“Renton’s General Stores: Groceries, Bakeries, Meat and Fish Markets”  
By Ethel B. Telban

As we remember Ethel Telban’s legacy in this issue of the Quarterly, we thought the coming of “Key Ingredients,” the Smithsonian traveling food exhibit, was the perfect time to reprint an excerpt from this article by Miss Telban. First published in May 1997, her well-researched piece is interesting and informative, and reminds us all that we of a younger generation of researchers stand on the shoulders of giants.

The first retail outlets in Renton were typically general stores which featured a wide variety of items for sale. Later, these stores began to specialize in such areas as groceries, meat markets, fish markets, and bakeries. The final stages of Renton’s retail/mercantile evolution has been the advent of the chain stores, and lastly, the predominance of the huge supermarkets.

“Housewives came in with baskets on their arms and took their time about shopping. Those who lived too far ordered meat and groceries by telephone and they were delivered with a horse and wagon. My father delivered even as far as Black Diamond. The store continued in business until some time in the middle ‘30s. Our business, like many other stores in Renton, helped many families during the Depression.” Eva Camerini

Some of these earliest stores stayed in business for decades. Names such as Tonkin’s, Delaurenti’s Piemonte Grocery, Covey’s, Bennett’s, Johnson’s in North Renton, and Pistoressi’s Eagle were Renton landmarks. Most of these maintained charge accounts and customers were expected to pay up on pay days or at the end of each month. During the Great Depression many proprietors “carried” or advanced credit to their customers for months and years. Some of these accounts were never paid up. The larger stores made home deliveries—with some traveling as far as Newcastle and Black Diamond. Eva Pistoressi recalls that her father would often place grocery orders on the Pacific Coast daily train to Maple Valley. The engineer would slow down and the groceries would be dropped off for the waiting customers.

According to William Richter, who worked as the meat cutter at Johnson Grocery for 35 years, the Johnsons operated their store from 1911 to 1973 with the help of their sons, Don and Roger. Because of its proximity to Pacific Car & Foundry, PACCAR President William Piggott called on the Johnsons and requested that their store stock gloves and tobacco for his workers. He also requested that Mrs. Johnson bake bread for his workers. Marge Richter recalled that 42 Renton junior and senior boys delivered groceries for the store over the years. Old timers fondly recall that the back room of the Johnsons’ store was the social club for the men in the neighborhood.
President's Message
By Laura Clawson, President

What does the Renton Historical Society Board of Trustees do?

This is another question I am asked by Historical Society members. The short answer—that we are a body of persons who jointly oversee the activities of an organization—isn’t helpful. One needs specifics.

The American Association of Museums has provided us guidance through their publication *A Handbook for Museum Trustees*, from which I summarize the following.

Trustees are people who are working toward a common goal: the vision and mission of the Renton Historical Society. All Board actions must further this end. Fundamental duties are threefold: loyalty to mission; care of assets; service to the community.

Our mission is to preserve, document, and interpret the history of greater Renton in ways that are accessible to our diverse community, and we must stay on this track. An example of staying within the mission is the upcoming Smithsonian exhibit, *Key Ingredients*, and its local companion exhibit, *Sustaining A City*, which brings national food culture into focus here at home. Service to the community is evident in the exhibits, programs, and services provided by our Museum.

Board work is done in committees; decisions are made at the monthly Board meetings. For example, the Museum Committee is responsible for overseeing the day-to-day operations of the museum and maintaining the collection. Removing artifacts from the collection, assisting with upcoming exhibits and projects, and drafting an ethics policy are all duties of this committee.

Financial recommendations are provided by the Endowment and Budget Committees. The Endowment Committee oversees the professional investment of endowment funds, under a board-approved policy that limits risk. The Budget Committee develops an annual operating budget and presents it to the Board for approval.

The Membership Committee is responsible for the annual membership drive and for raising the community’s awareness of the Museum. It is charged with increasing membership and nominating people to fill empty Board positions.

The Events & Fundraising Committee plans Board events such as the Annual Meeting, fundraising dinner, and exhibit openings. This committee has fun!

The Executive Committee guides and energizes the Board. We are the Board’s public face in the community, the legal signers, the organizers, the long-range planners, and the communicators.

Being a Trustee is both exciting and challenging. A range of talents and diversity of people is needed on a Board. If you are interested, please let us know. There is room at the table.
Renton Museum Report
By Elizabeth P. Stewart

I have worked in museums for almost 15 years and I have wanted to do a food exhibit all that time. In late March we finally unveil our own exhibit about food in Renton, Sustaining A City, as well as a Smithsonian Institution traveling exhibit, Key Ingredients: America By Food. Collection Manager Sarah Iles and I have spent over a year researching Renton’s foodways, with the assistance of several interns, Jen Myers, Kim Owens, and Benny Eisman. We have explored everything from dairy farming to pioneer picnics to wine-making, and found some fascinating stories along the way, many of which will end up in the exhibit.

Renton is a city built by waves of immigrants, with all the challenges that implies. People far from home needed a touchstone, and food often served that purpose. In sharing their favorite home-cooking with neighbors from other countries, new citizens found a way to bridge gaps between them. In an oral history Andrew Gigli remembered how school-kids traded the frittatas, ravioli, or potica in their lunches, and in that way found common ground as Americans. “We had strange food compared to the others, but so did the Austrians,” he recalled, but in exchanging these “weird” foods, “the Italian disappeared, the American or English became part of it.” By trying dishes from another country, these young Rentonites came to a new appreciation of one another’s heritage and how they all fit together in one city.

The places we eat are as important to us for the way they nurture our souls. One of our favorite objects is evidence of this. A menu from the Lighthouse Café is inscribed with a date in 1942 and a note that this was “the night Matt gave me my ring.” The menu is also signed by the group of friends who celebrated with them at the city’s first drive-up restaurant. “Am I Happy!” wrote the future Mrs. Johnstone. Almost 60 years later her husband donated the menu to the Museum.

These are just some of the stories we have uncovered, with more to come, I’m sure. Take the time to visit our two new exhibits and come to our special programs this spring, and share with us what you know about our city’s edible heritage.

"Key Ingredients" events

March 16 - 20 - Museum closed for exhibit installation.

Saturday, March 21, 10:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m. - Grand Opening with live broadcast of 97.3 KIRO radio's "In the Kitchen with Tom and Thierry"

Thursday, March 26, 5:00 - 7:00 p.m. - Members' only exhibit opening. Wear your favorite apron!

Saturday, April 4, 3:00 - 4:00 p.m., Carco Theatre. - "Closing the Food Gap," talk and book-signing with author Mark Winne. $10 adults, $5 students.

Thursday, April 16, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m., Carco Theatre - "3 Feet Under: Digging Deep for the Geoduck Clam" film screening. $10 adults, $5 students.

Thursday, May 7, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m., Carco Theatre. - "An Afternoon with Greg Atkinson," talk and book-signing. $10 adults, $5 students.

Saturday, May 9, 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. - Last chance to see "Key Ingredients"!

Liz Stewart
Renton’s Groceries continued from page 1

Delaurenti & Businello’s Piemonte Grocery catered to Italian customers by stocking special cheese, chestnuts and imported candies and cookies. During the holidays, the Pistoresi store did the same. Zute Businello later operated a deli on Main Avenue near Bill and John Santi’s Grocery. Seattle French Bakery (later Gai’s) maintained a delivery truck service in the Renton area for years. “Jimmy the Breadman,” who recently passed away at the age of 86, was well known in the Renton households. ¹ Renton’s first cooperative grocery was organized in the early 1920s by the members of the Renton Grange. It was near the present-day Lande Feed but it did not thrive for very long. ²

**Meat Markets**

Although many groceries in the early days operated meat markets, there were those that were strictly meat markets. These were well-known in the area:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Name</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1901</td>
<td>John Duncalf and Gallagher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Ed Ditlevsen and Charles Mitchell</td>
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<tr>
<td>1908</td>
<td>Conklin and Duncalf</td>
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<tr>
<td>1909</td>
<td>Hartley S. Gieldseth and his son Raymond</td>
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<tr>
<td>1911</td>
<td>E. T. Hudson</td>
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<tr>
<td>1912</td>
<td>Fred Uder</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>Henry Wurst</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A related meat operation was established in Renton in the early ‘40s when the Covey brothers, built the freezer unit or meat lockers at the corner of Morris and Third Street. This is now the location of the Salvation Army store.
Bakeries

No towns could exist without their bakeries, and Renton had its share, which are still recalled with fond memories by many old-timers. One of the earliest was Freyman’s and many remember their potato and Irish breads, as well as the real whipping cream cakes. Mr. Perry had a bakery where Garland Jewelers is located and we know some who still remember the delicious pies, jelly doughnuts, and cream rolls. Then there were bakeries operated by the Esterle family and for a short time by the McKnights. Remember the Van DeCamp Dutch bakery operated during the late ‘30s and ‘40s? Remember the Dutch caps worn by the sales ladies?

Fish Markets

Over the years several fish markets served the town and especially catered to Renton’s Catholic citizens. In 1909 a Marco Antoncich had a market but the location remains unknown. In the 1930s Matt Stepanich operated his fish market in conjunction with the Conklin Meat Market. Between 1933 and 1943 Sam Arnone had his next to the Eagle Grocery, which later became the Central Tavern on the northwest corner of Third and Williams.

The 1940s to the Present

In the 1930s, the first chain stores appeared in Renton, with the Skaggs store on Wells Street being one of the first.

Originally, there was rather strong resentment on the part of businesses but Skaggs was soon followed by Safeway and Tradewell groceries. According to Marjorie Lotto, her husband Mike bought the Nicola grocery at the corner of Third and Main in 1944 and then established his series of Market Baskets, first in North Renton (at the current site of Value Village) and then in the Highlands and Skyway areas. In 1965 he was bought out by Fred Meyer of Portland.

Then came the supermarkets.

Quality Food Centers (QFC), Albertsons, Thriftway, and most recently the huge Fred Meyer on Rainier Avenue in the Renton Shopping Center have dominated the market since their arrival. And while their level of sanitation is now regulated by state and federal laws, gone is the smell of the pickle barrel, the big stalk of bananas hanging behind the counter, the horehound sticks in a round glass jar, the cheese slab on the counter, the 49 pound cloth sacks of flour, and deliveries by horse and wagon.

1. We do not know the real name of “Jimmy the Breadman.”
2. Lande Feed was located at 95 Burnett Avenue South when Miss Telban wrote this in 1997. It was torn down in 2002.
3. Matt Antoncich’s fish market was located at Wells St. and Walla Walla Ave. (now Houser Way), according to the 1909 Renton City Directory.

Above: Tradewell supermarket, 1970 (#1970.001.7311)
Dear museum members and volunteers,

The museum offers a variety of events to its members and the general public, a better value than ever right now. We managed to book a number of impressive programs in conjunction with the Smithsonian Institution travelling exhibition *Key Ingredients - America by Food* and *Sustaining a City*, an exhibit created by the museum staff, about Renton’s unique foodways.

In choosing our spring programs we hoped to use our two new exhibitions as a jumping-off point to discuss issues such as food banks, hunger in the U.S, and the local food movement. For many of us the subject of food narrows to different recipes. Both exhibits are meant to make us realize that food is a much more complicated matter, with roots not only in economic, but cultural and social systems as well.

In our first presentation, *Closing the Food Gap* on April 4, nationally recognized food activist Mark Winne will discuss the history of food movements and a future that will feed the hungry, support local farmers, and promote community democracy – all at the same time. He will explore growing obesity and diabetes, income disparities, and the increasing food gap between the poor and everybody else.

On April 16th we will have an opportunity to watch an Emmy-nominated documentary film, *3 Feet Under: Digging Deep for the Geoduck Clam* by Justin Bookey. The film explores how this ugly clam, the “gooey duck,” has garnered a devoted following in the Pacific Northwest over the past century. This very entertaining, fun, and informative film will fascinate anyone interested in local food.

Who doesn’t want to spend *An Afternoon with Greg Atkinson* on May 7? A local chef and cookbook author, Atkinson will share with us his passion for West Coast regional cuisine. He has done extensive research into Pacific Northwest food, resulting in a better understanding of our place in American regional cooking.

All presentations will be held at the Carco Theatre. Tickets can be purchased in advance at the Museum—get yours early! Please encourage your family, friends, and other associates to attend them, as this is a really rare opportunity to hear these speakers without having to drive and park in Seattle.

See you at Carco Theatre on April 4th, April 16th, and May 7th. Enjoy your time!!!
Memories of Ethel Telban

Miss Ethel Telban died on November 19, 2008 at the age of 94. Miss Telban was one of the driving forces behind the formation of the Museum. She was a Board member for many years and served as the Museum’s long-time archivist and librarian. Her Renton roots went back to 1905, when her father, Blas Telban, settled here. She was proud of her pioneering heritage and passed that pride along through her work preserving Renton’s heritage.

**Eda and Theresa Pozzobon remembered** - “Miss Ethel Telban was a very special lady to us, and we have such fond memories of her. Miss Telban asked us many years ago to call her ‘Ethel,’ but she was always known to us as Miss Telban. We were always so proud throughout the many years to say we still had contact with our Grade School teacher at Henry Ford.

Miss Telban taught us Reading at Henry Ford Grade School. Our parents came from Italy and we did not speak English until we were in the First Grade at Henry Ford. Miss Telban was a very patient teacher and gave us confidence and that is why we became good readers. Another very important memory we have of Miss Telban was in 1945, shortly before the end of World War II. We were 17 years old and on summer vacation from Renton High School and we went to work at The Boeing Plant in Renton where they were building the B-29 airplane. Miss Telban also went to work at the Boeing Plant in Renton during that summer and we saw her there. Miss Telban always remembered it was very difficult for us to go through our first physical examination. When we saw Miss Telban there we felt so much happier. Those were different times, then. We loved Miss Telban very much and we know she had a good and long life, and did so much to help other people, the community and the City of Renton. Miss Telban will be missed a lot, but we know she is at peace with the Lord and her family.”

Eda Pozzobon suggested we print one of Ethel’s favorite songs. The Museum has a copy of the music if anyone cares to learn the tune to the words. The song is Henry Ford School’s last day of school theme song.

**IT’S JUNE, JUNE, JUNE**

Is there anything you want to know? Just ask us we can tell.
We’ve studied hard for nine long months and know our lessons well.
But now we’re looking for the days when we can have some fun, for
J-U-N-E always spells VACATION!
For it’s Hip, Hip, Hooray for the good vacation time,
With an old straw hat, no shoes at all and a fishing pole and line.
The brook is calling to us and the woods repeat the tune.
The very air without a care spells JUNE! JUNE! JUNE!

**Louise George recalled** - “I hardly knew Ethel when I started as a volunteer in at the Renton History Museum in 1982 and she turned out to be a wonderful and special friend. At that time everyone working at the Museum was a volunteer and Ethel was an excellent example, along with Ernie Tonda and many others. It was a pleasure working with her as she had this Librarian background which was perfect for a Museum. I soon realized how much time and work she had put into setting up files of all kinds, logging historical books, writing and typing the quarterly newsletter, and setting up interesting exhibits from time to time. As years went by, she asked me to type and help prepare the newsletter. Ethel loved everything RENTON, her sisters, and all the people she knew. She was a great gal!”

**And Norma Cugini also fondly remembered Miss Telban** - “Miss Telban played a memorable role in the history of Renton. I first remember her as my 4th grade teacher at Sartori School. She remains an outstanding teacher in my mind. She was active on every level of life in Renton, and was helpful to all. She was a treasure and we will all miss her.”

**Bob & Jean Hendrickson** - “in memory of a wonderful lady, Ethel Telban, who gave so much of herself, to our community – Renton.”

**Rosemarie Fliseck** - “in memory of Ms. Ethel Telban, a wonderful lady and Renton Pioneer.”
Renton Historical Quarterly  

From the Collections Department...  

By: Sarah Iles, Collection Manager

The Yummy, the Strange, and the Unappetizing

In preparation for our new exhibit *Sustaining A City*, I have been scouring our collections for items related to Renton’s food history. The cookbooks have been an entertaining source of information. Our oldest cookbook dates to 1890 and the collection ranges up to the 1980s. Local clubs and companies produced many of the cookbooks in the collection.

Cooking traditions certainly have changed over the decades, as the recipes from these cookbooks show. Recipes that seem strange to me were commonplace not that long ago. The combination of meat and Jell-O, for example, is one that I don’t think I will be sampling anytime soon! I have included a sampling of recipes from our cookbooks. Bon Appétit!

The Yummy: Magic Rum Balls

3 cups finely crushed vanilla wafers  
1 cup finely chopped walnuts  
1 1/3 cups (15 oz. can) sweetened condensed milk  
1/3 cup rum  

Confectioners’ sugar or colored sprinkles

Combine wafers, crumbs and nuts. Add sweetened milk and rum. Blend well. Chill about 1 hour. Dip palms of hands into confectioners’ sugar. Shape by teaspoonfuls into small balls. Roll in confectioners’ sugar or colored sprinkles. Store in covered container in refrigerator for several weeks, or put in freezer for longer period of time. 4 dozen.

-The From the Home Service Department of Puget Sound Power & Light Co.’s “Holiday Treats” cookbook. n.d. (RHM# 2008.003.053)

The Unappetizing: Salmon Mold

1 package Lemon Jell-O  
1 pint hot water  
3 tablespoons vinegar  
½ teaspoon salt  
4 teaspoons drained horse-radish  
1 cup flaked salmon  
1 cup cooked peas, fresh or canned  
1 cup cooked diced carrots


-The From "Jack & Mary’s Jell-O Recipe Book", 1937. (RHM# 2008.003.072)

-From Wonderful Ways with Soups from Campbell’s, 1960 (RHM# 2008.003.102)
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City:State: ___________________________Zip: ___________ + 4 (       ___ )

Please make checks payable to the Renton Historical Society.
VISA/MASTERCARD # _____________________________ Ex.Date: __________

Your Signature: _______________________________________________

☐ Please share your e-mail address with us: __________________________
☐ Please send me a volunteer application form. (32/1)

Mail To: Membership Secretary, Renton Historical Society
235 Mill Avenue South, Renton, Washington 98057-2133

Please Choose Membership Category & Any Donation You Wish To Make:

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☐ Business ($100) ______
☐ Corporate ($100) ______
☐ Life ($500) One Time Only (partially tax deductible) ______
☐ General Fund Donation ______
☐ Endowment Fund Donation ______
In Memory of: _____________________________________________

Total enclosed: _____________
Obituaries Collected

November 2008
Wesley “Blackie” Anglemyer
Susan Carlson
Helga Eva Karinen
Larry Kingen
Dorothy Strayer
More Pierucci
William D. Rathbun
Ethel Telban
Patricia “Minnie” Vaughn

December 2008
Margaret Bisiack
Gene Buxton
Gloria Patricelli DeSantis
Henry Haroldson
Bruce Hulse
Sheila Pratt
Merle Shaw
Myrna Abrahamson Swanson
Patrick “P.J.” Walsh

January 2009
James Culler
Linda Camerini Deane
Robert H. Hendrickson
Frances Holen
Dorothy Hemmingsen Jessen
Martha Davidson Kingen
Emmy Lindberg
Georgia Marenakos
Lois Pritchard
Anton Schatz
Mildred Schwendeman
Daniel Spears
Helen Anglemyer Templeton
Anna Peiroli Thurston
Trent Weathers
Sarah Agnes White

February 1-12th
Neil Burmester
Viola T. Hall
Lloyd Hoshide
John Levar
Karol Anne Moriarty
Eldra Rutherford
Richard Vaughn

Memorials
$100 & over
Lucy Ozbolt
Bea Mathewson

Ethel Telban
Bob & Jean Hendrickson
Jack Morrison
Bill & Carol Collins
Eda & Teresa Pozzobon

Dorothy Hemmingsen Jessen
Darrell & Judy Peterson
Thurston & Jean Bosley

Martha Kingen
Tom & Lori Huling
Joyce Entus

Memorials
Over $1000
Ethel Telban
Don Kalis
Rentonians Remembered

Jack Adams
Kenneth Picini
Lee Anderson
Florence Murray
Bill Beck
Katie Gilligan
Charles Bisiack
Chrissie Grubesic & Righi family
Margaret Bisiack
Chrissie Grubesic & Righi family
Dorothy C. Bruce
Harold Bruce
Virginia Shook Busato
Jim & Frances Bourasa
Bob Corey
Ira & Janet Henkle
Olive Corey
Ira & Janet Henkle
Eddie DellaRossa
Lora Henry; Katie Gilligan; Jean Newell & Joni Battey
Linda Camerini Deane
Ron & Sharon Clymer; Louise George; Florence Delaurenti; Rose, Don & Carmel Camerini
Madeline Donckers
Katie Gilligan
Diane Ford
Florence Murray
David Grimm
Dorothy Caniparoli
George Hannah
Florence Murray
Louise Hannah
Florence Murray
Robert H. Hendrickson
Mr. & Mrs. Robert Youngquist
Dorothy Hemingsen Jessen
Renton High School Class ’57--
Marily Roper, Connie Kerr Baker, Darlene M. Vill, Sylvia Alexander, Darrell & Judy Peterson, Thurston & Jean Bosley
Warren Jones
Bruce & Sarah Jane Hisey; Patrick & Linda Texeira
Larry Kingen
Louise George; Wendell & Cleo Forgaard; Beth & Mike Potoshnik; Richard & Corinne Lucotch; Charlene Saults
Martha Kingen
Richard & Corinne Lucotch; Jean Newell & Joni Battey; Florence Delaurenti; Louise George; Wendell & Cleo Forgaard; John & Eleanor Bertagni; Shirley Dunigan; Barbara & Lon Deffert; Delores & Alec Bakamus; Betty Richards; Peggy Bevan; Renton High School Class of 1940; Margaret Haggerty; McLendon Hardware; Donald & Doris McWilliams; Jim & Charlene Saults
Robert Kingen
Richard & Corinne Lucotch
Emmy A. Lindberg
Gwynne Taylor; Bert & Evy Nord; Judy Jones; Alice Knight; Gene & Kay Baxstrom; Excelsior Lodge No. 435, V.O.A.; Rachelle Cinque; Adrian & Rita Rowe; Sivert Johanson; Bernard & Sandra Johnston; Donald & Doris McWilliams; Steven & Patricia Gramer; Kenneth & Judith Wachholtz; Carolyn & James Sundvall
Diane McConville
Dan & Gloria Cartwright
Helen Murdock
Richard & Corinne Lucotch; Wendell & Cleo Forgaard
James Murray
Florence Murray
Shirley Newing
Peter & Hazel Newing
Barney Poli
Florence Murray
Dan Poli
Florence Murray
Esterina Poli
Florence Murray
Lois Pritchard
Richard & Corinne Lucotch; Ann, Tom, & Mike White & families; Wendell & Cleo Forgaard; John & Eleanor Bertagni
Fern Regis
Wendell & Cleo Forgaard
Raymond Rosa
Jim & Frances Bourasa
Laura Shook
Jean Newell & Joni Battey
Lillian Snowberger
Katie Gilligan
Iris Buckley Sutter
Betty Sipila; William & Patricia Borek
Myrna Abrahamson
Swanson
Paul & Nancy Duke; Marilyn Tharp Clise
Ethel Telban
Louise George; Marilyn Clise; Norma Lou Jones; Cecilia Major; Steve & Lynn Anderson; Al & Shirley Armstrong; Richard Major; Pearl & Don Jacobson; Steve & Marcie Maxwell; Margaret Sebelist; Roy & Norma Fournier; Rosemarie Fliseck; Jean Tonda; Daisy Ward; George & Frances Subic
Patrick “PJ.” Walsh
Wendell & Cleo Forgaard
Agnes White
Ann, Tom, Mike White & families; Jim & Stephanie White; Daisy Ward; Marilyn Tharp Clise
Kay White
Louise George
Arnold Wiest
Dan & Gloria Cartwright
Mary Lopan Petersen Wolfe
Karalee Rae
In Hindsight...

Boeing cafeteria kitchen, ca 1942. Entrée chefs are Ed Madigan and William Minear. (#1982.039.1580)