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Irma Austin Oral History Summary

Irma Austin, born in Fairvilla, Florida, shared her memories of life in the Wet Mountain Valley during an interview on October 1, 1986. Her father, a professor and writer under the pseudonym Solomon Weisman, influenced her artistic inclinations. Irma's family moved to Junkins Park in 1910, where her grandparents had homesteaded. Life was challenging due to cattle theft and harsh winters. Irma fondly recalled childhood adventures, including skiing mishaps and missing school during her family's early years in the Valley.

Irma detailed her schooling in Westcliffe and Silver Cliff, creating monthly blackboard calendars with her artistic talent. Limited by financial constraints, she was unable to attend high school formally but received private tutoring. She worked at the Pines guest ranch during her youth, where she cared for guests and shared horseback adventures with her employer's family.

After marrying George Fuchs (later changed to Fox), Irma lived in Pueblo before returning to the Valley, where she married Dewey Austin. Together, they ran a ranch and frequently hosted guests and friends. Irma reminisced about cooking for visitors, organizing horseback trips to mountain lakes, and exploring the scenic Sangre de Cristo mountains.

A talented poet, Irma expressed her love for the Valley's natural beauty in verse. Her reflections on the Sangre de Cristo mountains highlighted the cultural and environmental changes the region had endured. Her oral history offers a vivid portrait of resilience, creativity, and connection to the land.