

Dr. David L. Crowder Oral History Project

Bill Dedman – World War 1

By Bill Dedman

December 11, 1973

Box 1 Folder 29

Oral Interview conducted by Cynthia Porter

Transcribed by Victor Ukorebi May 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

This is Oral History. My name is Cynthia Porter. Today is December 11, 1973. I am going to interview Bill Dedman.

Cynthia Porter (CP): Can you spell your name for me?

Bill Dedman (BD): D-e-d-m-a-n

CP: The topic will be Idaho during the First World War. Mr. Dedman, where were you born?

BD: I was born in Cisco, Illinois, in 1898 – February 17.

CP: Where were your parents born?

BD: My father was born at Salt Lake City, Illinois; and my mother was born, I believe, at Bethany, Illinois.

CP: How long have you lived in Rexburg?

BD: I've only lived in Rexburg for five months.

CP: What were your occupations?

BD: I was a farmer in the Ashton area most of my life.

CP: When they first declared war, what were you doing?

BD: I was helping my father on his ranch.

CP: What did you feel? What were your reactions?

BD: Well, I had an older brother that enlisted as just as soon as war was declared. My father needed me on the farm; and reluctantly, I stayed home.

CP: So you did not get to go when President Wilson called for volunteers?

BD: No, I volunteered later about the close of the war.

CP: Did you have any service?

BD: Well, I volunteered in the Students Army Corp and went to Logan, Utah, about the middle of October. My papers were not sent to the draft board, the local draft board at St. Anthony. When Armistice was signed, my folks all had the flu and wanted to know I could come home to help out. When I went to the commanding officer, he said my papers had not arrived; and if I wanted to, I was free to go home. I chose to go home to help my folks. That ended my military service.

CP: Did your family buy any war bonds? Liberty Bonds?

BD: Yes they did.

CP: Was your father asked to increase his farm production?

BD: Well, we were, most farmers were farming pretty well at full capacity at that time as the price of grain was good and it was badly needed overseas as well as in the country. We raised all we could.

CP: When the pope declared or said what the peace should be, what did you think we should do? Did you think we should go on with the war? Did you agree with Gov. Alexander?

BD: We felt that the war was not a necessary thing. There was a great many things involved. We were not actually, should not have been in combat at the time we went in. there was a lot of politically intrigue. Like most wars, it was not a necessary war.

CP: What was your reaction when Gov. Alexander said that they should go on fighting? Did you agree with him?

BD: Well, after we once got into it, why there was nothing to do but to see it through. Gov. Alexander thought we should. And war was much more popular with the people than the last two wars have been. The one in Korea and the one in Vietnam, they certainly have not been popular wars, receiving the support of the people like the first and second World Wars did. The people felt they were fighting for principle at that time.

CP: What were you doing when Armistice was declared?

BD: What was I doing?

CP: Yes

BD: I was in the hospital in Logan. They thought I was coming down with the flu, but I didn't. I was kept in the hospital for a while, and I was shortly released.

CP: Did your family have flu.

BD: My family had the flu. There wasn't anybody that died of it, but I went home from service in order to be with them and look after them. Help was very scarce, and they were all down in bed.

CP: How did you feel when you found out that the war was over?

BD: I was very glad. I think everybody was very glad and very happy that it was all over, because a great many lives lost, and a great deal of property and much unhappiness.

CP: Did any of the people you knew personally die during the war?

BD: Yes, there were several.

CP: Before the war started, when the Battleship Idaho was launched, what was your feelings about that?

BD: Well, I've tried to recollect what the Idaho did. I can remember it was something outstanding, but I can't remember. At present, the Idaho is anchored in the Willamette River at Portland. They have services on it every year-flag flying and all. I can't recall just what action the Idaho took.

CP: Were you proud of it having the name of Idaho?

BD: Yes, naturally. It's been quite a while and you forget things men and ships do.

CP: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about what happened to you during the war?

BD: Well, there was nothing especial. I was just a country boy, and I helped my father on the dry farm. We lived a very normal, you might say, quite a quiet life. Never have had an outstanding life.

CP: Did you have anything to do with the call to guard the head gates at the dams?

BD: No, I had no calls

CP: Well, thank you very much. We will put this tape in the Ricks College Library upstairs.

BD: Okay.

CP: It will be used for further research.

BD: For what it is worth, why you are very welcome.

CP: Thank you.