

Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project  
 Reta McMillan Townzen Interview Abstract  
 March 8, 2018

Interviewee	Reta McMillan Townzen
Year of birth	1923
Place of birth	Hiwasse, Benton County, Arkansas
Interviewer	Camille Hatcher
Interview date	2018-03-08
Interview location	Kindley House; Gravette, Benton County, Arkansas
Keywords	<p>Townzen, McMillan Reta          McMillan, Howard          Horton, Dr          Moore, Edward          Hatcher, Camille          Hiwasse, Benton County, Arkansas          Works Progress Administration (WPA)          Canning industry          Carnivals and Fairs          Farming          Gravette plane          Jesse James movie          Medical care          Schools          Small town life          World War II</p>
Description	<p>Reta McMillan Townzen talks of times when you 'made due with what you had'. Her parents, like many of her extended family, were homesteaders in the Hiwasse Arkansas area, 'I'm kinfolk to everybody'. Momma's homeplaces were nearby at Buzzards Flock and Mount Pleasant, while Daddy's people came by wagon train stopping in Centerton.</p> <p>Fun times meant getting on the wagon to visit family and friends. There was music; Momma played banjo; Daddy the guitar. Later, neighbors shared their radios. Other times Townzen picked strawberries, ice skated, picnicked at Buttermilk Springs, attended Sunday School, helped Momma with the house and garden, or hunted with her two brothers. Hiwasse's brick school was heated by a wood stove. The student with the wettest feet got to sit by it and dry out. Memorable was the morning the student warming his feet had come from hunting skunk. It was during the annual school Christmas pageant that Eddie Moore got his life-long nickname and Townzen discovered her seamstress skills.</p> <p>Hiwasse had no hospital. But it did have Doctor Horton who attended her brother through diphtheria; the Healing Lady who got rid of your warts; and the stranger whose pine tar/Vaseline remedy cured Momma's cut hand. Even Daddy, hit by a rock</p>

	<p>working on Highway 72 for the WPA, could get a glass eye that moved.</p> <p>People made the most of local resources. When a tomato canning plant opened in Hiwasse, local women including Momma, got jobs. Her uncle filled his wagon with tomato waste from the plant to feed his hogs.</p> <p>A Bentonville canning plant would change Townzen's life. Townzen was working there when a boy walked by and winked. That boy became her husband. Townsend recalls their honeymoon drive to Pineville to see where the Jesse James movie was being filmed.</p> <p>Today (2018) at 94, Townzen describes herself as 'just busy living' thankful her 'family done alright'.</p>
Duration	120 minutes
Audio File Format	MP3
Images	Yes
Producer	Northwest Arkansas Oral History Project
Copyright	Pryor Center for Arkansas Oral and Visual History, University of Arkansas
Website URL	<a href="http://pryorcenter.uark.edu">http://pryorcenter.uark.edu</a>
Questions or Comments	<a href="https://nwaoralhistory.org">https://nwaoralhistory.org</a>
Interview sidebar	<p>Townzen's brother Howard McMillan was stationed in Italy in WWII. After he returned to the States he went to work in Washington State at an airplane factory. Later during a visit to Arkansas, he stopped in Gravette. Howard noticed the plane displayed at Kindley Park looked familiar. He confirmed by the registration number on the plane that it was one he had worked on at the factory. [01:51:00]</p>