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Summary of Oral History Interview with Everetts and Emma Curtis

June 16, 1990

Interviewed by Irene Francis

Everetts “Bud” Curtis and Emma Curtis (née Schwarz) shared their memories of growing up in Wet Mountain Valley. Bud was born in Wyoming and moved to Westcliffe in 1929 when his father bought a local garage. He attended school in Silver Cliff and graduated from Custer County High School in 1940. After serving in the military, he worked for Custer County for 14 years and later moved to Canon City, where he worked in the Schmidt plant and on an oiling crew before retiring from county work. Emma was born on her family's homestead in Antelope Valley, where her father raised cattle. She attended the local school and completed 8th grade before spending time in California. Upon returning, she and Bud eloped and settled in Silver Cliff. She later moved to Canon City, where she helped run a bakery with her sister in the former Greenleaf School building, primarily making donuts. The couple recalled early schooling, ranching life, and the impact of the Great Depression. Bud described playing baseball and ringing the school bell, while Emma remembered her small class of six or seven students. They also discussed the local legend of the glowing tombstones in Silver Cliff Cemetery, attributing the phenomenon to phosphine gas or spirits. Their interview offers insight into the challenges and traditions of early life in Wet Mountain Valley, from ranching and rural schooling to small-town businesses and folklore.

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