

# TAPE INDEX SUMMARY

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 DATE: January 6, 1981  
 LOCATION: 1114 Lee Street  
 INTERVIEWER: Mateo Osa

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1:16-7:20		Vacant lots of Lee Street, 11th to 9th Street vacant lot, softball field, Tom Mix's circus, Boise airport; River Side Dance Hall, roller-skating.
7:21-12:45		Outdoor toilets, River Street houses, Brown's Market, Grand Avenue Market, Roland Crisp, Pearl Grocery, close stores handy.
12:46-22:10		Vandalism, Willa Mae Robinson, colored new to Lee Street; Ash Street - 2 colored families; Basques, Chinese peddlers, ice cream carts, Torrance Ice & Fuel, buying ice; Husband's salary \$3 per day; bums shacks on river, bag food, tar paper shacks.
22:11-27:40		People helped each other, one phone on street, William Matevie; Railroad men; depot, freight depot, Stevens, Hayman-colored railroad workers; middle-class neighborhood, stable jobs.
27:40-end		Early coloreds distribution, never majority, prejudice in restaurants, southern feelings, World War II, Old Casino, colored people eat on streets, Grill Cafe.
Tape 1, Side 2		
0-6:00		Prejudice before World War II; coloreds social activities; Park School 16th & Grove; good race relations for neighborhood, 42 kids on Lee Street, good area for kids, swimming on river.
6:01-12:20		Everybody congenial, library on Washington Street, \$3 day rages, \$16 a month rent; Basques moved out by 1940; few Lee Street people owned houses, neighborhood divided last 5 years.

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SUMMARY

12:21-20:05

Urban renewal projects on Lee Street; Riverside Park, selling pop from bucket, 1¢ per bottle, admission free.

20:06-25:45

Colored moved into Miller Street, World War II coloreds increase; gambling on Pioneer Street, ran women, "Washington jigs"; Yugoslavs and Austrians, Czechs, lots of bootlegging, Warm Springs avenue bootlegger, hidden compartments for liquor.

25:46-end

Colored kept it in two block area, pretty quiet; Savoy Hotel, Oregon Hotel, other "houses"; Johnsons on Pioneer Street, pre-war situation; small stigma with "south of tracks", no trouble area.

NAME: THOMAS, Doris **OH5-**  
DATE: January 6, 1981  
LOCATION: 1114 Lee St., Boise, Idaho  
INTERVIEWER: Mateo Osa

INTERVIEWER: This is an interview with Doris Thomas conducted at 1114 Lee Street on January 6, 1981 by Mateo Osa.

The last two houses on the corner would be the north side of Lee Street?

DT: Uh-huh. Yeah, these two right here.

MO: Those last two were the only ones that weren't here in the 30's.

DT: No, they weren't here -- that was all vacant lots through there. But I think the most interesting part...

? Did Margaret live in this one?

DT: In the little one next to me, yeah. I think the most interesting thing about this neighborhood is that the vacant lot over there where the warehouse is -- you see, that was all vacant lot...

MO: Over here on the east side of Lee Street...

DT: Uh-huh -- of Eleventh Street.

MO: Of Eleventh Street, yeah.

DT: And it was all vacant lot clear over to Ninth Street -- there was nothing in there on this side of River Street. And they had the big soft ball park over there for years. All the soft ball teams played in there -- they had donkey baseball. They just really used to have a ball in there. And living right here was a ball for my kids.

MO: Was that -- do you know the name of that area -- what did they call that?

DT: I don't think they had a name for it.

MO: That isn't the same as -- I've heard, Liverside Park mentioned.

DT: I don't remember Liverside Park. No, it was just a big ballpark

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there. Then when they took the ballpark out, they had motorcycle races track over there. They used to bring the circuses down there years ago. They'd unload them up here on the -- that was when they traileed -- they'd unload them up here on the siding and then walk them down Twelfth Street, you know, the elephants and all the animals and everything. Tom Mix's circus was over there.

MO: Tom Mix?

DT: Uh-huh. Yeah, he'd parade around out on the -- for the kids.

But then they'd take them back and it was more of a circus to watch them take the animals and the elephants pushing the wagons -- like way back in pioneer days -- it was really interesting.

MO: A real old-time circus?

DT: Yes, and then when they moved it from here, they moved it across the river -- they had them over there. But it was really interesting. And then they had big carnivals over there.

? When Darth moved down here too in Boise, ?

MO: What'd you say -- it was the airfield?

? Yeah, uh-huh. The                      went clear over to Broadway. It was the Boise airport.

DT: You see when I come to Idaho they just finished -- they hadn't even had the dedication of the railroad depot up there, yet. They'd just finished it -- they hadn't even finished the grounds or anything.

MO: So that would have been...

DT: We came to Idaho in '26, '28, no '26 because I was born in '10 and I was 16 when I came to Idaho -- so I came in '26.

MO: What about this neighborhood -- was there a lot of social activities? Besides the park, what else did you do?

DT: No...

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MO: Dancing or maybe...

DT: No, not down in here.

? Wait a minute, was the old Riverside?

DT: Oh yeah, it's still over there -- it was the Riverside Dance Hall.

That's what they called it then, now they call it...

MO: Oh, the Mardi Gras?

DT: Mardi Gras -- it was called the Riverside Dance Hall.

MO: Going into there?

DT: Yeah, then they had -- then they changed it in Emmett, but I used to come over...

?: Then they put a soft floor in it and they had roller skating over there through the week and then they'd go -- my son used to work over there. They had one of those folding floors, you know, they put down for roller skating. No, they'd put the floor down for dancing and they'd take up skating.

MO: Was that a pretty popular place?

DT: Yeah, it was then, yeah. Louise went to that.

MO: Was it more an older crowd or a younger crowd?

DT: Kind of mixed, you know, then there wasn't so many definitions of young and old. When you went to a dance you kids went too and you didn't go to bars or anything like you do now. You know, it was more family stuff. They didn't sell any beer -- no, they didn't sell any liquor or anything over there, no. Not then. Then it changed. But on this street here there was, one, two, three houses across the street up from me that still had outdoor toilets -- out on the alley.

MO: They were on the back side -- on the south side?

DT: Yeah, clear back on the alley, outdoor -- they didn't have any bathrooms.

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MO: That was in that -- that whole lot back there was empty, clear to River Street?

DT: No, there was old houses across the alley there. In fact, in those days they were pretty good little houses, they were just small -- they were in pretty good condition. Before they put in all those apartments in over there -- they tore them all out then. No, they were in pretty good condition then, so it's been deteriorating, went down, you know. Things do over the years that aren't taken care of.

MO: Yeah. Well where did you usually shop from down here?

DT: Well we had -- over on Grand Avenue there was the Pearl Grocery and there was Zucker's Grocery, that was on 13th and Grand Avenue and then over on 15th and River was a store they called Brown's Grocery.

MO: On 15th and River?

DT: Uh-huh. No, not on 15th, I mean 13th and River. They called it Brown's.

MO: I'm familiar with the Pearl and Grand Market, and Zucker's, but I don't remember hearing the Brown's grocery.

DT: It was built in a house -- it was a crippled man -- he was in a wheel chair. They called it Brown's

MO: Was that his name?

DT: Yeah. I don't know what had happened to him -- I didn't know him well but we used to go over there and trade. But we didn't trade at the big markets, you could get credit at the little stores. Then, the Grand Avenue Market, Roland Crisp owned that. He built it up into a big market. Then when K-mart moved in down there, they wrecked his business completely. People would go

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there because a smaller store -- they didn't carry the variety.

So he finally had to go out.

MO: That               wiped him out huh? Did most everybody in this neighborhood deal either at the Grand Market, Pearl Grocery or Brown's?

DT: Uh-huh.

MO: Which one was around the longest, do you remember?

DT: Which one?

MO: Which market?

DT: Yeah, the Pearl was the last one to go out.

MO: And that was...?

DT: It was the one between 13th and 12th.

MO: Is that where the karate place was, is now?

DT: No, Zucker's is where...

MO: That's where the place was. Do you remember when approximately that went out?

DT: Zucker's?

MO: Pearl.

DT: Pearl, let's see, after I moved over here because I missed them to beat the devil because it was so simple to walk down there, like to get your dog food, cat food, bread and milk and not have to go way over. It was when I was taking care of little Monte was when it went out. He's -- that must have been about fifteen years ago, I would think.

MO: Oh really?

DT: Yeah, just               because Monte I think is about sixteen, seventeen now. So I imagine it would have been about that long ago. And they finally -- the big market, you know, finally squashed them.

MO: And Roland Crisp had the Grand?

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DT: Yeah -- well, he had the Pearl Grocery first.

MO: Oh, he had that originally?

DT: Yeah, originally. Well, no, I don't know who owned it -- oh yeah, Helen Butler, I believe her and her husband first owned it. I don't know if Butler is the right name or not -- I know her name is Helen. She sold it to Roland and a partner of his, which I can't remember his name. Then they sold it to somebody else which I don't remember who, and that's when he started the Grand Market. That was on the corner of Twelfth and Grand Avenue.

MO: And he ran that with his wife for a number of years?

DT: Uh-huh. He ran it for a long time and then he sold it. You know over here where the armored car place is -- he owns that too and he had that in too. He tried to make it into, oh, kind of a recreation place, except that it didn't go. So then he sold the big part of the market and put just the small, what you might call the nice groceries. But the reason he put it in was for his own mother. She lived on Twelfth Street right downtown.

MO: So getting back -- he kept part of the Grand Market, the smaller part, version of it?

DT: Yeah, he put part of it into a second-hand store. They done everything. They had a laundramat over there for a while and it didn't go either. Things like that just didn't go too good in this neighborhood. I don't know why.

MO: Things like a laundramat....

DT: Oh a nice -- I loved it, I hated it when it went out and it was so quick for me, because we didn't have a car at that time. It was so simple to go over there and do your washing. But they had an awful lot of trouble. They didn't have it policed right and



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they had an awful lot of vandalism.

MO: Oh, is that right?

DT: Not through our neighborhood -- now we never did. I raised all my kids down here and everyone of them are good kids -- they've all got good, responsible jobs and all have gone to college and everything, but there is some from over, oh, through Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth, over through there, is where the vandalism came from -- not from our neighborhood. This was always a nice, quiet, respectable neighborhood. In fact this is the first time there have been any colored people on this block -- any Black -- for two or three years.

MO: It's been that recent? How about Willa Mae, hasn't she been over....

DT: Willa Mae, no, she lives down here on Pioneer Street. She lives down there on the corner -- no, maybe she's been here longer than that. She's been here longer than that because she bought that place over there. But I don't consider her -- she's a resident of Idaho, she's been here all her life and raised. The people that live on the corner by her, I don't know them, but these other people -- like Bernice next door, her son took her to Oregon. She's been down -- she was born and raised in this neighborhood, way older than that.

MO: But she's still around, huh?

DT: As far as I know -- I haven't heard anything from her since she left.

MO: Oh, she's down in Oregon?

DT: I say her son took her, yeah. But whether the house has been sold or not, I don't know, but he rented it to colored people.

MO: So the colored people are relatively new to this street?

DT: Uh-huh, to this street, yeah.

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MO: How about in so far as Ash Street or Thirteenth Street, or...

DT: Well over on Ash Street -- the Stevensons lived over there, and the Haymans. But they were the residents of Idaho, I mean they weren't the ones that come in from outside.

MO:

DT: No, both of them worked at the depot and worked there until they retired. Then up on the corner, that house on the corner, I don't remember who lived there -- they were colored people, they were residents. They weren't the ones that come in from outside, you know. They're the ones you had the trouble with.

MO: So when you were living here in the thirties, in this neighborhood in the thirties, how many Black families would you say there were counting Ash Street and Thirteenth, Fourteenth, Fifteenth...

DT: I don't know anything about down across there, down there, you might just as well say that was out of my district cause I never went down in that part of town -- I never had any reason to.

MO: Oh, I see.

DT: But there was only the two families over on Ash Street, was all there was around here at all. But where Bernice was on down, where all Bascos at that time. Bascos lived down there, all of the houses were Basques.

MO: On Ash Street?

DT: No, no, on this street.

MO: Lee Street?

DT: Yeah, from next door to the white next to me, all of them, clear on up to the corner and then around the corner -- that house that sits on the corner of Ash -- they were all Bascos. And then across the street, that house on the corner, was a Basque family. They were

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all Basques when I moved here.

MO: And they were already here when you got here?

DT: Yeah, they were living here when I moved down.

MO: Do you have any idea where they might have came?

DT: I don't have the least idea. But I know that they must have been here for quite a while.

MO: Yeah. How many families would you say there were?

DT: Must of been -- one, two, three, four, five, six -- I'd say there was at least six families.

MO: At least six? And they were all right there on Lee Street?

DT: Yeah, all except the ones that were up there on Ash Street there at the corner -- that house on the corner of Ash, on the alley there, and then the house across the street on Ash Street, right there on the corner that has locks -- that was Basques. So that'd be one, two, and then...

MO: Did you know any of them?

DT: Oh yeah, I knew them all but it's kind of hard to talk to them -- they're all old country and the old people talk Basque, the language, and they taught their children to talk Basque. But the younger girls, I could talk to them. But at that time I wasn't interested in anything like that, you know. I was young and I was raising my family, so, history didn't -- now I'm very interested in this, but not when I should have been.

MO: That's the way it happens.

DT: I don't know why that is.

MO: Do you remember any other ethnic groups around here besides Basques, like Chinese maybe or...

DT: Not here, no, no, not down in this neighborhood. Although we had

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Chinese vegetables, peddlers, that come with some wagons, three times a week and brought vegetables in from China Gardens. You bought them right off the wagon. You bought your milk right off the wagon, you bought your bread, your rolls, everything they had, everything in the wagon came. They had the ice cream carts there when the guy went around everyday, ringing his bell, kids run for miles to get to the ice cream cart.

MO: Who had the ice cream cart?

DT: I don't know who it was. Probably through, I imagine it was from the Idaho Creamery 'cause they were there -- I imagine it was from that Creamery, but I'm not sure. I know when it didn't come the kids were very disappointed.

MO: It usually came every day?

DT: Every day in afternoon, a certain time.

MO: During winter, or...

DT: No, just through the summer months, you know, when it's hot. You're too young to have bought off an ice cream cart. But the ice wagon was what the kids had big fun of, when the ice wagon came. Torrance Ice & Fuel -- it's down there on sixteenth street.

MO: Torrance...

DT: Torrance Ice & Fuel.

MO: On Sixteenth?

DT: Uh-huh, on sixteenth. On, well, just on this side of the railroad tracks. Yeah, he would come around every day with the ice.

MO: How did he haul it?

DT: In a wagon, cart, and then they had Ford trucks I think, they must. The kids followed them for blocks. They were good old guys, they

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chip off ice for the kids and stuff. It's like way back, you know.

MO: How did they keep it -- it seems like it would melt?

DT: It didn't seem to. I mean, I didn't even have a refrigerator and I had an old icebox and they brought the ice every day, just a big chunk of ice.

MO: They had -- was it one solid piece of ice or just several big chunks?

DT: You bought whatever you wanted -- if you wanted ten pounds and they weighed it, and then they'd just chip it off -- great big slabs, and they'd chip off what you, you know... And if you happened to get some extra chips, you know, why they'd bring them in and give them to you to make a for them or something.

MO: What did it cost -- do you remember?

DT: Not very damn much because my husband only made three dollars a day.

MO: Is that right?

DT: That's right, so... Worked twelve hours a day. So, consequently, it couldn't of cost very much.

MO: Did you have to have it every day, practically?

DT: Yeah, because your ice boxes weren't insulated to hold it, you know, so every day you got ice except Sunday. The ice didn't deliver on Sundays. I don't know -- probably wasn't over a nickle or a dime -- it couldn't have been more than that, I couldn't have afford to buy ice it if had of been.

MO: If it had been over a nickle?

DT: It couldn't be much over that because bread was a nickle a loaf.

MO: So you think maybe the ice was like a nickle for ten pounds?

DT: I imagine, I think it was about ten pound chuncks, because I had

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a small icebox so I imagine it would have been. To tell the truth, I never did pay much attention. I just had pennies, I think, I paid in.. (Chuckles)

But back in those days is when the bums had little, old shacks down under the bridge, you know, the river.

MO: Right over here on the...

DT: Yeah, right underneath the bridge there, and all along they had, old tar paper shacks built down there.

MO: All along the river?

DT: Yeah, folks they didn't want them around so they lived down in there, and then they'd come up through the back doors and bum food, you know, a carrot or an onion, something like that.

MO: Were these like, the Depression days, do you think, that long ago?

DT: Well it wasn't exactly through Depression days, although things weren't very good in those days -- it wasn't nearly as bad as in the Depression. People in those days helped other people. Like on this block, when a new family would move in and if they were hard up or the man wasn't working or something, all of the people went together, fixed a box to take to them of food stuff and things. Nobody thought anything about it. And the schools used to do that too. But nobody helps anybody anymore -- I think that's what's the matter with the economy now, everybody is too, well they think too much of themselves and not the other person.

MO: Did it seem like the neighborhood had sort of it's own -- taking care of the problems type policy?

DT: Yeah, if somebody got sick you helped them. We had one phone in the whole neighborhood and it was -- everybody could use it.

MO: Where was that at?

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DT: Right here in this house, it was when Matevias owned this house.

MO: Is that right?

DT: Uh-huh, they were the only ones that had a phone and you could use it day or night, unless you -- they didn't have phones on the corners like they have now -- you'd have to go into town to use the phone to call the doctor or something. And then I, things got a little better for us and we had a phone put in.

MO: Who lived in this house before you did?

DT: William and Emma Matevia.

MO: Matevia?

DT: M-A-T-E-V-I-A. Now when they bought it, I don't know. But they lived here.

MO: And you lived across the street?

DT: Yeah, that was their place across the street, 1119 Lee we lived.

MO: You rented from then?

DT: Yeah, for thirteen years we rented from them. They owned the Pure Food Cafe, it was the Pure Food Cafe. Did you ever hear of the Pure Food Cafe?

MO: I don't think I have. Where was it at?

DT: It was between Tenth and Eleventh on Main Street -- right across from, where well they put the new, I don't know what they put in there now, but anyhow, it used to be the Manitou Hotel and Granada Theatre was across the street from there. And they was in it for years.

MO: What were some of the jobs that a lot of people in this neighborhood had? Do you remember...

DT: Oh, a lot of them worked on the railroad and at the Creamery over there and a lot of them worked -- I mean they worked down here on

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sections and quite a few of them worked up at the railroad depot and then there used to be the freight depot, used to be down here too, you know, on Eleventh Street.

MO: Freight depot?

DT: Uh-huh, where they brought freight in -- that was all freight down there.

MO: Is that what this line is for that goes through there?

DT: Yeah, it comes in from Nampa, see, we have a line that comes in from Nampa with the freight and then goes back on out to Nampa before it hits the main line. A lot of them worked there. I don't know, they just worked in restaurants and most of the colored people who lived down in this area, worked in barbershops -- shoeshine guys and stuff like that.

MO: Did many of the colored people work on the railroad?

DT: Yeah, there was quite a few of them worked on the section.

MO: Worked on the section. Is that, what, the repair crew?

DT: Uh-huh, yeah, on the repair crew. But the ones we knew worked up at the big depot -- they were, oh, baggage men, you know, and porters, maintenance men, stuff like that.

MO: Who were they?

DT: Well the Stevens that lived over next to them and Hayman -- he worked up there. Then we had another colored friend, I can't remember his name, but he worked in one of the barbershops. He'd been the shoeshine man in that barbershop, I guess, since he was a little tiny kid. He really -- he was really a character.

MO: Most of the railroad workers, did they work here in Boise or did they go to Nampa and work?

DT: No, they maintained the road here. They worked out of the freight



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depot down here and they worked on -- you know, unloading the freight, stuff like that -- and keeping the track up. 'Cause they used to have to clean that, you have to clean the track. Then they used to bring the coal in down there, all that kind of stuff, they don't do anymore.

MO: So would you say the neighborhood was an average, middle-class...

DT: That's what it was, it was just average middle-class, was what it was. It wasn't the slum area at all. Everybody kept their places up nice. It's a nice, quiet, refined street. Bascos, you know, are very, very refined people, I don't know if you ever knew them or not but they are really, they are very sociable people, but they are very closely-knit people too.

MO: Yeah. How about as far as -- everybody seemed to have pretty stable jobs, then?

DT: Seemed like it, yeah, I know. We didn't ever make a lot of money but we didn't go in debt. Of course, there wasn't any credit in those days so you didn't have to worry about going in debt.

MO: What do you think brought the -- do you have any idea what might of brought some of the, say, the Black population in here?

DT: I don't really know what brought them in here. I think during the second World War a lot of them came in from Washington and some of them stayed. But really there isn't that many colored people in -- in fact, it seems in the summer time, and in the winter time, there don't seem to be many -- so I think they're transients, really. I don't think they're permanent.

MO: How about as far back as you can remember in the 30's -- the colored population then, did they have it pretty stable or were they transients?

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DT: No, they weren't transients -- they were stable. There was a lot of Chinamen here then too. We didn't have any Chinese families in this neighborhood, but there was lots of Chinese here then. They run the China Gardens and stuff. I don't know, I would say that -- I really couldn't say how many colored people there were here.

MO: But was there more colored than white?

DT: Oh no, no, very small minority. As I say, there was only two families over on Ash Street and there wasn't any on this street at all.

MO: As far as Thirteenth and Fourteenth?

DT: Over in there -- that's where they centered more, over there on Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth, but as I say, I don't know how many were over in there because I never went down that way, even. I had no reason to go down there.

MO: Well it definitely did -- did it seem like a majority down in that area or not, would you say?

DT: Not a lot, no, I wouldn't say so. I would say there were very few, just a small majority of them.

MO: So would it be like, for Boise there was a high concentration of Black people in this area, but really there wasn't -- just because most of the Black people were in this area, there really weren't that many Blacks either.

DT: No, because, I think, most of them were centered in this area. I don't think they were around in town like they are now, you know, different places in town where -- you know, in South Boise. Like now when we had to move over on Ash Street there, the colored people there that lived next to us, they bought over in South Boise.

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Her sister, she lived down here on Pioneer Street -- she moved way out in the North end of town. That time they didn't move in those sections of town.

MO: I wonder why not.

DT: I don't know, unless it was if they wouldn't allow them to.

See now they can't keep them out of any part, any place.

MO: Did they used to keep them out, do you think?

DT: They used to be able to, yes. They didn't have to rent to them or sell to them at all. They didn't used to let them in the restaurants or nothing. If they got on the street cars they had to sit in the back of them -- just like they did down South.

MO: Is that right?

DT: Yeah, I worked in restaurants for years and we weren't allowed to wait on them. Even during the second World War when they brought all the colored troops in here, they wouldn't let you wait on them.

MO: Is that right?

DT: No, they wouldn't allow. They could go in the shows, but if they'd come in and sit down at a show, the white people would get up. Now why I don't know, because this was not part of the South, or Civil War or anything -- there shouldn't have been that feeling, but there seemed to be. I thought it was terrible that they wouldn't let them in the restaurants to eat, but they wouldn't.

MO: Could you give me an example --- some restaurant, maybe, you worked in?

DT: Well during the second World War I worked at the Old Casino, they called it, and then I worked at the Cabin, is where my biggest recollection of what they used to do. It was during the second World War and they brought all these coloreds in and they

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had no place to put them. So they had the Boise Barracks up there where the old Soldier Home and hospital was, they called it Boise Barracks. So they housed them up there. But they didn't provide any recreation whatsoever for them. They couldn't go in the restaurants and eat -- they couldn't go in -- but they could go in and buy stuff and take it out and sit on the curb and eat it. I worked in this room, they called it, and they had fried chicken on Sunday, and they could come in and buy all they want and then take it out and sit on the curb and eat -- I'd just feel so sorry for those fellows. And they could buy their beer and go out and sit on the curb and drink it, but they couldn't drink it in the place of business.

MO: And that was pretty common?

DT: Oh yeah, that was all -- there wasn't any place that they were allowed in, not even in the old wine-o places.

MO: And that was as late as World War II?

DT: That was during the war. I know

And then when I worked over at -- I worked at the Grill Cafe for years, that was down on South Tenth, and that was when the law was passed that you had to serve them because if you didn't they could turn in a complaint and they could close your place. But no, if you served to colored people in a restaurant, they'd call you a "nigger-lover" just like they did down South. And the white people wouldn't come in and eat with you. Now it doesn't seem to me like the prejudice would be that bad, but it was, 'cause I worked through it.

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MO: Yeah. Was it like that -- how long did you work in restaurants around here?

DT: Oh, thirty years.

MO: And from the time you started working in restaurants was when, 1940's or 30's.

DT: No, let's see -- I went to work it must have been '36, somewhere around in there. Then I worked clear up until.

DT: Well I was still working in the restaurants ten years ago, and my hands went bad and I had to quit.

SIDE 2 of Cassette

MO: You worked in a restaurant from 1936 and you can remember instances then before World War II or during World War II?

DT: Yeah, I worked in restaurants before World War II. We had at least two or three . I was working out at historic Gowen Field there and that was before World War II and they wouldn't allow you to feed them then. I don't know why. Of course, I'd been raised back East, in the middle-West, back in Indiana and Illinois and there's lots of colored people through there. But they're excessive -- they go to school with you. They had to let them in the school, there was no distinction about the schools and the shows, they let them in the theatres. But they wouldn't let them in the restaurants.

MO: How about services as far as getting served at a clothing store or a grocery store?

DT: No, it was just the restaurants

It was just like keeping your dog out, you know, they won't let

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you take your dog in restaurants.

MO: What did they do for social...

DT: They had their own churches and they had their own recreation.

They had a church over on -- I don't know whether it's still over there or not, on Broadway, and down here on River, I think it was Thirteenth, they had a church down there. It's gone now. In the place where they built -- oh, that spa, that center -- exercise place down there.

MO: Do you remember the name of it?

DT: No, I don't. Then over there where the Karate place is they had a colored church over there but

MO: Is that the one that Reverend Brickland was in?

DT: I guess, I don't really know. I didn't ever see too much about it.

But the people that lived next to me went to the one over on Broadway. I imagine it's still over there. So most of the people, I think, went over there.

MO: Do you remember any leaders among this neighborhood -- whether they're Black or White, as far as prominent people or a place people went to for help at times.

DT: I was too young to pay attention to anything like that. I was only twenty when I moved down here.

MO: What about as far as, you mentioned Blacks went to the same schools...

DT: Well they had Park School used to be down there on Sixteenth and Grove and everybody from this neighborhood all went to the school down there. The kids didn't think anything about it -- they would play with the colored kids and it didn't bother them. It's just the only distinction was the restaurants and they wouldn't let them

eat in the restaurants.

MO: So there seemed to be a pretty good relationship closer to the communities around.

DT: Yeah, oh yeah, there was no distinction as to whoever was colored or white. They were friendly neighbors -- they were nice people and some of the best friends that I've ever had in my life before.

MO: The kids played together.

DT: Oh yeah. Well you taught your children to play with them, you know, you didn't allow them to call 'em Blacks or anything, they were just the same as them. You didn't allow none of them things -- allow any distinction like that at all. And they were the same as their kids, so they always played like ordinary, common kids. At one time in this neighborhood there was 42 kids on this one block.

MO: Just on Lee Street?

DT: Just on this one block.

MO: Boy, that was a family.

DT: Boy it sure was, I tell you. And all the kids got along good together.

MO: Did most of the kids on Lee Street just hang around with most of the kids from Lee Street or did they get along with...

DT: Oh, they got along with all of them -- there was no gangs in those times. They didn't, never thought about having gangs like nowadays. Of course, they just plain by themselves down here because there was so many things to do because like I say, there was a big park over there, ball park. When they weren't playing games over there well they were over there practicing. So naturally, every boy in the neighborhood spent all of their time over there at the ball

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park. And then when there wasn't anybody playing over there, they was over there playing ball. So you didn't have any problem. And then, of course, the river is awful close so we had it fixed down there with a diving board and everything -- down along the side of the river. Every kid in this neighborhood learned to swim down there. They had big ropes tied on trees that they floated down the river on. My kids all learned to swim down there because, about forty years old -- every one of them. I had five boys -- every one of them learned to swim in that river. Now they say it's polluted, you know -- all my kids. Then they fished in it, when they weren't swimming in it, they fished in it. So they had so many things to do that you didn't have to worry about your kids getting in trouble. They never chased around uptown -- there wasn't anything to do uptown.

MO: It must have been quite a nice area.

DT: It was a nice area. It was a grand area --- it was one of the nicest areas to raise kids in, because there was so many vacant lots, all over that they had to play in. So really, it was a nice area. And everybody was congenial -- everybody liked everybody. That makes it nice. It's nice to see -- you'd sit out on the porch or stand out in your yard at night and talk to your neighbors, and they'd all be out there. Now you never see nobody. If you speak to your neighbor now he glares at you. (Laughter) "What's the matter with that crazy old fool." (Laughter) I got a neighbor next door that he comes out -- my dog is bad about barking, she went over the fence and barked and I said "She sure is a noisy dog." and God, he glared at me so much. I'm not going to speak to him no more. (Laughter)



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MO: People were a lot more outgoing and friendly, huh? What would you do in the evenings, for example, after work?

DT: Well we didn't have any money so we didn't do much of anything. We had a radio, of course, there wasn't any television. We spent an awful lot of time at the library. The library was up on Washington Street - Eighth and Washington, so people did an awful lot of reading. They walked to the park. Not too many of them had cars, in those days. You worked for three dollars a day, you didn't have much. We paid sixteen dollars a month rent for thirteen years for that house across the street. Now they got it fixed in three apartments and they get one-hundred and forty dollars a month for each apartment. (Chuckles)

MO: People would communicate a lot more, huh?

DT: Yeah, you're more social -- you visited. And we played cards. The neighbors would get together, you know, each one of them -- you had your special friends, and you'd play cards. Things like that. I know the people down on the corner, they made home brew.

MO: The Basque people down there?

DT: No, this was the Johnsons -- that was after the Basques moved out. They moved out of the neighborhood one at a time -- I don't know if they bought their own place or what, but anyhow, they eventually all moved out.

MO: When did they move out by?

DT: Oh, I don't know -- it was before I moved over on -- no, there was still some over when I moved on Ash Street. Because one of them, he worked for Torrance Ice and Fuel because we got oil from him. They probably started moving out about in the 40's, I imagine. Maybe by '40 they were all gone.

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MO: Then as far as the house, did they own those houses?

DT: I don't even think so, I think they just rented -- but they might of owned them, but I don't remember -- I think they were rented. Not hardly anybody owns their own places down here at that time. Bernice Matevie. Across the street -- they were all rented across the street. Eventually, why, they started buying them.

MO: These houses are mostly rentals from

DT: I don't even know who owns them or anything. I know that Matevies owned the one we rented and they owned two there.

MO: As far as most of the people on this street, they were renters do you think?

DT: I think so -- I don't think they owned, I think they rented.

Bernice next door, of course, she owned her place -- but she rented her place out a lot because she... But I think the other ones were rented, I'm not sure. Maybe they weren't -- I don't know. We weren't inquisitive or anything -- didn't pry into other people's business.

MO: One lady mentioned that she thought most people

or the majority of people owned their houses.

DT: Well they might of, as I say, I don't really know 'cause I never did inquire. I know we rented, but.

MO: She thought that after they worked a while, saved money, sold their houses and rented their houses out and moved to a different location...

DT: That could be.

MO: But maybe that was

DT: No, the neighborhood stayed up in good condition all the time I lived down there. Even when I lived over on Ash Street, it was still in

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pretty good -- really the neighborhood was only started to go down hill, I would say, in the last five years. It's because they just -- the people that own the places just rent them to anybody and they don't give a darn what happens, so people just tear them to pieces. Because it's only been within the last five years that these houses -- in fact, I couldn't believe it when I saw that house on the corner, the way they were tearing that thing to pieces. I just couldn't believe it. Well just the other day -- of course, I don't get out much because it's hard for me to walk, I couldn't believe how they'd tear that down. Then I just looked at all of them -- the two next to Bernice's have been remodeled through Urban Renewal deal. So it's only the big white one and the little one on the corner are the ones that are deteriorating. They didn't remodel those. And the second one down from me, they remodeled that one.

NO: As far as remodeling, the interiors?

DT: Well, they have a deal through the city that they'll come in -- no, they'll do the whole thing -- outside, do all your repair work, remodel it -- it's kind of like a, you get a loan through the city and they'll do it. But the houses over on the other side of the street have always been in good condition. They're all home-owned over there though -- there isn't any renters over there except the one in the apartment house. But Mr. Spring -- no, Mr. Scott owns it now, the whole thing -- the three houses up and then the trailers. He's particular who he lets in any more. So he don't care if they rent it or not -- if he can't get good renters that'll take care of it, then he won't rent. So that's what's keeping those places up.

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MO: But the other houses...

DT: The rest of them on the other side of the street -- they're all kept up in pretty good condition. I think, one, two, three of them, I think, have been, remodeled, you know -- and redone. Then the little house over there, you know, it's redone inside and painted outside and fixed up. They're keeping them up pretty good. It's just the ones just up -- really the last two houses on the block that are really in bad condition. Because the man that bought the house rents to me is remodeling that himself, he's got the back on it -- he hasn't got started on the front yet, but he's doing it. But he had bad luck last year -- he was working and broke his back -- or his neck, broke his but he bought that. And then the little one, the one on the corner, I don't know when they put that in there -- it was after I moved off of Ash Street that they put that little one on the corner in there. That's a nice house.

MO: What about this house -- was it always out of brick -- as far back as you can remember? So the exterior hasn't changed much?

DT: Uh-huh. I think it's the way it was built.

MO: It's really a nice, attractive house.

DT: Yeah, it needs a lot of work done on it -- I just, I'm not in a position to fix it. I'd like to get rid of it -- I'd give it away.

It's too much for me -- the yard's gone to pot and the fences are all going down. Just costs too much to keep it up.

MO: Are you familiar with all the -- thing called the tent town?

DT: Yes.

MO:

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DT: Oh no, uh-huh.

MO:

DT: I don't think I'm ever over in that area. I had a friend that lived over there -- I guess she was on a street -- she was down towards the river. They were small houses over there, but they were nice little houses. But I don't even know.

MO: How about the Riverside Park -- does that name ring a bell?

DT: Not unless that's what they called the old ball park over there.

MO: This one over here?

DT: Yeah, over where the -- they might of called it Riverside Park.

MO: Well for example, Eva Chadwick was telling me how -- was that where she sold hamburgers?

DT: Yeah -- well, maybe they called it Riverside Park. Yeah, the softball game.

MO:

DT: Yeah, my oldest boy sold popcorn. He was only about five years old I think. They had a tin bucket. He'd carry it in a bucket. He'd put the pop in a bucket and swing it around -- couldn't hardly carry nothing. He was only about five years old -- he got a penny a bottle for selling the pop. If he brought back empty bottles. He'd work his little self to death. Yeah, they had a little stand they set up over there and they sold candy and popcorn and pop -- to watch the softball game.

MO: Was the zoo in over there?

DT: What?

MO: A zoo?

DT: A zoo? In the park -- over there?

MO:

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DT:

Of course,

Eva's been in this neighborhood a lot longer than I have. She was born and raised down on Lee Street. She's a lot older than I am.

MO: Did it seem like a pretty popular place for everyone or was it mostly just kids....

DT: Oh no, everybody. Old people -- because you didn't have to pay anything. It was free -- they had a freezer set up there and people'd take blankets and go sit all the way around the ballpark, you know, and watch them play ball. and didn't have to pay anything -- naturally everyone went -- old people, young people. come from all directions carrying their blankets and carrying baskets with their drinks or something in them and then spend the whole night because they'd play -- see they played over there until the second World War and they were still playing games.

MO: Oh, that long?

DT: Oh yeah. Gowen Field had a team that played over there. Mountain Home Air Base used to come over here and play.

MO: Do you remember an increase in the Black population after World War II or

DT: Well there was more, I think, moved up on Miller Street, up through there, and then Pioneer Street, they used to call it Lover's Lane -- that was practically all colored people, where that comes in from Leaden Street like that. But there was quite a lot of colored people in there. They never were in our neighborhood enough that I ever noticed, really, whether there was many more or not. There was a lot, as I say, during second

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World War, there was a lot of them here on account of the colored people they brought in. But there never was any in our neighborhood, and I always -- when I went to work, always went up Eleventh Street so they were back over this way. So really I never seen hardly any of them.

MO: Did you ever walk through Lover's Lane there?

DT: Oh yes. I was very much respected.  
They liked my husband -- everybody called me Mrs. Jack.

MO: Mrs. Jack?

DT: Uh-huh -- my husband's name was Jack. Everybody called me Mrs. Jack. Yeah, I've worked the late shift and I'd come home at four o'clock in the morning, and I wasn't going to take the by-pass, so I'd come down through there. They'd run houses and things. Colored people don't bother you if you treat them with respect, which I knew enough to do because I lived by them -- so you have to treat them with respect the same as you treat anybody else. And none of my children ever had any trouble. I made them respect them too. If you give them respect, they give you respect and there was no problem.

MO: How about as far as -- did you hear about any gambling?

DT: Oh yeah.

MO: On Pioneer Street?

DT: Yeah, they had two houses there.

MO: Two gambling houses?

DT: Illegal.

MO:

DT: Yeah, They was running women down there -- they brought them in from, we called it "Washington jigs." These Washington jigs,

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they brought the women in from Washington.

MO: Washington, D. C. or Washington...

DT: No, Washington over on the coast -- Seattle. They'd bring them in on the weekend -- drive in then take them back. So there was pretty wild times down there. But they stayed in their own area.

MO: They brought them in on weekends, huh?

DT: Yeah. And there was a great, big, heavy lady -- they called her Mama. Oh she was big -- she used to play Aunt Jemima in the stores -- you know, demonstrate the Aunt Jemima pancake. She had a big house. Of course, the Yugoslavs and the Austrians had houses all over this side of town too.

MO: Oh they did?

DT: Oh yeah -- dancing houses, illegal liquor...

MO: Yugoslavs and the Austrians?

DT: Yeah, and the Czechs -- there was quite a few of them down through this neighborhood.

MO: This was in your time, or before, or afterwards?

DT: They went here when -- they used to live in this neighborhood, but there was Austrians that lived on Eleventh Street -- there was two families on Eleventh Street. One was on the corner of Eleventh and Miller and one next door. Then there's another one down on Tenth and Miller -- another family. Then over on Fifteenth Street -- Sixteenth Street there was families over there. They run liquor houses and gambling.

MO: Do you remember any names?

DT: No, not really. It's been so long ago, I've forgotten the names. I was trying to think of what Mary's mother's name was. Hemuvich?



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was the name of one.

MO: Does Grimach....

DT: Hemuvich.

MO: Does Grimach name ring a bell? The Yugoslavs also, you say, around here?

DT: Yeah, I worked for a Yugoslav for nine, ten, twelve years.

MO: They lived down in this area?

DT: No, no, they were -- he was from the North End, he lived in the North End of town. It was when I worked at the Old Casino.

MO: How about the Czechs? Where did they live?

DT: Oh they just -- alot of them lived on Grove Street. There was a lot of houses on Grove Street that were mostly Czechs.

you see they worked in the mountains? -- oh, for Morrison Knudsen and for Quinn Robbins, stuff like that. Contract men.

There was an awful lot

MO: You mentioned that there was some bootlegging going on?

DT: Oh yeah, there was lots of bootlegging.

MO: In this neighborhood?

DT: Well the fact to tell the truth it was in every other neighborhood -- it wasn't just centered in this neighborhood. My girlfriend worked for the vice president of one of the banks -- he run a good bootlegging place, and he was way up on Warm Springs Avenue. So it wasn't just in this neighborhood. It was when Idaho was dry, so they'd go to Oregon and get alcohol and that was when bathtub gin was invented. And they'd go to Oregon and bring in -- that's how some of the Yugoslavs come in to town. I know old Tony -- he came here from Portland and that's how he happened to settle in Boise, was because he run liquor -- he run alcohol from Portland to Boise. He liked

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Boise so well that he moved to Boise. He never did get caught. They had their cars fixed -- he had his fixed. The back seat, you could take it out and there was a regular compartment underneath there. All this liquor would just sit in there, just perfect, and he'd put the seat back on there. There wasn't any way you could tell it was in there unless you'd tear the car all to pieces. Oh, they really had... But the house we moved in across the street there, Austrians lived over there before -- I guess they owned the place. Anyhow, but underneath all your windows -- the windowsill would be fixed on big springs and you could pull them out and there was all compartments down underneath there where they hid all of their liquor and stuff. It was quite interesting to go around the house and pull out every windowsill -- just pull way out, you know, there'd be compartment down in there. (Chuckles) But they made most of their stuff.

MO: Which Austrian family was that?

DT: Well the Hemovich's -- Sochovich's. There's not none of them around here anymore. I imagine they're all dead and the kids are gone.

MO: They almost sound like Yugoslavian names.

DT: They were Austian though, those families were. Practically all of them have a vich on the end. The boss I worked for, he was Yugoslavian and he was Bonkovich. Tony was -- I worked with him, he was Czechoslovakia and he was Benzovich. So they all had "viches" on the end of those names. They're all, I guess, their countries are all just right close together.

MO: How about, did you ever see them bootlegging in the Black community or maybe on Pioneer Street?

DT: I don't know whether they bootlegged down there. Now I know they

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had lots of liquor down in there. . . . liquor  
down there and gambling and houses and women and they had everything,  
it was really wild down there. But they kept it in their own area --  
they didn't move it around.

MO: Just what -- that two block area -- that one block area?

DT: Yeah, just down in that -- well, I'd say from the corner of Pioneer  
about half way up on the block to the alley, towards Eleventh,  
and then down around Pioneer. Just in that area, but they didn't  
move around, I mean, in fact if you hadn't been walk then, you  
wouldn't even have known what was going on there because they didn't  
move into your areas or anything. They kept in their own. Same  
way with the Austrians -- houses just down on Sixteenth Street there,  
they kept it in their own areas.

MO: Did they have bootlegging houses . . . the Austrians?

DT: I don't think -- I don't know whether they run women or not. But  
at that time they had houses all over Boise.

MO: Oh yeah.

DT: Oh yeah. They had Savoy Hotel, in between Tenth and Eleventh, and  
then there was another one down on Grove Street -- Oregon Hotel  
they called it. Then there was another one up on Tenth Street,  
another one on Eighth Street. In fact there were -- oh, even in  
the big hotels they had gambling and .

MO: And those houses were gambling houses?

DT: Well, some of them had gambling and drinking, some of them just  
run women. The Savoy just run women. The Oregon just run women.  
Working nights in a restaurant is where I learned all that stuff.  
Because you worked with the cab drivers and you get real friendly  
with them, you know, so they tell you all that stuff. Otherwise,

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I don't know that I would have known about it; except the boss that I worked for, his wife run one of the houses. Knew quite a bit about that one. (Chuckles)

MO: How many families were down there on Pioneer Street? Do you have any idea? Any names of any people down there...

DT: Well the Johnsons lived down there -- that's the only ones that I know of. That was the brother of the people that lived next door to me and the only reason I knew them is them. That was way before Willa Mae's time -- before she lived down there. I don't know what the names of the other ones on down Miller Street, or on down Lover's Lane we always called it. It was Pioneer Street, but there was about three houses down that street and they were all colored -- they all...

MO: You mentioned that they usually just brought women in on weekends.

DT: During the-- yeah, during the second World War they'd bring in women on weekends. As I say, that's why we called them the "Washington jigs." They'd go back and then they'd -- of course, in those days you couldn't get off the base, you couldn't get leave until weekends so there was no use bringing 'em in until the soldiers were released on weekends. But they just brought them in more for the pleasure of the, you know, because the colored soldiers were brought in and there was nothing for them to do

MO: So there wasn't really that much of an establishment?

DT: No, uh-huh.

MO: Trade down there before World War II that you remember?

DT: No, no really I don't think they had any houses down there before then, until they started them just during the war. Then they all closed down as soon as the war was over. Just a service to the boys.

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MO: Was there any stigma associated with being south of the tracks, do you remember?

DT: Not that I know of. Yeah -- oh there was to some extent.

If you say you lived on Lee Street, "Where's that?" "On down south of Eleventh." "Oh, south of the tracks." But it really wasn't that bad. I mean it wouldn't be no town at that time, you see, Boise wasn't really large. Boise wasn't a city at that time, it was more of a town, you know. But now, I don't know, I don't think there's a stigma. Of course, I don't get around anymore so I don't know what they say. I think they really call it the slum area now from what they used to -- they used to, the folks down here were really just nice, not nicer than they were up in the other parts of town. And good respectable people -- hard-working people.

MO: A pretty stable population?

DT: Yeah.

MO: As far as police in the area, you didn't have too many problems?

DT: Never seen no problems.

MO: You never saw a cop?

DT: Not down in through this neighborhood -- not when my kids were growing up, very seldom ever saw one. You didn't, you know, drive through the area or anything like that. Of course, then they didn't have cars, that made a difference. You know, they walked their beat.

MO: Did they walk a bit through here? Cops didn't even have a beat through here?

DT: Not through this neighborhood they didn't. There was no reason for it. People never even thought about calling the cops. You never had any trouble. My husband worked nights so I was alone at nights with all my kids and they never was once that I was scared. In fact,

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I never even locked my doors, not all the years I lived in this neighborhood, I don't even lock my doors at night.

MO: Well that can't be too much of a problem then.

DT: I always had a dog and I depended on him to alert me, see.

END OF TAPE

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