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Summary of Oral History Interview with Marie Fuchs Erps

March 7, 1978

Introduced by Irene Francis, statement read by Marie Fuchs Erps

Marie Fuchs Erps was born in 1904 and spent her early years in Westcliffe, Colorado, before marrying Fritz Erps in 1928. Her father, Leonard Fuchs, emigrated from Germany in 1890, operating a saloon and brewery in Westcliffe before later working in mining. Her mother's family, the Taylors, came from Missouri and settled in Silver Cliff after encountering Native Americans near the Pines.

Marie and Fritz raised three children—Fritz Jr., Ellen, and Patricia Ann. Fritz Jr. served in the Navy, while Ellen and Patricia both married and settled in different parts of Colorado. Marie recalled community life in Custer County, including dances at the Eddie Barlick Hall and the old Philip Opera House in Silver Cliff. She played in an orchestra formed in 1922, performing for schoolhouse dances and at Alpine Lodge. She was also involved in sports, playing on an undefeated high school basketball team. In addition to music and athletics, she remembered multi-day Fourth of July celebrations, featuring rodeos and dances with live orchestras.

Her husband, Fritz, worked for the county for 43 years, initially plowing roads only in summer but later maintaining them in winter as well. He was known for ensuring residents, such as Mrs. Ruth Wolff, could access town during heavy snowstorms, sometimes working through the night in severe blizzards.

Marie's recollections capture the resilience and close-knit nature of the Wet Mountain Valley community, highlighting its early settlers, traditions, and the hard work required to thrive in the region.

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