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Hanssen, Walter and Frieda
October 6, 1980
Interviewed by Deborah Hood; introduced by Irene Francis

IF: "A generation in change: A series of interviews concerning Custer County history and its changes as viewed by Wet Mountain Valley residents." The following interview took place on October 6, 1980 in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Walter Hanssen of Westcliffe. Present were Mr. and Mrs. Hanssen and Deborah Hood, who conducted the interview.

DH: Mr. and Mrs. Hanssen, I'm going to ask you, where your parents were born and how they came to this country.

FH: My mother was born in Indianapolis, Indiana and she came to Garden City, Kansas when she was about 16 years of age. My father was born in Missouri, Kearney County, Missouri, and he came to Kansas as a young man and that is where they met and were married in Kansas, my parents were.

DH: I see, there in Garden City.

FH: Near Garden City, yes. And I was born in Kansas. Do you want the date, Debbie?

DH: If you don't mind giving it.

FH: November the 28th, 1914, and I was born near Holcum, Kansas.

DH: I'm seeing it's not that far from Garden City.

FH: No, no, it isn't too far from Garden City. It's near Lakin County.

DH: Yes.

FH: And then, we came to Colorado in 1918. I was just three years old when we came here. We came in the spring of 1918 and we came in a covered wagon.

DH: For heaven's sakes, do you remember any of that?

FH: Yes, I remember just a little of this trip. Now, we had two wagons. We had three horses and one wagon was the covered wagon which they fixed so my mother could cook. They put up the old cook stove in this covered wagon and when it came time to cook a meal, they laid back the tarp and put the stove pipe on and my mother cooked right there on the wagon.

DH: Oh, for heaven's sake.

FH: And then, we slept, also slept in the wagon. Now, there were four of we children when we came to

Colorado and they fixed, well it would be like white bed smell, they'd put springs and mattress up high in the bed of the wagon and then we children slept on one down underneath so we all six slept in these two beds in the wagon.

DH: And how big was a wagon?

FH: What would be the size of a bed of a wagon at that time?

WH: Oh, not probably over 30" wide, maybe 36" wide, 3 feet, probably-

DH: Were these the bunks or the bottom of the wagon?

WH: The bottom of the wagon, yes, so I imagine it would probably be, how wide is the standard bed?

FH: 54"

WH: Well, it wouldn't be that wide, probably four feet. I wouldn't know, Debbie, to tell you the truth what size a wagon bed is.

FH: I wouldn't know, Debbie. I'm not sure.

DH: When you stop and think about putting six people in a space like that, it's good that all of you got along.

FH: Yes, it is! (laughing) Or we would have killed each other! But I do remember our riding along and we children would be on the bed and looking out, course, you know how they, the back of the covered wagon would look, and we'd be looking out the back, watching, you know, whatever there was to see out the back and one of the horses hurt its ankle and we had to stay over, was it Rocky Ford, I think, until the ankle was better, and I can see my father doctoring the horse's ankle. They used hot vinegar and you know, put cloths around it and doctored the horse's ankle.

DH: I used it.

FH: You used it, so you know how hot it is. And let's see, then I went to school. My folks home-I need to go back, I'm going to have this all plugged up for you.

DH: Oh no, you're not.

FH: But, my folks homesteaded. This was the homestead. This is why we came here.

DH: I was just going to ask you why you had come.

FH: This is why we came here. My parents were not happy in Kansas. They didn't particularly like Kansas, so they had come here prior to this time, of course, and they loved it here. So, they filed on 360 acres and you see, you had to live on it a certain length of time and you had to make certain improvements before you were deeded this land by the government. So, my parents did this and we were out north of town. It was eight miles north of town, out by, well, it's where they filmed "Comes a Horseman".

DH: West of Highway 69, or east of highway 63. It would be east of Highway 69. You would turn off there where Elton Kemper's corner is, and you'd go Copper Gulch Road.

DH: Oh, I see.

FH: You go out that way, and you can go on through, you know, and get to Canon City. Well, you could get Highway 50 by going Copper Gulch and of course, then my father, well, we didn't always smoke on the ranch. We went to Chandler. I went my first year, two years of school at the Chandler school. My father didn't work in the mine but he hauled coal from the mine to the coal car, the train in Chandler.

DH: Where was the Chandler school. I assume, in Chandler, but I'm not familiar with the name.

FH: Well, that town no longer exists.

DH: I see.

FH: You see, this Cuckoo Mine, I suppose they ran out of the coal and it didn't work anymore, and that was, and there was a Chandler Mine too, and I presume these mines probably both ran out of coal and no longer functioned. So, there was nothing to live in Chandler for. So, there's nothing there anymore. We were out there two or three years ago and you can see the foundations where the houses were and the stores and the school and all, but there's nothing left there anymore.

DH: And where is that from where you lived?

FH: From where we lived out there?

DH: Mm hmm.

FH: Oh, it's near Canon City. It's only a few miles south of Canon City, about six or eight miles south of Canon City. So, Lidwed had been probably 35 miles from where we lived, it wouldn't have somewhere in that neighborhood.

DH: How old were you when you started school?

FH: I was six. Well, I probably was five and then six in November probably and I think I went the first two years of school.

DH: And did you board in Chandler?

FH: Well, we all lived in Chandler, just outside of Chandler. We lived near the Cuckoo Mine and it was a big boarding house and my mother ran the boarding house and she had boarders and we were a mile from school and it was Blanche and Lawrence and myself, the three of us, we'd walk to school then, and it was a great experience. Of course, it was quite a large school at that time.

DH: I imagine it was.

FH: Of course, there were just the two rooms, you know, they had first four grades in one and the last

four in the other. Then, we came back to the farm, the dry ranch, we always called it the dry ranch. So, we came back up here and then we children finished our education at Ula school. We would go by buggy or sleigh, whichever, from the dry ranch, or our home to Ula.

DH: And where was the Ula school?

FH: Well, do you know where Donny Camper lived when it burned?

DH: Mm hmm.

FH: Well, that, part of that was the old Ula school.

DH: I see, and why the name Ula?

WH: Ula was the first town in Custer County. I think it comes from a French name, Ula. It was a French community, or a French descendants colony that settled that. That was one of the first, I think it was the first post office in Custer County.

DH: I see, and Ula was spelled ULA, wasn't it?

FH: Mm hmm.

DH: Uh huh, and where was the town site of Ula? Is it where present Westcliffe is?

WH: No, it's where Nellie Camper lives. Do you know where Nellie Camper lives now? That was the original site of the town side of Ula.

DH: I see. What, that sits out kind of on a rocky knoll in the middle of nowhere. Do you know why they began a town there?

WH: No, unless it would be on the stagecoach route from-

DH: Texas Creek?

WH: Cotopaxi through to Rosita. It could have been on the stage road, yes, that's probably why they settled right there.

DH: And what caused them to abandon it?

WH: That I don't know.

DH: I'm sorry about that question. (laughter)

FH: Abandoned, I don't know, and of course, that was before I-

DH: I was going to ask you.

WH: It was before my time too.

FH: Yes, that was.

DH: Mrs. Hanssen, I need to back up and for our tape, I need to know your maiden name.

FH: Frieda Nelida Entz.

DH: Nolida, what a beautiful name! (laughter)

FH: Isn't it terrible? I never liked it.

DH: Oh!

FH: And so, then when I was married, I dropped the Nelida and took up the E as my middle name, and this hurt my mother. Not terribly, of course, but when it came time for me to get my birth certificate, well, then, it really came out then.

DH: That you no longer used Nelida.

FH: Uh huh. She knew I didn't but I guess she hadn't thought very much about it, that it came the time we all thought we should have our birth certificates and we had to write to Kansas to get them. We could get them, though, we had no problem in getting them fortunately.

DH: Many of those records were lost during those times.

FH: Yes. So, we all have our birth certificates.

DH: You were legally born.

FH: Yes, we're all legally born. (laughing)

DH: I want to ask you one question about your original middle name. Was that a family name?

FH: I don't think so. I don't know where my mother picked this name up.

DH: Now, you've never heard it before?

FH: No, I never have ever heard it ever, but it was spelled NELIDA.

DH: Well, it really is beautiful.

FH: Well, thank you. I should have thought it was way back then. I still don't. (laughter)

DH: Let me catch Mr. Hanssen up with you, after you came up about your childhood. Mr. Hanssen, where is your family from?

WH: My father came from Schlewich Holstein, a sea port on the North Sea, between Germany and Denmark.

DH: I see.

WH: And my mother came from Saxony in Germany.

DH: Uh huh.

WH: They came over at different times. They didn't come, father came first and my mother later. They were married in Rosita in 1887.

FH: And they hadn't met-

WH: No, they hadn't met in Germany. They didn't meet until they got to Rosita.

DH: For heaven's sakes. Did your mother come with her family?

WH: Yes, yes, they came, she came with her family from Saxony, Germany.

DH: Did your father work in the mines at Rosita?

WH: Yes, he was a carpenter. He done the woodwork on the ribbings and in the shaft but he didn't work as a miner, he was a carpenter.

DH: I see.

WH: There were nine children in my family.

DH: My goodness.

WH: Four, five, six, seven boys and two girls. The oldest four boys, two of them died in infancy. Two of them died, one of them was seven and one was nine with diphtheria. One died in the evening, and one the next morning.

DH: My goodness. How tragic!

WH: And the, now I only have one sister left and my other two brothers passed away in the last five years.

DH: I see.

WH: So, there's just the two of us left.

DH: Mr. Hanssen, when were you born?

WH: Born November 30, 1905.

DH: Your birthday is very close to- (laughter) and were you born in Rosita?

WH: No, I was born in Silver Cliff.

DH: I see. Did you grow up in Silver Cliff?

WH: Yes, yes, I grew up in Silver Cliff. I went through the 8th grade in Silver Cliff.

DH: And that is, you must have gone to the school building that they are in the process of attempting to restore.

WH: Yes, yes. At that time, it had three rooms when I started school.

DH: About how big was Silver Cliff at the time you were growing up?

WH: Oh, I'd say probably between 400 and 500.

DH: Had it been dropped in size?

WH: Yes, very much so.

DH: This, let's see, would this have been when the mines were a little bit tapped-

WH: Yes, yes, yes, the mines were going down.

DH: I have understood that at one time Silver Cliff was a contender for the state capitol.

WH: That's right. They had been told, I have nothing to prove it by, but I've been told that it only missed by one vote of being the capitol of Colorado.

DH: I heard it was by three. (laughter) Close. Was the main source of income then for most of the people still the mines when you were growing up?

WH: Yes. In Silver Cliff, yes.

DH: Yes, yes. Uh, I'm figuring out how to phrase this. I'm interested in learning about furniture shops, furniture makers in Silver Cliff. I ask because of a piece of furniture I own.

WH: I don't remember of anybody that manufactured furniture in Silver Cliff. They might have, but not to my knowledge.

DH: I see.

WH: They had a big hardware store, a big furniture store at one time, there at one time. A man by the name of Woodside, William Woodside.

DH: And, well, at that time, let's see, the freight lines were still running and the railroads were here, weren't they?

WH: The freight lines that's quit running. The railroads, yes.

DH: Where were most of the goods shipped in from, furniture and clothing and so forth?

WH: Mmmm, I would say, probably Denver.

DH: I see.

WH: What is the name of the furniture? Do you have a name on this furniture or something that you-

DH: A.W., Silver Cliff.

WH: A.W. A.W.

FH: Well, that'd be Woodside-

WH: No, this, his name is William though, William Woodside.

DH: I don't know. Well, we can figure out about that later. When you were growing up, going to the grocery store, for example, I'm sure was a bit different than it is nowadays.

WH: (laughter)

DH: You probably, well, Mrs. Hanssen, you, for certain, uh, your family living on the ranch part of the time, did you raise most of your food?

FH: Yes. We always had chickens and milked the cow, this type of thing, and the garden and so forth in the summer, yes, mm hmm. And we children didn't get to come to town often. Of course, we went to school but we seldom came to town. But at that time, usually, our parents would give us at least a nickel to buy candy while we were in town, and you could get a big sack full of candy for a nickel and now, you can't get a sucker for a nickel, I don't suppose. So, it was a thrill to come to town and have your nickel to buy your bag full of candy.

DH: Mr. Hanssen, when you lived in Silver Cliff, of course, living in town, your food was provided in a different way. How was it? Were you able to purchase milk and eggs from people who raised them and-

WH: No, we had a place where we had a couple of cows and we raised some pigs and chickens, rabbits and had a big garden and we would go out in the fall and have somebody dig potatoes for enough potatoes for our winter, and we raised most of our vegetables, we had a very large garden, so we did that. About the only thing that you had to buy would be your staples, sugar and flour and a few things like that. And usually, my father, he went up to the mines, he still did carpenter work. But during the winter, there wasn't much carpenter work going on, so during the summer, he would stock up on flour and sugar and those kinds of things and then we had to get by in the winter.

DH: Well, that aspect of it isn't a whole lot different than it is now. People in the area still buy when they make their most income and then holds them until the following year, doesn't it?

FH: Mm hmm.

DH: I'm curious. Mrs. Hanssen, you came west literally, in a covered wagon.

FH: Yes.

DH: Do you remember seeing automobiles as you were progressing on your way-

FH: No, I don't recall seeing automobiles. I'm sure there were some but I don't remember. Now, our neighbors, out on the dry ranch, were the Colemans, Bessie and Ed and Bill Coleman, and I can remember Bill Coleman, he came home from the war. He had a motorcycle, and it had a sidecar. He had a sidecar and I can remember my mother going into town with him. She rode in the sidecar and she took a bucket of eggs with her to take to the store. If they survived the trip, I don't know. (laughter) But she took eggs, you see, this was the way they bought they staples. Eggs, butter and chickens and this type of thing was taken to town to the grocery store and in turn, why, we got flour and sugar and coffee, the staples that we needed.

DH: For heaven's sakes. What did your mother think of riding in the sidecar?

WH: (laughing)

FH: I'm not sure, but I'm sure she must have been thrilled!

DH: I'll bet she was! (laughing) Let's see-

WH: 1924 to 1927, I quit when I was a junior because I had barely the information that I wanted and I knew as much as the teachers did, so I quit. And then I went to work for, out in the country, as a hay hand and worked for some of the farmers out here.

DH: Do you remember any of them you worked for?

WH: Yes, John Hanssen and Edward Hanssen and I recall the Schultz barracks, and Mr. Hoddar, down here [unintelligible]

DH: That's a new name to me. Where did he live?

WH: That was new-

FH: Roberts.

WH: Roberts Cattle Company.

DH: Oh! Practically outside your back door.

WH: Then, I went to work for John Hanssen as a truck driver. I drove a truck for 13 years. Then, I went to work for the Soil Conservation Service and on a temporary basis and the 1st of July came along and they cut out the temporary help, so I was out of a job, so I went to work at school as a manual training teacher in school. When I went back to school, I discovered that I had [unintelligible] education so that I didn't finish my high school education. So, they go on all this at school. The principal was a very good friend of mine. He talked me into taking two subjects. I had 14 and took 16 credits to graduate. So, I took two subjects while I taught manual training, enough to get my diploma. So, I graduated in 1944. It took me 17 years to get through high school.

DH: Well, but you got finished! That's more than a lot of people were able to do at that time. (laughing)

FH: True.

DH: Tell me the subjects you took.

WH: Chemistry and advanced arithmetic.

DH: Where was it that you went to school, went to high school?

WH: Here, at Custer County High.

DH: At Custer County, and was it where it is now?

WH: No, when we started, it was [unintelligible] what was the grocery store now. It was upstairs in the, it's what the grocery store-

DH: Where Mr. and Mrs. Peyton lived.

WH: Mm hmm.

DH: For heaven's sakes.

WH: That's where we started high school was up there.

DH: Mrs. Hanssen, were you able to continue on to high school?

FH: Yes, and I graduated in 1932 from Custer County High School.

DH: Above the grocery store?

FH: No, they built the high school, which, you know, they tore down. They built it in 1924-

WH: Or 1925.

FH: And so, I went, my high school years, at that Custer County High.

DH: I see.

FH: And that's where it is now.

DH: This was really something to be able to get to go to high school, wasn't it?

FH: Yes, yes. Now, my older sister and brother did not go to high school, but I did, and both my sisters younger than I went to high school.

DH: How fortunate you were because I know, several people I've talked with, were not able to complete high school.

FH: No, now the sister in Littleton, she's three years younger than I and we came for my first year, I worked for Dr. and Mrs. Fee for my room and board and went to high school.

DH: I see.

FH: Probably the first two years, and then my sister, Iola, was old enough to go to High school so my parents rented us a room and we stayed in town and batched and went to school, worked for Miss Kettle to make some money to help put us through school. But, we both graduated from high school, and my sister, Iola, went on to college. She had two years at college.

DH: Oh, my goodness! Where did she go?

FH: She went to Western State.

DH: In Gunnison.

FH: Yes.

DH: How fortunate for you. How many of your friends at that time were able to have that much schooling, Mrs. Hanssen? Well, we don't-

FH: Probably most of them because you see they would have been about my age and at that time, my, a good many of the young folks were going on to high school out of grade school, so probably most of my friends did get high school education. But I was certainly a frightened little country girl when I went into high school.

DH: Oh, I can imagine you were.

FH: I was.

DH: How big was your high school class?

FH: Well, when we graduated, there was 12. There were six boys and six girls.

DH: That was handy for dances, wasn't it?

FH: Yes! That was real good! (laughing)

DH: Mr. Hanssen, you started to high school a few years earlier than Mrs. Hanssen. How large were the classes then?

WH: I would say that there were 30 in the freshman class, I believe. Some of us had been out of school a year between 8th grade and the time they started high school. So, there was quite a few that were about the same age. So, I would say our freshman class was around 30.

DH: Uh huh.

WH: And I think, all together, the school probably had, the first high school we had, would be around 60,

would be my estimate.

DH: It's really quite a number of kids.

FH: Yes.

WH: Yes.

DH: Mr. Hanssen, I'd like to get back to your job with the Soil Conservation Service.

WH: I started with the Soil Conservation Service on a permanent basis in 1945 and I retired in 1971, 26 and a half years with the service as an agricultural engineer.

DH: What exactly did you do as an agricultural engineer?

WH: We did stop water dams, erosion control dams, [unintelligible], drainage, contour, farming contour ditches, range management, such things as that.

DH: Mm hmm. Well, you must have seen quite a bit of change in the valley during those years, didn't you?

WH: Yes, indeed, yes, quite a bit. I can't exactly say, it would depend on what you'd, what you're interested in as far as change is concerned. Attitude towards the Soil Conservation Service improved a great deal in those 26 years. It was hard to start because people weren't interested when I first went to work in soil conservation. It was something new and it had to be, people had to be educated to it. It improved greatly. We had people who were very much against it when I went to work who turned out to be some of our best cooperators. So, that improved a great deal in the 26 and a half years that I worked for the service.

DH: I can imagine it did. You said that you worked on drainage and land contouring and so forth. Was this more in one area of the valley than another or was it throughout the valley?

WH: We had, our district was Custer County. We had the entire county. So, we did a lot of work around Wetmore. We were in the Greenhorn Mountains and Hillside, out on the Divide [unintelligible] county.

DH: Mm hmm. Well, you probably helped many farms and ranches become much more productive by doing that, didn't you?

WH: Yes, yes.

DH: Was this during the time when people, land owners, were kind of changing from small landowners to larger holdings?

WH: Yes, yes.

DH: What, just as an example, what was perhaps the average size of land holding when you started in 1945?

WH: Oh, probably 1000, 1500 acres.

DH: So, that had progressed immensely from when the first families came in to homestead, hadn't it?

WH: That's right.

DH: Did they homestead, what, 80-acre tracts, or was it 160?

WH: It depended on exactly, that you could get in a tract that was all in one piece and sometimes, the Homestead Act called for 320 acres, or 640. If you could get a whole section in one piece, why, they homestead 640. If not, they took a half a section, and maybe three quarter of a section in order to get it in one piece.

DH: Mm hmm. I see. I've understood that when the first families in the German colony came in in the 1870s into the south end of the valley, they were supposed to settle up on what's commonly called the Desert, because every place else was willows. Were these mostly cleared away on Grape Creek and Colony Creek?

WH: Yes, my belief is that before the Colony came in here, this was [unintelligible] so forth. I think that beaver had a lot to do with it. People coming in and trapping the beaver and upsetting the balance, nature's balance, had something to do with the change in the creeks and the [unintelligible] and so forth.

DH: Mm hmm. When, perhaps you can answer this, when were most of the willows cleared away in the valley floor itself and that land made productive? I suppose it was a gradual thing.

WH: Yes, yes, indeed. It wasn't till just the last few years, a gradual situation.

DH: Mm hmm. You said that attitude had changed during your time with the Soil Conservation Service. In what way?

WH: Let me say that we're all people and we hate to have anybody dictate to us what we do, what we should do, and what we shouldn't do. So, it was a process of educating people to make them realize that the Soil Conservation Service is based on actual experience and to sell that to the general public to make him see that by spending a little money, he could improve his property. He could reap more benefits from his land. That was, I think, it was a system of education mostly that did, turned the trick.

DH: That's very important, isn't it? Mrs. Hanssen, after you finished high school, did you work outside of the home or was you married then shortly after?

FH: No, I was out at the high school about 18 months before I was married, and I worked for Mrs. Overfaldt as a housekeeper, cook and clean house.

DH: What sort of jobs were available for young girls during that time?

FH: Probably were that type of work.

DH: Mostly housekeeping.

FH: Yes, I think so.

DH: Helpers, I see.

FH: I was trying to think. My high school class, I think only one or two graduated from college. In fact, I think there were only that many that wanted college.

DH: I can imagine so; it was much less common even when you graduated than it is now.

FH: Yes. It was my desire to go to college. I wanted to be a school teacher. But I didn't, of course, probably it's just as well. I probably wouldn't have been a good teacher anyway. (laughing)

DH: Then, did you do any work outside your home after you were married?

FH: No. Then, of course, later I began with my sewing-

DH: Your sewing-

FH: Yes, and I've been doing it since, oh I started that probably in the, why, in the 40s. But it didn't get to be a full-time job until about probably in the late 50s.

DH: My goodness, the style changes you've worked on. (laughing)

FH: Fun.

DH: I'll bet it has been.

FH: It's been very interesting, and of course, the most thrilling work to do is to sew for weddings.

DH: Oh, I can imagine that it would be. Lots of headaches and times to be nervous.

FH: But it's such a joy.

DH: Oh, that's fantastic! You two have had a very full life. Do you have children?

WH: One daughter and two granddaughters. That's, just one daughter. She lives in Gunnison. She works in the First National Bank and her husband is a custodian in the school system.

FH: She graduated from Western State College with a degree in Secretarial Science, it was called at that time.

DH: I'd kind of like to change the subject here and talk about two sorts of, well, depressing times in history if you would. The first would be the Depression. How did this affect your family and other people that you knew up in the valley?

WH: I was very fortunate during the Depression because I had a steady job as a truck driver. I worked for 85 dollars a month and we would go to work; I would go to work at 6 o'clock in the morning and most of the time, it would be 10 o'clock before we got home, and the days that I didn't drive a truck, I worked at

the filling station. So, that, I was very, very fortunate in having a job because jobs were very scarce, hard to come by.

DH: I can imagine that they were. What happened to the valley during the Depression?

WH: Oh, yes, we had what they call WPA, it was a government program and they did about anything that you could think of. They worked on the railroads, they worked on the streets, and-

FH: Built bridges.

WH: Built bridges, yes, anything to keep them busy. They didn't receive very much money. They gave them food, commodities such as flour and sugar and lard, canned goods, clothing, bedding, just enough to keep the families together.

DH: Uh huh. Did you see a lot of people moving out of the valley during that time, or were they even able to move?

WH: They weren't even able to move. If you had, if you were on the WPA rolls, why, you stayed pretty well put, because if you went some place else, you'd have to work your way in there or almost all before you could get on the relief roll. So, the people stayed pretty well in the valley. See, that lasted from 1931, 1932 Roosevelt's administration came along. He's the one who started that.

FH: About '36.

WH: '36 or '37, yes, for five years.

FH: It was a very difficult period.

DH: I can imagine that it was. You were married during that time.

FH: We were married in '33.

DH: In '33.

FH: Yes.

DH: Quit writing my notes here and get back to talking. What, I'm thinking of how to phrase this, what did the women, what did the housewives do during that time to help their husbands who weren't able to bring in any work?

FH: Well, I know some of them worked. Of course, commodities were given to these poor people. Well, they were workers in that area, you see, that would distribute those, and were bookkeepers and so forth.

WH: [unintelligible] I don't think the women had a job, no, I don't believe they did.

FH: I don't think so. They were home makers but I can't remember working very much, so I don't think

so.

DH: Do you feel perhaps that rural areas, or at least, small towns such as Westcliffe and Silver Cliff were harder hit than the large cities when the Depression came or was it easier for them?

WH: It was a lot easier, I think, because there weren't so many of them. Your larger cities had such long bread lines and so many people that they didn't, some of those people didn't work but a day or two, just barely enough to keep them alive and on the WPA projects we had here, why, they worked nearly every day. So, I figure it would have been easier on people in a smaller community than it would in a large city.

DH: I see.

FH: And then, of course, we had the Dust Bowl days during this same period-

WH: Well, that's what caused the Depression was the-

DH: How did the Dust Bowl affect the valley? Was it really a part of the Dust Bowl or did it miss it?

FH: Not, well, not exactly. We had some of the dust but not like they had in-

WH: We had terrible droughts. We didn't have any snow in the winter and we didn't have any rain in summer for about three years and it was very, very dry. All of the creeks dried up and all the springs and everything, we had a very bad drought. No, no goldang crops whatsoever, no potatoes or anything of the sort. Only a small amount of irrigated crops was all they had in the valley.

DH: It was a very difficult time for people to survive during those years, wasn't it?

FH: I think so, yes.

DH: Of course, I imagine travel then-

WH: Restricted? Yes. We had, let's see, we had an automobile, we had, that was during World War I, of course. We didn't have gas rationing during the Depression, did we?

FH: No.

WH: No, didn't have money enough to buy gasoline.

DH: You didn't have to worry about it, did you? (laughing) Well, gas rationing kind of leads me into my next question I'm afraid we're going from bad to worse as far as subject matter here. But I'm interested in World War II and how it affected the people in the valley. Were either of you affected personally by it? Did you have to go to war, Mr. Hanssen?

WH: No, I was too young for World War I and I was too old for World War II. I was registered but they, but my draft number never came up. So, I was never involved in either one. I had a brother. My oldest brother was getting ready to go into World War I. He was to leave the day they found armistice, so that's how close our family came to getting involved in World War I. I had a brother-in-law who was in World

War I and I had a son in law, what is he-

FH: He's, my brother-in-law.

WH: Your brother-in-law was in World War II. I think that's all the members of the family that was ever involved in either World War I or II.

DH: Were there a lot of men from the valley who went to both of the wars?

WH: Yes, there was quite a number from World War I, some World War II.

FH: You see, the park over here is dedicated to those that-

DH: Yes, I know it is.

FH: There's quite a list of those that lost their lives in World War II. The difficult time in World War II, it seemed, was the rationing, the shortage, first of gasoline and then sugar and all fats, for instance, lard and butter and margarine.

WH: Soap.

FH: And soap, and of course, when you say sugar, they meant syrup and candy and all the things that take sugar. But occasionally, we could get syrup. Of course, you were allotted so much sugar, you know, each, with your stamps, but it didn't go very far. But we learned to make cake with syrup, caro syrup, and then, for my bread, I-

Tape ends and restarts.

DH: When we were so rudely interrupted, we were talking about sugar rationing and World War II. Would you like to continue, Mrs. Hanssen?

FH: Well, really, it didn't seem difficult at the time, you know. We learned to get by with what you had. When it came to canning time, they'd always give us extra stamps.

DH: I would think after that canning, because it was a great portion of your winter's food when you could can and preserve.

FH: Yes, it was, and they always gave us extra sugar. All you needed to do was to tell them approximately how many quarts of fruit you were planning on canning and then they would give you the sugar that they, the amount that they would allow for that amount of canning. So, it really wasn't all that difficult, and as I think back over the Depression and also rationing and World War II, I, personally, I felt this was a good education. I really did not suffer with the, in this time. We always had plenty to eat. We always had plenty to wear and plenty to keep us warm. So, really, it didn't seem that difficult to me. And I feel now, that if we were to have a Depression, the young folks today would have a rough time. They have no idea about how to save and how to do without or to make do with something else, perhaps wear hand me downs and this type of thing. So, to me, it's been a good education and I've had a good life.

DH: I think that is a fantastic viewpoint. I'm one of the age group you're talking about. I can agree with you. I think probably people living in a small community such as Westcliffe might be better off if we had a Depression rather than people living in cities. But, I cannot really personally project as to what I would do if there was no money tomorrow, if there was no grocery store or no money to purchase with. Mr. Hanssen, when you were driving a tractor in the Depression, weren't you?

WH: Yes.

DH: How did you get gasoline? You must have been allotted?

WH: Yes, we had gasoline enough for the projects that the [unintelligible] supported, they and you got the gasoline you wanted, and we had gasoline coupons that were for our own use and they would allow for each automobile a certain amount of gallons.

DH: Now, was this during the Depression or during World War II?

WH: During World War II.

DH: I see, and at that time, you were working with the Soil Conservation Service.

WH: World War II?

DH: Oh, World War II, you were going to high school again.

FH: Well, yes, I think that he just began working for the Soil Conservation Service about the close of World War II, I believe.

WH: Yes.

DH: Something I'm curious about, not having been there at the time, when World War II was over, were rations immediately lifted or was this something you had to contend with for several months after?

WH: Several months after. They were gradually lifted because the supply was short. They couldn't, you couldn't get an automobile. There weren't very, they quit making automobiles so you couldn't go out and buy a new one. If you could find a better used one than the one you had, you were fortunate. Shoes and a lot of other things that they didn't start making right away, we had to wait maybe six months, maybe a year before the supply caught up with the demand.

DH: I see.

FH: And even the materials for making garments, your dresses and so forth, this was difficult to find too during the war.

DH: I'll bet it was. I remember my mother remarking that of course silk stockings were non-existent during the war, weren't they?

FH: That's right. That is so true. I'd forgotten about it, and soon after the war, they came out with the

nylon hose and of course, they are so much more practical, or were so much more practical than the silk was because they wore so much better, and I don't think silk hosiery aren't even available anymore, do you think?

DH: I don't think so, except for having perhaps in a specialty shop, might be.

FH: Mm hmm.

Tape stops and restarts.

DH: I'd like to ask you about the changes that you have seen in the valley and the land and so forth somewhat and make innovations so forth into World War II.

WH: It has become more specialized. People have gone into certain fields, either registered cattle or specialized in producing hay or range cattle and the equipment has become much more sophisticated in the last few years. Machinery, well, as I remember back, oh, tractors, rubber tired small tractors [unintelligible] from $1000 to $1500 now and you buy farm machinery today that costs maybe $40,000, so there has been a tremendous amount of change in the type of equipment the farmer uses, and it's always been a mystery to me how the farmer today can afford to buy this high priced equipment and still come out on top because I don't believe that the money he gets for his produce, his products has kept up with the price of the machinery.

DH: I can agree with that. When I was in college, in economics, they called it perpetual indebtedness. I think it has become a way of life for rural community people. This brings up another question I wanted to ask. I know that when my father was growing up in the Hillside area, he picked lettuce and we used lettuce and lettuce and he said he did not enjoy eating lettuce for several years after that. This was during a time when several large truck farms flourished in that area [unintelligible] why they're no longer there? What has happened to them?

WH: When they took the railroad out, it took the market out of the produce business. You can't track vegetables. You can't have all vegetables the same way that you could with [unintelligible] you can't put them on a truck. They had to be refrigerated and packed in ice and everything else to keep them fresh and that would be almost impossible as today. So, when they took the railroad out, that did away with the little truck farms.

DH: I see, and when was the railroad taken out? It wasn't all that long ago, was it?

WH: No, 1938, I believe, was the last time the train ran out of here.

DH: And that was out of Westcliffe?

WH: Yes.

DH: Was there still a spur at Texas Creek at that time?

WH: no, they took it out all the way then, last time.

FH: You could, so they could have moved cattle from Texas Creek.

WH: Oh, yes, they could still load cattle at Texas Creek, yes. The train didn't come up from Texas Creek, no.

DH: I see. Well, Mrs. Hanssen, I think we're about to get this wound up here. I have one question that I neglected to ask you earlier that really intrigues me. You said, as a girl, when you lived out in what we now know as the Copper Gulch area, you called your place the dry ranch.

FH: Yes.

DH: Why was that?

FH: Well, it was dry. We depended completely on the rain for our moisture, no water from irrigating.

DH: I see, much different than the people who lived here in the valley at [unintelligible] at that time.

WH: But no, my father, we raised, did some truck farming. We raised peas and we picked peas and my father would taken them to Hillside. They had a shed, you know, at Hillside, and we would pick peas and then, later in the day, towards the late afternoon, I suppose, my father would load up what we had picked and would take them to the packing shed at Hillside where they were sorted and packed in ice and put on the train to be shipped out.

DH: I see.

WH: And then of course, he did raise potatoes. There was two or three years he had a bumper crop of potatoes and then we began having trouble with the bugs, chelids or whatever they were, and problems. But he was known as the potato king in the valley for a few years. It didn't last long because, and of course, then we got into the drought, didn't we, was part of that problem too. And then, later, my father, my parents moved off the dry ranch. But I think that was '42. Mother wasn't well and my father decided he'd like to try farming down in the valley where it was irrigated, irrigation, and they lived out where Ralph Cook lives on the place now. I think at that time Frank owned but they lived there for about a year, I think.

DH: Your parents must have moved there shortly after my husband's grandparents moved away from that place.

FH: Oh, really?

DH: Mm hmm.

WH: Your husband's grandparents would be-

DH: Alma and Oscar Eickleman.

WH: Oh, sure!

DH: They lived on the Roscoe place for years, and I believe that Grandma told me in her interview that they moved to town in 1942. So, it would have been-

WH: Right soon after us.

FH: Yes.

DH: Yes. What do you [unintelligible] something we said at least a tape and a half ago. Was the name of the town that was a seaport from where your father came?

WH: Schlewich Holstein, SCHLEWICH, Schlewich Holstein.

DH: And it was two words. Do you have any idea what that would mean in English?

WH: No, it was the name of a famous seaport. My granddad Hanssen had sailing vessels on the North Sea and they hauled cargo from one seaport to the other on the North Sea. I don't think it has an English name. I think if you look on the map today and look on the map, it says Sterl Schlewich. The name Holstein has been taken off of it.

DH: Mm hmm.

WH: It's been cut down to one word. I looked it up here a while back. It's one of the major seaports on the North Sea.

DH: Now that I remember my geography, I can remember the name, yeah.

WH: One of the famous big seaports on the North Sea.

DH: I see. Well, Mr. and Mrs. Hanssen, thank you for a lovely evening and a super interview.

End of recording.