

**JAKE S. WISSLER.**

**Interview 028a**

**December 18, 1982, at home of Jake S. Wissler 902 South Meadows**

**Becky Bailey, Interviewer**

**Retyped by Courtney Lawrence**

**ABSTRACT:** In this interview with Becky Bailey, Ohio native Jake Wissler recalls life during the Depression. After the stock market crash in 1929, Mr. Wissler lost his job as a machinist and eventually joined the Army. He spent three years as a machinist and carpenter in the Army, serving mainly in Panama, and then returned to Chicago where he married his wife, Bella, and continued looking for work. The Wisslers survived the Depression in Chicago and Ohio and eventually moved to Panama.

**Becky Bailey (hereafter BB):** Today's date is December 18, 1982 and I am interviewing Mr. J. S. Wissler at his home at 902 South Meadows. Mr. Wissler, where were you born?

**Jake S. Wissler (hereafter JW):** Cam, Fayette, Ohio.

**BB:** How far is that. Is that close to Canton? Is that where?

**JW:** No, it is. I grew up in Canton. Uh. Fayette is close to Toledo, Ohio.

**BB:** When were you born?

**JW:** July 31, 1910.

**BB:** And your parents' names were?

**JW:** Jacob S. Wissler and Emma Wissler.

**BB:** Were they? Were their parents from Ohio, too?

**JW:** My father's. My grandfather was Jacob S. Wissler in Ohio, born in Ohio. And my mother was born in Germany.

**BB:** Oh. Do you have brothers and sisters?

**JW:** I have a sister, Francis.

**BB:** Where does she live?

**JW:** She lives in Oak Park, Illinois.

**BB:** How did you end up in Texas?

**JW:** Uh, this is going to be a long story. Do you want it down here?

**BB:** No no, okay, we'll wait. Alright, let's see, in 1910, you were 19 when the Depression hit in 1929.

**JW:** That's right. Well, uh it didn't.

**BB:** Were you living...

**JW:** Well, it didn't, the crash was '29. It was one of these slow affairs. Sort of creeping. It really didn't hit bad until about '30 and up into '31. I was working. I had a job up until May of 1931.

**BB:** What were you doing?

**JW:** I was a machinist.

**BB:** Did you train for this on the job?

**JW:** Yea. No, well I uh took it in a high school as a high school subject. And uh then when my father died in my second year of high school. I uh went to work for the Temcon Roller Bearing Company as an apprentice machinist. And the machinist business, that is I was supposed to spend two years with the Temcon Roller Bearing Company and that plus my high school experience was supposed to qualify me as a journeyman machinist.

**BB:** Okay, that means...

**JW:** Journeyman means the regular level, operating level. I was...would then be qualified to teach others a machinist trade.

**BB:** Was this unionized or was this simply?

**JW:** No, that was before the time of unions, unions. About the only thing unionized those days was some coal miners. The union was not wide spread like it is today. The unions really didn't gain power 'til I think 1937, I believe it was. The Congress passed some laws. I don't recall them just at the moment. But gave considerable impetus and strength to the unions.

**BB:** Were you living at home still? You said your father was dead. Were you supporting your mother and sister at this time?

**JW:** I ...while at the, let's see. I don't know what time you mean.

**BB:** Okay, at 19.

**JW:** When I was 19, I was bitten with the air bug. That is I wanted to fly. At this time it was not too long after World War I. After World War I, it was common for aviators from the, that had been in the war to, you know, buy up planes. Government surplus planes and barnstorm around the country. Just taking people for rides. They fly into and out of a pasture or a small airport and take people for rides. And one of these fellows came through Canton and I got bitten by the bug. So, I uh, there was in Chicago a school started up sort of a Jerkwater school, you might call it. Built around, that is the air program, was built around one individual, a Captain J. P. Bryan, who had been an aviator in World War I. And a representative of the school came through Canton, looking for young people that were interested in going to school that is. They had...that is the school, that they were representing was Greer Aviation College.

**BB:** Were there any kind of minimum requirements that sort of thing like high school diploma or?

**JW:** No. All they wanted was three hundred dollars. That's all they wanted. I went up there, went up to Chicago. And I didn't have all the money. But they would get you a job. So I gave them a minimum amount, I don't remember what it was, and they got me a job. And I went to work as a machinist. So I went to work daytimes as a machinist and nighttime I went to Aviation College learning about airplane engines and uh airplane construction. We even built a plane while I was going. One of these little planes and they took it out and they flew it. But I never got to the point of doing any flying myself. I always felt I was cheated.

**BB:** Yes, I would too, if you worked that hard at it and then didn't get to go. I noticed...I've been reading some of the Lufkin newspapers during this time and every paper had in it, something about somebody flying from...you know, the distance things and all of that. Everybody was bitten I think.

**JW:** Well, this was in...we'll say 1929. Uh, the first flight across the English Channel was in 1903. So, we're only twenty six years from the first flight.

**BB:** Yes. We're really getting after it. Okay, let's go way back then. What were you, about sixteen, when you first went to work then as a machinist?

**JW:** Yes.

**BB:** Was that about right? Okay, do you remember your...the hours that you worked and the pay you got, that sort of thing.

**JW:** Hang on a minute. If you want to shut it down.

**BB:** Okay.

**JW:** As an apprentice with the Temcon Roller Bearing Company, I started at twenty two cents an hour and the working day was from 7:30 in the morning until 5:00 in the evening. This was about nine hours, I guess, with a half hour for lunch.

**BB:** Was it six days a week or?

**JW:** Five and a half days a week.

**BB:** Five and a half.

**JW:** Yes. And of course, you progress, I...progressed to thirty nine cents an hour by the time that I had finished my time there in 1929. I started at Temcon's in 1927 and worked until 1929.

**BB:** So that was almost three years.

**JW:** Yes. About two years. Yes.

**BB:** Okay, do you remember what you were making when you went in Toledo? No, Chicago, wasn't it?

**JW:** To Chicago.

**BB:** When you were working there?

**JW:** Yes, I started there at sixty cents an hour with the partition machinery company. This was an organization that was started by the...well, the shop was set up by a paper mill that was headquartered down in Illinois along the Illinois River. They....in order to sell their paper products they manufactured machines that used the paper products. And....they were developing some new machines and...they set up this shop in Chicago and I...went to work there and worked with them through this period. I progressed there from sixty cents an hour to eighty cents an hour. I was making that when the Depression finally hit us in May of '31 and the...a cancellation of an order for six machines caused the paper mill to decide to shut down the shops. So they folded the whole bit up. Everybody was laid off. And....they took the principals, that is, they had several engineers working there and the superintendent of the works and...a couple of foremen. These people went back to the paper mill to some jobs there and the rest of us were just laid off.

**BB:** How many were laid off, then?

**JW:** I would guess that there were around twenty people. Maybe a few more. Twenty, Twenty-four or twenty-five. Something like that. It was a small place.

**BB:** Right. Do you remember? Were all the other jobs by this time dried up? In Chicago? Were you able to find something?

**JW:** Well, I sought other work around Chicago for a couple of months unsuccessfully. Even Greer was not able to help. That is Greer Aviation College, was not able to help then. In fact, Greer was sort of folding up itself. Captain Bryan got a job teaching aviation engineering at the University of Michigan and he left. He was the Aviation College. When he left it folded up. In fact, he left behind some of his things and I had some here. I fished them out of the odd corners and took them, kept them.

**BB:** What did you do after you weren't able to find work, then?

**JW:** Well, in the trade you heard rumor travel. And I talked to others that were in the same boat. I heard that there might be some work out in San Francisco. So, I had a little money left so, I bought a bus ticket out to San Francisco. Went out there looking for work. At that time, the travel was a little difficult. It took us seven days to get out there. And during part of the time I was friendly, got friendly with one of the bus drivers. We hit Cheyenne, no, it was Omaha, Nebraska...Grand Island, Nebraska, that was it. Grand Island, Nebraska. And it was May and they had a freak snowstorm out there. And they...the bus we were in was a large bus for that time. It couldn't get through, so they decided to break it up into two smaller buses. That is, all the passengers that were due beyond Grand Island, they were going to break it up into two smaller, two small bus; but they didn't have a driver so like I say, I was friendly with the bus driver so I said, "I'll bus or I'll drive the bus. You go ahead so I can follow you. And this we did. I drove from there up to Cheyenne, Wyoming. The other bus...it was an interesting experience because the roads were snowed over than they just headed out across the fields. All you had was a line of flags to follow and then you followed the line of flags. So.

**BB:** None of these snow plows or anything like that. You just took out.

**JW:** No, there weren't any snow plows then. You just went where the drifts were lightest. In the level fields, it was the lightest. There we went.

**BB:** Well, did you have any luck in San Francisco? When you got there were the rumors true?

**JW:** I tried several places and there was nothing there. It was as bad there as in Chicago. And my money was running low. So I started back for Chicago. And doing odd jobs and thumbing rides. Riding on trains in the blind. Things like this. Finally made it back to Chicago. Let's see, I think it was about July. Yes, about July that I started back. It took me till the first part of August to get back to Chicago.

**BB:** So, you were a couple of months on the road?

**JW:** Yes.

**BB:** Was it hard catching trains? Were there policemen out to check or anything like that?

**JW:** Well, I teamed up with a couple of other guys that uh...

**BB:** Were in the same boat, uh?

**JW:** Well, they had a little more expertise than I did. So, they kept me out of trouble, let's say. No, I was never chased. I was lucky; I was never chased. It was dirty. It was rough. By rough, I mean you don't have cushioned seats to ride on, like you...you know what "riding the blind" is, don't you?

**BB:** No, uh-uh. What is that?

**JW:** You're riding between two cars. You know the cars couple together. And you just stand there and hang on.

**BB:** Oh, my word. I thought maybe you jumped in a boxcar or on a gondola or something.

**JW:** No, no. I rode the blind most of the time. And when the car...when the train slowed down for a yard or something, why if you were getting shaky or tired or something you would jump off, and rest up or something like that.

**BB:** And just catch the next one coming by.

**JW:** Catch the next one coming through. But uh...

**BB:** Where would you sleep? Just camp out along the...

**JW:** Camp out. You find a spot. Hole up, a haystack or a barn.

**BB:** Were people nice to you? Did they offer help as you went along?

**JW:** Well, uh.

**BB:** Or did you ask much?

**JW:** Well, you asked if there was something you could do to earn something. I did find something to...

**BB:** Pay for your meals as you went along.

**JW:** Yes, to do. Get something to eat. I think I went one or two days without something to eat. But this was accepted. And...when I landed in Chicago. I landed in the railroad yard. And you're walking. I think that I went over to neighborhood. See in Chicago when I was going to Greer College, Bella's folks....Greer College was a real neat hookup. They had houses. They leased houses. From and I think, what's his name?

**Mrs. Wissler (hereafter MW):** Tishner.

**JW:** Brought Tishner brought some of the houses, didn't he?

**MW:** He made rooming houses out of them.

**JW:** Made rooming houses out of them and hired people to run them. And of course the people hired to run them, they had a place to stay. It was free rent for them. And they took care of the place. They....let's see, you didn't make up the beds, did you, or did you? You did. All right, they made up the beds.

**MW:** All of the housekeeping.

**JW:** Housekeeper. They made up the beds. They had guys like myself, bachelors, kids, or what not, that were going to school there.

**BB:** Just a minute. By that time you were out of money.

**JW:** I was out of money and I was pretty flat. So, the fellow that later became my brother-in-law, he had told me, if you're ever hard up, you can always get a meal at an Army post. And in Chicago on the west side, the rooming house was on the east side, on the west side was a quarter master depot. This was a place where the quarter master corps stored equipment that was used by the quarter master. If you've have been in the Army or connected with it you might know....

**BB:** I've heard of it.

**JW:** You might know what depot is.

**BB:** Yes.

**JW:** There was a quarter master depot over there that I was aware of, so I walked over there. Now here, you walked. This was about, I would say, nine or ten miles from their place over to it. I had been walking before that.

**BB:** Before that.

**JW:** That was nothing new. But I, as a means of locomotion everybody now has a car and you don't go anywhere without a car. But in those days you walked, you hoofed it. So, I walked over and I propositioned the cook or the mess sergeant. I said, "Look, I am up against it. I am hungry. I have no place to stay. How about washing dishes for you or shining shoes or making beds or doing something like this. Maybe I can get something to eat. You'll give me something to eat. If the business works, maybe I'll have a place to sleep around here." So, it sounded like a good deal to him, so he put me to work washing dishes and that night they rigged me up with a bunk in the corner of the kitchen. So the next day, I started propositioning the soldiers. You want somebody to shine your shoes a

dime, fifteen cents. And I got, oh, six or eight of them who were willing. So I shined shoes and washed dishes and stayed there. This would be about from the first part of August till about the end of August. And then the....

**BB:** This was 1931. Still' 31.

**JW:** Yes. And then the....the mess officer came through on an inspection tour and discovered me and said this was a no-no. You can't do this anymore. He said, "If you want to, I'll be glad to enlist you in the Army. But you can't stay here." Well, winter was coming. So I said, "Okay. I'll join the Army."

**BB:** Did they have a lot of recruits at this time? Were people wanting to join 'cause they couldn't find work anywhere else?

**JW:** Well, uh. Yes. I went up. They sent me up to Fort Sheriden. Now they started paying my transportation. They gave me "L" fare. "L" fare was a dime incidentally.

**BB:** Oh, okay.

**JW:** But uh. Yes, I was sent up to Fort Sheriden and there I was sworn into the Army. And they had...oh..as I recall they had...they were forming recruit company's. And a company with a couple of hundred at a crack. And they were asking you, "Where did you want to go." They were giving you a choice. Most of the new recruits were being sent out of the United States. You had a choice of the Philippines, Hawaii, or Panama. And in Hawaii. It would have been the Air Corp and me...I was gung ho Air Corp. So, I said, "Okay. I want to get into the Air Corp in Hawaii." Ok, so I was put down for Air Corp Hawaii and me and I think about thirty of us were shipped over to Fort Slocum, New York. It was on an island off of Rochelle. New Rochelle, New York. And here they were gathering people, that is recruits, from various parts of the United States, until they had a boat load to take them out of the New York harbor to.

**BB:** To wherever.

**JW:** Wherever it was going.

**BB:** Did you go through a basic training like they do now?

**JW:** No, no. Yes, they did and they didn't. But they discovered that I had abilities, particular abilities. So they put me in the carpenter's shop. And while in the carpenter shop I had a comparative amount of freedom. That is, other people weren't telling me what to do and things like this. There were jobs that needed to be done and uh I did them with a fair amount of ability. One of the things that really got them going. They..Fort Slocum was an old place. This had been built, I would say about the mid-1800's. And....and Army post, that was a regular Army post from way back in the mid-1800's. They had the parade ground, and around the parade ground were the officers' quarters. The officers' quarters were fancy, big brick buildings. Beautiful. Each one, that is, there

was the post commander was the Colonel, his was the big fancy one. Then as you went down the line a little less, a little less, a little less down to the Lieutenant's on the....but they were around the parade ground. And then back away from the parade ground was the barracks. And the individual homes, little wood houses for the non-coms. The enlisted personnel and, of course, the Privates like myself. We were in the barracks. But....the quarters being built back then....each room had a fireplace in it. They were in the big officer's quarters. And I noticed these fireplaces standing empty.....standing empty and I mentioned to the fellow that run the carpenter shop, he was a non-com, staff sergeant-I think at the time. I mentioned to him, "Hey, we have some...packing cases here that are pretty good lumber and some of these quarters, they've got these fireplaces and....I hear the women complaining that they have no closets. Look why don't' we take this stuff and enclose a couple of those fireplaces and make closets out of them. We can close them off to the outside. So he says, "Okay, go ahead and try it." So I did this to a couple and....right away.

**BB:** They liked it.

**JW:** Everybody wanted one. I mean we just didn't have enough scrap lumber to make...enclose fireplaces into closets. The result was....that the post quarter master, who was in charge of the carpenter shop, come down and said, "Hey, we'd like you to stay here. You're doing things we enjoy."

**BB:** Made things a little easier.

**JW:** So they made me an offer to stay but, I was young and...

**BB:** You wanted to go to Hawaii.

**JW:** I was nuts about air corp. So, I refused. They did keep me. I landed up there in I think.....about the middle of September, that they shipped us up there from Sheridan to Slocum. And....they wouldn't let me go until November. They scratched me off of two ships, two ships that sailed. And I was getting antsy. I was scratched twice. You know, they put the list out there of who's going.

**BB:** And there would be your name.

**JW:** And....then....so they deleted it. But I did get out in November. I told them, "Look. Hey, I don't have to do this. Okay."

**BB:** When you got to Hawaii did you get to fly?

**MW:** No.

**BB:** No?

**JW:** I didn't get to Hawaii.

**BB:** Oh, you never made it to Hawaii.

**JW:** No. When I...when we...the ships went through, the route was through the Panama Canal, they dropped off the Panama people, and then they went to Hawaii and dropped the Hawaiian people, went out to the Philippines dropped the Philippine people. And then picked up a load of...see you served two years. And you rotated. The ones that were due to come back, they would bring them back. Do the same thing in reverse. When I got to...when the ship got to Panama, they called me out and said, "You're going ashore here." Well, I said, "I am Air Corp Hawaii." They said, "Well, we need you here. We've got to have you here and you're going to get off here in the signal corp. I found out later that they had a mechanic who had died. And they had to replace him and there was nobody in the whole ship with mechanic experience except me. So I was it.

**BB:** So you stayed.

**JW:** So I wound up in Panama.

**BB:** When you enlisted in the Army, how many years did you sign up for? Did you sign up for three or four?

**JW:** For three, it was....yes, at that time it was...a hitch was three years. Standard three years.

**BB:** So how long did you serve in the Philippines?

**JW:** No, in Panama.

**BB:** In Panama, not the Philippines. Panama.

**JW:** Uh, I stayed there until July of 1934. They....I was rotated back then.

**BB:** And you went back to...

**JW:** My two years was up. And then I was discharged from the Army. I could of continued in the Army. I took a discharge. And I went back to Chicago..

**MW:** We got married.

**JW:** Lookin' for Mrs. Wissler. Well no, I take that back. I went home first, to Ohio. And then from there, I went back to Chicago and propositioned her.

**BB:** I think that's proposed! Well, by this time in the civilian life, were things easier? Were you able to find a job? Or were things bad?

**JW:** Things didn't look good. We got married...well, here again, I had saved some money. I think we had about three hundred dollars.

**MW:** Two hundred.

**JW:** Two hundred dollars. And my sister and her husband, had an apartment, and he was working. And...we got married from the home in Canton, that is the whole....I went back after coming up there and asking you if you would marry me, then I went back home. And...her mother and dad drove her down from Chicago. And....we took off to West Virginia, because we had to wait in Ohio. I forget what in the dickens the law was, but we would have had to wait. So we went down to West Virginia to get married. We walked into the clerk's office down there and applied for a marriage license and he proceeds to write us up. Then he gets me and my age and then he asks her..her age and she is twenty. And he says, "No can do. She's got to be twenty-one or over for me to issue a license." So you tell it.

**MW:** Well, my mother and father were standing up right there with us. And I said, "Oh ma, did you hear that?" And the clerk asked me if this was my mother? And I said, "Yes, my mother and father. Oh well, that's different." And he gave us a marriage license.

**BB:** As long as your folks approved, it was ok.

**JW:** So we got married in West Virginia and went back to Canton, and moved in with my sister and her husband. And....that was our honeymoon. The next day I went out pounding the pavements looking for work.

**BB:** Were you able to find something right away?

**JW:** We were married September 1, and uh, September 10, I had been looking in between. Let's see, from about the middle of July, till I went, I didn't go up to Chicago right away. I think I came up there in August, yes. I landed at home. I was pounding the pavements.

**BB:** The whole time from July until September, until you found something.

**JW:** Yes, and....in September a foreman from one of the shops there came to the house and....said that uh, they were, it was a dental equipment manufacturing company. And...they started up....they were an up and down business. They started after the school year started. And they knew about how many dental students in their area there would be. Then they started up and they ground out so much dental equipment that they expected to sell. Or felt sure they could sell. And when that was finished, why then they shut down until the following fall. They just ran from fall into the spring. So uh...

**BB:** That was just depending on how many kids graduated with dental, that they could sell dental equipment to.

**JW:** Yes, they could sell dental equipment to. And uh, so I worked from September 10 till February 28.

**BB:** How much did you make then?

**JW:** I made forty cents an hour.

**BB:** OOO! The wages were way down. Or was it just particular to this? You were making eighty cents in '31.

**JW:** Yes that's right. And the wages were down. They went zoom. In fact I think I was lucky to get forty cents an hour. Then uh, I hit the pavements again. And the next thing I landed was Canton is sort of a central town. It's between Cleveland and Columbus. And the trucking company is between, there is a lot of trucking between Cleveland and Columbus. Canton was a transfer point between the trucking companies running north and south in Ohio, and east and west along the Lincoln Highway. See, Canton was on what was then the Lincoln Highway. So they had the Three C. Trucking Company had a transfer dock there. The trucks would pick up cargoes and bring them to the dock. Here the cargoes were transferred to other trucks that ran other directions, whichever direction the cargo went. The trucks would pull in in the evening, and then you would work all night transferring the cargo, and they would pull out in the morning and you would be done until the following evening. It was a night job. This I worked for about six weeks, I think.

**MW:** It wasn't too long.

**JW:** About six weeks on the dock. And I don't remember, I don't think I made too much. I don't know, I didn't write that down.

**MW:** It might have been piece work.

**JW:** No, no it was so much an hour, but it was less than I was making at Harvard. I think it was probably about thirty or thirty-two cents an hour. Something like that. And then, I don't remember, I think that we felt that it would be better in Chicago.

**MW:** Well, I went back, looking for work.

**JW:** Did you go back while I was working on the dock?

**MW:** No, you had already quit.

**JW:** On the dock I had already quit. Then she went back to Chicago with her folks, and I kept on pounding the pavement there. That didn't last too long, because in April, April 25, I went to work for International Harvester Company. So I guess about the first part of April, or the middle of April I came to Chicago. Oh, while we were in Canton, Bella got a job. She....was it one or two jobs that you had?

**MW:** I tried all over looking for work. And I used to work for the A&P, and they had one down there. So I thought, well, I'll try to get a job there. Well, they didn't need any help. But one Saturday, they were gonna sell, angel food cakes. A lot of angel food cakes.

**JW:** They were putting on a big sale.

**MW:** I was told. But they wanted someone who would put frosting on the cakes, right while you were waiting. And I had to make the frosting and put the frosting on the cake and demonstrate them. Oh dear.

**JW:** This is the way they were trying to sell things, you know.

**MW:** But that was only one day.

**BB:** Ok. Mr. Wissler, you started back..you started to work for Harvester in 1935 then, do you remember what you were making then?

**JW:** Oh yes.

**BB:** I needed to ask you while you had your book out.

**JW:** I started at sixty eight cents an hour. This was the going rate.

**BB:** Oh, that was a twenty eight cent raise. Well, from the last place.

**JW:** Well, here in this business, a lot of it depended on the size of the company you worked for, the kind of work you did, and things like this. I was just a common, lowly, machine operator, at Harvard Manufacturing. When I started at International Harvester Company, I started there, as a machinist. And there I progressed to my regular work, as a tool maker. And I moved, I was with the.....let's see from April of '35 to February of '36, I was a machinist. And then I moved from there into the experimental department. I was working for International Harvester Company Tractor Works. International Harvester has all kind of places. I was working at the Tractor Works and I moved into the experimental department. And there I gradually rose to ninety eight cents an hour.

**BB:** So you were back, after seven years, you were finally back to making as much as you were when you almost first started. Did prices of clothing and food, take this same drop? Or were they, did they remain about the same?...or do you remember?

**JW:** Here's the food buyer. I think that she's going to have to tell you because clothing, when I came out of the Army, I wore Army clothing. Remember the trousers and boots. And I think I had some clothing left from before I went in the Army, and I wore that. I bought very little clothing while I was at International Harvester.

**MW:** No one bought very much.

**JW:** But food, I don't recall. I just don't recall. How about you?

**MW:** Well, I keep trying to visualize it but it seems that I think up today's prices. And prices we used to pay. You can't do that. We paid five dollars a months rent for an apartment.

**JW:** Yes. This was a two-room apartment. Two room kitchen and apartment.

**MW:** Twenty dollars a month.

**JW:** Twenty dollars. It was five dollars a week – twenty dollars a month, yes.

**MW:** That was furnished.

**JW:** Now you worked. While I was working for International Harvester, she was working in the A&P, near us. About...oh no, you were....yes, right across the street. Bread was ten cents a loaf, that was a standard pound and a half loaf, wasn't it or a pound loaf?

**MW:** No, a pound loaf.

**JW:** Campbell's Soup was three for a quarter. Three cans for a quarter. That same size can you get now for I don't know what. Coffee was....

**MW:** Nineteen cents a pound.

**JW:** Nineteen cents a pound and sometimes it would be on sale for, three pounds for twenty-nine cents.

**MW:** I don't know.

**JW:** No, no, no, it was nineteen cents a pound, three pounds would be fifty-seven cents. It might have been three pounds for forty-nine then. Something like that. They always made it nine cents, you know. Let's see, some other common things. Coffee, bread, sugar, how much was sugar? Wasn't that a nickel a pound? I think it was a nickel a pound. The flour, I remember the twenty-four pound bag, you never bought that. Wait a minute, the five pound bag that you used to buy what was that?

**MW:** About nineteen cents.

**JW:** About nineteen cents, yes, for a five pound bag.

**BB:** Well, if you could afford to buy it, was sugar available?

**MW:** Oh yes.

**JW:** Oh yes, after the war. Ok. Well, down here it wasn't even available. Several people told me that sugar was very hard to get during this time.

**MW:** Well, now during the war, sugar was rationed.

**BB:** They may have confused the time.

**JW:** Well, we had trouble then.

**MW:** Sugar and coffee. Coffee was rationed too.

**JW:** You had to have ration stamps for coffee and sugar and tires.

**MW:** And gas.

**JW:** And gas, yes. But this didn't affect us because I was in the Army. And she got stamps, but she was living with her folks, and they got stamps. So they made out.

**BB:** Well, when did things seem to start to being a little bit easier? As far as being able to find work and keep work and your pay was substantial enough to live on?

**JW:** Well, here again, I worked up until '37. In '37 we went to Panama for a vacation and I got a job down there and we stayed there.

**BB:** Oh!

**JW:** For the next five years. So we don't know about things in the United States from 1937 on. We only had experience until '37, and the period while I was working at International Harvester, we had no trouble. We bought a car, it didn't work, it was a pain in the.....and we sold it. We didn't need a car. In Chicago you had public transportation, so what did you need a car for? So there you go.

**BB:** So really the very worst time was in '31.

**JW:** In '31. That's right. That's when it hit us. And it wasn't us because Bella's father worked all through the Depression.

**BB:** He never lost his job or anything?

**JW:** He worked for the Palmer house. No problems. So we were really lucky.

**BB:** Do you think a Depression like '29 can happen again?

**JW:** No, unless the federal government goes bankrupt. Because the first Depression caused so many social programs to be enacted into law. And the federal government has taken upon itself the responsibility of holding up income through unemployment

compensation, so that I can't see it, unless of course the source of the artificially maintained income goes bankrupt. And dries up.

**BB:** If that happened, do you think people would react as they did then? As you did?

**JW:** I think if that happened, the United States would see a revolution. I honestly believe that there is such racial tension, there has been a considerable weakening of the moral fiber of the individuals in the nation as a whole. I feel that a national...let's see, what am I trying to say?...A feeling of nationalism, a feeling of love for your country, above everything else has suffered such an erosion since we were young that the people who now live in this country feel towards this country as their country. They only feel it as something from which they will try to get all they can. And when they can no longer get anything, they'll discard it.

**END OF INTERVIEW**