

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

Thomas Galler – Life During WWI

By Thomas Galler

December 16, 1973

Box 1 Folder 40

Oral Interview conducted by Ray Dell Morris

Transcribed by Victor Ukorebi January 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

I am Ray Dell Morris. Today is December 16, 1973. I am going to interview Thomas Christian Galler, Sr. The general topic will be World War I and the feeling as reported from a person living in Southern Idaho.

RM: Mr. Galler, where were you born?

TG: Council Bluffs, Iowa.

RM: How long did you live in Southern Idaho after you were born?

TG: We came out here in 1909, 08, or 1910. I don't remember which it was.

RM: Where were your parents born?

TG: My mother was born in Germany and my father was born in Council Bluff as far as I know.

RM: When you moved to Idaho in 1908, or 09, what was your occupation at that time?

TG: I was not very old.

RM: How old were you at that time?

TG: About five I believe it was.

RM: During the war years of 1917 and 1918, do you remember what you were doing then?

TG: I was working during the summertime on farms.

RM: That year, 1917, you were mentioned in your fact sheet that you worked on a dry farm. Do you recall where it was at?

TG: East of Ammon up on Willow Creek.

RM: Who did you work for up there?

TG: Herman Waserman.

RM: During this time, what was the first general outward appearance that the United States had went to War? Do you remember?

TG: I just have a faint recollection of them talking about the declaration of war.

RM: Do you remember what you were doing then or anything?

TG: No I don't. I was probably going to school in the wintertime.

RM: Do you remember anything about President Wilson or the things he may have said at that time?

TG: No, not very much.

RM: During this time, the Governor of Idaho was a man named Alexander. Do you remember anything that he might have said?

TG: No.

RM: We mentioned a little before on the home guard. Do you remember anything about people guarding ditches or bridges or anything like this?

TG: Railroad bridges above Idaho Falls had a guard on it.

RM: Did they guard it 24 hours a day.

TG: Twenty-four hours a day.

RM: Was it a military guard or civilian. Do you know?

TG: No, it was not a civilian; but I don't remember if it was military guard or a- oh, what would you call it- I can't think of the name.

RM: Just a group of people?

TG: No. It could have been a military guard- he wore a uniform.

RM: We talked a little before about food rationing during the war. Do you remember anything or what your family did to get rations or anything about that?

TG: Oh yes, you had to buy a lot of stuff extra to get a sack of flour. Corn meal, oatmeal- different things to take the place of flour.

RM: Do you remember any sacrifices made by your mother or doing without or things like this when it came to that rationing of the food?

TG: Yes, sometimes it was. Some items were pretty scarce.

RM: Do you remember any of the? What about sugar?

TG: There was a rationing of sugar. I don't remember too much as whether it was plentiful or not.

RM: During 1918, you worked out at Coltman. Where is Coltman?

TG: North of Idaho Falls.

RM: Who did you work for out there/

TG: Coster, Dick or Pete Coster.

RM: What type of farm did they operate or ranch?

TG: Just general farming, potatoes, grain, and hay.

RM: Do you recall their reaction to the war at the time?

TG: No, I don't.

RM: Did the prices for their crops go up or down or do you remember?

TG: No, I don't remember much about that.

RM: Do you remember anything about the idlers or slackers- the men that did not go to war and would not work? Were there many around the area?

TG: That I could not tell you. I don't now.

RM: Do you recall where you were when the Armistice was signed?

TG: I was living in Idaho Falls.

RM: Would you describe how you hears about it and the events that followed it?

TG: Well, there was a railroad whistles, all the whistles in town that was operative was a blowing. People on the streets were having a lot of fun. Cars were driving up and down the street. It was pretty heavy traffic on both streets and sidewalks. How the news came in, I don't know.

RM: Was this in Idaho Falls itself- downtown?

TG: Yes.

RM: How long did this last?

TG: Well, it lasted pretty much until the wee hours of the morning, as far as I know.

RM: You mentioned something about the flu that followed the following year or shortly after the war. Do you remember anything about that?

TG: Yes, I remember that.

RM: Can you tell us about that and how it affected your family?

TG: Well, our family had the flu. Everyone in the family, I guess, was down except for me. I never did get the flu. I was pretty busy taking care of the home at that time. And Dr. Spencer would come around every once in a while to see how we were doing. There was a lot of sickness in the town. They were wearing masks for a while. When you went up town to get groceries or something, you had to wear when you went into a store or around. And then they disregarded that later.

RM: Do you recall any people dying from it?

TG: Oh, yes, there were a number of people died from it. Their names, I don't know as if I could give you their names now. Of course, there were a lot of them that we did not know.

RM: Was this winter after war? Do you remember the exact date? Was it the winter after?

TG: No, I don't remember for sure. I think the flu was in 1918, but I am not sure. The winter of 1918- that fall.

RM: We've basically went over some of the things which we talked about before. Can you think of anything or instances of friends that went to war from where you lived?

TG: Yeah.

RM: Do you know how their family felt about them going to war?

TG: Well, I imagine that would go the same with one family to another, when a person leaves a family to go to war, why they're not too happy.

RM: Do you think the citizens backed the President and the country?

TG: Yes.

RM: Can you remember anyone that went to war, say next door neighbor or something, that did come back and hearing him tell of anything?

TG: ED Paulus. I remember when he went to war; but as far as him telling anything, I don't remember he did. Of course after he left, he was gone until after the end of the war. He was here. And then there were others the same, the same way.

RM: Do you know of any outwardly things that the citizens or the businesses did to conserve energy or help the war cause.

TG: Oh yes, there were a number of things that the people did, for instance tin foil, save all the tinfoil, roll it up in balls; oh, there was other things but I don't remember just what they were. But there was at the time a fuel shortage. There was no fuel that I know of.

RM: After you saved this tinfoil, what did you do with it then?

TG: I forget where we took it. They gathered it all up you know.

RM: Were you paid a bounty on it?

TG: No.

RM: You just gathered it up and turned it back in?

TG: Yeah.

RM: How about women making socks or bandages?

TG: Oh yes, there was a lot of that going on. It was sent overseas.

RM: Do you remember you mom doing something along this lone or an organization that maybe she belonged to that helped something?

TG: No, I don't. Could have. There was always something going on.

RM: Do you remember anything else that we haven't talked about during those years- an increase in production of wheat what the farmer was to grow or anything like this?

TG: Well, I don't remember about that. At that time why it was a supply and demand that regulated the crops.

RM: Being in war then, we had a large demand, didn't we?

TG: Yes.

RM: Is ther anything else you can think about?

TG: I do not know.

RM: Do you remember the type of living conditions that came about because of the war. Was there cold winters or?

TG: Do you mean during the war was the winters exceptionally cold?

RM: No. Was there a shortage of fuel or coal or anything like this have an effect on the living?

TG: No, I don't remember during the war of there was any shortage of fuel. There was after the war though. I believe it was, I forget just when it was. They had a big coal strike back East. They rationed coal out here for a while.

RM: Do you feel that Idaho supported the Governor and the President in the action which he took to get into the war?

TG: Yes, I feel that it was.

RM: I would like thank you, Tom, for these comments; and as we pointed out before, the tapes that we are making will be placed in the library at Ricks College and it will be used for researchers and this is the only purpose. Is there anything else you would like to include?

TG: If there is, I can't think of it now.