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Summary of Oral History Interview with Marie Wagner Jones

September 22, 1986

Interviewed by Irene Francis

Marie Wagner Jones was born in 1908 in Westcliffe, Colorado, to Frank H. Wagner and Marie Anna Dickman. Her family had deep roots in Custer County, with her mother's side arriving from Illinois and her father's side emigrating from Germany. The Wagners homesteaded land near Kastendick's, where they built a log cabin. Her father worked at a brewery in Rosita before becoming a forest ranger, patrolling trails and enforcing game laws on horseback.

Marie attended the Willows School and later high school in Westcliffe. She excelled in sports, particularly basketball, though she left school early after eloping with Guy Loat. The couple moved to Montana and Wyoming, where her husband worked on ranches. They later returned to Colorado, where Marie raised three children—Lester, Ralph, and Betty.

Growing up in Westcliffe, Marie witnessed the town's evolution. She recalled ice cream parlors, boarding houses for miners, and the transformation of local dance halls into roller-skating rinks. She also worked at The Pines resort, where she served vacationing guests. She fondly remembered schoolmates, dances, and community gatherings, reflecting on the close-knit nature of the town.

Marie's life on a ranch involved picking peas and lettuce, milking cows, and managing daily chores without modern conveniences. Living in Blizzardeen, she often had to travel by horse and buggy in deep snow. Despite the hardships, she valued the simplicity and joy of rural life, expressing gratitude for the strong sense of community.

Her interview provides a rich history of pioneer life in Custer County, highlighting the endurance of early settlers and the changes in ranching, education, and small-town traditions over the decades.

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