didn't want to. So my mother didn't make him because he was lame. He couldn't be in the service and she said she wasn't going to hurt his feelings any more by making him go when he didn't want to. I never knew anyone who was a conscientious objector, but I understand there were some who said they wouldn't go, but I don't remember in our town anyone doing that. I guess there were some, but I didn't know anyone.

Ruth: I remember Rev. Windmiller (sp?) when he came. He was a conscientious objector at one time. He said that when he was young he didn't just didn't feel that he wanted to go to war. But when he left here he did go into the service as a chaplain.

Rachel: Oh, so did Mr. Potter.

Ruth: I think it changed his mind after he got into the ministry. He was a conscientious objector before he got into the ministry.