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Oral History Collection

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Erps, Fritz and Marie

September 16, 1986

Interviewed by Irene Francis

Note: The interview focuses primarily on the Cloverdale Mine.

IR: This is Irene Francis. I am here with Marie and Fritz Erps. The date we're doing this tape is September 16, 1986, and the subject we're going to begin to talk about is the Cloverdale Mine. I have some questions that I will ask them. Ok, let's see now. When did this mine start? Can you tell me something about when it started?

ME: They said, the late 30s or early 40s.

FE: That it, you think? When was we up there? 40 or 49 or what?

ME: We were up there in about 44 because Patricia was just a baby and Fritzie was a senior in high school.

IR: What were they mining up there? Minerals that they were mining?

FE: They drove when I was up there, 200 ft the tallest, was in there quite a ways or, I don't know how long it was, but 300 or 400 ft. and we drove another 200 ft. while I was up there.

IR: What did they, you said dry that, did they dynamite it or

FE: We had a shooter and a little car, track like a railroad to bring it out and dump it on a dump.

IR: And then when they would dump it, then would they assay it right there?

FE: Well, we knew, they were trying to find a stick or standard, I don't know.

IR: What mineral were you looking for?

FE: Gold mostly, I think. Copper.

IR: Were they, did they take some of it out of there? Or had before?

ME: Didn't they?

FE: I don't know whether they did or not. Had a mill up there, electric motor and that was from the water from that power plant down there, that big water wheel, and they had the line back up to the tunnel again.

IR: You would run by the stream water? It was powered by that? Do you know?

FE: I don't know if it's still there or not.

IR: Yeah, I was up there some time ago, it was up there about 8 years ago, about 6 years ago, it was still up there. That's the last time I was up there. Were did these people come from that started it, do you know?

ME: Well, Mr. Porch lived up there, and well, he'd bring in these stockholders, I think, from Oklahoma, Margaret said. They came in, but he was the one that was kind of, was interested in it and wanted to see the mine progress, so they could get something out of it.

IR: Now when you lived up there, did you have children when you lived up there?

ME: Yes, we had Fritzie, Meryl and Patricia.

IR: And you would go up there during the summer months.

ME: We come down over the weekend, and then go back up, we was up there about, well, he was up longer. We stayed up there about three months and, in the beginning, Margaret Stacy and Ed, when they first started, and Laverne was only about two years old, they lived up there. So did Bill Kleine's dad and he even had Bill and his sister, they lived up there. Sometimes, they tried to live up there during the winter to work at that mill. So, Margaret told me that. That was from Ed.

IR: How would you get up there, by truck?

ME: No, they'd use sleds.

IR: No, I mean, when you went up. Did you take a truck?

ME: We went in our car.

IR: Your car.

FE: Dickie had a truck that he hauled all the gas and stuff up there, powder and everything.

IR: Powder they carried up by truck? Cause when we went up there, that road was really rough. It was a rough road up there. I don't know was any better then.

ME: Well, it was then because the kids and I helped build that road from the power plant on up so it wouldn't, so our car wouldn't hit a rock when we went up or down.

IR: Oh.

FE: We drove an old car, what was it?

ME: Chevrolet.

FE: Chevrolet, what year was that?

ME: About a 32, I think.

IR: And how about, did you ever see the saw mill as it was working up there?

FE: No, I don't know about that.

IR: Because I know there was one up there.

ME: I think that went up later, but I don't think that's what was used for to build the buildings cause they were built before the sawmill.

FE: Coleman had a? up there, but that don't, way down Rainbow Lodge there a little ways.

IR: Oh. So, when they would build the buildings though, would they be out of logs or would they?

ME: Mm hmm.

IR: Mostly out of logs?

ME: I think they just put a crew in there to build that because they, Margaret said, at that time, they employed quite a few men, and I thought they really was on to something.

FE: Were the cabins up there log?

IR: You said something about a boarding house?

ME: Uh huh. We stayed in the boarding house a couple of weeks. That's where Ed and Heavy stayed. There was even an upstairs to it, but I can't say that it was built out of logs. But I think it was. Because I can still see it. It was a big, you know, big place for the, for you to eat, and there was a big kitchen and then there was rooms, I suppose, for the people that were doing the cooking.

IR: And it was just for people of the mine. They didn't have people come from, like, tourists. They didn't have anybody like that there.

ME: No, this was for people from the mines that came in, I mean, that worked there, at the mines.

IR: And how many families were up there when you were up there?

ME: When we were up there, there was just our family, but Heavy and Ed stayed up there. They just bashed in the cook shack. I called it the cook shack. But we took, we went, we all stayed up there. I took the kids.

IR: So, somebody cooked the, all the meals for everybody?

ME: At that time, Ed only cooked for himself and Heavy, but before, they did have a cook. I don't know too much about that. That was just what Margaret was telling me yesterday.

IR: But you would cook for your own family.

ME: Uh huh.

IR: And you'd have to carry up all the provisions for the entire week.

ME: Uh huh.

IR: And then, you'd come back down over the weekend.

ME: We'd come down, usually Saturday morning, and we could get stuff, and come back up Sunday afternoon. Of course, if you could fish, there was fish in the stream up there. You could fish.

FE: Right by the cabin, all around the cabin, there'd be a dam there.

IR: Did they stock the lakes at that time, or was that just native fish that they had, do you know?

FE: Oh, they used to stock a lot of these lakes with horses. And Art, I think he had an airplane and planted them up, didn't he?

IR: Yes, he's told me something about that when he took and dropped the fish and when he was telling us about that, it made me think, you have to be a pretty good pilot to be able to drive over, fly over those lakes and dump fish in them.

ME: Oh, he was good.

IR: So, and that was about in the 40s that that was stocked, I think.

ME: Yeah, because Patricia's born in 39 and she was about four or five years old when we was up there. Because Fritzie was a senior and Meryl was a junior.

IR: Well, what caused them to stop mining? They couldn't find anything or

ME: Think they run out of money.

IR: They ran out of money, did they?

FE: I guess. Of course, he was the overseer. He had a place down where Rainbow Lodge is at. That's where he used to live. He had a place there.

IR: Oh, that was his place. The lodge wasn't there then, was it?

FE: Yeah, the lodge was there.

IR: As a Lutheran lodge, was it?

FE: Yeah, and Percivals, hey took it over after that, didn't they?

ME: Yeah, but did Percival sell or does he still have his up there?

FE: I don't know. That, what's his name? Mary? One of the Berry girls?

ME: Whitcom?

FE: Whitcom.

ME: Yeah.

FE: He, he lived up there and was taking care of it when they had horses. I don't know if they still have horses or not up there.

IR: One of the stories that I had heard for the reason of closing it down was that the war came along, and a lot of the men had to go to the service.

ME: Well, that could be something too, because, what was it, it was December 7th, 40, when was it we went to war?

IR: 42?

ME: No, it was 46.

IR: 46.

ME: I was watching that show the other night. I should have known that.

IR: And so, they said, you know, one of the stories that I had heard, was they lost a lot of the men to work the mine, lot of the ones that were backing in, and so forth.

ME: Uh huh Well, that could be a possibility, too, cause I couldn't say anything about that cause I know they, well, he even had to register on that one. They didn't take him because, well, he was past the age, but in case we didn't do very good, why they would guess they would start taking the older ones.

IR: Did you see any animals while you were up there? You have any stories to tell me about that?

ME: Groundhogs, and I call them, coonies, others call people call them bristling pigs, I think. Dear, what else did we see?

IR: How about elk? Was there any elk up there?

ME: Didn't see any elk.

IR: Too high, probably.

ME: Probably so. There was one deer that for a while, she wasn't, she kept her distance from us, and pretty soon, she finally come out in the open and she had two little babies with her.

IR: oh, how nice. And she'd bring them with her?

ME: Bring them with her, right down to the creek to drink. But she kept her eye on you, but we could see her. But we never bothered her, I mean, just let her do what she wanted to do, and then the little bristling pigs, if you walk along to go up to the mail where they were, they'd just sit up there and look at you. They weren't afraid of you at all, cause they knew you weren't going to hurt them. And just as I said about the groundhog that Ed fed, he was tame. Oh, it was beautiful up here.

IR: How about birds? Were there any birds or was that too high?

ME: Yes, there was a, what do you call those, camp robbers, that would take a piece of bread out of your mouth.

IR: Stellar Jay, kind of.

ME: Blue jays. I don't know of any other kind of birds. Do you?

FE: That's all I know.

ME: But there was lot of places, I mean, that you could hike around and do things. And we had our dog with us, and take him up, too, and he'd know something.

IR: Now, you had kerosene for lamps, that type of thing.

ME: Gasoline, wasn't it? We had the gas light.

FE: Yeah, we had a gas light.

IR: And how about cooking? What did you cook on?

ME: We had a cook stove, and

IR: Wood, cook stove, wood?

ME: And the water we got, just right out of that spring. We had a nice cabin. It was a three-room cabin. Somebody, I think, maybe the president of somebody of the company, slept in it, or stayed in it. It was a real nice one. The other ones were kind of going to pot, but there were several people come up there for the weekend to fish that could stay in them if they wanted to. Several did that, you know, just kind of fish one day and go back the next.

IR: Uh huh. Is that trail going up there called anything else except, I mean, I know it's behind the Rainbow Camp, but is that called anything, any type of name, the road that goes up there?

FE: To?

IR: Yeah, the road that goes up to Cloverdale mine?

FE: No, that's all I know, just the

IR: Is that Rainbow Lake that's up there?

FE: Yeah.

IR: Around there, around that area?

FE: Yeah, two miles from the camp, is it?

ME: You hit Rainbow Lake first, and then you went on to the power plant.

FE: Then Rainbow Lake, then going up there, to the power plant.

IR: But you were catching most of your fish out of the

FE: Beaver dams.

IR: Beaver dams.

FE: By the cabin. We went so late one time, we never caught nothing, did we?

ME: You couldn't fish in it. It told you, I think they even had a warning up that the fish were dead or something, in that. You walked right up to the lake. It was just like right on top of the mountain.

IR: And this was called Silver Lake?

ME: Silver Lake, and you could look in at the water was, but the, they said it had been dynamited and you couldn't use the fish. So, we never fished in it. Now, Margaret said, when they were up there, they could fish in it. That's where they would catch their fish, but this happened afterwards, somebody, I don't know why they done it, or

IF: Was that, were they up there?

ME: They were up there long before

IR: And this was Margaret?

ME: Stacy.

IR: Stacy.

ME: Uh huh. Her little girl, I, her cabin still was there. They weren't with the rest of them. Ed built their cabin and it was down from the cook shack and that, wasn't it? Quite a ways. That's where they lived.

IR: How long were they up there?

ME: Well, I don't know for sure, but I think Margaret said they stayed one winter and that's when this, you've heard of Bill Kleine?

IR: Yeah.

ME: Well, his father worked up there, and he had his, his wife died or something when Bill and his sister was small, and he had those two kids up there. Margaret used to take care of them while he went to work.

IR: And he worked in the Cloverdale?

ME: He worked up there, too.

IR: And you never really heard about them shipping any of the ore. It was just

ME: Now, if Mr. Kleine was here, old man Kleine, he'd probably give you a real good story cause he was a good talker, even to Bill.

IR: Most of these mines that I hear about, most of the money was backers. That was mostly where the money was, was just the backers, people bringing money in for backing and all. There wasn't a whole lot

of ore taken out.

ME: I think that was with this

IR: With that one.

FE: I think so.

IR: There's a picture here of a ranch at Antelope and I think it's what we now call Antelope Valley and I'm going to let you tell me something about that, Marie. Tell me about the name. The picture is, shows a hewn log house in, and Regis had told me that, she thinks it had sod roof on it, and the picture is showing a little boy and a little girl and a woman and another little girl and a man, and Marie's going to tell me about the people in the picture.

ME: Ok, the woman is my mother and her first husband, Charlie Weaver, and their two children, Fritz and Rosie Weaver.

IR: What was your mother's name?

ME: Taylor, before she was married. And then when she got married, she took her little sister, her name is Ida, and my uncle Will. They were just little children too, because her mother was dead and her father had gone to Oregon to find work, and they never heard anything more from him.

IR: You figured he died?

ME: Mm hmm. In Oregon.

IR: So, she was here with two little children.

ME: Well, she, she was married, and they lived out there. They were married about five years, Charlie and my mother, when he passed away, leaving her with these two children, and with Uncle Will and Aunt Ida. I think it was about a couple years after that, that she married my dad, because that was in 1896, cause, when they were married.

IR: And your dad's name was?

ME: Leonard Fox.

IR: Leonard Fox. What was, were they ranching? Were they ranching?

ME: Homesteading.

IR: Homesteading.

ME: Mm hmm.

IR: How many acres did he have, do you know?

ME: I don't know that. I have the homestead paper.

IR: Uh huh. Where did he come from?

ME: Charlie? I really don't know that. She just met him here in Silver Cliff because he and my Aunt Burns' husband were good friends and that's how they met. But my dad came from Germany, my father, and so did Fritz's, both his mother and father came from Germany.

IR: Now, did your mother and father, and her mother and father all come over at the same time?

FE: I don't know that.

ME: No, I don't think so. His mother and father got married over there, and they come to this country together.

IR: They come to homestead or to the colony, or

FE: Yeah, they come with the colony.

IR: They were part of the colony.

FE: I think so.

IR: That colony that came from Chicago area? And they were going to, weren't they going to truck garden? Farm type of thing?

FE: To farm, homestead, I guess. [unintelligible] call it the school section. That's where they lived. I was a kid, born up there.

IR: The school section?

FE: Yeah.

ME: It's known as the Erp's school section. People will know what it is then.

IR: I see.

ME: Still under that name.

IR: Oh, uh huh. And what was your father going to do? When he came from Germany.

ME: When he first came out here, he and a man by the name of Cody, started a saloon.

IR: I see. In Silver Cliff?

ME: Westcliffe.

IR: Westcliffe.

ME: I cut a piece out of a paper from up here at the museum and it was in 1897 where Leonard Fox and James Cody, dealers in liquor, fine wines, and beer.

IR: So, they came out here to start that. Do you know many years they had that?

ME: I really don't know, because afterwards, papa was interested in mines, when he sold off the saloon, why, he was interested in mining. That's what he done most of his, the rest of his life.

IR: Did he make any money at it?

ME: No. Oh, when he worked up here at the Geyser, why, he was on salary, you know, made money that way.

IR: But didn't really gain any gold or silver out of it himself?

ME: No.

IR: This afternoon, I've persuaded Marie to play piano for us, because we feel like that would be good to put on the tape, too. What are you going to play for us, Marie?

ME: Memories.

IR: Memories. That's a good one. Ok, we're ready.

[very out of tune piano]

IR: That was great. Do you know something else you can play?

ME: Can't think of the name of it.

IR: She's going to play Glow worm.

[plays Glow Worm]

[plays I don't know why I love you like I do]

IR: Play it again. I'll sing it with you.

[plays song again, with Irene singing]

IR: This was a delightful afternoon spent with Fritz and Marie Erps in their Silver Cliff home. It was a pleasure to be with these two lovely people.

End of tape.