

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

Mary Ingram- Experiences of the Great Depression

By: Mary Ingram

December 6, 1975

Box 2 Folder 1

Oral Interview conducted by David W. Ingram

Transcribed by Victor Ukorebi January 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

This is an oral history project. I am David Ingram and today which is December 6, 1975, I am going to interview Mary Ingram who is my grandmother. The general topic will be about the Depression.

David W. Ingram: Where were you born?

Mary Ingram: I was born down in down Southern Utah, Garfield County, in a small town about ten miles below Panquitch, which is the Garfield County seat.

DWI: How long have you lived here?

MI: We came to Idaho in 1909.

DWI: Where were your parents born?

MI: My father was born in Carthage Illinois. My mother was born in Potowattomie County, Iowa.

DWI: Where were you living during the depression?

MI: I was living in Idaho Falls, Idaho, in the years '30'31'32.

DWI: What part of Idaho Falls did you live in?

MI: We lived over the F Street, across the drive there from the hospital.

DWI: How many were living in your household at that time?

MI: There was eight children in the family and two others. One a nephew of my husband's and a brother of my husband's which made ten and then with myself, it made eleven in the family. My husband was away in his job.

DWI: Did you have a big house.

MI: Fairly large but not room enough to accommodate as many persons as there was but we got along.

DWI: What was Grandpa doing for work?

MI: My husband was a range man. He was on the range, in the winter, he was feeding cattle and sheep. Sometimes on the range and sometimes on the feed lots near the town.

DWI: You said he was away from home; he wasn't living at home all the time?

MI: Not all the time, not regularly. Mostly his job took him away.

DWI: Was anybody else in the household working, have any other kind of job to help bring in money?

MI: Occasionally, the brother and the older boy would have a few days of work. Mostly on farms.

DWI: How much money did Grandpa made?

MI: At this time the wages were so low my husband was making less than a hundred dollars a month.

DWI: Did you get by pretty good on this?

MI: We did get by. It was a struggle, we didn't have much put away, but we seemed to get by.

DWI: How often could you go to the grocery store and get food?

MI: The grocery store was not far away. How often we went to the grocery store depended on the amount of money we had to spend on groceries.

DWI: Did the businesses allow their customers to charge things?

MI: Not at this time as I remember. We didn't go in debt. In the summer season we did have a good garden and depended a lot on what we raised on our garden plot, which helped out greatly.

DWI: How were the businesses ding in town? Did a lot of them have to close down?

MI: I was too busy at home pay much attention to the businesses in the town. I wouldn't have much of an opinion on that. Only I know that some of the banks closed. I remember seeing the line up of the depositors trying to get to the bank to get their money which, as I remember, they didn't get in, they lost their money.

DWI: Were you able to provide plenty of clothing for all the kids in the family?

MI: Well we seemed to get by. We made what we had to with hand-me-downs, and made over clothing. I was pretty well skilled at that, so was my oldest daughter. We made our clothing mostly, including our coats.

DWI: How old was the oldest kid at that time?

MI: I had two daughters age eighteen, one son older which he did have part time jobs. Just part of the time.

DWI: And how old was the youngest?

MI: The youngest at that time was six years old.

DWI: So most of the kids were going to school?

MI: They were all going to school but the oldest son.

DWI: Can you remember any ideas or any actions taken by the President, Roosevelt?

MI: Well, I do remember when the law was made establishing Social Security and when the taxes were imposed on those that had jobs and were working for a wage.

DWI: Was there a bread line?

MI: Well, when there were so many that was needy and even hungry, the city did establish a bread line. I remember the line was quite long and that not too far from where we were, waiting for get their portion for the day or the week or whatever. That didn't last too long however, as I remember.

DWI: What in your mind do you think caused the depression?

MI: Don't ask me that. I wouldn't be much of an authority on that.

DWI: How do you think your family did compared to the other families in the neighborhood? Were you better along or worse.

MI: There being so many in the family, I guess, we had more of a struggle to get by with what we had than most of the neighbors. Some were a little worse off than we, really.

DWI: Were ever there a lot of people getting money from the government?

MI: I couldn't say as to that. I think they a choice of whether they would tale Social Security. Anyway, Social Security had its limitations.

DWI: Did anyone ever come to the door and ask if they could do anything for food? Or did anybody from your house have to go around places to see if there was anything they could do?

MI: No, I don't remember that there was anyone that came to the door and offered help.

DWI: Do you remember how long the depression lasted?

MI: Two or three years, as I remember.

DWI: Well, thank you very much for talking with me on this tape. This tape will be turned into the library at Ricks College for future research.