

West Custer County Library District Local History Collection
Oral History Collection

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Erps, Marie Fuchs

March 7, 1978

Introduced by Irene Francis, statement read by Marie Fuchs Erps

IF: This tape is property of Custer County Library. It is part of the oral history taping series. The subject of this tape is Marie Erps, spelled ERPS. Her maiden name is Fuchs, spelled FUCHS.

ME: My mother was [unintelligible] 1904. I spent all my early days in Westcliffe until I was married in 1928 to Fritz Erps. Going back to my childhood days, my eight years was at the grade school in Westcliffe and then we have the high school that I attended about a year and a half was in the building that Jennings now has a meat market in it and then we went to the new high school. High school was very good because we had a very good basketball which we enjoyed very much. Later on, I court basketball for a couple of years. Then after being married, I lived in Silver Cliff and on October 2nd, we'll be married 50 years.

My father came from Germany and my mother's side came from Missouri in the early days and then they came to this country, there was still Indians up at the Pines where they lived for Chuck Baum and then moved to Silver Cliff.

My husband's [unintelligible] with Mrs. Yannert both come from Westein, Germany where they were married in Germany and come up here to make their home. They grew flowers and lived here all their lives and their children were raised here.

I have three children Fritz, Jr., Ellen and Patricia Ann. Fritz, Jr. spent four years in the Navy, also that time was spent in Japan. Ellen T. is married and has one little girl. She spent part of her time overseas as her husband was in the Air Force. Patricia Ann, she was married. She lived in Pueblo, has four children. She was very active in the Lutheran church where she plays for the choir and the church.

My father, Leonard Fuchs, came to this country from Germany in 1890. He lived at the old Wolff building in Westcliffe which was a pretty nice hotel at that time. He had a saloon, the first saloon was over where they have the picture show now, also a brewery at the south of town.

The valley was not too well populated but there were quite a few people and at that time, Westcliffe was starting to build up from Silver Cliff. Silver Cliff was kind of dying down and they were moving homes down from Silver Cliff down to Westcliffe which made it convenient for them down there.

My grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. John Taylor, with their family, came from DeKalb county, Missouri to the Wet Mountains. They settled at the Pines. At that time, there were Indians at the Pines. The Indians were friendly but the women were a little bit afraid of them so they moved into Silver Cliff. My grandfather wasn't able to find any work at that time in Silver Cliff so he went to Oregon to try to find work. In the meantime, Ada Farbee? Contracted pneumonia and died. The rest of the family stayed at Silver Cliff where my mother met her husband and married so that the rest of the family. On my side, I had a brother George, George Fuchs, who was born in Westcliffe in 1898 and George, I have to mention this,

was a very, very wonderful musician. He died very young in 1932, leaving a son to kind of forage and carries on the name.

My husband's folks, Mr. and Mrs. John Erps, who were married in Germany, came to Custer County and settled out south in the valley. Mrs. Erps went to work for a while up in Rosita and the story was that she would walk from Rosita down to the Lutheran church, which was about seven miles, on Sunday to go to church. They lived at Mo? Erps school section south of town, which they made a pretty good living. Later on, Mr. and Mrs. Erps and Fritz moved into town of Silver Cliff where Fritz went to school at the Silver Cliff school. Mr. and Mrs. Erps had nine children, Albert Erps, Lizze Erps, Fannie Erps, John Erps, Lilly Erps, Ella Erps, Amy Erps, Lotta Erps and Fritz Erps. Some of these children are deceased and some are still living. Mrs. Erps was also a midwife. She delivered about 47 babies out in the south part of the county. They had a doctor in town but it was so hard to come in town by buggy and horse to get the doctor to go back up to deliver the baby, they usually had the midwife and everything went ok, why, the doctor didn't have to go out.

When I was little, they had dances down at the Eddie Barlick Hall and my mother always went to the dances and of course, I went with her. On New Year's Day, they would have about three nights of kind of a bazaar where everybody attended. We also had an opera house in Silver Cliff called the Old Phillip Opera House where people would walk from Westcliffe up to Silver Cliff to attend the opera. Afterwards, there would be a dance and they would have a supper.

Also, after we were married, beginning in 1928, we had dances in the country, every Saturday night, you'd go to a different schoolhouse and enjoy yourself dancing. Also, they had real good dances at the Eddie Barlick Hall and during the 1930s, there was a hall over Jennings Market where they had dances. Around the 4th of July, they usually celebrated about three days for the 4th, and all three nights, they had booked two orchestras, one in the Eddie Barlick building and the other one over the Jennings place, and good orchestras and big attendance. Good rodeos.

In 1922, we formed an orchestra. There's about seven of us that played in this orchestra and it wasn't one of us that could read notes. But we played for dances all over, in the schoolhouses, up at Alpine. At that time, they had a lodge up there at Alpine Lodge. We also played for the dances in town. But I was in high school. I played the drums in the high school orchestra and we also had a very good [unintelligible] Mrs. Coogler was the head of the [unintelligible] She really liked music and wanted everybody to participate.

In 1922, when I was going to high school, we had this real good basketball team that you might say here that they never lost a game in four years. Annie Hannsen, Betty Iman, Margaret Caden, Alma Schultz, Marie House, at that time, Grace McCormick, Hazel Roberts and Alice Hagan who are the ones that played all the basketball team, every one of them very good.

My husband Fritz worked with the county for about 43 years. When he first started work for the county, they did work in the summertime and not in the wintertime. Later on, they started to clear the snow in the wintertime and for that, they used their own tractor and a grader that they pulled behind the tractor. That cleared the roads. Sometimes, they would leave home and be gone for three weeks, we wouldn't even know where they were at, trying to clear the road for people to get in town. They had a bad blizzard about 14 years ago and Fritz was out in that blizzard for about, well, he left in the morning about 6 o'clock and he didn't get through until about 1:30 the following morning. He came home, ate his breakfast and went back again. But everybody was concerned because the weather was so bad, they

wouldn't think they were going to be able to get through it.

Mrs. Ruth Wolff lived out towards the mountains and when we had a bad snow she would always walk. So, when Fritz would go out that way to clear the roads, he would always swing in and go around her house so Mrs. Wolff would be able to get out at least to her mailbox and somebody could pick up her groceries and bring them to her from town. She was always so grateful for this that when she knew that Fritz was coming out, she would have him a hot coffee cup of coffee and some cookies.

IF: We have been recording Mrs. Marie Fuchs Erps at her home on March 7, 1978.
End of recording.