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Summary of Oral History Interview with Helen Hibbs

Helen Hibbs was born in Alamosa, Colorado, on October 24, 1915, to Albert Francis Chase and Hilda Hotz, a German immigrant who came to the U.S. as a child. Helen grew up in Colorado and later married Arthur Hibbs, a former miner, flight instructor, and business owner.

Arthur worked as a hard rock miner in Creede before enlisting in the military in 1940. Due to his age and aviation skills, he became a flight instructor during World War II, training both Navy and Army cadets. After the war, he and his brother established a flying school and helped lay out the airport in Salida. Eventually, Arthur and Helen moved to Westcliffe, where he pursued business ventures, including a jewelry and watch repair store.

Arthur also pioneered television broadcasting in the region. In 1953, he set up one of Colorado's first television translators, charging \$10 annually for access. Despite inconsistent payments from subscribers, he kept the service running, eventually donating it to the county. He was recognized by Governor McNichols for his contributions to early television in the state.

Helen worked as a teacher, primarily in early education, and played the organ for the local Catholic church. She also assisted in their business while raising a family. Arthur suffered from progressive spinal muscular atrophy, a debilitating disease similar to ALS, which gradually limited his mobility. Despite his illness, he continued to work on watches and electronics until he could no longer do so.

The interview provides insights into life in Westcliffe, including changes in ranching, business, and community dynamics. Helen described how the town had multiple grocery stores, a Piggly Wiggly, hardware stores, and a thriving grain industry, which later declined. She also recounted significant snowstorms, including one that collapsed their hangar, destroying their last airplane in 1959.

Helen's recollections highlight the resilience of early settlers, the evolution of small-town commerce, and the impact of technological advancements in rural communities.

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