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Oral History Project World War II Years, 1941-1946 - Georgia Myking

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Interviewee: Georgia Myking
Interviewer: Thomas Saylor
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Georgia Myking was born on 25 July 1918 on a farm outside the small town of Polk City, Iowa. She attended high school in Polk City before moving to Cloquet, Minnesota, in August 1937. She soon met her future husband, Lawrence Myking, and they were married in Cloquet on New Year's Eve 1937.

Georgia and Lawrence lived briefly on a small farm on the outskirts of Cloquet before moving into town during the war years. While Lawrence worked as a machinist for a local manufacturer, Georgia worked as a homemaker and raised four children.

After the war the Mykings continued to live in Cloquet, where this interview took place in May 2001. Georgia Myking passed away in 2003.

An interview with Lawrence Myking is also part of this collection.

Georgia offers memories of civilian life in a small town (Cloquet, Minnesota) during the war years, with observations on rationing, shortages, and changes in everyday life.

<u>Interview key</u>:
T: Thomas Saylor
G: Georgia Myking
[text] = words added by editor, either for clarification or explanation
(***) = words or phrase unclear
NOTE: interview has been edited for clarity

Tape 1, Side A. Counter begins at 000.

T: Today is May 24, 2001. It's a beautiful sunny day in Cloquet, Minnesota, and I have the pleasure of sitting here with Georgia Myking. First, thank you very much for taking time to speak with me today.

G: You're welcome.

T: I want to begin by asking about December 7th, 1941, the day Pearl Harbor was attacked. Do you remember what you were doing when you heard that news?

G: No, I don't really remember. It was evening. It was just, it was so scary. I felt so bad. But I don't remember much of anything else.

T: Now in 1941 you'd been married a couple of years already, and you were living here in Cloquet. Do you remember how those people around you reacted, your neighbors or your husband?

G: Oh, I think everybody was really scared. They knew that it was war coming and it would affect all of our lives, so it was kind of scary.

T: Do you think as you reflect now, were you completely surprised by the fact that the US had now gotten involved with the war, or was this something that people were expecting sooner or later?

G: I just think we expected to go to war because of that.

T: Did you read the newspaper the next day or two, and see stories and pictures that came with that?

G: Oh yeah, we read all of that stuff. We watched it and listened to it on the radio at home. We didn't have TV then. So we listened to it on the radio.

T: Did you find yourself listening to the radio or watching the newspaper with a little more interest or sense of diligence than you did before that?

G: Anxiety.

T: Anxiety, that's a good word. Now for you, you didn't have any children that were old enough to be called up. What was the sense of anxiety for you?

G: Well, I figured my husband would probably be drafted.

T: That's right, he was born in 1916, so he would be twenty-five years of age. Was he ultimately drafted then?

G: He went to his physical. Then he was working and one day at work, some of the other men where he worked got their draft notice, so he came home to see if he got his and he did. So he went back. I had the thought, I had this little child, and I thought, I wouldn't want to live out on the river out in the country just to live in solitude. And I thought I wouldn't want to live out there by myself. I thought, I'll go to California and live with my aunt. That was my thought.

And then he went back to the mill after when he thought that the other men were going to be gone. He went back and started picking up his tools, because he'd been buying tools all the time, for his machinist work. He went to pick those up and one of the supervisors came by and saw him and he said, "What are you doing?" He said, "Picking up my tools, because I'm going into the service." And he said, "Oh no, that's a mistake, you're not supposed to be going. You got a deferment." Lawrence said, "I've decided I'm going to go." And [his supervisor] said, "Go over to the city hall and talk to them, it's hard to get out of a deferment." So he went over to the city hall and they told him that Conwith [Manufacturing, Cloquet] was making things for the Army, and that was why he got a deferment, and that he should stay there. So then he did.

(A, 93)

T: So Lawrence didn't <u>apply</u> for the deferment. Rather it was applied for, <u>for</u> him.

G: It had been given to him, that's right.

T: And that deferment was difficult to get out of. So even if he had <u>wanted</u> to go, in a sense, he was going to stay. That's a reversal of how the story usually goes. Well you mentioned that thoughts went through your mind of, "What if Lawrence goes?" You might even go to California. That's one way your life could have changed, rather drastically. He didn't go. *(ringing of clock in background)* How do you feel, in what ways did your life change after 1941?

G: Well, we stayed on that little farm [outside of Cloquet] for a couple more years. We had a daughter then. And then we had a house, it was kind of run down when we bought it. We painted, and put in a new roof, and fixed it up, so it looked real nice. We decided we would move on to something else. So we put it up for sale and it sold right away. We bought an apartment building, and it was very run down. The apartments, [the building] only had four, I think. And they were too large. And these apartments had a bedroom, and a living room, and kitchen. Then there was a doorway into two more rooms. A lot of the apartments had one of the rooms, just using it for a storeroom. And they heated this with wood stoves. It was a mess, really a mess.

It didn't pay enough; they didn't get enough rent from them to make the payments for heat, no, not heat. Taxes and a payment, because each person, at that time, was heating their own place. There was a law at that time that you couldn't raise rent.

T: Rent freezes?

G: You had to leave the rent where it was. So, I went to the [price control] board and asked them if we changed the apartments, made two apartments out of each one by closing that door and put in central heating, could we raise the rent? Yes, that was allowed then. So that's what we did. And it only had one bath, one toilet I should say. Maybe it had two toilets, maybe there was one on each floor. But there was no bathtub in the big building. So we put a bathtub in the lower one. I don't think we had a bathtub in the upstairs, just the one on the first floor. Then we put, everybody had their own washing machine, and tubs hanging out in the hallway. We asked everybody to move one at a time, to move out of the building, so we could move them. And we took out all of the washing machines and the tubs and stuff. Put a laundry in the basement. So we worked really hard on that.

One of the local Oldsmobile garages called us, and they asked if they could rent an apartment for a mechanic who was coming into town with his family. At that time, you couldn't buy a car unless you had some sort of connection. You couldn't even buy tires unless you had special permission. So we told him that we could rent them an apartment if we could buy a car from them. So we bought a new Oldsmobile from them and we gave this couple an apartment that was freshly painted and really looked nice. So it was a good arrangement for the both of us.

(A, 175)

T: You mentioned a moment go that the little house you had out in the country sold pretty fast. For a good price you felt.

G: We felt that it was a good price. They had paid us, definitely paid us. We had paid off the house, we only had it five years and in that time we had put a new roof on and painted the whole house.

T: So it sold pretty fast, and the apartment building you had, sounds like with the Oldsmobile dealer, that they were desperate to find an apartment for this guy.

G: Apartments were hard to come by.

T: So even with the rent freeze there wasn't much availability.

G: Right.

T: So people were, if they were coming into town, they needed to find a place to stay. So you had some leverage there, with this dealer to the point where they offered to sell you a car just to get the apartment and they were going to pay rent on the

apartment, so this wasn't any free deal. It was just to let you have it, we want to buy a car from you. That says something about how short the housing was.

G: Yeah, housing was short.

T: But so were cars apparently.

G: So were cars.

T: Now tires were a rationed item?

G: I think they were. They were hard to come by.

T: Any other ways you feel your life changed when the war started?

G: Well, they had coupon books, that you could get sugar and butter.

T: Do you remember those ration books?

G: Those were ration books. I don't remember, I know people had really looked down on margarine, and the margarine you could get, that you could just go to the store and buy. It was in a block, just like a pound of butter; it wasn't colored. It was white and you had to color it. Then a friend of ours found out that he could go over into Wisconsin and he could get margarine that was in a plastic bag that had a little capsule in it that was color. And you could just squeeze that bag and color it. You could buy as much of that as you wanted. We found that to be real good, and he bought margarine for lots of people. Because of the convenience of using it. So we bought margarine from him.

T: And you had used butter before the war started?

G: Oh yeah. And then sugar was real short, and a lot of people used honey for sweetening, cakes and stuff. And I liked honey, but I didn't like it in baked things. Things tasted different. I didn't like it.

T: How about the clothing, was clothing any more difficult to acquire?

G: Well, I tell you, we didn't buy much clothing. I made a lot of the clothing for the kids. We just didn't buy much clothing.

T: At the local stores, not the food stores, but if you went to a hardware store or a general dry goods store, did you find that the selection in the shop changed after we went to war?

G: I can't remember if it did, but it maybe did. We didn't have much money, so we didn't do a lot of shopping.

(A, 238)

T: I see. What I just laid here and what I'm displaying here, for Georgia, is a number of ration coupons. We've got supplemental mileage rations and this is from the state of Florida, it's a gasoline ration card. Were there such things in Minnesota, too, do you remember?

G: I don't remember gasoline being rationed, but maybe it was. I don't remember that being a problem. Because we had worked so very hard on that building. Lawrence would go to work in the morning and when he came home at three o' clock, he would start right to work on that building. During the day, I cleaned up stuff and pulled down stuff. And painted and worked on it, too. So we put in long hours on that.

And then finally, when we were getting where we had things pretty much under control, we decided that we were going to take a vacation. So we took the kids with us, just Larry was in school, he was in kindergarten or first grade. So we took him and Mary and went on a trip to Florida. And we were gone, I don't remember if it was three weeks or a month. It might have been just three weeks.

T: You mentioned the renovation of that apartment building and the installation of central heating. There must have been an awful lot of plumbing supplies, and paint, and brushes. Those things difficult to come by?

G: No. It was just the work. And what we did, the man who really owned the building, Lawrence went to him and asked him if he would help us with this. We said, "We have money for renovation," but we needed to make payments to him then. So, we got a satisfactory payment set up with him and then we put the money from our house, we had that in a separate account, and we put it into the renovation. And he liked that, because he figured there's no way he could lose on that.

T: So he remained the actual owner of the property?

G: Yeah. While we were renovating.

T: Did you ultimately, you and Lawrence, buy the property from him?

G: Oh yeah, we ended up paying for it. We had it all paid for. Once we got it paid for, we decided to sell it.

T: When did you sell it? Do you remember what year that was?

G: No, I don't remember what year it was.

T: Was it after the war?

G: Let's see, *(pauses three seconds)* Cathy was born there and she was, I think, she was born in '40. It must have been about a year after she was born that we bought this house across the street here then.

T: So you didn't have the apartment building for all that many years then?

G: No. We didn't have it for very many years.

T: But you never had any problem finding renters did you?

G: No *(laughs)*.

T: Let's go back to these coupons, here's a rationing poster *(displays war era posters on rationing themes)* and such things that you saw, encouraging people to go along with the rationing system. Rubber footwear was rationed too, some places.

G: I didn't know about that. That furnace that we put in was fuel oil, but I don't remember having any problem with it. The only problem that we had, was when [renters] called and said, "My apartment is too cold." And when we'd go outside [to check], there'd be somebody with the window open. And that would make us really upset.

T: Sure, heat going right out the window. Now did you have sugar allowance coupons?

G: Oh yeah.

T: How did that work? Were you issued so many depending on the size of your family?

G: I think so.

T: So you got these, how often, was it monthly?

G: I don't remember how often they came.

T: What did you do with yours?

G: I used them.

T: Did you use all of yours?

G: Usually. Sugar I would have used at least, because I did a lot of baking.

T: Were there coupons for other items, foodstuffs as well?

G: Yeah, there were coupons for butter and sugar I remember, but I don't remember what else.

T: Somebody once mentioned coffee.

G: I think so.

T: If you didn't use all your coupons, what happened to them? For example, coffee or butter?

G: I think they just were wasted. Or you could give them to somebody.

T: You could give them away?

G: I think you could. I don't know.

T: They weren't issued just to Georgia Myking, for example?

G: I don't think so.

T: Let's see what else we have in here. *(pages through volume of ration stamps and posters)* Now these are for food, this is for flour. Do you remember the difference between the colors of stamps, red, blue, green?

G: The only thing I can remember about the coupons was sugar and butter.

T: Butter was produced in Wisconsin and Minnesota too, where was all that butter going?

G: I don't know.

T: Wasn't going to the stores, huh?

G: Most of it was service, but I don't know how much they got.

T: Were you and Lawrence off the farm by the end of 1942?

G: Yeah.

(A, 329)

T: Okay, let me put these ration stamp coupons away here. Now you were married, just to move on here.

(Phone rings, tape paused and starts again)

T: Okay, back on. Now you were already married on New Year's Eve of 1937, and your marital status didn't change during the war, but you did have two of your children were born during the war. How did that, how did the war impact that, about the kids being born? Was your life more difficult, having kids do you think during that time?

G: No. I didn't think the war was too, was a big difficulty for us at all. There were little things, you know, that, like the rationing. You just did it, and there wasn't anything real important. It was just something you had to do.

T: Lots of jobs were filled by women during the war. Did it ever occur to you to go out and get a job somewhere?

G: Lawrence had told me when we got married, "I don't want you working outside of the home." So I just never did it. I always found it enough work, what I needed to do at home. We were always remodeling a house, and I was painting and cleaning, and tearing up and had stuff to do. And I did it done.

T: Yeah, you described it and that seems to have gone on for a long bit of time.

G: Many years.

T: Did you know anybody in your neighborhood, or family members, women who did decide to go out and work?

G: *(pauses three seconds)* Some of my friends worked in stores, were clerks, but other than that, I didn't know anybody that. I know that women did go and work on boats, or did work on boats and stuff like that, but I never knew any of the women that did.

T: But you noticed some people who went to work in town with some of the retail places. Were those people, women who hadn't worked before, but were taking advantage of the opportunities?

G: Yeah.

T: Now Cloquet was about how big during the '40s?

G: I don't really remember. But I know it has grown [since then].

T: It's about eleven thousand now, I think, which is, seems pretty big in some ways. Well, being in the town life, it's sometimes in a big city people react in certain ways, and in small towns too. How do you think from your perception, how did life in Cloquet, Minnesota, change as a result of the US going into war?

G: *(pauses three seconds)* You know, I didn't think too much about it changing. Maybe it did, but people were kind of anxious. There were a lot of people that got bad news, somebody being killed or something. And Lawrence's two brothers were in the service, and we were anxious about that. But then they came home okay.

T: Do you know what branch of the service they were in?

G: One was in the [Army] infantry, and the other was in the… Phyllis [Blasney]'s husband, she was married to Lawrence's brother. She's (***) now, but she was married to Lawrence's brother. I know he was in the submarine, I don't know if he was, I guess he would have been in the Navy.

T: Yes, that's Navy, the submarines. But they both came through the war?

G: They both came through the war and they both died of heart attacks later.

T: Really. Did the war, do you think, bring the community of Cloquet together, in a sense of we're in this together. Or not do you think?

G: I don't know if it did, I didn't really…

T: Were there visual things, like scrap metal drives or rolling of bandages for the Red Cross? Remember any of that kind of stuff going on?

G: Well, I know we rolled bandages, but that was later. And we rolled them for sending overseas to Third World countries that don't have bandages. I know that they did roll bandages for the service, but I was never into that. I had the little kids and I was, I pretty much just worked at home.

T: Were holidays like the Fourth of July, or Labor Day, or Armistice Day being celebrated with any more a sense of fervor or patriotism than they had been in the past?

G: You know, I can't remember.

T: Well, let me change the subject. Think of yourself here for a minute, in that apartment building. Would you say that you were, were you and Lawrence better or worse off, or about the same?

G: I think we were probably about the same. We worked hard, his wages were very small. We saved every cent that we could. When we had that apartment building, we started, we made a little store, a convenience store in the front of it. I took care of that, day and night. And would run and do other things if no one was there. So we were very economical and we worked hard.

T: So you were also responsible for the little store, as well as trying to help with the renovations, as well as trying to manage the household and take care of the kids. You didn't have time to work to work let alone sleep *(laughs)*.

G: I didn't have much time.

T: Is that apartment building still standing?

G: Yeah, it's on the corner over here [nearby].

T: Do you know what the address is for that place?

G: I don't know if it's 622, or what it is.

T: It's Allen Street?

G: But it's on the corner of the next street, on Laurel Street.

T: I am just curious, maybe I'll go take a look at it. It seems everything is so close here.

G: They took that store out after, well, we took it out after our third child was born. We decided to close the store and we made our apartment larger then.

T: You were living in that building then?

G: We were living in that building, yeah. We lived in it the whole time we renovated. We moved from one spot to a different one in the building.

T: Were you attending church fairly regularly during that time?

G: Not real regularly.

T: But you were members at Bethany [Church in Cloquet]?

G: We were members of it. And [Lawrence's] parents went there, but we didn't go real regular.

T: And you mentioned a moment ago that the church did have a bandage rolling program. Do you remember any other kind of ways they might have helped in the war effort? Large or small, collecting scrap metal or other things like that?

G: I don't think they did.

T: Is that a large church?

G: No, it's a small church.

T: Where about is that located?

G: Well now, at that time it wasn't located where it is now. This is a whole other story. We were on 10th street and now it's an Al-anon [Alcoholics Anonymous] building.

T: The old church you were in?

G: Yeah. The church had bought a house and changed it into a church. And it got too small for our congregation and we had looked at this house on 6th St. and Carleton Ave. And then Swedish Zion had wanted to sell their church, but they wanted far more than our people could afford to pay, so we just skipped it. Sometime later then, when we had moved to the country, I see this parsonage next to the church for sale and asked my husband if I should go and look at it. And he said, "Sure, why would it hurt?" I went and looked at in and just loved it.

So at the next date I had him go look at it. Well, we just told the real estate man we'd like to buy the house, but not the church. The church was for sale. Another group had bought it and it went bankrupt. So we told him that we would

like the house, but not the church and he said he was sorry, but he couldn't sell it that way. He had to sell the whole thing. We said, well give us time. We'll go to the congregation and ask them if they'd be interested in it. So Lawrence said, "You'll have to tell them, I won't do it."

So I was elected to ask the congregation if they'd be interested in purchasing this church from us if we bought it. But we wanted the house. They said, give us some time to look at it and think about it. So it went on for about a month and the realtor said, "I have to know." So we had another meeting and all but one person agreed that they would buy the church from us. We told them that what we would do, if they were interested, they could have the building, church on 6th street and they could put the deed for the church on 10th St. to us. We would just exchange if they wanted to do that. That was fine with them. So that's the way it was. Then we went ahead and bought that house and church. Then the congregation started fixing it.

(A, 467)

T: When you went to church during this time, that is, what you heard from the pulpit on Sunday morning, at all reflecting the fact that we were at war?

G: I don't remember much of it. I remember that a lot of people had different ideas, as they all did and still do. One would have one idea and another would have another idea. They wouldn't always mesh.

T: That still is the case. Did people talk about that, talk about the wars?

G: Oh yes, people talked about it. I think it was on everyone's mind, always.

T: In one, in different ways.

G: In one way or the other. They had someone in the war, or they were afraid someone was going. There was a lot of things to think of.

T: That being afraid of someone maybe having to go and not being able to influence at all. You had to sit and wait and worry about it. For the worriers among us, that's really awful. Have you thought about an average day for yourself? You talked a lot about the kind of work you did during this time; it was substantial, you did an awful lot of things. Did you feel that the United States being at war changed the kind of life that you led? In a sense, try to imagine if we hadn't gone to war, how might your life have been different during that period? What might have happened that didn't or what might not have happened that did?

G: You know, I don't know how I would have been different. It probably would have, but I don't…

T: It seems like, for example, the apartment building. Do you think that you were both encouraged to work hard and buy that place because rents were high, or because it was difficult to find a place and people were more likely to rent?

G: Well, we fixed, we bought the house out on Sunnyside [outside of town] and then fixed it up and then sold it. We almost doubled our money, so we thought that when we bought this apartment building and fixed it up, we would again, maybe not double it, but again be paid back for our work, and that was true, we were. And then we bought a farm, five miles out of town and that was an old house too and we fixed that up and sold that. And again we got a lot more. I don't know if it was just that we fixed it up, that was part of it, but the times were changing too. And each time along the way, houses were getting more expensive, so we got more money by far from our farm than we had paid. Plus we had lived there, we had a big garden, we had all of our vegetables. We raised all of our meat, our milk, our butter. We had a good living there, maybe too good.

T: Sounds like those decent real estate prices, encouraged you to think along those lines?

G: They did. And each time we bought a house, the first one we bought wasn't in good repair, but it was all we could afford, so we bought it. And that worked out real fine. This, the apartment building, when the realtor showed us that, I was so angry. I thought, "How could he think we would buy anything that looked so bad?" But then we thought about it a few days. And we thought, there's no reason it can't be fixed. So we went to work on it. It was hard work.

T: That's an important way things impacted you, in this case real estate property value questions, impacted and influenced how you and Lawrence made decisions about whether to buy and to sell.

G: And Lawrence's wages at Conwith were never one of the higher paying deals. It was second, I should say. The toothpick [factory workers] were paid the least wages, but then Conwith was second. It paid nowhere near what [Northwest] paper mill [in Cloquet] paid.

T: Northwest Paper. So they were known in town as being the highest wages?

G: Yeah, they had the highest wages. And his wages were never real good.

T: Did Lawrence ever consider moving up to the Northwest Paper there, to work?

G: I don't know if he didn't think he could get in there. It was difficult to get in there.

T: It sounds like if it was known to be better, people were probably anxious to work there, if they could. He lasted forty-two and a half years [at Conwith], so it must have been.

G: I kept telling him, he said, "My brother makes more at paper mill than I do." I said, "You know, it's not how much you get, it's what you do with what you've got." That's what counts, and that's what we did.

T: That's good advice. Okay, let me get another visual prompt out here. I was reading the Cloquet *Pine Knot* in the [Minnesota Historical Society] archive, and I came across this headline. That's for the day President Roosevelt died. *(displays Pine Knot first page)* I think the *Pine Knot* came out on Fridays in those days and President Roosevelt had died on Thursday, so this was brand new news and it made the headline here on Friday April 13, 1945.

G: *(reading story from Pine Knot page one)* County men difficult to report for induction.

T: Yeah, they got a bunch of them there. Go ahead and read the names.

G: *(reads through names in article)*

T: Do you remember hearing the news that President Roosevelt died?

G: Oh yeah.

T: How did that impact you?

G: Oh, I was always sad when one of the presidents died.

T: President Roosevelt specifically, was he a person that had more of an impact do you think?

G: I thought he did a lot for the country. I felt the worst when Kennedy died.

T: Worse than when President Roosevelt?

G: Yeah. Maybe because he was shot.

T: President Roosevelt had been ill for a while. Do you remember that being a big deal around town, with your relatives, your family when President Roosevelt died?

G: No, I think everybody felt kind of bad, but not anything special that I remember.

T: Let me try another one, I've got all sorts of things here. *(displays newspaper first page)* How about this one, this is from the *St. Paul Dispatch*, August 14, 1945. It's VJ Day. Japan is about the surrender. This is the big extra. What do you remember about when you got the news that the war was finally over?

(A, 555)

G: I think it was great, I think people were happy.

T: How about you specifically? You didn't have any brothers or sisters serving overseas, your children weren't old enough, what kind of emotions did this leave you with personally?

G: *(pauses four seconds)* I can't remember.

T: Did you feel this sense of anxiety or something was lifted now that the war was over?

G: I think so.

T: I'm going to show you some that I've got in relation to this. This is the big city, downtown St. Paul. Just some pictures of people, again this is from the same paper, August 15, 1945, St. Paul. *(displays photographs of downtown St. Paul, Minnesota, on VJ-Day)*

G: *(looking through photos)* People are excited, aren't they?

T: Lots of people in downtown St. Paul.

G: See, I don't think they did that here in Cloquet.

End of side A. Side B begins.

T: Well, let me ask you, with these images of downtown St. Paul, was there any spontaneous or planned celebration here in Cloquet, sort of people letting off steam when they heard the news about Japan surrendering?

G: I don't think so. There may have been things, but we didn't go to everything that they did. Like I say, we had the two little kids. We worked a lot. We didn't go to some of the things that they did.

T: That's interesting, I've often wondered how different it was. We see all these images of St. Paul and Minneapolis and New York. If you talk to people now, who were alive then. The ten million people who say they were at these parades, and all you see is several hundred. People want to in many cases to identify with those events. I just wondered if there was something in a small town that matched that.

G: I can't remember that there was.

T: There were some celebrations in Duluth. I was reading some Duluth papers from the same day, 15 August 1945. They had some celebrations on the main street of Duluth.

G: Duluth gets a lot more involved than Cloquet does.

T: The big city stuff?

G: Yeah. Marching and getting groups together, groups that marched on the street and stuff. Cloquet will have parades, but that's about it. For marching and…

T: What's the relationship between Duluth and Cloquet? Do people here perceive of Duluth as the big city?

G: I think so. A bigger city.

T: A bigger city. And what do people from Duluth think of places like this, Cloquet and these kind of places, or don't they think of these places at all?

G: I don't know. All of these smaller places go to Duluth for shopping, for some shopping. And if there's something you can't find there, then Minneapolis is close enough that you can go.

T: How long does it take to drive to Duluth?

G: Only about twenty minutes.

T: Do you go there for shopping or services yourself?

G: We only go there for special things. Maybe to Menards [home improvement retailer] for stuff like that. Cloquet has lost some of the lumber, one of our lumber stores has closed. So we don't have too much, we don't have a good place to buy 2x4s and wood and different stuff.

T: That's in Duluth now.

G: But Duluth has it, and lots of lumber stores in Duluth. You can buy anything there.

T: It's just close enough now that these smaller towns can't compete with the selection I suppose.

G: I suppose, I don't know what. I don't know what happened with this lumber store. The hardware, plumbing and hardware stuff, M and M has; they have a store attached.

T: That's in Duluth?

G: Yeah, we don't have trouble with that. And Wal Mart [a retail store] has about everything except 2x4s.

T: And they're pretty recently arrived here?

G: Yeah. When Wal Mart came in, White Drug [smaller drugstore] went out, and they had clothing and all kinds of stuff. They went out and Pamida [local store], too.

T: So two older, established stores went out. That's a good oral history project for someone a few years down. How small towns have been impacted by things like Wal Mart and also other transportation that makes places like Duluth just a small distance.

G: No problem.

T: There's a grocery store right down the hill here. And so for immediate needs you…

G: It does very well.

T: It's the biggest one in town?

G: Yeah.

T: Just close enough to Duluth to be a problem if you're going into business; you'd have to have something a little different, or everyday products. You wouldn't want to go to Duluth for grocery shopping.

G: There's some people that do go there to go to Cub Foods. I have went there and I don't find that it's… If I get one thing for a little bit less, I pay more for something else.

T: Not worth the drive.

G: It isn't worth going there. I don't do it.

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T: Let me just ask you one more question. If you think of the larger sense, a big picture of yourself, the 1940s for example, you're twenty-two years of age. You've just been living in Cloquet for a couple of years. Think of 1945-46, by that time you're twenty-eight years old and you've got two kids. How's your life different than that period of five, six years before and after?

G: Well, I had worked for, I had done housework for other people before that. I had always done housework for myself. I liked that better, and I didn't mind doing housework for other people. I liked being married and having my own home. Like I say, Lawrence didn't make much, our money was very tight. We kept a cash book, we wrote down everything that we spent, even stamps. So we knew where our money was going. That was the only way that I think we could have made it and ever come out ahead.

T: When the war was over and you were twenty-seven, twenty-eight years old, were you optimistic about the future?

G: Oh, I think so. I think I was always optimistic.

T: As a person?

G: Yeah.

T: Good. So you thought about your life in the war as past, and as you looked to the '50s, you said you were fairly upbeat, positive about your own situation. How about for the country as a whole, did you feel the country was moving in the right direction?

G: I thought so, I always thought we were progressing rather than going back.

T: Okay, this is the part, the question where I ask if there's anything I forgot to ask. Things that you'd like to include, but I didn't get around to. So this is thing that if there's something you wanted to tell, this is the time to do it.

G: I can't think of anything else. I'm eighty-two and forgetting a little bit of stuff, but…

T: I've enjoyed this immensely. I've enjoyed speaking with you, and learned a number of very interesting things. Thank you very much for the interview, and at this point I'm going to turn the recorder off.

END OF INTERVIEW