

Interview: Ralph Mohlenkamp, Edward Probst, and Haynes Thompson

Interviewed and Transcribed by Carolyn Simpson, 24 June 1982

Edited and Researched by Karin Page

Simpson: ... Eddie Probst home on Wilmington Pike, near Aurora, Manchester Township, Dearborn County. The first interview will be with Haynes Thompson.¹ Haynes, you want to tell me the time and place of birth?

Thompson: 1905, Moore Street, Aurora, Indiana.²

Simpson: Tell me about your family.

Thompson: Well, I don't have much of a family. My mother died when I was 15 months old. A lady took me to raise me - her name was Lydia Marshall - Spangler Marshall.

Simpson: Was she related to you?

Thompson: In no way - no way. She had a son nine years younger than I was. I lived there for about 45 years. And then I went out to Dillsboro and stayed there a few days with her. When I came back, I started myself a flower shop - about 1946.³

Simpson: What was the name of your flower shop?

Thompson: Thompson's Florist.⁴

Simpson: Where was that located?

Thompson: On Fourth Street, 424 Fourth Street, Aurora. I was in that for 20 years.

Simpson: Where did you attend school and what schools did you go to?

¹ Robinson's 1982 Lawrenceburg & Aurora City Directory, Robinson Directories, Inc., Hillsdale, Michigan, (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 10 Nov 2021); Aurora City Alpha - 45, entry for Thomason, Hayes, 426 Fourth St. retired Mrs. Leah M. retired.

² Dearborn County Obituaries, database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 8 Dec 2021); citing Journal Press 3 Jan 1995 and DC Register 5 Jan 1995; entry for Thompson, Haynes, 89 years old. Haynes was born 17 Feb 1905 according to his headstone. (*Find A Grave* (www.findagrave.com : accessed 10 Nov 2021), memorial page 20839903, created by Pete Nocks; Haynes Thompson (1905-1994), citing River View Cemetery, Aurora, Dearborn, Indiana.)

³ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 10 Dec 2021); citing Journal Press 3 Jan 1995 and DC Register 5 Jan 1995; entry for Thompson, Haynes, 89 years old.

⁴ The Southern Indiana Telephone Company, Inc. Telephone Directory for Lawrenceburg-Aurora-Dillsboro-Guilford-Mt. Sinai-Moores Hill, Aurora, IN, Classified Telephone Directory p. 19 Thompson Florist, 424 - 4th St. Aurora; (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

Thompson: I went to the Aurora School and went to the eighth grade only.

Simpson: Could you tell me what a school day was like, say when you were 10 years old? What would a school day be like for you?

Thompson: Reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Simpson: Did you have any favorite teachers?

Thompson: Emeline Kerr.⁵

Simpson: Why?

Thompson: She was a great woman, that's all.

Simpson: O.K. What did you do before school - like in the morning?

Thompson: In the morning - carry out the ashes and carry in the coal, in the wintertime.

Simpson: What kind of breakfast did you get?

Thompson: Oh, good breakfast. Bacon and eggs. We had good food all the way through. Nothing fancy but good.

Simpson: Did you go home for lunch?

Thompson: All the kids went home for lunch in those days. Either that or you carried it. But I would get out of school about 11:00 and go pick up a dinner bucket to go to Ralph Mohlenkamp's uncle, Johnny Green.⁶ That's the old cooper shop in Aurora. That's on Exporting Street.

Simpson: What did they do in the cooper shop?

Thompson: Make barrels.

Simpson: What did you do after school, then? Or was your school over at 11:30?

⁵ Inter-State Directory Company's Directory of Lawrenceburg and Dearborn County for the Year 1908, p. 196 Kerr, Emeline and Rachel, Centre Twp., Aurora, 59 a. Aurora; (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

⁶ Robinson's 1982 Lawrenceburg & Aurora City Directory, Robinson Directories, Inc., Hillsdale, Michigan, (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021); Aurora City Alpha - 18, entry for Green, John F. 120 West Conwell St. Aurora – Alton Packaging.

Thompson: No. School was out about three in the afternoon. Then I would go home to work, most of the time. Until I was about 15 or 16 years old. I would run the peanut wagon corner, down on Second and Main.

Simpson: What's a peanut wagon?

Thompson: Peanuts and popcorn! Didn't you ever see a peanut wagon?

Simpson: Yeah.

Thompson: That's what I run down there.

Simpson: At the ballpark in Cincinnati - something like that?

Thompson: No. This was on the corner of Second and Main in Aurora. Owned by Jacob Trulock who ran a hotel right across the street there.

Simpson: Then?

Thompson: I would do that until about 11 o'clock, go home and go to bed and then start all over the next day. Finally, I got to working in the hotel where they were serving meals, and I got to wash dishes for my food. Where did I go after that?

Mohlenkamp: How about the old tobacco barn? What was the - I don't know the name of that.

Thompson: I went to work at the tobacco barn.

Simpson: Where was this?

Thompson: It was where Tandy's clothing is right now.

Mohlenkamp: Bridgeway and Exporting.

Thompson: Then I went to what they called the "Old Wooden Shoe" - down on Decatur Street. I worked there for quite a long time.

Simpson: What did you do there?

Thompson: Oh, everything. I run a spray gun, sand...

Simpson: What did they make?

Thompson: Furniture – good furniture. I mean good furniture. From there I went into business working for Ben Schusterman, clothing store.⁷ Worked for him for quite a while and finally bought part of that one.

Simpson: Where was that?

Thompson: It was on Second Street, in Aurora.

Mohlenkamp: 331.

Thompson: Right next door to Ralph.

Simpson: O.K. Now ...

Thompson: From that, I went into – worked for Sol Vigran⁸ for four or five years.

Simpson: What was that?

Thompson: General merchandise - ten cent store.

Simpson: When did you start your floral shop?

Thompson: Right after that.

Simpson: Tell me about your courtship. Who did you marry and when?

Thompson: Well, I courted one woman all my life - Leah Watson.⁹

Simpson: How long did you date Leah?

Thompson: Fifty years.

⁷ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Journal Press 18 Jul 1978; entry for Ben Schusterman, d. 1 Jul 1978.

⁸ "Mr. [Harry] Vigran owned a store in Aurora previous to 1918 in the Neff building, on Second Street, which is now occupied by Joe Chrisman. He sold out in 1918 to his brother S. Vigran, and bought the variety store in Richmond." (Source: "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 10 Dec 2021); citing Journal Press 11 Apr 1968 obituary for Rose Vigran d. 1 Apr 1968.)

⁹ Leah was born 25 Jan 1906 and died 8 Jan 1985. (*Find A Grave* (www.findagrave.com : accessed 8 Dec 2021), memorial page 20718558, created by Pete Nocks; Leah M. Thompson (1906-1985), citing River View Cemetery, Aurora, Dearborn, Indiana.)

Simpson: Did you stay romantic the whole time?

Thompson: I still am.

Simpson: That's good - it may be a mistake to rush into marriage here.

Thompson: Well, there's reasons for it. She was a very ill girl. I couldn't even afford her pills let along keeping her. Her father could, so...

Simpson: O.K. Do you remember your first car?

Thompson: Yes, I do. 1916 brass radiator Ford touring car.

Simpson: There was a pretty one, I thought, at the car show down here.

Thompson: Wish I had one.

Mohlenkamp: Yeah, you'd have some money now, wouldn't you? I had a 16, 17, 19, 23. Then I went to Chevrolet.

Simpson: Where did you buy your Ford?

Thompson: I don't know.

Simpson: Was there an agency?

Thompson: Yeah, there was an agency here. I bought a used one.

Simpson: Now, about military service?

Thompson: None.

Simpson: None. O.K. Now, we're through your jobs and cars. Now I think we'll see what Ralph remembers about his childhood.

Mohlenkamp: Oh, boy! O.K.

Thompson: You remember when we had typhoid fever?¹⁰

¹⁰ Typhoid fever transmitted by contaminated food and water. Symptoms include prolonged fever, nausea,
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Mohlenkamp: Oh, yes. Bill and Haynes had typhoid fever and they did everything but die! I tell you them two guys were as sick as anybody I ever saw in my life.

Thompson: I had typhoid fever. And had to lay around about five weeks. Had a relapse for another three months.

Simpson: How did you get it? Was it mosquitoes?

Thompson: No. Water.

Simpson: Was it common?

Mohlenkamp: Well, they sure had it, I'll tell you that.

Thompson: I weighed 170 pounds. And when I got better, I weighed 110.

Simpson: What age were you?

Mohlenkamp: Young - real young. Bill was ... that was back in the 30's. Don't know what year it was.

Thompson: I was still with Schusterman then. I remember the day I had to go home. I was shortening the sleeves for somebody's coat. Had to quit in the middle of that. Went home and laid down and didn't know anything for about five weeks.

Simpson: So, you were a young man. Old enough to be at work?

Thompson: Oh, yeah.

Mohlenkamp: Was Bill still at school?

Thompson: I think he was. Well, I don't remember.

Simpson: Ralph, what year were you born and where did your family live at the time?

Mohlenkamp: Born January 27, 1917 - born on John Street in Aurora.¹¹

headache, vomiting, abdominal pain, rashes, diarrhea, loss of appetite. "...in the 1930s, particularly in rural and poor communities...65 percent of typhoid outbreaks in the United States ... occurred in cities with a population of less than 5,000 people." (Van Dijck, Andreas. "Journeys into the Past," Miami University (www.miamioh.edu) : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

¹¹ Ralph Mohlenkamp born Jan 1917 died 27 Dec 2000 (*Find A Grave* (www.findagrave.com) : accessed 8 Dec 2021), memorial page 20874653, created by Pete Nocks; Ralph Mohlenkamp (1917-2000), citing River View ©2021 Lawrenceburg Public Library District

Simpson: What do you remember about John Street then?

Mohlenkamp: John Street was predominantly German people. And they were all home owners - most of them were. They really were.

Thompson: They took pride in their homes.

Mohlenkamp: I tell you, it was a wonderful place to live down there, it really was. You could leave your house unlocked. Nobody bothered anything.

Simpson: What did your father do?

Mohlenkamp: My daddy was an upholsterer by trade. He worked at the Indianapolis Chair and Furniture Company for 35 years.¹² I graduated from Aurora High School.

Simpson: Did your mother work outside the home?

Mohlenkamp: No, ma'am. No, ma'am.

Simpson: What did she do?

Mohlenkamp: My mother was a housemother. She was always home. When we went home, my mother was home when we went home - with one exception. One day, I broke my arm, and, of all things, mother was gone. I never will forget that - the longest day I live. But she was always home.

Simpson: Did you have brothers or sisters?

Mohlenkamp: I had one brother.

Simpson: What was his name?

Mohlenkamp: Eugene - he was 18 months younger than me.¹³

Simpson: Where did you go to school?

Cemetery, Aurora, Dearborn, Indiana.)

¹² Indianapolis Chari Co Inc. 315 Importing St. Aurora. (The Southern Indiana Telephone Company, Inc. Telephone Directory for Lawrenceburg-Aurora-Dillsboro-Guilford-Mt. Sinai-Moores Hill, Aurora, IN, Classified Telephone Directory p. 22 Indianapolis Chair Co Inc 315 Importing St. Aurora; (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

¹³ Dearborn County Obituaries, database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 8 Dec 2021); citing Register 29 Nov 1973; entry for Mohlenkamp, Eugne C. d. 1 Nov 1973.)

Mohlenkamp: Aurora High School - graduated in 1936.

Simpson: What was happening in the world, then, in 1936?

Mohlenkamp: 1936 - well, I tell you. Well, I tell you what really happened in 1937. Business wasn't too good in 1936, pretty rugged. And the first job I ever had, I went to work for Speckman Brothers in Aurora,¹⁴ and never asked them how much pay I was going to get. And, of all things, I worked ten hours a day, six days a week, and went and got my pay and they give me \$7.00. When I went home and told my Mom. I said, "Mom, they only paid me \$7.00. "Well," she said, "You know, Ralph, you don't have to work." And, begorry, I took her up on it. Monday morning rolled around, I never even went up. Well, and, of all things, I was still in bed at 9 o'clock the morning. And here a guy knocked on the door and you can imagine what he thought of me still in bed at 9 o'clock in the morning. Well, anyway, he wanted to talk to me, and mother told him I was in bed. "Well," he said, "tell you what you do. Have him go up to the store to see me." Here it was Robert Johnston - Robert L. Johnston - and, you know, I went.¹⁵ Heck, I got up out of bed and walked up there. And so, the next day, I went to work for Robert at \$12.50 a week. He was in the appliance business. They had appliances, refrigerators, Delco light plants.

Simpson: Was that Johnston Gambles then?

Mohlenkamp: Right, right. And I went to work for old Robert for \$12.50 a week.

Simpson: That was after you graduated?

Mohlenkamp: Right, and I also went to Salmon P. Chase College of Commerce, too.

Simpson: Where was that at?

Mohlenkamp: Cincinnati.

Simpson: And what do you remember about your school days?

Mohlenkamp: Well, I tell you. There was a lady - we went to Southside School. One lady always greeted us every morning, Mrs. Klingelhofer.¹⁶ I'll never forget her. And she had a

¹⁴ Speckman Bros Garage 206 3rd St. Aurora (The Southern Indiana Telephone Company, Inc. Telephone Directory for Lawrenceburg-Aurora-Dillsboro-Guilford-Mt. Sinai-Moores Hill; p. 12 Speckman Bros Garage 206 3rd St. Aurora; (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

¹⁵ Johnston Go Robt L. elec appl 333 2nd Aurora (The Southern Indiana Telephone Company, Inc. Telephone Directory for Lawrenceburg-Aurora-Dillsboro-Guilford-Mt. Sinai-Moores Hill; p. 6 Johnston Co Robt L elec appl 333 2nd St. Aurora; (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

¹⁶ Irene Klingelhofer d. 1984 buried in River View Cemetery, Aurora, IN. (Source: "Irene Klingelhofer," database ©2021 Lawrenceburg Public Library District

boy, and his name was Ralph.¹⁷ And for some reason or other, she always brightened up whenever she seen me. And incidentally, she is still living - Irene is - in a nursing home. Anyway, her boy got to the fifth grade and then he died. And she lost her boy in the fifth grade. When you went to school, you went up the sidewalk. And there Irene's house was right there. And every morning, Irene was there to watch the kids go by. She would holler at them and have a big time every morning.

Simpson: She wasn't a teacher?

Mohlenkamp: No, just real close to the school. As far as school teachers are concerned, I don't know. I really only had one I had a problem with, and I won't mention the name. Other than that, I think I got along with all of them. And Jeannette Baker, she was the most outspoken one of all the ones I had.¹⁸

Thompson: Best teacher.

Mohlenkamp: I never had no trouble with any of the school teachers, actually.

Simpson: Did your teachers - like in grade school - were you in separate classes, first grade, second grade. And you weren't like the one room school concept here in those days?

Mohlenkamp: That was before our time. When we had music, we would go to another room. Southside school only went to seventh grade. When we went to 8th grade, we had to go to North school.

Simpson: Where was the North School?

Thompson: Right where they call middle school now.

Mohlenkamp: Now, wait a minute. It wouldn't be there. Right there on Washington Street.

Thompson: It's torn down, see. The one they have now is still called the middle school.

Simpson: What about your courtship?

Lawrenceburg Public Library Obituaries (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 18 Nov 2021).

¹⁷ Ralph Williams Klingelhoffer b. 1914 d. 1926 (Source: "Ralph Williams Klingelhoffer," database with images Find A Grave (www.findagrave.com : accessed 18 Nov 2021) Ralph Williams Klingelhoffer memorial id: 19187342.)

¹⁸ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Journal Press 4 Jun 1974; Jeannette Baker b. 31 Dec 1885 d. 1 Jun 1974.

Mohlenkamp: Yeah. I got married in 1940. I married Dorothy Hallfarth.¹⁹

Simpson: Where was Dorothy from?

Mohlenkamp: Aurora. 112 Railroad Avenue. And her and I, we lived there for 28 years. So she spent over 50 years in that house. Yeah, that's it, absolutely.

Thompson: I swept many a room in that. My grandfather was -

Mohlenkamp: I remember when I went to high school. He was there.

Thompson: He was the janitor over there - Uncle Billy Thompson. And there was a little house alongside where they lived along there ...

Simpson: Do you have children, Ralph?

Mohlenkamp: I have one step-son, ma'am. William.

Simpson: Did you serve in the military?

Mohlenkamp: No, ma'am.

Simpson: What about your jobs?

Mohlenkamp: I ran a filling station for about a year. That wasn't very good.

Thompson: Where was that?

Mohlenkamp: Right where ... at one time ... that was a mistake.

Simpson: Why wasn't it good?

Mohlenkamp: I went to work for Harry during high school, worked for him on Saturday and during nights whenever he wanted off. And I did, no kidding. Things weren't too good. That was in 1935, 1934 or 1935. And Ed Powell, never will forget Ed Powell, got a brand new Harley-Davidson motorcycle, and that was really something! Hardly anyone got a motorcycle in those days. And he would let me ride that thing. Had a big time on that thing.

¹⁹ Walter Harris Hallfarth was the brother of Dorothy Mohlenkamp. (Source: "Walter Harris Hallfarth," database Lawrenceburg Public Library Obituaries (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 18 Nov 2021).

Simpson: Were Harley-Davidson's as powerful as they are now?

Mohlenkamp: Well, Harley-Davidson was a 74, ma'am. That was a big one, a beautiful thing. This was yellow and kinda brown.

Simpson: What was your first car?

Mohlenkamp: My first car? My parents' first car was a 1924 Ford. And I was seven years old when I learned to drive that car. My mother and daddy didn't have no garage. So, they kept it next door because the people didn't have a car. Well, we would go to church on Sunday morning, we had to come out of an alley. So, I had been watching my dad how to work the pedals on it, never driven one in my life. I said, "Dad, I'm going over to get the car." So, this Sunday morning I got dressed before everybody going to church and said, "Dad, I'll go over and get the car." Well, he didn't realize what I had said. Great day in the morning, I went over and backed that thing out of that garage and, of all things, Haynes was going out the alley, you know. And here comes Markie Mattox in - you know Markie used to live down there.²⁰ And here come Markie Mattox in the alley, which necessitated either he back up or I back up. Well, so now I had to make those old pedals go, so I could back her up. So, I backed her up so Markie could come on in, and I took the car out and set it in front of the house. That's the first time I ever drove a car, never had a lesson – nothing. Just watched my Dad. Just watched how he worked. See, they had three pedals on those things.

Thompson: Did you ever run out of gasoline on a hill?

Mohlenkamp: No, but I heard about that. Run out on North Dearborn Road one night, remember that!

Probst: Backed down Wilmington hill, already. Mom and Dad ran out on the way to Lawrenceburg. Shriver had a filling station but he was closed up. And my Dad went up and knocked on the door, and I never will forget. And he had a lantern or something, and he shines it right in Dad's face and "Just as I thought, not a customer of mine at all." Never will forget that.

Thompson: Gus was one of the old characters around town, wasn't he? There's something to think about.

²⁰ Marcus William Mattox (d. 1954). (Source: "Marcus William Mattox," database Lawrenceburg Public Library Obituaries (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

Mohlenkamp: Bill McLaughlin.²¹ He didn't get to work during the depression, in other words. He had two boys and the only income he had was catching fish. He would catch fish down there and a couple of summers there. He had a lot of good luck catching buffalo. He was catching it and everybody in town, I think, would run down there and try to catch buffalo with Bill. Well, ole Bill, he kept on catching buffalo. He had his lines in the right spot, you see. Well, he would take them up to sell to ... he used to run a little restaurant there. Wasn't it - Gus Shriver - and he would sell his fish for sandwiches.

Probst: In the wintertime he bought furs.

Mohlenkamp: That would keep Bill going, helped him, anyway, to get a few pennies, well, after all ...

Simpson: What's buffalo?

Mohlenkamp: Well, ma'am, they look like a carp, actually.

Simpson: Big, ugly fish.

Mohlenkamp: They are not a carp, by no means. They have a white meat.

Simpson: Catch them in the river?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, yes.

Thompson: It might be interesting, Ralph, for how we used to heat our houses.

Mohlenkamp: Oh, my goodness, sakes alive, ma'am. Haynes and Lydia - I don't know. They always concocted a gasoline engine somewhere. Who in the world had that thing?

Thompson: I don't know.

Mohlenkamp: They usually got a gasoline engine to cut that wood.

Thompson: We would catch the wood in the river, right up at the top of the bank. Haul it up on a high hill, saw it up, and carry it in the house, and then carry out the ashes.

Mohlenkamp: If we got half a ton of coal, just half a ton of coal. Boy, you don't know how

²¹ Possibly William G. McLaughlin. (Source: "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 10 Dec 2021); William G. McLaughlin d. 1 Mar 1979.)

we appreciated that. That was something else.

Thompson: The price of a ton of coal \$1.25.

Mohlenkamp: Well, I got married in 1940. I bought coal for the whole year for fifty-five dollars - ten tons. Ten ton of coal we put in our basement for fifty-five dollars.

Simpson: Where did you buy it?

Mohlenkamp: I think the Dierking Coal Company.²²

Thompson: Cutter had a coal yard.

Mohlenkamp: Fact of the matter, Dorothy's daddy took off from work so he could put the coal in just right – in the basement.

Simpson: Did your furnace have like these automatic feeders?

Mohlenkamp: We never had no furnace, ma'am.

Thompson: Grab your clothes and run for the hot stove!

Simpson: Where was your stove, then?

Mohlenkamp: One in the kitchen, one in the family room. Then, my mother-in-law got sick, ma'am, and we had a bedroom off to the side. And we got an oil heater put in there to keep her nice and warm. So, actually, at that point, we had three stoves going. In 1948, we put a furnace in the house – a coal furnace. That was great.

Simpson: You still have to shovel the coal in?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, yeah, but think of that - three stoves. An oil burner and two wood stoves. Why, that's a job right there! But then, when we got the furnace, then we had heat all over the house.

²² Dierking Chas Coal Co. Importing & Exporting, Aurora (The Southern Indiana Telephone Company, Inc. Telephone Directory for Lawrenceburg-Aurora-Dillsboro-Guilford-Mt. Sinai-Moores Hill; Classified Telephone Directory p. 10 Dierking Chas Coal Co. Importing & Exporting, Aurora; (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

Simpson: Who usually got the job of feeding the stoves? Was that a woman's job? Kid's job?

Thompson: Whatever time of day it went out, whoever was there.

Mohlenkamp: You better.

Simpson: O.K. And I think we will go to Eddie now and see what he remembers of early years and then we will go on from that. Where were you born, Ed and when?

Probst: I was born up in back of Guilford in a log house in 1905, August 26.²³

Simpson: How big was your log house?

Probst: Well, less than five rooms.

Simpson: How old was it at that time?

Probst: I couldn't tell you that. I have often wondered if it is still standing or not.

Simpson: There's still some out there. Whereabouts in back of Guilford?

Probst: Well, it's on up through Bonnell, almost to Manchester. Down under the hill from Manchester.

Simpson: I knew the foundations of one down there on Tanner's. In back of where we used to live. And there's a whole one back there, too.

Probst: Well, this, you had to go underneath them two bridges. It was the second bridge up that you went under through to cross Tanner's Creek to get over to it.

Simpson: What did your daddy do? Who was your Dad?

Probst: Well, John Probst, was his name. He was a farmer, cowboy, cow buyer by trade. He did a little of everything. Farming was his biggest.

²³ Edward Probst d. 12 Apr 1988 (Source: "Edward Probst," database Lawrenceburg Public Library Obituaries (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

Simpson: How many acres did he farm?

Probst: All his life until he retired.

Simpson: Was it a big farm, a little farm?

Probst: Well, it was all over. We lived in Dearborn County. We lived in Clay county. We lived in Howard County. And then we moved back to Dearborn County.

Simpson: Who was your mother?

Probst: Hannah.

Simpson: Where was she from?

Probst: Sunman, Indiana. Her daddy run the Legion Hall out there. Back where it was known as the Big Four Hall. He owned it.

Simpson: Is your background German, then?

Probst: Oh, yes. Both sides. I was four years old before I could say an American word. The reason for that was Dad moved from where we was living at down on 1, over here in back of Greendale there, and put out a tobacco crop. He got a man and wife to stay with us. A man and woman to help Mom with the housework and help him and they talked American and then we all talked American.

Simpson: Was your Mom and Dad first generation American?

Probst: Oh, no. Third or fourth. I don't know how far back. My son could probably tell you on that 'cause he checked through on it. They come from the Swiss-German area over there. The in-laws or out-laws did.

Simpson: They kept - the generations - the German language.

Probst: Oh, yeah.

Simpson: Did your Mom and Dad continue all their life or did they learn English?

Probst: They learned plenty of English. My Dad only went through the fourth grade. But I would put him against anybody with a high school education as far as figuring.

Simpson: Where did he go?

Probst: I couldn't tell you that. They were raised out around the Weisburg area, out in that neighborhood.

Simpson: Did you go to a Lutheran church. Were you a religious family?

Probst: Raised Lutheran.

Simpson: I knew there were Lutheran Germans out there.

Probst: Oh, I knew they went to Hubbles Church – Catholics out there. And you had Lutheran. My grandma and grandpa and uncles. There are several buried at the Lutheran cemetery there.

Simpson: What did your mother – did she have a big family?

Probst: She was a housewife.

Simpson: How many brothers and sisters?

Probst: I had five brothers and five sisters. All living today except the sister next to me.

Simpson: How did she cope with laundry for ten kids? How did she do her laundry?

Probst: The hard way - with the old scrub

Thompson: Everybody did his own share.

Tape 2:

Simpson: ... Probst and his childhood telling us how his mother did some of her housework jobs. Eddie, you've got five sisters and five brothers and your mama did the laundry by hand.

Probst: That's right - all done by hand.

Simpson: How old were you kids when she finally got a washing machine?

Probst: Well, I wouldn't know. I would have been up in the 20's.

Simpson: Did she still have plenty at home - kids - at home?

Probst: Yeah.

Simpson: Where were you in the family? The middle?

Probst: I was the oldest one.

Simpson: O. K.

Probst: Next to me was sister, Irene, who passed away.²⁴

Simpson: When your mother went to cook, how did she go about getting the meal together. Was it canned or was it garden?

Probst: It was garden. She would cut the ham off the shoulders and cook beans.

Simpson: Did you fix your own hams?

Probst: Yeah. We did our own butchering.

Thompson: We had to or else.

Probst: We never did kill any cattle, but we always did hogs. We always had pork to make sausage of that.

Simpson: Why was that? Didn't your family like beef?

Probst: Just wasn't the practical thing to do. I don't know. Never was done back in them days.

Thompson: Too big.

Probst: Too big to handle and you couldn't keep them, either. Pork you can salt that down, put it in brine...

Mohlenkamp: Smoke it. Put it in lard, sausage in lard.

²⁴ (Source: "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 10 Dec 2021); citing Lawrenceburg Press 6 Jun 1963, Register 6 Jun 1963; Irene Probst Tabor b. 21 Apr 1907 d. 3 Jun 1963.)

Probst: And we always had sauerkraut in the basement, made out of cabbage in the summertime.

Mohlenkamp: Sauerkraut, pickles, onions, and apples.

Probst: Canned fruit, always canned all summer long. Whatever came along.

Simpson: How did she can? Did she have pressure cooker?

Probst: No.

Mohlenkamp: Tin cans with sealing wax.

Probst: And glass cans.

Simpson: Did she cold pack?

Mohlenkamp: In a tub - an old copper wash boiler. Right.

Probst: I didn't pay too much attention to that.

Thompson: I think that was the way they did it, though. They cook it real good, then put it in there so Mom had some things set on top of the cans so it wouldn't run over.

Thompson: Blackberries. We would go five miles into Kentucky to carry them home.

Probst: We used to raise our beans. We raised our navy beans on the farm. In the winter time, we would tramp them out on the floors and then we would finally get down to where the beans was. That was part of the things. Instead of watching TV, we would clean out the beans on certain nights of the week so we would have beans to eat. I remember cleaning beans.

Mohlenkamp: You made everything and done everything yourself.

Probst: You had to do it.

Mohlenkamp: The woman - every time she sat down - darning, repairing something in the evening. That's when they fixed the clothes.

Simpson: How about like if you went to the grocery store? What would you be apt to buy? Like flour, coffee?

Probst: You'd buy your flour. You'd buy your coffee. Your coffee would be in beans. You had a grinder that you would grind your coffee. Flour, pepper and salt. But the rest, you never bought bread there. You'd make your bread or biscuit, cornbread. There would be nothing that you would buy in cans.

Mohlenkamp: There wouldn't be much more than that that you would buy. A box of matches.

Probst: Yeah. A box of ole kitchen matches to light the firewood. Be very particular with them, too, so they would last a long time.

Mohlenkamp: Whenever there's a fire to light the lamp. A ladder to light the lamp.

Simpson: What's a tinker ladder?

Mohlenkamp: Roll up a paper.

Probst: You use a Sears & Roebuck out in the outhouse.²⁵ Guess you're familiar with that.

Thompson: That's kinda dangerous, wasn't it?

Simpson: Did you really? Or is that just a saying?

Probst: No, no. That's the truth. No, that's the truth.

Thompson: Don't know how long toilet paper has been on the market.

Probst: I don't know, either. But Sears and Roebuck catalogues were a thinner paper. Thinner than what newspapers are. They would work better.

Simpson: And they were free, right?

Probst: Yeah, yeah. They were free.

²⁵ Sears and Roebuck catalogs were published before 1894 and continued until 1993, with online publication in 1998. (Pruitt, Sarah. "When the Sears Catalog Sold Everything from Houses to Hubcaps," History (www.history.com : accessed 9 Dec 2021); 13 Mar 2019).

Simpson: Did everybody get a Sears and Roebuck catalogue?

Thompson: Practically everybody. Anybody that bought any amount of anything, they got it.

Probst: Couldn't say about that.

Thompson: Now you have to buy so much to get one, I think.

Simpson: What would you be apt to buy from Sears and Roebuck?

Thompson: Materials, heavy shoes, overshoes.

Probst: Big gum boots. Remember they come up to here. Felt boots, were a little rubber down there with felt on top. I have a rocking chair out there on the front porch that I got for Christmas when I was three or four years old. And I imagine it came from Sears. I'm not sure.

Simpson: You had rural mail carriers, right?

Probst: Yeah.

Simpson: How far did you have to go to, say, a grocery store?

Probst: We only went to a grocery once a month.

Simpson: Was it nearby or was it a trip?

Probst: In Guilford. There was probably one in Guilford and there was one in Homestead. Mehrhoff had a grocery store there. I know we went there.

Simpson: How about haircuts? Did you go to a barber?

Mohlenkamp: No. Ah, that's an interesting thing. Once was fifteen cents.

Thompson: When Gallagher Arthur cut it, it was only a nickel on the back porch.

Mohlenkamp: He cut my hair on the back porch, right overlooking the river. They had their home on Decatur Street and they had a great big long porch on the back and Gallagher Arthur would cut hair on Saturday. Only on Saturday - worked someplace else. Yeah. And

you would go down there and he would cut your hair - and look at the river. Harry Arthur.²⁶ How come we ever called him "Gallagher?"²⁷

Thompson: I don't know.

Mohlenkamp. Harry Arthur.

Simpson: How about you, Eddie? Did your dad cut yours?

Probst: Dad or Mom did. Eddie Wise was the first barber I went to.²⁸

Mohlenkamp: Cost a quarter or just 15 cents - Jess Miller.

Thompson: First barber to cut my hair was Bob Knippenberg's wife.

Mohlenkamp: Al Knippenburg - Albert Knippenberg.²⁹

Thompson: I had long curls, and they saved those curls in handkerchief boxes about the house. They had been there fifty years or better.

Probst: And your baths. I took a bath once a week and that was on Saturday night. If there was three or four kids in the family, you all used the same bath water. Whoever got there first got the clean water and the rest of them had ...

Thompson: We used the same tub but not the same water.

Mohlenkamp: We never had to do that.

Simpson: You didn't have 10 kids.

Probst: I guess you had to carry the water in.

Mohlenkamp: Yes, we had to do that.

Probst: Our water was just outside the kitchen door there. That's when we lived here.

²⁶ Harry Thomas Arthur. (Source: "Harry Thomas," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 18 Nov 2021).)

²⁷ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 10 Dec 2021); citing Press 2 Feb 1940; Harry Thomas Arthur b. 1885 d. 30 Jan 1940.

²⁸ Edward George Wise (Source: "Edward George Wise," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 8 Dec 2021).)

²⁹ Kippenberg, Albert Mrs. Main St. Aurora. (The Southern Indiana Telephone Company, Inc. Telephone Directory for Lawrenceburg-Aurora-Dillsboro-Guilford-Mt. Sinai-Moores Hill; Aurora Kirkpatrick-Marshall p. 7; (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

Simpson: Did you get hot water?

Probst: Heated it up on the stoves.

Mohlenkamp: Right.

Thompson: We didn't have running water for years. We didn't have electricity for years.

Probst: We didn't have electric here until after I bought the place in '33.

Simpson: Did you go to bed awfully early? Without electric, what did you do?

Probst: Coal oil lamps.

Mohlenkamp: I tell you families used to get together a little bit more. Your neighbor would come sit on the front porch. Well, they wouldn't stay up too late. They would talk over the back fence.

Thompson: If anybody in the neighborhood was sick, everybody was there to see what they could do. You never had to worry about anything. If you needed anything, you would get it someplace. That's one thing you don't get now. By golly, the people next door don't hardly talk to you.

Probst: Yeah, they go right out the door and never say...

Thompson: Gladys Holmes - who lives in a house I own - was in the hospital five days before I knew she was gone.³⁰ She lives in the house right next door to me. The house I own - upstairs - Doug Ward's mother is in there. I knew when she went.

Simpson: Haynes, your parents died real young?

Thompson: My father lived. My mother died when I was fifteen months. My father lived until...

Mohlenkamp: Not too long ago, was it, Haynes?

Thompson: He was married the second time fifty-two years ... second wife.

³⁰ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Register 9 Apr 1992 and Press 7 Apr 1992; Gladys Marie Holmes d. 4 Apr 1992.
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Simpson: What happened to your mother that she died so young?

Thompson: Well, they thought it was arthritis, spinal meningitis. I had a crippled foot, all twisted around when I was a youngster. And the last time I went to a specialist to see if I could have anything done for it, he said it had to be that, instead of a club foot, spinal meningitis. So, she had that during pregnancy.

Simpson: Like your parents, Ralph, how old did they?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, boy, my mother lived to be 90. She just died just this year. My daddy lived about 78.³¹

Simpson: The life span was just as long then, without the medical care, life squads.

Mohlenkamp: Mother lived to be 90 years old.³²

Simpson: What about your parents, Eddie?

Probst: Mother died in '53, 53 or '55. I don't remember how old she was.³³ Daddy lived to be 99 years old. He died about six years ago.³⁴

Simpson: You didn't have a hospital in the county then, did you?

Probst: No.

Mohlenkamp: Had to go to Cincinnati.

Thompson: Back when I was driving for Johnny, I had to go to Cincinnati.

Simpson: Where did you go to school, Ed?

Probst: Well, I started in Greendale School, then I went to a little one-room school up on 48. Then I went to a one-room school out at Dana, close to Brazil, Indiana. Then to Greenstown. That was more or less a consolidated school. The grades were all in one big

³¹"Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Journal Press 18 Mar 1975; obituary for Bernard Mohlenkamp d. 12 Mar 1975.

³²"Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Register 21 Jan 1982; Mary Mohlenkamp d. 19 Jan 1982, age 90.

³³"Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Press I Oct 1953, Press 8 Oct 1953; obituary for Anna Mary Hornig Probst b. 26 Oct 1885 d. 25 Sep 1953.

³⁴"Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Press 19 Aug 1971; obituary for John T. Probst b. 29 Sep 1879 d. 16 Aug 1971.

school out there. And then I come down to Aurora and went to a one-room school up on Laughery. And then I went to Lutheran school one year in Aurora. And then I went to Northside School and went to 7th, 8th and one year of high. That made me sixteen years old, and dad said, "Well, son, we need you on the farm. Maybe later on you can go to the Richmond Business School," which was down in Aurora here - up over the Stoll meat market, but I never did go there.

Mohlenkamp: I remember Richmond. What was his first name?

Thompson: Willard.

Mohlenkamp: I don't remember the school.

Simpson: What did you do, then, when you got out of school? Did you work for your dad?

Probst: I worked for Dad for a while. Then I left home. Stayed up in Norwood for about six months. Worked at different places up there, card playing plant,³⁵ U. S. Rubber. I worked for Barney Kroger - B. H. Kroger - for two weeks.³⁶ I've never been in a Kroger store since.

Simpson: Would that be the original Kroger that started the Kroger's?

Probst: Original.

Simpson: What was he like?

Probst: I never met Barney. I never did meet him. Well, at that time, he was put in the store, on every little corner that he could put, all around Cincinnati. That was the beginning of the Kroger Company. And I had - when I went to work in the morning, I had to go back in the back room and cut all the rotten off the lettuce and the cabbage. And I just didn't like it. I worked there two weeks. I just didn't like this job. What I got paid there, I don't remember. So, I left there and went to the Goodrich Rubber Company. And when I ended up, I was working at the U.S. Card Manufacturing Company.

Simpson: How long did you work off the farm?

³⁵ United States Playing Card Company ("United States Playing Card Company," online encyclopedia (www.wikipedia.org : accessed 8 Dec 2021).)

³⁶ Kroger ("Kroger," online encyclopedia (www.wikipedia.org : accessed 8 Dec 2021).) Founded by Bernard Kroger in 1883 in Cincinnati, OH.

Probst: Well, then I come back home and my dad and I couldn't see eye to eye. So, I went to live with an aunt and uncle over in Greendale. And I got a job at a horseshoe factory, which is where the Gulf Refinery is now. 25¢ an hour and worked twelve hours a night, six to six. They give you half an hour off to eat lunch at midnight. And I worked there three days and daytimes. That's when they were building the power plant over there, and daytimes, my aunt would take me over to the power plant to see if they would need any help. So, after the third day, I got a job over there on the cement gang, finishing walls. I worked there till the plant was finished. They wanted me to go on the inside, and I couldn't see going in, so I left there. And then come down and worked for A. D. Cook Company, pump company in Greendale which was within a block of where my aunt lived. A five-minute whistle used to blow. I would jump out of bed, run across the street and get there in time to punch the time clock at 7 a.m. I worked there for two years. Finally, Mr. O'Brien came to me and another fellow. He was a buddy of mine. He lived at the next house to me. Come to us - we were the last two he had hired. He said, "Boys, things are slowing down a little bit and we have to let you fellows go." At that time, we were getting forty cents an hour.

Simpson: That was Cornelius O'Brien.

Probst: That was good, too. That was good pay at that time.

Mohlenkamp: Real good pay.

Probst: When I went at Columbia Power up there at forty cents an hour, my first pay check was for forty-five. When I counted the hours up, it didn't come out right, and I went to the boss and said, "Something's wrong here." "No," he said, "I just gave you a raise. You're a good worker." And I was raised on a farm and I didn't do what the other fellows were doing. They didn't work.

Thompson: Now you can't find anybody to work.

Mohlenkamp: Yes, it's pretty hard.

Probst: So after Mr. O'Brien let me go, I come home and helped Dad put out the crops. That was in April. And in June, I said to Dad, "What are you going to do with those milk bottles up in the barn there?" Well, Dad had run a milk route. He had run a dairy here in town - just raw milk, see. He said, "Why, what do you have in mind?" I had hunted everyplace for a job, and you couldn't find one. You couldn't buy one - in '27. "Well," I said, "I kinda think maybe I could sell some milk." "Where you going to buy it?" "Well, over at Woody's." They had a reputation of having good Jersey milk. They had good milk. He said, "Well, you might try it." So, I tried it, and that was the beginning of it. Started

June 20 when I had 20 bottles - 20 pints of milk in a case - 20 pints of milk - raw milk. Went over in Lawrenceburg and sold 20 pints of milk at a nickel a bottle. Had 20 customers that first day. Went back the next day with a little bit more. From that day on ...

Simpson: 1927, you say?

Probst: 1927.

Simpson: It was Probst Milk, Probst Dairy?

Mohlenkamp: Probst Milk – “Mother's only rival.”³⁷

Probst: Probst Milk Company.

Simpson: Did you ever raise your own cattle and stuff, or did you always just ...

Probst: Yeah. Then I run a route down in town and bought out Lee and Hefner from W. Heuston in Cincinnati. They brought milk in here. They had a crooked driver. He got in trouble. So, Townsend West decided it was too far to come with her trucks. So, they sold it to some lady that was hauling it into their plant from farmers around here. You see, she run it, so she got tired of it, and I bought her end of it out. And, well, things just come along. I never knew there was a depression. Never did hit me. So, a few years later on, why Dad and Mom in the meantime had split up after having eleven kids - the last two was twins. They decided they weren't suited for each other, so they split up. And this farm was for sale, so I bought this farm for two hundred dollars. I give Dad Two hundred dollars and borrowed the rest of the money and Dad took second mortgage on it.

Simpson: Were you married at that time yet?

Probst: Oh, no, ma'am. No.

Simpson: Tell me about your courtship.

Probst: Well, I was going with my wife, and any other girl that would go with me.

Simpson: Where would you take them when they would go with you?

³⁷ Probst Milk Co. Wilmington Pike Aurora “Complete Dairy Products. Mothers Only Rival” (The Southern Indiana Telephone Company, Inc. Telephone Directory for Lawrenceburg-Aurora-Dillsboro-Guilford-Mt. Sinai-Moores Hill; Classified Telephone Directory p. 12; (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

Mohlenkamp: Church, mostly.

Probst: And the most famous place was Johnny Oberting's barbecue place up on Old 50. I would love anything to get that recipe. She won't give it to nobody.

Thompson: Stoll's was great, too. The metts they had at that time, nobody has that recipe.

Mohlenkamp: How about their liverwurst?

Thompson: Nobody's got it.

Mohlenkamp: You never ate anything like that.

Thompson: The guy that had it, died with it.

Mohlenkamp: That's dumb. You used to get a liverwurst that big around for a nickel.

Simpson: Were they made here?

Mohlenkamp: They made them right there.

Thompson: They shipped that mett all over the world.

Simpson: What was the name of it?

Mohlenkamp: Stoll Meat Company. Have you ever been in Merry's Grocery Store? Did you ever notice that little girl in the meat market - in one of the pictures? That's Stoll's Meat Market. That's the inside of it.

Probst: The one girl that is in the picture is Phyllis Funk.

Mohlenkamp: She is vice-president of the bank.

Probst: Of course, we had home brew camps up on the Miami River. We would go up there. You would get a tin cup about that big around. It had a handle on each side. You would get that full of home brew - for how much?

Mohlenkamp: I was never there.

Thompson: You working, selling. I don't know.

Mohlenkamp: A lot of families made home brew, ma'am.

Simpson: What was home brew? Was it more like beer?

Mohlenkamp: Rated beer.

Thompson: Homemade beer.

Simpson: Down in Kentucky, it was whiskey.

Mohlenkamp: This was permissible. It was put into law.

Probst: After I bought this farm, I lived there a long time by myself. Red Orem and I made a batch of home brew one time, and I put it in the basement, and I slept up there where I sleep now. And I woke up one night and "bang" - something hit the ceiling. It had blown up - made it too strong!

Simpson: This was legal? It was all right to do?

Mohlenkamp: No, it wasn't legal.

Thompson: Not legal to sell.

Probst: Remember, they would make the raids along the Miami River? You go up to E-Town and up the road to Harrison, and there were camps down in there. And, of course, you go that far, you would go right out on the road. We had one right out in the road here - next house up the road, owned by Conaway. He made home brew and sold it there.

Simpson: What did you make it with?

Probst: We would buy the ingredients in the grocery store, caps, cappers and bottles.

Thompson: There were fellows who used to stop at the stores. They would call ahead to the clothing store when I was at Schusterman. The fellows that would come through here selling stocks and bonds, and stuff like that. They would want a big dinner, and I bet those guys spent more money down there than any in the country. They would come out there and have their big dinners.

Probst: Conaway, over on, near Dillsboro. He had good killing over there.

Simpson: When did you finally get Mrs. Probst to propose?

Probst: 1936. I've been with her all them years. I had three children – a girl and two boys. Girl lives in Martinsville; she's the oldest. And Butch lives at Columbus and Rick is in Korea.

Mohlenkamp: Butch is a dermatologist.

Probst: Daughter is Helen Jane. I talked with her this morning. The family reunion is Sunday and she is the secretary.

Simpson: Did you serve in the military?

Probst: No, ma'am. Just sweat, was all. Went on about two years. My Dad would have been in the next draft in World War I. He was sweating, too. Just happened he was old enough.

Mohlenkamp: Long period.

Thompson: What were you? About thirty-five?

Probst: Yes.

Simpson: So, you missed it because of your age?

Probst: Yes.

Simpson: What do you remember about World War II. You all lived through that era. Was it frightening to you? Did you know what was going on?

Probst: Well, there is one thing I always remembered. We moved in March of 1918, moved down on Laughery Creek on Richards' farm. And Dad and I were out haying on the hillside when we heard the awfulest noise. And Dad said, "There's somebody up there on that hill sure gunning an automobile awful bad." And, all of a sudden, here come a little airplane over the hill. Somebody was flying an air plane over the hill. That had nothing to do with World War I, but that was the first airplane that I had ever saw come flying over that hill. Then, World War I, there were times ... one time they had a false alarm. They blowed the whistles. And we lived close enough that we could hear all the bells and the whistles. See, at that time, factories all had whistles on them and when trouble, they would blow the

whistle instead of like now we blow sirens. And we heard all that. And, well, I don't know if we had a telephone or not. But, anyhow, we had no way of knowing what was going on, but we was scared. We thought the Germans had come over.

Simpson: World War I.

Probst: World War II. I could tell you a lot about that, I guess.

Simpson: You were from a German family. How did they feel particularly World War I? Did you still know of any of your relatives in Germany? How did your family feel?

Probst: No, we wouldn't have. I don't know - WW I in Germany. See the Lutheran School here and Lutheran Church used to have service in German and English. Well, in World War I that was eliminated. They cut it completely out. I know that. But World War ... well, you had to have gas stamps to get your gas. And we made chocolate milk, and we had to buy chocolate syrup. We had a fellow that was our salesman from Dayton, Ohio. I called him up one day and said I was awful low on chocolate syrup, "What can you do for me?" And he said, "Well, you just have to try to get it anyway that you could." We always had enough. We were very fortunate. I mean, for our crops, for our operations.

Mohlenkamp: Most individual people didn't have any reason to have more. They had trouble. They didn't have gasoline to go around. No way.

Simpson: How much would they give you? How much were you allowed to have?

Thompson: I don't know. Very small - very few gallons. Stamps was what you got. When you used up your stamps, you were done. That was all you got.

Probst: I don't know.

Simpson: What else was rationed that you remember?

Thompson: Sugar. Butter.

Mohlenkamp: Meat, too.

Thompson: Oh, yeah. Butter was rationed. Some guys didn't get anything. Where did it go?

Mohlenkamp: I tell you something to think about. My Mother and Dad and brother, they run out of meat stamps - didn't have anymore. But, of course, in those days, we still had a skiff down in the river, you see. And the river was up, and my brother would go over and look at the boat. He had to go over and look at it twice a day. And here he does down, it had rained and got some water in the boat, and he was down there bailing the boat out. And, you won't believe, man, but there was a big old fish that went right up there and jumped right in his boat. Man! And let me tell you something, you couldn't make him but believe that the good Lord supplies him with that fish. I tell you He did, and this is true. And they took the fish and they had fish. They sure did.

Thompson: We had watermelon rind preserves, you know. And that was our sugar. That was what we had for sweet stuff. We had ... we run out of sugar.

Mohlenkamp: Tires was another. We had to ration tires.

Simpson: Were shoes rationed?

Mohlenkamp: I don't think so.

Thompson: I always had to have special built so I don't know.

Mohlenkamp: I don't think we had any trouble with shoes. Rubber boots might have been hard to get.

Thompson: I ordered a pair of shoes two weeks ago. How much do you think?

Mohlenkamp: I don't know.

Thompson: Over four hundred dollars.

Mohlenkamp: I could imagine.

Probst: Would be cheaper to bury him, wouldn't it?

Mohlenkamp: No. That's going up every year, too.

Thompson: Well, I helped Stork on that for 16 years when I quit the the flower business.

Probst: There was little round plastic things that you got your meat and butter with. Little tokens. Did you ever see them?

Simpson: I think so. I was born in 1940. I can remember saccharine. Really, all I can remember is not being able to have sugar.

Probst: We have a whole mess of them. We use them to play Bingo with WSCH.

Simpson: Oh, you do? You still have your tokens?

Probst: Yeah - we never throw nothin' away here. Not anymore.

Simpson: You didn't need your butter tokens. They are probably the ones you've got.

Probst: Oh, listen. I tell you they needed them. They checked on you.

Simpson: But your milk business.

Probst: We didn't make our own butter. We had to buy butter from Hal Creamer out there.

Thompson: We didn't have any trouble in having enough food.

Probst: Well, we didn't, either.

Mohlenkamp: Basically, we had enough food to go around. Some things you may have liked to have, you couldn't have. You couldn't buy. Meat prices, well, that was kinda -

Thompson: That's when we had chicken. I got to the place when I wouldn't eat it at all.

Simpson: Did you raise your own chickens?

Probst: We had a bakery here in town. This was after we were out here. Dearborn Bakery, down on the river front. Back in them days, bread wouldn't hold up like it does now. But the drivers would go back to the store every day and pick up what was left - rolls, and all that sort of stuff. We used to get that stuff. And Dad would go down and get a big load of it. That was good eating. It was stale to sell. But us kids ...

Thompson: I don't like fresh bread.

Probst: That was another thing. With ten kids in the family, you would say, "How did Dad provide enough food?" Well, we always had food. Sometimes it was beans and sow belly - like of that. We never could go away hungry. But I could tell you people in this town that there were kids that went to school that were hungry. And that ain't been, well, some time back. Well, their parents just didn't provide for them.

Thompson: When the cabbages were in, we made the sauerkraut, pickles, and everything. When I was a kid, we used to carry blackberries five miles from the Kentucky side down to the river and then home and help Mom can them. We had everything in the basement.

Simpson: How many would go on the blackberry hunt? Would the whole family?

Thompson: No, just a couple of us. Mom Marshall and I went. John Peters had the boat going down. He had a big boat. Maybe eight or ten of us would go. It wouldn't have been so bad if it had been a regular lard can but it was them Crisco cans that were so long and I was short.

Simpson: Did you get chiggers?

Thompson: Not in Kentucky. I get them here, though.

Simpson: Tell me what you remember about the river. I want to know about the '37 flood. Other things, too, about the people that lived...

Probst: How about when the river was froze over and seeing the people walk across it. I saw that. I never did do it.

Mohlenkamp: I did.

Probst: You probably did.

Mohlenkamp: Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

Probst: They tell me that they drove model T Fords across it.

Mohlenkamp: Well, it could be.

Thompson: I don't see how they could ever have done that, Ed, because wherever it was smooth enough to do that, it wasn't thick enough. The rest of it was all broke up. You could walk it, but I never did walk it.

Mohlenkamp: First time I ever walked across the Ohio River was in 1948. She was frozen over I think in 1933, I believe. We went to skate down there.

Thompson: Let me take that lower side of Decatur Street.

Mohlenkamp: Well, that has been since then. You mean the last big ice they had. I don't know how many years ago that's been.

Thompson: Tom Bauer place across the street.

Mohlenkamp: Oh, yes. Now you're going back in '17 or '18. Well, see the Ohio River froze up, ma'am, from Sugar Creek, in Kentucky. Froze up there and backed up and jammed the river, down there, see. And at that time, there used to be a bottling house there - there was a brewery there. And there was a bottling house across the street and that bottling house collapsed. Right where the park is now.

Simpson: The ice collapsed it?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, yes. Particularly when the water went down and out. Finally, that thing broke. See, it went out with them. I got pictures of that ice in front of the Wooden Shoe there. They said it went down Second Street so fast ...

Thompson: I was on Second Street when it happened.

Simpson: What happened then?

Thompson: The ice just stayed. The water dropped so fast. But in the middle it went on down the lower end of town.

Probst: So in '13 there weren't any dams across the river at that time. The dams were built in '24.

Mohlenkamp: The whole was built in 1928. Canalization of the Ohio River. That's when everything was done.

Thompson: I used to remember. Ralph, maybe you remember how much that the footage was along here on Second Street.

Mohlenkamp: Well, I tell you at Robert Johnston's store, when I worked there for Bobbie, it was about 64 feet, yeah.

Simpson: How deep do you think the river was at Aurora, then?

Thompson: I wouldn't have any idea. The '37 flood.

Mohlenkamp: 82 feet. Right now, it's 27 feet river.

Probst: It used to be, before the dam.

Mohlenkamp: About 13 feet.

Probst: Can you imagine a bar over on the other side of the river and people going over there swimming by the hundreds?

Mohlenkamp: Beautiful water; clean. A great big bar, just sand. All except the upper part of that thing was gravel, but when you got to the middle of it, from then on down, it was sand.

Simpson: O.K. I know they used to have trouble with boats getting hung up on sand bars down around Laughery, somewhere.

Mohlenkamp: Yeah. That was above the island, just above Laughery Creek. Yes, then you might talk about this just a little bit. When I was a kid along the river, and I have been on the river my whole life, they used to have these great big towboats coming down the river and they were all sternwheelers with barges, wood barges. And they was loaded. And another thing, those two boats only had that much water on them. In other words, free board on them. Sometimes the water would come up over the deck, they were that far down in the water. There wasn't much of the boat out. Well, anyway, the biggest and a lot of them lovely old boats. And they were dandies, the "*Monongahela*", "*W. P. Snyder Jr.*," the *City of Pittsburgh*.³⁸ And, another thing, you take your big boats that go down the river today, you mean like around this bend at Aurora - they had to come down into the bend, then start back that boat up, they back her up, and back her up. And what they were doing - they were slacking the bow out into the main part of the river - in the main part of the channel. And once they got her straightened up and you'd hear the old bell. And another thing, the Captain didn't regulate that boat. He rang a bell, then the guy downstairs, he'd full speed ahead or whatever he wanted. You'd hear that old bell ringing and you'd see the old wheel start to go.

Thompson: Fools like us would get behind and get in the first wave.

Mohlenkamp: Oh, yes. Sixteen foot waves.

Probst: What we lost in the 1913 flood, though, was these nice old steamers.

Mohlenkamp: Yeah. Hundreds of them lost them down the river.

Simpson: How did you lose them?

Probst: Ice. Ice crushed them to pieces. They were all wood. All sternwheelers with the paddle wheel on the back ...

Mohlenkamp: Side wheelers, too. The passenger boats, too. I tell you another thing, they used to have along the river was a "meet your boat trip." They had a boat that was coming from Louisville, Kentucky. And one would go up to Cincinnati on a Sunday. They would meet in Madison, Indiana. So, people could get on at Cincinnati and ride to Madison

³⁸ Monongahela and City of Pittsburgh were sister towboats built by the American Bridge Company at Ambridge, PA in 1927. ("The Towboat Monongahela," *The Waterways Journal Weekly* (www.waterwaysjournal.net) : accessed 8 Dec 2021); 24 Jan 2021. W. P. Snyder Jr. towboat built in 1918 by Rees & Sons Company of Pittsburgh, PA. ("W. P. Snyder Jr.," online encyclopedia Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org) : accessed 8 Dec 2021).
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and transfer on the other boat and come back the same day.

Thompson: I've done it from Aurora.

Simpson: Did you ever ride the boats?

Mohlenkamp: Yeah.

Thompson: We used to have a wharf down there at the end of Second Street.

Mohlenkamp: Right behind the restaurant down there. "The Apple" - right behind there.

Thompson: A boat would stop there and unload everything. Boy! They would push those colored folks. I'm telling you, they really worked them.

Mohlenkamp: I tell you another thing, people would go up on the front of the boat and throw nickels and dimes down to those colored people. And you'd never see people fight for money. By golly, they had a heck of time. I tell you they would!

Thompson: We'd go down to see the boat come in - that's something else we would do.

Mohlenkamp: I tell you another thing. I went down to the river all by myself on the skiff. And a towboat came up the river with one barge on it and, first thing you know, I seen some guy out on that barge jumping up and down and waving his hand. And I thought, well, first thing you know, the wheels started working and the first thing I thought of was Clarence Zernach. Clarence lived next door to us, and he worked on the Ohio River for the government. And here first thing you know, here was Clarence. He said, "Come and get me. Come and get me." Well, glory be, I was just a kid. And I had never taken anybody off a towboat in my life. Well, I rode the old skiff over there, and I had a chain on the boat and threw Clarence the chain and he caught it. But he couldn't hold it - he couldn't hold me. So, Clarence still didn't give up. And the towboat captain - he didn't slow her down a bit. Man, he just kept right on going. Those things don't look like they're going very fast, but you try to catch one of them sometime. Anyway, I pulled the ole chain back up on the boat and got in position again. By that time, there were two or three other guys run out there with Clarence. This time they caught me. When they stopped me, I was back by the paddle wheel by then. That didn't bother me any. So, I just took hold of that ole boat and kept the skiff away from the paddlewheel, see. Those guys pulled me up farther on the towboat. I'll tell you a little story. My mother - it's a wonder she lived! My Mom had to be sitting right on the front porch - she saw that. Anyway, I got old Clarence off the tugboat and took him home. I'll tell you one more little illustration, then I'll quit. Tommy

Owens - that was back in the days of "tippy canoe." They was a fad. One time when what we built was a tippy canoe, and that was a little boat about that wide - about two feet wide and eight feet long, and made them out of barrel hoops and wood. Put a gallon can at each end, give her a little buoyancy. And, so, if you sink the thing, it might flip. Well, Tommy Owens and I were riding the waves behind the *Queen City*. Now the *Queen City* was a very palatial boat on the inside, ma'am. Her decor on the inside was one of the most beautiful boats on the river. We was taking these waves behind the *Queen City* - and she made a real good wave. I was riding in the waves. I got in the wave. I got through the shore waves, I got through them OK and got in the big waves. And I was just sitting there, riding the waves, sitting sideways in the boat. Well, Tommy came over that wave endwise - he had his tippy canoe - and here he come over endways. And I was sitting right here, and he came over that end right inside of me. And, of course, naturally, I got in the water. That's for sure - no other way. Well, my Daddy always told me, "Now, Ralph, if you get in trouble, stay with your boat." Well, here I had a gallon can - turpentine can - on one end and a gallon can on the other end, had a little wood in that thing, just a little bit buoyancy, you see. So, I just pulled myself back up on that sunken boat and kept my head out of water, and I paddled to shore. Yes, I did. I paddled that old thing back to shore. And, again this time, my Mom and Dad both was on the front porch. They finally got so they could handle it OK though. They had to because there was no other way.

Probst: You just wonder why you're still alive today. The good Lord was sure looking after you. I've had many experiences the same way.

Thompson: Well, if He wasn't looking after us, we wouldn't have done it, would we?

Mohlenkamp: One more thing, we traced the trot line out there one night, back in the days when the packet boats were still running.

Simpson: What's a trot line?

Mohlenkamp: Fishing line.

Thompson: Line with weights on one end and weights on the other end.

Mohlenkamp: We had an up and down line.

Thompson: And had hooks hanging straight down from it. Put it down on the bottom. And had a long cork coming out to the buoy.

Mohlenkamp: Yeah.

Thompson: You had 20 to 30 hooks on it, sometimes.

Mohlenkamp: Hundred. Well, sometimes. Little ones. Go out there and pull up this buoy and get your trot line and fish on it.

Simpson: You just left it out there?

Mohlenkamp: Yeah. You - well, you could leave it, too. Or whenever you were done fishing. You might leave it there a week. Depends.

Thompson: You went fishing every day.

Mohlenkamp: Oh, yeah. Two or three times. This particular time, we were out there. We were pretty well on the bar - just right below the ferry boat. And we had a lantern. We left the lantern sitting down in the bottom of the boat - wasn't doing much good. And you know that durned ole packet boat come down the river. And we never did hear it. The wind was going up stream, you know, just a little bit. And you couldn't hear that boat, and that thing - your port and starboard lights are up high. That's not on a natural view - they're up high on top of the stacks. Well, the first thing you know, we heard the hiss of the motor - you hear that thing. Well, we had an upstream wind that night. I had to oar to keep the boat straightened around so I could [inaudible] the lowers. I heard that noise and I looked up and my eyes fell on them red lights and green lights. And my brother was tracing, and I said, "Gene, drop that line!" He dropped her - he didn't even move. He sat right in front of that boat, boy. And man, I rode that thing to Kentucky. I got right out of there. Boy! I tell you that was frightening.

Probst: Close call. That was frightening.

Simpson: What did you do with the fish? Did you some way preserve it?

Thompson: That's where you would have a fish box in the river. You just leave them in that box and have the box tied to the land - anchored out. And the fish were living in the surrounding water of the river.

Mohlenkamp: When you wanted a fish, you lifted up the trap and get yourself a fish out.

Simpson: Like each family had one?

Thompson: Whoever was fishing, yeah.

Mohlenkamp: You see. Another thing on Decatur Street. There was, practically everyone

had a boat anchored out. And all took good care of their boats. That was really something. Another thing they used to do, ma'am. I remember [inaudible] sister, Agnes, they had a little boy [inaudible] they used to put that little boat on the back end. And they would all get cleaned up. They was cleaned up for the evening. Go down there, take the boat and ride up-town. Put the little boy in the back seat and have an outing on the river. This was true and a lot of people did that. Old Mr. Hughes, Jack Hughes, would get the boat and the oars out, maybe go over to the bar, and take a little boat ride. And you could go over to the bar anytime and have a picnic there. That was always a great place to go.

Probst: Oh, yeah. You could build a fire over there. There used to be bonfires over there all night long.

Simpson: That in Kentucky?

Mohlenkamp: Yes.

Probst: Then you would go up in the farmer's garden and swipe a watermelon. I done that one time and that was the only time.

Mohlenkamp: Talking about the river - the big towboats. Well, they were primarily sternwheelers. Then the first screw wheel boats that was on the river was the *Cosmos*, [inaudible] King's Landing Company. They were towboats owned by the Portland Cement. They were the first screw wheel boats. The first BIG screw boat I ever saw. I mean, the line that had those was [inaudible] Company. They owned the *Louisiana*, the *New Orleans*, the *Indiana*, and the *Ohio*. And these were all big boats. These were all big boats like they are today. And, incidentally, I run into the *Louisiana* a couple of years ago, and she is still in operation. And I called the guy on my marine radio, and I asked him if that was the original *Louisiana*, and, begorry, it was. I seen her go by last year. And, incidentally, there was a guy down below Rising Sun that pilots boats. I can't think of his name right now, but I think he worked on her, too. We used to have a Cap Chandler used to be here in Aurora. And he was head of the U.S. Corp of Engineers in Cincinnati.

Thompson: Lives on Fourth Street, two doors from the Catholic Church going down towards the river.

Mohlenkamp: But he was the captain on the *Sprague*.³⁹ Now the *Sprague* handled the biggest tows that had ever been handled on the river. The towboat *Sprague* and he was also captain on the *Sprague*.

³⁹ Sprague built in 1901 by Captain Peter Sprague in 1901 was the world's largest steam powered sternwheeler towboat. "Sprague," online encyclopedia Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org : accessed 9 Dec 2021).

Simpson: What did they do when they got to Louisville? Weren't there falls or something?

Mohlenkamp: Yeah. They had Alpine dam or McA line. What is that that locks the dams? They drop you ... ma'am. I think they drop you - a pretty good drop there. I been through that already -

Simpson: They had that already, though, when you were young?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, yeah. That has been there many, many years.

Probst: That's always been ... back there. You know the *Belle of Louisville*?⁴⁰ You 're familiar with it. I was locked up one time - thrown in the brig - on that boat one time.

Mohlenkamp: She used to be known as *Avalon*, didn't she?

Probst: Yeah. *Avalon*. It was the *Avalon* first one or the next one. They had three names on it.

Mohlenkamp: Yeah. I know. *Avalon* was one of them.

Probst: But Ernie Scranton and I ...

Thompson: No wonder you got locked up!

Probst: ... were on that boat. We got to cutting up. We had been drinking a little bit. Finally, the captain, or somebody, come to us and said, "Come on, boys." We went downstairs. They didn't lock us up. But they told us to stay right here until the boat lands in Aurora. Then you can get off. I never will forget that. That's - what was the other name of that boat?

Mohlenkamp: I'm sure you're right about them.

Simpson: What were you doing on the boat, Eddie? Just for fun?

Probst: Excursion - it was strictly an excursion boat.

Mohlenkamp: Dance floor and everything on it, ma'am.

⁴⁰ Belle of Louisville, built in 1914 steamboat from the great American packet boat era. ("Belle of Louisville," Belle of Louisville Riverboats (www.belleoflouisville.org : accessed 8 Dec 2021).)

Thompson: Dance floor and the bar.

Probst: This was before - if I remember rightly - this was before the bar was open. And we took our own bottle on there. We had more than we should have had.

Simpson: Then that home brew went with you, huh?

Probst: Brew or "mountain dew." I don't know which.

Simpson: Did you all live here during the flood?

Mohlenkamp: Right.

Simpson: Where did you live then?

Mohlenkamp: Where I lived? I spent most of the time on John Street.

Thompson: I lived on Fourth Street.

Probst: You're speaking of the '37 flood?

Simpson: Yes.

Thompson: For a few days, none of us lived anyplace.

Mohlenkamp: No. You ain't a kiddin'. Ma'am, it was terrible.

Probst: We worked.

Simpson: Where did you go?

Probst: We worked around the clock.

Thompson: We helped. We helped this guy moving. We helped you move. We helped Ralph move ...

Simpson: Trying to stay out of the water?

Thompson: Trying to get out. Easy to get out. But, boy, getting back!

Simpson: How long did you have warning? I mean, when did you know this was coming?

Mohlenkamp: I tell you what really happened, Clarence Zernach ...⁴¹

Probst: And this was the house over there. Well, the house is gone. But the house was burned over there on Moore Street, just recently.

Simpson: The water up past Dara's [?] windows ...

Probst: Yeah.

Simpson: Tell me what happened in January. I know that much.

Mohlenkamp: Anyway, we went to bed one night. The water was clear over the bank. We lived just across the street from the river. We had to walk across the street and walk down the bank - down into the river. The river must have been under the bank ten or fifteen feet down underneath there, see. But the next morning, at 5 o'clock in the morning, here come Clarence Zernach, our next door neighbor. He knocked on the door and said, "Folks, get out of here. We're about to be run over here." Well, glory be, Dad still had his car in the garage. We were just lucky to get that thing out. Dad had to back that car out on the street then we took it up on - we were living on Decatur Street at that time - we took it up on John Street to get it up by your house. Then the water got up to both tires and then the water quit. Boy, that was lucky. Well, so anyway, then everything happened. Heck, by night-time, water was in the house.

Simpson: Did you get your furniture out?

Mohlenkamp: Yes. Do you know what happened? My mother - we all put it upstairs, and got everything up. And Mama looked at Dad and Mom said, "You know, Dad, I don't like that." Dad said, "You don't think I'm going to take it all back down." And Mom said, "I don't know." But, you know, the old dear went upstairs and grabbed something and took it out and put it on Haynes' front porch, and they emptied that house and put it all on Haynes' front porch. And if it hadn't been for that, they would have lost everything. Well, the house was practically ruined when they got back in the home. Even washed the plaster off the wall - washed it off. Gone. Porch was gone.

Simpson: Did you have flood insurance?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, no, no.

⁴¹ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021) citing Press 6 Sep 1973, Irvin E. Zernach d. 3 Sep 1973 brother of Clarence Zernach of Angleton, TX. ©2021 Lawrenceburg Public Library District

Thompson: There wasn't no such thing.

Mohlenkamp: Then they had to. What was that part of the government that moved in here? The state militia wasn't it?

Probst: Yeah. The national guard. The national guard came down here from someplace up north.

Mohlenkamp: I tell you another thing they needed at this point. They needed a hospital. Can you imagine that? They needed a hospital, and, at that time, this Fifth Street church had just put a new addition on their church.⁴² They kinda had a Sunday School room or whatever it might be. Well, anyway, all the electricity went out. We didn't have no lights. Oh, boy! No water, no lights, no nothing. Well, Ole Bob Johnston where I worked, he still had a Delco light plant in a demonstrator. In other words, this thing was in a trailer they pulled behind a car all intact. And, begorry, all you had to do was hook it up. And, begorry, ole Jesse Laaker, he took it up there and hooked it up to that church and provided electricity all the time. They had a lot of people there. People get sick and get hurt and everything happened.

Simpson: They used it as a hospital?

Mohlenkamp: As a hospital.

Simpson: Which church was it?

Mohlenkamp: Fifth Street.

Probst: Church of Christ. First Church of Christ.

Simpson: Now, Haynes, where did you live? On Fourth Street?

Thompson: No. I lived on John Street like the rest of them, when that was going on.

Mohlenkamp: I tell you another thing. I slept with four guys one night. Four of us in one bed. And, of all things, I was next the wall. Well, the next morning, I was practically on the floor, hanging with the sheets. There I was between the wall and the bed.

Ralph Mohlenkamp and Haynes Thompson discussing the effect of the 1937 flood on

⁴² "First Evangelical United Church of Christ," online encyclopedia Wikipedia (www.wikipedia.org : accessed 8 Dec 2021).

Aurora, Indiana. Haynes Thompson owned a floral shop. Ralph Mohlenkamp worked at Johnston's and Gambles. Ed Probst ran a milk route from his farm at that time.

Simpson: Tell me about Black Sunday.

Thompson: Black Sunday. Water was up just to the ceilings - first floor - on Second Street. What's the number Ralph?

Mohlenkamp: 331 - 333.

Thompson: And this was in January, 1937.

Mohlenkamp: Right, right.

Thompson: And a bunch of us was up there playing cards. We would go out and measure the steps and to the hallway - the steps coming out. We would go out and measure the steps, and I went two or three times, and it was all right. Went out another time, well, it's not raising anymore - ten minutes after the last time. In ten minutes' time, it had raised six and a half inches - went over an extra step. And we had all this merchandise that we had in the clothing store - a lot of it - on that second floor. So, then we went in this guy's bathroom, cut a hole in the ceiling and put all of it in the attic. We might as well have thrown it away. It was terrible, I tell you. It was really bad.

Mohlenkamp: I'll tell you a little story about that. See, our store was right next to where Haynes' was, you see. And the fellow I worked for figured out how high the '84 flood was. The '84 flood was the measuring flood of all. Nothing could ever get any higher than the '84 flood. So, he had it all figured out. So, all the other stuff we had to take out - take out of the store - took it up the street supposedly above the '84 flood, which worked out pretty good, see. 'Til the next day. The very next day, all the light bulbs were floating around in there, everything getting on the shelves. Well, little Robert, he went and bought a little old John boat from old Sol Vigran for twenty-five dollars, and it leaked like a sieve. Well, we had our skiff yet, so we brought the skiff uptown. And so, I went through the transom of the window with that little old John boat and went with it through the transom and started picking up what was floating around in there to salvage. And getting it off the shelves and putting it in this John boat and taking it out the window and handing it to Jesse Laaker and Woody. Well now, that wasn't the worst of it. The worst of it was Ed Everett was upstairs. And every time those guys - and snowing - a terrible time. Snowing and rain and blowed all the same - all this trouble and all this weather. Just terrible. Poor old Ed. And every time these guys - we would get the skiff loaded down. See, they would take it over there where the Aurora Lumber Company used to be, and that's where the Lutheran School is now. They would take it over there and then Bob Johnston would put it in his car

and take it up on Fifth Street. And Mrs. Johnston would clean it up, wipe it off, and put it away. Well, in the process of doing all this, these guys were out operating our boat, I mean, a bottle too many times. Well, they didn't let me in on that, I didn't get in on that. I was still a kid. Well, then finally, this one gentleman, he got next to his boss. "Boss," he said, "What's wrong with him? By golly, there's something wrong with him." Well, he done been at the bottle too many time. I said, "Mr. Johnston, there ain't nothing wrong. He just has been working too hard." Then Teaney's grocery broke down.⁴³ The water was going to put them out of electricity. And then they wanted to hook up a light plant up there. So, ole Jesse - they had one of those old light plants - and he finally got one of them running. And he went up there and cranked the thing up. And I don't know what happened. But anyway, he hurt his hand. He really cut his hand. Boy, he really fixed himself. So, but they finally got that thing going and they had lights up at Teaney's. But Teaney's grocery got flooded, too.

Probst: Yeah, Teaney's moved off down from where they was at Ray's Inn. Moved up there to get out of high water and said he had eighteen inches on the floor before it ended up.

Mohlenkamp: Say, another thing, at that time we [had] appliances - washing machines, refrigerators, stoves. And we moved them up the street and the next morning, by golly, the water was in there. If it hadn't been for those legs - they had legs on them then in those days. If it hadn't been for those state highway trucks - the state highway trucks brought those big dump trucks down there - which were high bedded trucks - they would have lost everything. They would have lost the whole bunch. You see, those high bedded trucks - they could back down through the water. They could take more water - they were high. And if it hadn't been for them ... but, then, Eddie, you know what happened then? Then all the merchandise went everywhere. You didn't know where it went to!

Thompson: There was some out at Schneider's at Cochran and some at the Lutheran School. We had some at Everett's attic. I don't know if we got it all back or not.

Mohlenkamp: Finally, we had some stuff that showed up about two years later. There was a guy out there in Cochran had a bunch of Youngstown cabinets that were still out there. "When you going to come to get them?"

Simpson: Was your business good after the flood? People lost so much.

⁴³ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.lin.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Register 8 Sep 1994; Press 6 Sep 1994; obituary of Charles "Bud" Teaney Jr. d. 3 Sep 1994, former owner of Taney's Supermarket, Aurora, IN.

Thompson: Oh, that's another situation. We had the clothing store and we had some stuff out at Cochran by Schneider's where Sutton's hatchery was. What's the name of that guy?

Mohlenkamp: Sparkle. Sparkle's cleaners.⁴⁴

Thompson: The hatchery was there. We would bring clothes in there. They didn't buy a lot of clothes. Everybody lost everything they had. They would buy one shirt and one pair of pants. And then they would go to bed and the wife would wash it. And they would put it on the next day. That's the way it went. That's how they bought new clothes. Until they got straightened around. We had clothes for them, anyway.

Probst: There's one thing about it, a flood, though. When there's a flood in town, everybody talks to everybody else. Now, you go downtown, there's a lot of people that won't talk to you.

Mohlenkamp: Now you can get a lot of help.

Probst: When there's a flood everybody talks.

Mohlenkamp: There was some pilferage. There was some of that. I know poor ole Jordan Olcott.⁴⁵ I think he took about as much as anybody because they were really lifting from him.

Simpson: What did he have?

Mohlenkamp: Drugstore, cameras and all kinds of stuff, you know.

Thompson: This idea of helping everybody out. It's easy to get your stuff out, but when you go to get it back, everybody needs help to get it back and you can't get any help. That's when you have your problems. You have to just look and look and look. We had Gerkepott's crew down here. And Tommy Thompson sent one of his big trucks down and three or four men. If it hadn't been for them, we never would have got back to Second Street.

Probst: A lot of farmers come in from hilltops to move the town out. But when it come to moving back, they didn't come back. See what I mean?

⁴⁴ Robinson's 1982 Lawrenceburg & Aurora City Directory, Robinson Directories, Inc., Hillsdale, Michigan, (Lawrenceburg Public Library : accessed 8 Dec 2021); Aurora City Alpha - 43, entry for Sparkle Cleaners Side Entrance, owner Elvin Frankel 430 Fourth St; Sparkle Industries Inc owner Elvin Frankel 223 Exporting St.; Sparkle Uniform Service Side Entrance, owner Elvin Frankel 430 Fourth St. Aurora.

⁴⁵ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.: accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Press 26 Jan 1956 and Register 26 Jan 1956, Jordon Thomas Olcott b. 30 Oct 1895 d. 19 Jan 1956 worked at the Olcott Drug Store for over 40 years until he retired and the store was sold.

Thompson: We wasn't in a big rush 'cause we built all new shelving after.

Simpson: I was going to say, was your building damaged?

Thompson: Terrible. Every building on Second Street you could tear the floor up. There was mud that deep between the subfloor and the regular floor.

Mohlenkamp: Floors were all buckled up. Then you had to cut them out and put them back down again. I tell you another thing that was a mistake, too. Of course, you live and learn. But we had, at that time, that area that we had as a loading place is over there. A lot of people lived over there.

Thompson: All streets and alleys.

Simpson: Where Aurora Terminal is?

Mohlenkamp: Right. Well, you know, Robert Johnston, he was one of the best guys that anybody ever lived knew. They called ole Bob up. "Hey, Bob, my refrigerator is getting in the water." "O.K., we'll come over and get it for you." So, bang, he'd send us guys all over there to get their refrigerator and their stove. Now what happened? We'd take it away over and put it in our warehouse. Then we ended up with it all. At that point, it was our obligation now to take care of their stuff. We had the whole place full down there.

Simpson: How many people worked for Johnston, then? Do you know?

Mohlenkamp: Well, there was Woody, ole Gus Beclaneyer, Jesse Laaker, myself, Lawrence Beckmeyer and his wife, Leah. That's about it.

Probst: That's you tell over there where this terminal that was originally the best part of Aurora. There were some beautiful homes there.

Simpson: I've seen pictures.

Probst: Beautiful homes in there. Pretty.

Mohlenkamp: There sure was.

Simpson: Were you out here then, Eddie? Or were you

Probst: '37 flood? Yeah, we was here.

Mohlenkamp: You kept delivering milk, didn't you?

Probst: I never missed a day. We take out right down here at the foot of the hill in a boat and away we go. The only way to go and we rode it.

Thompson: I was on a diet with ulcers.

Probst: One day we went through ice that thick. One of us would stand out in front of the boat and break the ice with a board to get over into town.

Simpson: Did people have money to pay you?

Probst: We didn't worry about that.

Simpson: You just handed out the milk?

Probst: We give to the Red Cross. Take ten gallons cans over to the Red Cross.

Mohlenkamp: They finally got so they even rationed food. In other words, they brought food to you, didn't they?

Probst: Yeah, they brought food in. I used to get soup at the soup kitchen on Conwell Street. One or two houses, oh, three or four houses up there. There used to be a soup kitchen there, and I used to stop there to get breakfast.

Thompson: I went to Dillsboro and got a bunch of food a couple of times.

Simpson: Did everybody just more or less stay in the area? Did they just keep moving to higher ground?

Probst: They stayed around Aurora. If they had relatives not too far away, they would go stay with them.

Simpson: Did you have anybody in here?

Probst: Oh, yeah. The people down the road here. Ask Johnny Nugent, when you see him, where he spent the '37 flood.

Simpson: Did he spend it here?

Mohlenkamp: Haynes had quite a bunch down there.

Thompson: I don't know how many we had. G Lischkge, Selma Lischkge,⁴⁶ ...

Mohlenkamp: We had a good time, too. We had no electricity. We couldn't do anything at night time. Didn't have no electric. Had lamps. We used to go up there and play cards, remember?

Simpson: I thought your house was in the flood, Haynes.

Mohlenkamp: Oh, he was higher.

Thompson: I was higher, but the water got over the daggoned basement, though. Yeah, water got right close to the floor. I was up higher.

Simpson: Did you live on John Street?

Thompson: Lower John.

Probst: Here's one thing, I tell you. In 1918, when my Daddy went to buy a farm, he started selling milk when he lived down on Laughery. We'd come in with a fifteen-gallon milk can in the front end of a buggy. Come up from "Texas." Two dippers in it - 1-pint dipper and 1-quart dipper, and the lid. When you take the lid off and turn it over, it had a great big bowl there. And then you would dip a pint of milk in this lid and carry it over to the lady where she poured it into a fruit jar or whatever. And if she wanted a quart - like that. Well, Dad made a little money on it.

[telephone]

Thompson: My wife checking on me, maybe.

Probst: Made enough money. He was looking for a place to buy. Well, he was running this milk route, and he was still selling milk out of the buggy and can. And I still got the can up in the barn. So, this farm over here was for sale and so was this one. So, old Doc Martin - old T. J. was a real estate man here - T. J. took him over to this farm across the road and Dad bought the farm and agreed that he would take it. And they were coming out along the driveway there. And there were cornstalks there from the flood on the pasture fround. And Dad said to T. J., "Hey, what are those cornstalks doing here?" "Why, that's where the water was when the flood was up last spring." Dad said, "I don't want this place. Let's go

⁴⁶ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Press 18 May 1993, Register 13 May 1993, obituary for Selma V. Lischkge d. 11 May 1993.
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look at that other one." So, he came over and bought this one.

Simpson: A little higher up the hill.

Probst: That's why we own this one. He had agreed to take that one, but ...

Simpson: Floods probably never got over there again, has it?

Probst: Oh, yeah.

Simpson: Since then, though.

Mohlenkamp: No. Not since 1937.

Probst: But, '37 flood. Now you take that house had been under water. But it was just that far from being up on the main floor of the house. It was in the basement.

Simpson: Now about the riverboat people. Did any of you [know] of anybody that lived on a riverboat?

Mohlenkamp: Yes, Willis Christy. He had just little bitty - not very big. That was his home. And he lived on the water all the time, too. And he kept it in water all the time, too. Course, in the wintertime, he beached it.

Thompson: Jack Dennerline lived on one.⁴⁷

Probst: Is Jack still living?

Thompson: I don't know.

Probst: The last I heard of Jack was when they built this bridge across 50. And they had just built that bridge. And he was underneath there on the bank. He had just a flatboat then, with a shack built up on it. But he lived on the bank during wintertime or maybe spring. He went on down the river and that's the last I ever heard of him.

Thompson: He had a shanty boat, too. Oh, there were several of them, but I just don't know who lived on them.

⁴⁷ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021); citing Register 1 Dec 1999; obituary for Jack T. Dennerline d. 25 Nov 1999.

Mohlenkamp: Monk Chamblin. He had a shanty boat. He used to live down there on Laughery Creek, Monk did.

Probst: He lived down there. Chamblin lived down on the creek.

Simpson: Why did they live on the river? Economy?

Thompson: There's no taxes, no nothing.

Mohlenkamp: Some of them, I think it was just a way of life for them.

Simpson: Did they make their living on the river or what?

Thompson: I don't know what they did do.

Mohlenkamp: I don't think they did much of anything. Since this one guy - Willis Christy - he didn't do nothing. Sold a little fish, that would be about it. Don't think he worked. Now, Chris Faber's daddy lived on a shanty boat.⁴⁸ He had his out on the bank, too. Those two lawyers I was talking to you about, a while ago, they had them. McMullen. They'd take that shanty boat down to Laughery Island and leave her there all summer.

Probst: Tell, that was their recreation.

Mohlenkamp: Some of them made homes on them. I don't know what the heck for.

Thompson: I'm going to have to leave. Can you tell them about Gus Kassler?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, Lord. Yes, well ...

Probst: What was the old Indian that used to live up here when we was going to school? Up above by the water works there? Scairt the heck out of [us] all the time.

Mohlenkamp: I don't remember him.

Probst: Ended up at Rising Sun.

Mohlenkamp: I don't know, Eddie.

⁴⁸ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021), citing Press 14 Aug 1942; George H. Faber d. 1 Aug 1942; son Chris Faber.
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Thompson: But it's been a great part of my life. I tell you that I like it all. I think we have seen more things than most people have ever seen and not leaving town. I never left town. I have always lived here.

Probst: There might be people going around the world in the sky, but we have had our fun right here.

Thompson: We have seen a lot of things change, I can tell you that.

Simpson: We saw that from the cars first coming. We have cars coming now.

Mohlenkamp: You're talking about shanty boats, too. There's a lot of those shanty boats that ended up on a bank, over there in "Utah." And I think the Brooks' had some of them. You remember the Brooks?

Probst: Yeah

Mohlenkamp: And I remember Mrs. Hill had a shanty boat. Did she have a shanty boat or a shack?

Probst: She had a shanty - shanty right down here. She had a little trailer right in there.

Simpson: A lady that lived alone on one?

Probst: She had raised her family. She lived alone.

Mohlenkamp: She was a good old soul.

Probst: See, that's her grandson. It was her son that worked for Neff ... died.

Mohlenkamp: Right.

Probst: That's her grandson that's a preacher out here at the Methodist church at Wilmington.

Simpson: You lived right on the river. You would remember if there was kids that lived out on boats and things, wouldn't you?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, sure. But there weren't too many of them in my time. There will be one thing I'll admit, too. Sometimes they were by. They would just go by. In other words,

you'd look up and here'd come a guy and he would have a rowboat and pull that thing. They wasn't going no place. All they had to do was tie up that night. I remember Willis Christy - I told you. He was really a shanty boater. And I do know the Brooks were. And they finally came up on the bank. And some of them - they raised up in the air - made homes out of them. Then there was another shanty boat came down the river, about 1936, from Pittsburgh, Harry Schardine.⁴⁹ Oh, there were two shanty boats in Lawrenceburg. And they both came down here to work at Seagrams. But don't you remember that shanty boat that used to be on Bielby Road? They took it out there and they fixed it up and lived in it. They hauled it out there from the river. I can't think of this one guy. But this other guy, but they came down the river and they were good friends of Woody's. We would sell them bottle gas to put them on the shanty boats.

Simpson: What did a shanty boat look like? How were they built?

Probst: They're like a barge. Yeah.

Mohlenkamp: With a little house on it.

Probst: A little smaller than a house. And inside you walk down into them - down into a hall. And you would have a narrow door here that to bounce you head on if you weren't careful. Biggest part of them would be.

Mohlenkamp: I don't think I would relish that too much, I don't think!

Probst: Do you remember - I think I have asked you this before? Do you remember when Heisy built that trailer he took to Florida?

Mohlenkamp: No.

Probst: You don't remember that. That's settin' down in the front yard. Took a four cylinder Maxwell. Took the frame out of it, I think. Frank Longcamp was the one that built it.⁵⁰ In fact, I know he did. He slept - could sleep - four people in it. A table up against the wall that folded out and a wash bowl in the corner to wash your hands. And a kitchen set on the other side. Hang your coffee cups on a pressure water under - a tank - flush toilet had a whole in the floor to pump air into it - fresh water....

Mohlenkamp: I've seen a lot of changes on the river. I tell you - they talk about this man.

⁴⁹ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021), citing Journal Press 12 Nov 1991; obituary for Harry Schardine d. 10 Nov 1991.

⁵⁰ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2021), citing Register 27 Jan 1994; obituary of Dr. R. Frank Longcamp d. 22 Jan 1994, dentist in Aurora.

Kastner - Gus Kastner. Gus was an old river man, too. And he was also a fix-it man around Aurora. He could fix anything. But he would hardly charge anything. He would take nothing he prepared for you or charge a quarter. And that's the way he made his living, and he was busy all the time, wasn't he?

Probst: Yeah.

Mohlenkamp: Busy all the time. And he had not - he had little books of motors. Gus was awful handy. Fact of the matter - I had occasion - we had a skiff for many years and finally, after I got married, kinda neglected the thing. And it finally went to pieces. Well, it come time in my life when I would like to get another boat. And I found a set of skiff sides. Now skiff sides was made out of cypress lumber, and they were eighteen feet long and twenty-four inches wide, and when I found out that [INAUDIBLE] had this in his barn, up on Fifth Street, upstairs. "Hey, I understand you got some skiff sides up in your barn." "Yeah. They don't belong to me, they belong to my brother, and he's kinda funny about them thing." "Well, how could you buy them?" "Well, Ralph, I tell you, I don't know, but I'll find out." Well, glory be, he goes back up there and Johnny Green, you know Johnny Green, my uncle? Well, Johnny Green was my uncle and he - him and them Kastner's were all good friends, and he said he wouldn't let anybody have them except someone related to Johnny Green. I was his nephew, you see. He came back down to the store and he said he would sell them but he would have to have twenty dollars for them. Well, glory be, I just happened to have twenty dollars in my pocket. So, I gave it to him so he wouldn't change his mind. So, I sent Jesse Laker up and I said, "Now, Jesse, you go up and pick up those skiff sides for me." He went up and got them things. So, now I was the proud owner of two skiff sides. I knew what I was going to do. So, I went to Jim Fairfield - he could do anything. "Jim, how about building me a skiff? Now, Jim, I want it to look exactly like my old one." And he said, "I'll do it." He built her to perfection. Just exactly the way she looked - the original boat came from Whitlock.

Simpson: I was going to ask you if you knew Whitlocks.⁵¹

Probst: Mine was from Whitlocks. I got that from one of the floods. And to get it I had to drive through water there. Burned up when the barn burned.

Simpson: I heard he [Whitlock] had a factory there at one time. Made boats down there.

⁵¹ "Dearborn County Obituaries," database Lawrenceburg Public Library (www.lpld.lib.in.us : accessed 9 Dec 2010); citing Journal Press 3 Feb 1966; obituary of Stewart B. Whitlock d. 29 Jan 1966, President of the J. W. Whitlock Co., and boat harbor operator at Rising Sun. He and his late brother, Dean, operated a furniture factory and maintained the family tradition in boating established by their late father, J. W. (Row) Whitlock, who achieved national fame and set records as the owner-driver of Hoosier Boy hydroplanes.

Mohlenkamp: He made some dandies, too.

Simpson: Did he make kinda small versions of his race boats or something?

Mohlenkamp: No. Plain old skiffs - regular skiffs. Mine came from, originally was from a wharf boat - Gus Gerlach's - boat. And when they sunk the wharf boat they disbanded, I think. They had two skiffs on them. And my uncle bought that for us. We had it many, many years. We had it for a long time. Then Jim built me one that looked just like it. He hit it right on the money; right on the money.

Probst: I just wonder if that was the one I rented one night to go across the river to see a girl.

Mohlenkamp: Could be!

Simpson: How long did you keep your second one and do you still have it?

Mohlenkamp: Oh, no, ma'am. I eventually, those things go different. I was married then, and I will say one doggoned thing for sure. My wife, she went right along with me. O.K. We got the skiff. Then we got a six horsepower Wizard engine to go on that thing. Then, first thing you know, we got a twelve-foot boat regular factory built with a twelve horsepower engine on it. Then that wasn't big enough. So, before the year was over, we got a new engine on that thing, but it was an eighteen one. Then I sold the whole outfit and got a sixteen-foot boat with a forty on it with a pull rope on it (you had to pull it to start). Then we decided that was too much. So, the next year, we sold it and got rid of that engine and got one with an electric start. So, then after that, I got a new seventeen-foot boat with an eighty horsepower. Now I have a houseboat - in 1972. We enjoy the river.

Simpson: Do you spend a lot of time with the boat?

Mohlenkamp: No, not a lot. As much as I can.

Simpson: How much is like gas compared now to then?

Mohlenkamp: Marina right now is \$1.40 a gallon. And when you first started boated it was 19 to 20 cents.

Simpson: How many miles to a gallon can you get then?

Mohlenkamp: Depends on how fast you are running. If you're running about 1800 rpm, I probably get about 3. But if you're moving right along down the river, about 1 mile per gallon. Well, we haven't done a whole lot of traveling this year. There are several boats that go up [INAUDIBLE] creek all the time. That's only about six miles, you see. So, you don't burn a whole lot of fuel. We do contemplate on going to Manchester Island at Ft. Summers. Manchester is about a one-hundred mile trip up the river.

Probst: Where's Manchester Island?

Mohlenkamp: Above [INAUDIBLE] dam. Just a nice trip. Several of us will go. We will have a good time.

Simpson: Where do you have your boat docked?

Mohlenkamp: In the water at the Marina over here. About five minutes from home. So, it don't take long. I have been leaving it in the water the last two years, but I will take it out this year. I'm going to get some work done on it. The boat is in good shape. My boat is worth more today than when I paid for it. You have to keep after it. There is a lot of tender care there.

Simpson: Do most people here have boats, do you think? Most Aurora people?

Mohlenkamp: No, very few.

Probst: Most of them are from away. They come down from Indianapolis, Greensburg, Versailles, Hamilton, Osgood.

Simpson: Did people used to have boats more?

Mohlenkamp: They had rowboats, a lot of rowboats.

Simpson: It wasn't any safer then, either, out in the river than it is now?

Probst: Your river wasn't as deep.

Mohlenkamp: Well, it was more safe years ago, than it is now. If you are in, like, to like boats, you're o.k. But say if you just roll a boat out in the river, you better be careful because somebody is likely to hit you.

Simpson: I was thinking about the rapids.

Mohlenkamp: We don't have rapids. We do have current.

Simpson: Current! That's what I'm trying to think of. Is current stronger now?

Mohlenkamp: No, we got a lot more stable river than we used to have. We do have some flexibility, but not as great.

Simpson: I know some days it's like blowing white caps down there.

Mohlenkamp: Well, it's upstream winds doing that.

Simpson: Well, I thank you, gentlemen. I hope I haven't tired you out too much here.

