

West Custer County Library District Local History Collection
Oral History Collection

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Kiesler, Mary and Angelica Brassie Kempton, Dorothy Parker

July 30, 1991

Interviewed by Irene Francis

IF: We are in the home of Mary Kiesler and we have here with us Dorothy Parker and we have Angela. Tell me your whole name, Angela.

AK: Angelica.

IF: Angelica. Tell me your whole name.

AK: Angelica Brassie Kempton.

IF: And what was your maiden name?

AK: Kennamame.

IF: Kennamame. We will spell those names out on tape for later. How did you come, where were your born, first of all?

AK: Aguilar, CO.

IF: And-

AK: 1905, November 29.

IF: Where did you go to school?

AK: I guess my first school was in Trinidad. I was two years old when I left Aguilar and went back to Europe, Kalstra? With my parents. When I was seven years old, I came back to Trinidad and that was my first school.

IF: And then did you go there all eight grades?

AK: No. I should say not! I don't know, you don't want to go into my life because it's pretty tragic, the whole thing and I don't know as you want to go into it or not. But anyhow, while we were in Trinidad, there was a strike going on there, miners' strike, and my father moved us to Segundo, CO which was about ten miles from Trinidad and while we were there, the whole family took typhoid fever and there was five children, my mother and father, and four of them died and there was three left, and I was, happened to be one of the three.

IF: And those are the kind of things we need to know because a lot of people will go into cemeteries and see where the tombstones that everybody died a day apart or-

1 Kiesler

AK: That's right.

IF: And so where are your parents and sisters and brothers?

AK: They're buried at Trinidad, CO, all four of them. My mother, father, sister and brother that died in, during that, in 19-, now let's see, it would have to be '14, 1914. We were just back from Europe for two years when they died.

IF: Was there an epidemic in the community?

AK: Well, not that we knew of. We think maybe it was in the water. They thought it was in the water at that time.

IF: And then, there were three of you children left?

AK: Yeah, there were two boys and myself, one younger, five years younger than me and one five years older than me. We were, I tell all about it in here, but anyhow, they had to find a place for us to live because the house had been sold. Everything had been sold, you know, to pay hospital bills and funeral bills. I knew we didn't have a home, in other words. So then, they split us up and two of us, myself and my oldest brother, went to Gonther? CO. That's just about seven miles above Aguilar. Where? And my youngest brother stayed there. Then he was brought to Radiant, to another aunt and uncle. We were just from one aunt to the other uncle, from this aunt to that one, and then when I was at Radiant, that's where I graduated there from the 8th grade, and then moved to Florence with my two brothers.

IF: So, you got together and moved-

AK: We got together then. Two of us, well, we were always all separated to start with but my oldest brother said, as soon as I can get work, then we will all live together, the three of us. So, we did, and that was at Radiant. Then, that mine closed down and we moved into Florence and my brother worked at Canon road there. I went to school there for two years.

IF: Was there silver mining there in Stanton, Canon, or what was in-

AK: Gold mining.

IF: Gold mining.

AK: That was going up to Cripple Creek, you know, the Phantom Canyon Road.

IF: And so, he went to work there and where did you go?

AK: We lived in Florence.

IF: You lived in Florence.

AK: In a little house and I was 13 then, 14, trying to keep house.

IF: So, tell me how you got up to teaching then in the Augusta school?

AK: Well, then, that job, there was no more work there, so my brother moved to Wetmore, CO, so there was no school there for me because I'd had two years of high school and they only had one year there at Wetmore if you remember. But I went there anyhow and I took a commercial course from the teacher there, Mr. Yost was his name. He said, Anna, he said, I'd like to see you go on to school, and I said, well, there's no way, you know, we weren't financially able. So, he set up a date. He said, I think you could take the teacher's examination and you would be able to pass it. So, he set up a date for me and I came here to Canon City and took the teacher's examination at that time and I passed them. So, then I start looking for a school. Well, I didn't have much luck for a long time. Nobody wanted to hire me, two years of high school, 17 years old, you know, no education. So, but anyhow, then Mr. Brassier, my husband, got me the Augusta school.

IF: Now tell me how you met him. How did you meet your husband?

AK: Well, when I was staying at Radiant, I was always a lover of horses and my aunt used to have a kind of a, what they called a livery stable there at that time. They used to haul timber in with the horses and they used to stay there, you know. She would have room for the horses. I got up early one morning and we had one cow there, oh it was just to milk her and I could hear somebody talking to a horse in the barn. He kept saying, Bob, you better let me out of here. And evidently, his horse, Bob, that he called Bob, had him pinned up against the wall and he was a stallion, beautiful stallion, and he wouldn't let Newell loose. So, I thought, well, this is kind of interesting. I didn't know who it was, you know, so I waited and sneaked up a little closer, closer to where I could get a good look, you know, at the horse. Well, after about half an hour, the horse kind of give up then and he let him out. But he kept threatening him and when he let him out, then he came over. He seen me there and he introduced himself as Mel Brassier.

IF: So that's how you met.

AK: That's how I met him.

IF: And so then, he helped, he was going with you at that time-

AK: No, no, we were still in Florence living there. I happened to be with my aunt when I met him but we were living in Florence. So, he, my brother again was out of work, you know, and he went up to his ranch and worked for him for a while, and he would come down. We could go back and forth, and that's when we start going together then. Then, he got the school for me and I went up there.

IF: Well, where was his ranch?

AK: Right here. This is Kitty.

IF: Oh, I see. That's where his ranch was.

AK: That's right. Who has it now is Goss.

IF: Goss?

AK: Yeah. Then the lady that's here, what's her name? Treadma Jones, I sold it to them and they lived there for 25 years and then they eventually sold it to this Goss, and they're the ones that's there now. But at that time, no one was living there, is when he was instrumental in getting the post office. That was in 1940?

IF: And the post office was called the Keating.

AK: Keating post office, and it was named after this, let's see, I have the ? here somewhere.

IF: Sarah's named after a professor?

AK: It was called the Keating-

IF: Start again.

AK: Mello was instrumental in getting a U.S. post office located at the ranch. It was called the Keating post office, named after Pueblo, CO educator, John F. Keating who Mello admired.

IF: Now he-go ahead.

AK: Mello was the postmaster. Mail was delivered three days a week by horseback from Rye, CO to Wetmore. It was a luxury in those days.

IF: And did he do that? He was the postmaster. He got his horse and took this, delivered the mail?

AK: No! He just, we just had the post office.

IF: Post office, and people-

AK: I tell about the other fellows that delivered the mail.

IF: Oh, I see. They delivered the mail from different places. Well, go ahead and tell about your fellows. Tell about them a little bit.

AK: About who?

IF: The fellows that delivered the mail. Was there any stories there?

AK: I put, well, there's quite a bit of story. I got a lot of stories in here of different people. I'm sure it would take two hours just to-

IF: Ok, well, we won't go into this then.

AK: But anyhow-

IF: Was there one little kind of story you could tell us about somebody on horseback delivering the mail?

4 Kiesler

AK: Yeah.

IF: Was there a lot of snow and-

AK: Ok.

IF: When you're ready-

AK: There was no –

IF: Ready? Ready? Ok.

AK: We started the telephone. They put in the telephone. We had got the telephone. I tell about that in here. Then we had a neighbor, Mrs. Mingus, that passed away and they wanted Mello to meet them down the road to bring up a casket from Florence cause they could not get, you know, they couldn't get up there with the car. This is way, you know, after we got married. So, I went with him and we went down to the Billington Ranch and picked up that casket and we sat on top of the casket and by the time we got to the Mingus Ranch, it was dark. You know, it was, well, it's quite a ways and it was just pitch dark, and I was pretty spooky sitting up there on that casket. We had to open gates all the way up there and lo and behold, when we got to the last gate, Mello got out to open the gate and here comes a deer and just put his face right up against Mello's, just scared you to death, you know, where you know the eyes, how the eyes look when they, on the deer with the light, and we thought later, it was a pet deer that the Bigelows had raised there that just went around. But anyhow, I wasn't very happy about everything was spooky. Well, we got up to the place and the body was in another room. Now that is one place that the historical society is trying to get some history on.

IF: Which is which place?

AK: Mingus Ranch.

IF: The Mingus Ranch.

AK: A lady by the name of McCullough from Beulah has come, came to see me then and wanted to know if they could get-but anyhow, getting back to my story, the body was in this, another room, and it froze, you know, just, didn't have to embalm them. They were practically froze.

IF: Kind of cold.

AK: And the neighbor, Mrs. Bigelow then, helped Mello put the body into the casket and it was two weeks before they got that body out. Snowstorm.

IF: A snowstorm.

AK: Yeah.

IF: So, they had the body there at the home all that time. They never got to bury it?

AK: Well, no. But it was practically embalmed, I'll tell you that.

IF: (laughing)

AK: (laughing) A lot of these stories, then I go into the lore and I go into, I got a lot of interesting things for my children and great grandchildren.

IF: It would be nice for them to know.

AK: Yeah, I don't ever intend to have it printed or anything.

IF: Tell me then, so you went to your husband, Nello, went to, or he wasn't your husband then, but he went to Mrs. Beeman? Did he go to Mrs. Beeman and try to get you a job?

AK: No, he was a member of the school board.

IF: Oh, he was?

AK: Yeah, he was a member of the school board and he was instrumental in getting the job for me.

IF: I can imagine that she would let you have the job if he was on the school board.

AK: Yeah, he was on the school board.

IF: Ok.

AK: And that's why I got the job, or I never would have got it. But anyhow, I taught there. Then, in the middle of the year, we decided to get married. Well, there was no way to get out except on foot.

IF: And this was in the winter time?

AK: Oh, yeah, well, it was Christmas vacation.

IF: Oh, ok.

AK: That's the only time I had, you know, Christmas vacation. So, we decided, so he had a car that he left at Wetmore, you know, so he would go down on horseback and then we'd pick the car up and come into town and whatever. But there was a problem. We had a tire up at the ranch and we didn't know how to get that tire, so we got the old horse, old Bob, old Bob horse that we still had. So, he told me one day, he said, you get ready in the morning, we'll leave. So, when he went to pick me up, there was Bob with the tire around his neck.

IF: The tire was around the horse?

AK: Yeah, and I sat on the horse and he walked beside me carrying the suitcase and we walked then to the Broadhorse sign, down to Billington's, which is the first place which was about eight or nine miles. Then, my brother was driving the school bus at Wetmore and he picked us up there. We turned the horse loose, took the tire off, and turned him loose and he went back home.

6 Kiesler

IF: And then you went to Florence and got married?

AK: Yeah. I think that it takes on Christmas Day, believe it or not. (laughing)

IF: And then, did you stay in Florence for your honeymoon?

AK: We went to Trinidad then. That was our honeymoon to Trinidad cause I had a cousin there. When we come back, it was another problem, getting back to the ranch. So, you see, we didn't have any horse then and we had to leave the car again. So, we hired a man there with a team and a wagon, I can't even remember his name now, but anyhow, we put some hay in the bottom of that thing and a tarp over it and you can believe it or not, I laid then under that tarp until we got up there. It was so cold. It took us hours to get up there. That's how the storms was in that area at that time.

IF: And so, then you went to live at the ranch with him.

AK: Yeah. Then, we had a cabin that was on an adjoining 160 there, they just bought their own and we started housekeeping in that cabin. We had a stove and a bed and a kitchen cabinet. That was it. Well, when we was in Wetmore, we bought, we thought, well, we better buy some groceries. We bought \$11 worth of groceries.

IF: Which was probably quite a bit at that time.

AK: Well, the biggest thing we had was 25 pounds of sugar. We was going to be sure, we wanted to be sure we had enough to make candy, so we bought 25 pounds of sugar. Well, when we went up and got to the Brassier Ranch, which was right here, and our cabin was up here somewhere up in this area, yeah, right along that crick. There was 10 or 12 feet of snow. Well, so we didn't know how to get the groceries there, so we took, he made a homemade sled. He put the groceries on it and put Bob in front of the sled, the old horse again, and we started up that trail. When we got about two thirds up there, the sled was too big for the trail and down it went. You know, down into the crick and the snow was about 8 or 9 feet deep, or 10, I don't remember. But it was crusted and you could pretty near walk on it, and so Nello got busy trying to get that up, get the groceries up but when he'd pick up that 25 pounds of sugar, down he went, you know, down in the water. It must have been about 11 or 12 o'clock before we got to the cabin. But of course, that didn't matter then, you know. We didn't care.

IF: Was the sugar wet?

AK: Huh?

IF: Was the sugar wet?

AK: Oh, no, it was too cold.

IF: Oh, it was too cold to get wet (laughing)

AK: Oh, boy, yeah. It was too cold.

IF: So then, when you went back to teach at the school, did you have to walk from that ranch or how did you get there to school?

AK: Well, then, I had to walk three miles, no, let's see, it was two miles from the cabin to the ranch. Then I picked up the horse and drove to Painter's Ranch, which was another five miles, and it just got so cold in February and March that I could not take it. So, I quit.

IF: And then, that was the end of school.

AK: That was the end of school for me.

IF: Well, tell me about, what were your duties as a schoolteacher there?

AK: Reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, taught some history and used to read stories, mostly for entertainment you know during a period was too cold to get out for any activities so I read stories most of the time.

IF: Did the school district give you any curriculum or did you have-

AK: You bet! Mrs. Beeman sent the work and came to visit the school. She came to visit the school.

IF: How often would she come and visit?

AK: Oh, not very often. I think I probably seen her twice during that year. Then, in 19-, my husband passed away then in that period of time. I tell all about that here and I was left with the two girls. I had two children, two girls.

IF: Did you teach at this school until your husband passed away?

AK: No, no. Just that one year.

IF: You just had the one year and it was too cold and that was the end of that.

AK: That was the end of it.

IF: Then you went to be a ranch wife.

AK: Yeah, then I went to the ranch and after he died, I still stayed up there. He died in 1938 and I stayed at the ranch until 1945, I guess. I stayed up there six years. But in the meantime, was wartime, and I called Mrs. Kettle. She was the school superintendent. She called me apparently and she said, Anne, we can't get a schoolteacher for your school. There's no teachers available. That was in 1940 and 1941 I think. I have it in here. So, she said, you're eligible to teach there if you want to teach the Augusta school, you're eligible to teach it and you can teach.

IF: Your children were going to this school at that time?

AK: Yes. Both of them. So, I said, only under one condition, is that you let me move the school at my

ranch because the snow was terrible and it was too hard to get over, see, this is weeks and divide here. We had to come down here and go over this divide and come right into here to the school again. And I said, I can't get, I just can't make it. I can't run the ranch and take the children to school. So, they decided that was alright. So, I went ahead then. I had a cabin there that I kept, that we had for hired help. So, we moved Augusta school again, and I taught that full year.

IF: On your ranch.

AK: At the ranch.

IF: And then, did you leave that area then after that year?

AK: Yeah, then, from then, I started leaving because it was getting too hard for me to stay there.

IF: Where did you move to?

AK: Florence.

IF: Florence. Then, was that the end of that school then?

AK: Yeah, as far as I know.

IF: They closed the school?

AK: No, let's see, that was in '45. As far as I know. I don't know when consolidation started.

IF: In 1953.

AK: Yeah. So, I don't know what happened to the school.

IF: Well, we'll have to look.

DP: Cecil and I both followed-

AK: On the-

DP: After you, Cecil and I both taught there. They didn't close it then.

AK: Oh, no, they didn't close it when I-

IF: This is Dorothy Parker speaking. Tell us about that then, Dorothy. Did you teach at that school when it was at her ranch? Or did you go back to the other building?

DP: No, it was still the last building they had up there.

AK: You have a picture of that one.

IF: Yes.

AK: Don't you, Mary?

IF: Mary, you have a picture of that?

AK: Ok.

MK: But I don't know how many, what year did you quit teaching there? What year would that have been?

AK: 1941.

IF: 1941, I think she said.

AK: Let's see, I'll tell you right here when I moved out.

IF: Now when this was in your house, what-

AK: At the ranch-

IF: At the ranch, do you have the exact year there or not?

AK: Yeah, I sure do.

IF: Ok.

AK: Got it here somewhere. I don't know what I do have. I'm going to tell about it-

IF: But tell how many children you had. Tell us something about that.

AK: One, three, four, five and six and eighth graders, and the 8th grader went to Westcliffe to take the exam, Whitmore, Willie Whitmore and I had my two and I had John Brassier's Chuck, and I had Lee Pennamondy, Willie Whitmore and my two girls. So that made the six, I think, six children.

IF: And those children were right there around us.

AK: Yes.

IF: Didn't have to go very far.

AK: No, the Brassier's just had to walk a little ways, you know, about, and Whitmore came quite a little ways, but he was already pretty grown and he rode the horse there, Willie Whitmore.

IF: Tell me some of the things that were expected of you as a teacher. Did, like for instance, did you have to, were you also the janitor?

AK: Oh, I took the school at \$85 a month and I done my janitor work. I say here, I had no choice to do anything else. Mrs. Kettle, the county superintendent, was very helpful sending my lesson plans and visited me throughout the year. She came oftener at that time.

IF: This was Miss Frances Kettle?

DP: No, Georgiana.

IF: This was Georgiana Kettle.

AK: Georgiana Kettle.

IF: Alright.

AK: Verna Jean was also a lot of help. That was my daughter. She was in the 6th grade. We would study at night together and prepare our lessons for the next day.

IF: She was your assistance teacher.

AK: Yeah, she was, she knew more than I did. She was a very bright girl. We had very few outdoor sports, mostly baseball. Most of the time, the weather was bad. During this period, I always read stories and found that the children soon looked forward to those periods. It turned out to be a very good year. My only 8th grade pupil, William Whitmore, had to go to Westcliffe for his exams, so I gave him all the rest, and he graduated that year. But I did teach that full year.

IF: Was there any high school in Westcliffe at that point? Do you know?

AK: Oh yeah, there was high school.

IF: So, did that person that graduated 8th grade, did he go on to high school?

AK: No, no, he was married and he worked in the timber. He was killed by a tree that fell over him. His wife is still working at that veteran's home there in Florence.

IF: Oh, uh huh. So, he died as a young man?

AK: Oh, yes!

IF: As a young man.

AK: Yeah, he went to the service. He come back from the service. He was drafted because all of them- I also registered the men in the service up there.

IF: At your ranch?

AK: No, at the Fairview school that was over-

IF: Oh, the Fairview school.

AK: Yeah. That one.

IF: Uh huh.

AK: I registered them. In 1940, they called me and wanted to know if I would register. It was only a triple A program at Westcliffe for, with Earl Cress-

IF: Tell me what the triple A program is?

AK: The agricultural, that was, when the war broke out-

IF: Alright.

AK: Ok. They paid people to defer land and you know, build dams that were, so that, you see, we had an overproduction of weed at that time, and the farmers were starving. So, after Roosevelt got it, they put that program in.

IF: Triple A?

AK: The triple A program, uh huh. And I worked for the triple A program, I registered, let's see, I measured dams that they built and land that was deferred and I would report back to Westcliffe. It was a three-man board, Earl Cress, Higgins, I don't remember the other one. Now they finally made me a member of that board at the end. I did work for the Triple A for quite some time. Rode back and forth.

IF: Tell me, now, being a city person, I don't know what deferred land is. Tell me what that means, deferred land.

AK: Well, you've heard of overgrazed land?

IF: Yes.

AK: Where they put too many cattle in on it. Well, the government would pay them to keep cattle off and that was deferred for a couple of years.

IF: I see. So, they would, like, rotate the land is what they were doing.

AK: That's right. You see, we had the Dustbowl, if you remember, in them days. We even had it up there in the 30s, you know, it got that far. And of course, we had, Roosevelt put in the CC camps. I got this all in here.

IF: Mm hmm.

AK: Like I went through all the war years that I had at the ranch as a widow. I was up there for six years after my husband died.

IF: Well, maybe you'll let us read a little bit of that on the tape a little later.

AK: Yeah, well, let's hear Dorothy's story. You want another-

IF: Which one's this about?

AK: This is a snowstorm and there was about six people that was stranded at my place.

12 Kiesler

IF: Ok, let's tell that.

AK: I'll read it to you.

IF: Yeah, we're going to hear about a snowstorm now.

AK: Our ranch was located on the forks of the road and was about the only stopping place for people that were caught in snowstorms and couldn't get home. One Saturday night, there were three couples returning from a dance at Wetmore. There was three feet of snow on top of the storm we had in October and no way they could make it to their homes. They stayed for three days. There was always plenty of basic food in the house as we always prepared for winters of this kind. They were all from our neighborhood so we prepared to have a good time. The women helped with the cooking. The men with the chores. We played cards for entertainment. We'd make cakes for the winners. Also, with the scarcity of liquor, it was a drink or smell. The winners drank. The losers would get to smell. (laughter) I had a piano and Charlie Akins always carried his violin with him as he played for many dances. There was lots of singing and dancing. It was just another party that they hadn't planned on. There were many more in their homes along with sleighrides. I joined the crowd. Nollo was gone and there was no way I could bring him back but what I would have given for just one more embrace. That was just-

IF: This was after he had died. How did your husband die?

AK: He had a very rare disease. A pucomfotus. And why he got it, he was only 38 years old, nobody knows. But he only lasted three months after he got it and that was it. I tell all about that-

IF: Where is he buried?

AK: Huh?

IF: Where is he buried?

AK: Out here at Florence.

IF: In Florence.

AK: In the Highland cemetery. Let's see if I can find Dorothy Parker. We used to have horseback rides where people would get together and go for a horseback rides different places that we didn't, you know, that, when they were new. This one time, right at the foot of the Bigelow divide, you know where that's at?

IF: I've heard of that.

AK: Alright. The Akins, they had built a house there and it was just partly, it was finished but just roughly constructed. So, this day, they decided to have a big spaghetti dinner in that place, and some of them stayed home to cook the spaghetti and some of them went on this ride, you know, in the meantime. So, when we got back, we had this spaghetti dinner at the, well, let me read you the poem.

IF: Read the poem.

AK: Yeah. Glenn had a sense of humor and I say, he will explain that in his own words here in this poem.

He said, I'm fain to tell this story, as it appeals to me as good, and it happened not so long ago in our old neighborhood. My wife, one day, received a call that pleased us much indeed, that we were both invited to a big spaghetti feed. The brothers and the sisters and all the kith and kin and the friends from many miles away were all invited in. Now I quite enjoy a beefsteak fry and I'm strong for quail on toast, but of all the feasts that I can name, I like spaghetti most. For a day or two before the feed, I never ate a bite that I might for this occasion, prepare my appetite. Rance Madonna cooked the grub and he's a skillful cook. What he don't know about spaghetti, simply isn't in the book. Now the feed was almost ready and things were going fine, when someone in the crowd announced, someone had swiped out wine! Yes, I don't know what the reason is, some people seem to think that you cannot eat spaghetti without a little drink. My wife did promptly volunteer to assume the risky task of bringing back the tasty wine without even being asked. She searched throughout the building beneath every box or trunk and crawled up overhead amongst the attic junk. It never did occur to her that the floor was somewhat weak, so she felt herself a slipping and the boards began to squeak. Now the sumptuous dinner was prepared for us to eat and I like many others had just occupied my seat. The plaster now began to fall. We were soon supplied with proof. Someone directly over us was coming through the roof! My wife, she thought the end had come and believe it, so did we, for the end was now quite visible as we could plainly see. And who the new intruder was, not one amongst us knew, for we did not fully realize it was not her face in view. Imagine my embarrassment when much to my surprise, I saw my wife's feet dangling right there before my eyes. She hung there just a moment suspended by the chin and said, I heard your party, and thought I'd just drop in. I was not so much astonished that she should drop in late but it seemed not quite conventional to drop right in my plate. But the thing that did most vex us and all our feelings hurt, was to see that sumptuous dinner piled high with attic dirt. We were all of us quite hungry and disconsolated indeed, but the best that we could call it was a lost spaghetti feed. Should I ever be invited again within my life, I'll perhaps devise a different plan to introduce my wife, and remind her, should she choose again to drop in with sudden burst, that we'll all be less embarrassed if she'll enter top end first.

IF: Did he used to write a lot of those things?

AK: Oh yeah! Yes, he wrote a lot.

IF: Any little thing.

AK: Anything that took place, he wrote a poem about it. I have several of them in there.

IF: Oh, I'd like to copy those cause that's-

AK: That's a very good poem.

IF: Ok, now on to Dorothy! Let's hear this story about Dorothy.

AK: Oh, let's see, I don't remember where I put it, Dorothy.

DP: Inaudible

AK: When that happened.

DP: Yeah, that's what I said.

AK: We agree on that one, huh? 1942.

IF: Ok, we're going to hear the story about Dorothy.

AK: I would be neglectful if I failed to mention two of our teachers that taught in our school. Cecil Cress and Dorothy Parker are sisters. Cecil was Verna Jean's 1st grade teacher. That's another way we trace these days of teaching, and I will always credit her for giving Verna Jean a starting ability to pursue a school career that excelled throughout her life. Cecil was a dedicated teacher and Verna Jean was fortunate to have her. She was a guest in our home many times and a pleasure to have. Dorothea Mill and her husband Milton had leased the Bragg ranch and was a neighbor as well as a teacher. We had many school activities together. Once we were having a neighborhood picnic. Dorothy and I were to furnish the ice cream. When it was almost time for the picnic, she called me in a friendly voice and asked if I had any sweet cream left as she said, in her rush to prepare the children, had mistakenly put horse liniment in the ice cream instead of vanilla. Fortunately, I did and we arrived at the picnic on time. I'm sure the hogs of the Parker hog pen smiled with a feeling of relief as the liniment and cream smoothed their aching bones.

Later in the year, Milton had bought a ranch in the Westcliffe area and Dorothy, with the help of Joyce Manley, had moved into our 'teachreach' to finish the school year and was joyfully expecting her third child. Was that right?

DP: Uh, that would be Nancy, should really be the fourth child. We lost the first one.

AK: Oh, did you? One night at two o'clock, 2 am, I received a call from Joyce saying, 'come quick, Dorothy is having pains.' I dressed hurriedly and in a blinding snowstorm, with two feet of snow already on the ground, I could not get out of the yard, my car. I called Glenn Bigelow who was with us and he put on the snow chains and went with me. In the meantime, Joyce was frantic. She called Fred Zanoly, who in turn, called and said he would meet me there. But, he said, 'I do not want to be there when that baby's born. So, you've got to be there.' I didn't want to be there either. By that time, Dorothy knew the time was urgent and had called Milton, who was on his way to get her. But she met Fred at the road, got into his pickup and they were on their way. They met Milton halfway to Westcliffe and got her to the doctor ten minutes before the birth of her daughter Nancy. Joyce was in tears. That was the girl that was taking care of her children. I took her and the boys, Johnny and David, home with me, who were a joy to have with us. When we were safe at home, Joyce and I sat and relaxed and we refrained from smiling as I thought to myself, 'yes, Dorothy can sure entertain.' (laughing)

That girl was with me for about two weeks, we was talking about that. Tell them how much snow they had.

DP: Well, I'll tell you that story again. I was making a cake. It was, that was the seven months school and school was going to be out in about two weeks. But I was baking a cake and I told Joyce all of a sudden that I was having these severe pains which was two weeks after I had been to Westcliffe once with false pains. The doctor said it would be about two weeks and sure enough, it was two weeks. So, I knew it was the real thing and I said, 'go to the phone in the 'teachreach' and call Angelica. She came back and said Angelica wasn't home, didn't answer. So, I said, 'well, go and call Zedony's and she called Zedony's and Irma said, 'oh, you know, Joyce, we have never had any children and Fred doesn't want to be responsible for that.' So, she came back and told me that, and then I said to her, 'go back and call anybody. Just get somebody here.' In the meantime, it started snowing. It was snowing badly and so in the meantime, Angelica got home and Mrs. Zedony got in touch with her and Fred came down and let us know he was on his way, or Angelica let us know and I went out to the road as she said to me, 'get in the truck and get on the way,' and every time we went over these snow drifts, I thought the baby was coming and I'm not a too talkative person but I felt I just must be talking so that Fred won't get nervous over this. We didn't have a telephone out in the Valley when that was. So, Angelica called the nurse, Nurse Chessley, Mrs. Chessley had to go out and tell Milton that I was on my way and then Milton had to get there. He did meet me up in Silver Park about halfway. Then, when we got there, the pain stopped. When I could relax and Dr. Fargo, David Fargo, had to get out in the middle of the night and he had asmos and terrible shake and he kept telling me, 'wait, just wait till we get some water boiling.' I said, 'I can't wait, Dr., I can't wait.' Finally, he came in, he said, well, it's ok now. Go ahead and have the baby. So, I relaxed and I couldn't have any more pains for three hours. (laughing) Finally, he sat there waiting and finally, the baby came and he was so angry with me. Said, 'don't ever ask me to be your doctor if you're going to pull these stunts.' (laughing)

AK: As if it were all your fault.

IF: Tell me a little about, you said, during the war, you were here during the war. Did they have any kind of fundraisers for stamps or bonds or-

AK: Bonds.

Long pause in recording.

AK: They would exchange a day's work for a meal.

IF: Did any of them have families? Did you get to talk to them at all?

AK: Oh, yes, I talked to them. They were all young people. Yeah, that was just, you know, the draft. They were pretty young, and then, of course, I had a lot of experiences with different ones all along. In fact, we had three boys one time, they stayed there, and 25 years after, down in my office at Florence, some well dressed kid come in there and he was selling some insurance. He was giving me a bad time, you know, and finally, he looked at me. He says, 'and you don't know who I am, do you?' I said, 'no, I don't.' He says, 'well, do you want me to tell you who I am or do I have to kiss you first?' I says, 'you better tell me who you are.' And he said, 'I'm B.J.' he said. 'I'm the boy that stayed with you with two other boys and ate you out of house and home. He says, 'how did you ever feed us?'

IF: And he had worked for you some, huh?

AK: Huh?

IF: He had worked for you some? Did he work for you?

AK: Yeah, he was working for, well, Nollo was living at that time and he would, they were working in the lettuce and they stayed there till the lettuce crop was out, you know, but they-

IF: Did you, now what all did you raise on your land?

AK: The cattle, potatoes, head lettuce, peas, for sale, that's all.

IF: Did you take now, the lettuce and the peas, did you take into Westcliffe? In to the lettuce sheds?

AK: We took them in to Florence. They have a shed there. Then it finally moved to Westcliffe.

IF: When the railroad was there.

AK: The railroad was there then, yes. But it went out right after that. I can remember right recently. You tell about that in there. That's right.

DP: Mm hmm.

AK: So, he was in the service-

IF: Ok, you left, did you sell your ranch or did you just-

AK: Yeah, I sold it in 1945.

IF: Uh huh, and-

AK: I think I got it down here.

IF: Then, who did you sell that to?

AK: To Treadma Jones.

IF: Uh huh.

AK: She's still here in Canon. '44 and '45. I evidently lost it and I sold it in '45, yeah.

IF: Then you came to Florence. What did you do when you come to Florence? You just mentioned about your office.

AK: Well, I kind of wrote a synopsis that I'm going to put in the back of whatever you call that. I came to Florence, let's see, the last year, it just got so bad. You remember, right after I got through teaching. Then, that fall, then I sold all the cattle and got ready, put the place up for sale because I didn't, I couldn't get any help anymore. I came to Florence and got a job at the hatchery there, where the

17 Kiesler

hospital's at now, and I worked there, and we stayed in an apartment there.

IF: Now, what's the hatchery? Is that fish or chickens or-

AK: Chicken hatchery.

IF: Chicken hatchery.

AK: She finally gave that building to the Florence for a hospital, you know, Mrs. Rankin was the one that gave it to them. But anyhow, when I came there, that was, the war was over, you know, and I came down and I didn't want, the girls didn't like to stay in an apartment. We were cooped up, so I bought a duplex there at the place and that was when the polio was so bad. Five of the children up in the rounds there had it. I knew five of the girls that had it there. It was really a bad time, all, you know, with the polio. So, then Wolf Kempton then came home from the service and he had helped me. He had helped with the building of the Augusta school up in the mountains. He had a place up there too and that's where I met him was up there. But I never did give it much thought you know. Then, he came to see, to visit us several times after he came back from the service. Well, we married then. I married him in 1948. I was a widow for 12 years, I think. 12 years. And Verna Jean was ready for college, the oldest one, and LaVerne still had, she went to the academy here in Canon City. She stayed there, and I worked then for the Office of Price Administration, the OPA. I had a bad experience with that too. Then I was, I thought that everybody was honest, you know, till I got into those jobs. Like they were up in the mountains, we never locked the door. It was different when we got down here. So, I worked there for that, for the OPA until it was the end of it and then I think, transferred me here to Canon City and I worked here until the end of rent control and then I and when they closed was when I married Walt, and I started bookkeeping office in my own home. I started bookkeeping and selling insurance, Farmers Insurance. I got to studying a policy. When I sold the ranch, I had somebody make my income tax and I got took. But I didn't know it. So, I thought, none of that. So, I started studying the tax law and I combined my knowledge with insurance and tax preparation and bookkeeping and I was on it in Florence for 23 years on Main St.

IF: Was your office called a certain name?

AK: Farmers Insurance.

IF: Farmers Insurance.

AK: For a while and then I picked up other offices, you know, that was going out of business. That was a different kind of insurance and I called it the Kempton Insurance Agency then. Then, I finally sold out in '71. My health got pretty bad so I just quit. Sold out in '71 but-

IF: Did you husband do that also?

AK: No, he worked at the mine, worked at the mine all the time. He had nothing to do with-

IF: This is what mine? Tell me what mine this is.

AK: Corley Coal Company. It was out in the south field of Florence. He worked there for 14 years. Then, 18 Kiesler

he transferred to the State Hospital in Pueblo and he went back and forth and worked there until he retired when he was 65, he retired. I retired in '71 actually, but I took my tax preparation home. The fellow that bought me out says, 'I don't want to buy your tax business,' he said, 'I'll get it all anyhow the minute you leave Main St., you know.' I said, 'that's fine. I'll take it home.' So, I took all my files home. I had quite a few, you know. I still do some.

IF: You still do some taxes.

AK: A little bit, not much.

IF: That's neat. Is that the story you wanted her to tell, Dorothy?

DP: I just thought she should mention her husband.

AK: Yeah, yeah, I married him there, and he was working at the Corley Coal Company.

IF: We're going to talk to Mary Kruch? Am I saying that right? Kiesler and she also has written a book called 'Rain and rainbows' and the first part of it tells, well, it's really just her whole life history, starting from when she was born. Ara, do you have all of her genealogy history?

AW: Yes.

IF: So, at this point in the tape, we'll just say to see the genealogy record in the file. Mary, I would like you to tell me just, well, I thought it was very interesting when I was reading in the book about your early life in Vineland, in Pueblo, CO and for some of those who are listening to the tape, that's the area where a lot of the produce is raised and sold even today out there in Vineland. Is that, in the book, there's a picture of her home which is a brick building and she talks about helping to build it and carrying bricks and is that building still there?

MK: Yes. The building is still at Vineland.

IF: And is it on Highway 50?

MK: On Highway 50.

IF: As you go out?

MK: As you go east.

IF: Uh huh. Tell me a little bit about, I want you to tell me the story about when you went to your first day of school when you were a young person and come from an Italian speaking family in the home and I guess I want to hear it from your perspective because I grew up in the Chicago area and it was a time when that area was a melting pot, you know, a lot of Germans and Polish and Italian families first generation coming to our school and we had to teach a lot of young people as students ourselves, taught them during recess how to teach. But that wasn't so in your case, was it?

MK: No, I couldn't speak a word of English until I was seven years old. I started to school. I wanted to go
19 Kiesler

to school. My father took me to school and 1st grade teacher's name was Miss Shacklett. My daddy explained to her as best as he knew how for he couldn't speak fluid English so he told her that he'd like for me to sit there so that I could hear the other children speak the English language and perhaps I would pick some of it up and I could learn to speak English. Well, no sooner did my father disappear from sight, from the schoolhouse, and this teacher would ask me then to get out of my little seat and start for home, and she would pat me on my back and she'd say, 'home, home'. And I understand 'home' so that meant that I was to leave and go home so I'd start up the lane and my daddy's farm that he began as a young man was just about a quarter of a mile from the schoolhouse, and he always tied his plow and horse to a post out in this field – long pause – come home in the evening, that's what he figured he was going to have to do. So, I came home pretty early so he saw me coming up the lane and he met me, wanted to know why I was coming home and I explained to him that the teacher told me to go home. So, his habit was of always putting me up on his shoulders and taking me on horsyback rides, he always called it, and he took me back. This was repeated many, many, many times, taking me back to this teacher. But as soon as he disappeared from sight, why, she would ask me to go home. Finally, they came to terms and they discussed it and the teacher finally told my father that when she learns to speak English, we won't take her in school. Well, I had no way to learn English cause Mother and Father didn't speak English. They both had come from Italy and they were small children and had no chance to learn English language. So, my father knew that it was losing battle, so he finally hired a tutor, an Italian tutor and we kept him in our home, he had room and board there, and then he, when my father and mother came in from the field, why, we would study, and I learned the English language. So, I was seven years old before I went to first grade.

IF: You think that that was something that the teacher just decided or there was a school policy?

MK: I think it was the teacher's decision. Of course, she didn't like the name and she wanted to change the name and that was one of the things she did do. She succeeded in changing the name.

UIM: Excuse me, girls. Mary, I finished your book.

IF: Oh, I'm sorry. I thought-(laughing) yeah, turn it off a minute then.

MK: My oldest brother has the home place and he's farming it, with help of course. He's too old to run it by himself. But he does have help and he's running the farm as it was when my father had it. Big crops now, instead of vegetables, now it goes into hay and alfalfa and corn fields. Then, I have a brother that has, a younger brother has the farm adjoining the big farm which used to be my grandfather's farm on my mother's side of the family and he has that farm and has added to it since.

IF: And what was their names?

MK: This is Phillip that's running the farm.

IF: Uh huh, but what was your-

MK: My grandfather's name was Andrew Gianetta. That was my mother's maiden name, Gianetta.

IF: And how do you spell that?

MK: Geonetti.

IF: And you had said that they took produce into-

MK: When I was a child at home, we gathered the vegetables and fruit and prepared them for sale. We would wash them and pack them in baskets and bushels and then the wagons were loaded with the produce and the wagons were drawn by horses and they were taken to Pueblo and the housewives would come and meet the farmers and buy their produce right down the street.

IF: And then today, what happened?

MK: Today, it's, the truckers come to the farms and pick it up from the farmers so it's not pedaled to the residents of the town like that anymore.

IF: Were you the only one in the family that became a teacher?

MK: Yes, I'm the only one in my family. But I have a lot of offsprings that are teachers now. My cousins on both sides of the family, men and women, and I have one granddaughter that's a teacher. I have lots of nieces and nephews that are teachers now. But I was the first one.

IF: When did you decide to be a teacher?

MK: When I was just five years old. I made little stick dolls, corncob dolls and hollyhock dolls and stood them along the wall in a shed that contained a brick oven where we used to bake our bread and when it was nice and warm in there after mother took the loaves of bread out of the oven, why, I'd go in there, and I would teach the rest of the afternoon and teach the corncob dolls and the hollyhock dolls.

IF: So, you taught even before you knew how to speak English.

MK: That's right. My father detected that in me as a little girl and he kept saying all the time, he would tell my mother, we have a natural born teacher, so we've got to do something about it and I do believe that that's what gave him the idea of having a tutor in the home. Because he couldn't speak the language and mother couldn't speak the language and he wanted to be a big farmer so he knew he had to do something about his children. So that's when he hired the tutor and he came into our home and lived with us and for his room and board, why, he would help out in the field during the day, but in the evenings, you would sit around the family table and he would teach us. And he had his own method and I picked it up quickly. My mother then learned enough that she could sign her name and could speak the language rather, oh, it was sort of broken, but she still could make you understand what she wanted to tell you. But my father progressed very rapidly socially educated more than he was book educated because he didn't have time to read. But he made friends with many of the bankers and business people in town because then he had to do big business with them. So, from then on, and I started at school when I was seven years old, then I graduated from high school in Vineland in '27.

IF: I want to back up just a little bit. I want you to tell me what a hollyhock doll is.

21 Kiesler

MK: We used to raise hollyhocks along the fences. We planted flowers and a hollyhock doll is after the hollyhock blooms, it has a little head to it and you take that little head and turn the little skirt upside down and you put a little stick in there and you have a little face looking at you and a nice big white skirt and I stood them along the wall and corncob dolls, after the horses had eaten the kernels off of the cobb, the corncob doll, I just tied a ribbon around it. I called it a doll cause that's the only kind of doll I had. We didn't have dolls in those days. So, those were my students.

IF: I have a daughter and she used to have stone people and the kids would make fun of her because she was always playing with her stone people. Same kind of thing. After you graduated from high school, in 1927 I think it was, then did you go on to college? You graduated from high school.

MK: Yes, I graduated from high school in 1927 and I went to school that fall, went to Western State College in Gunnison. I attended one full year and then was given a special permit to find a school and the first school that I had was the Augusta school and I moved into Westcliffe.

IF: When you went to college, did your parents have the money to send you then?

MK: No, college wasn't expensive in those days but they still didn't have the \$500. It cost about \$500 to enroll and buy supplies. But they didn't have that. But I went up there and enrolled but I got to live with a woman, Mrs. Hards, who boarded young girls that came from any distance and we lived in her home and she agreed that my father mail her bushels of vegetables, like carrots and spinach and lettuce and beans and all of the different kinds of vegetables that were raised on the farm, and he would put them on a narrow gauge which went over the pass and she would get them the next day and use those vegetables to feed the girls that she was boarding and we had our rooms there, and that paid for my room and board, all the vegetables that my father could send from the farm and then what little money I could get from the family would buy my books. See, it was room and board that was the most expensive part of it. But I went one year that way. Then when I got my school, then I bought my own way through.

IF: So, then, that summer after you taught-

MK: After I taught a year, then I went back in the summers. So, I would spend my summers up at Western State until I got a life certificate.

IF: So, you would teach when you were in your first school, Augusta school, was that a winter school?

MK: No, it was a whole year school, but I would go to school in the summers after school was out. I would enroll then in I believe it would be June, July and August. Then I'd have to be back again for another term of school teaching.

IF: I know in some of the mountain areas up there in the Wet Mountain Valley, they had a summer school rather than winter school but this was from September to-

MK: May.

IF: May.

MK: Dwight taught the full year and I would go back then and teach a full year and then go to college.

IF: Tell us about your first year of teaching.

MK: I taught in a granary the first three months cause the schoolhouse that I was to teach in had been burned down. So, I taught in a granary right on the property and the seats were made out of logs and the floors had great big spaces in them. It was just a granary and it had mangers in there, or bins to put feed in there. But we managed because I didn't have but the four children, the two Painter children and two other children and we managed it for three months and then finally, we moved to the schoolhouse that was built on the property. It was still called the Al Printer school and I then proceeded to finish teaching there for that year.

IF: And what family did you stay with?

MK: I lived with the Al Painter family. They had two boys that attended school there. Later, then, in a couple of years, I moved down to the property, down to the, closer to the school which is across the street from Mr. and Mrs. Bragg, Charlie and Catherine Bragg. I lived with them then two years. I finished teaching there.

IF: And how far away from school was that?

MK: Well, that was just a little distance in comparison to what it was from the Painter ranch.

IF: And what were your duties as teacher?>

MK: I had to bring in the wood at night, bank the stove, clean the building, carry out the ashes, pack in the wood, go to the creek and break the ice and haul in the water for the tank. In those days, we did each have our cup to drink out of. There was a dipper hung on the wall and everybody got their water out of this tank of water and I had to make my lesson plans and it would be dark by that time after I got the children all dressed warmly to ride their horses to go home and I had all of the janitor work to do and I had to make lesson plans for the next day and then I would start for home. And it would sometimes be dark by the time I got to the first haystacks. I would follow a barbed wire fence up the hill and I would get as far as the haystacks and in the wintertime, the cattle would reach over the fences and would pull a hair, the hay out of the stacks and it would make great big spaces in the haystacks and luckily, I could crawl in there if a snowstorm would come on, a blizzard and I would stay in these spaces. Then, when Mr. and Mrs. Painter found out that I wasn't at home yet, why, they would come after me. They would hitch a horse to the sled and they would come to the first haystack and probably, that's where I would be. But if I made it to the second haystack, they would have to search for me because now it was dark and many a time, I saved my life by crawling into these spaces in the haystacks to keep from freezing. The snow would pile up, it would be four or five feet deep. We would not see the ground until the next spring and maybe sometimes in April and May, we still hadn't seen the ground.

IF: And there would be no way to call off school, I mean, the kids, they-

MK: If you saw a blizzard coming, and you knew that it might turn out to be real bad, you bundled the

23 Kiesler

children up. You put on their wraps and overshoes and mittens and caps and you would get their horses out of the timber and put the children on their horses and send them home. But you never would know whether the children got home or not. That was one of my big worries because I knew I'd get all my children started, but I never knew whether they all got home.

IF: There wasn't any phone in that area.

MK: There was no way that we could find out. Some of them didn't have phones. There might have been a phone at one of the homes but not all of them, and of course, then, I had to leave the building and there was no way to tell the people that I was either in the building or I'd started for home. So, I would head for the, these barbed wire fences were hard to follow because you could catch your clothes, your long coats in them, but you followed them to keep from getting lost in the blizzards and that's why I would head for the haystacks, and many times I would stay there, oh, maybe, two hours before they would come to pick me up. So, those were experiences for an 18-year-old girl that were hard to explain to others because teachers of today don't realize the hardships that, if you were dedicated and you were determined to stay there, I knew that I better not give up and go back home. So, I knew I had to stay with it because that would have been a failure if I had gone home and I would hurt about it.

IF: Right. Who was your superintendent in those days?

MK: Mrs. Al, Al Beeman was my first superintendent.

UI: Same one I had.

MK: Yes, and then in the latter part of my teaching in Custer County, it was Mrs. Georgiana Kettle.

IF: And she would come and visit every so often?

MK: Yes, they came at, well, when I first started teaching at Augusta school, it was about twice a year. They would come in the fall, get you started. Then, they would come back the next spring to give the children a yearly test to see whether I had done my teaching successfully.

IF: Then you went, after that was over, how many years did you teach at that school? Just the one year?

MK: I think I was there three years.

UI: Six years.

MK: Six years, well, I guess I was there six years. I'll have to look at my paper again.

IF: And did you, then you would go to school in between time?

MK: Yes, summers, to get a life certificate. That was the thing you had to earn at that time was what they called a life certificate, which would have been a two-year degree. It would be the equivalent of a two-year degree for an A.B. or a B.A. as some of them call it. So, you had to go many summers in order to get the credits.

IF: Then, what was your next school in Custer County?

MK: Then, from the Augusta school into the Beck school. That was out on a big cattle ranch.

IF: Do you know what road that was on? Was it near Colfax Lane?

MK: No, that was the one west of that.

IF: Uh huh.

MK: I don't remember the name of it.

IF: And how many children did you have at that school?

MK: The first year, I must have had about 10 or 12 children.

IF: And you were at that school more than one year?

MK: Yes, I was there about three years. Before I taught, no, I was there two years at the Beck school and then went on from there. I was at the Beck school two years and lived with the Beck family.

IF: How many, did some of the children live in the home? At the home you were in?

MK: Yes, the Beck family had two girls, Catherine and Margaret, and there were other children that attended this school. They had cousins that attended there, the Fred Beck children, and the Henrick boy. I had the Henrick boy there that year.

IF: Were they, there was around where the German colony came in in that area.

MK: Right.

IF: So, were they mostly descendants of the German colony?

MK: I think so.

UI: This was Joe Beck?

MK: Joe Beck and Fred Beck's children attended there and the Henrick boy.

IF: Tell me a little about social life around school. Did you have any, what kind, did they have anything other than the Christmas programs and that kind of thing?

MK: I don't think, when I was in the Beck school. Now, when I was at the Augusta school, we had several programs but at the Beck school, we didn't have, there weren't enough children to put on any programs and there so few in the lower grades and then most of them were in the upper grades and it was kind of hard to put on anything, and at that time, the way I looked at it, Mr. and Mrs. Beck were not really in favor of any, so we didn't spend any time on it. He wanted just the academic taught. He was on the school board, he and his brother. So, we didn't spend much time on any fun things.

IF: And it was while you were at that school when you met your husband?

MK: Yes. That was at the Beck school.

IF: Uh huh, and you said something in your book about that family losing their mother and father and then, there was nine children in your husband's family?

MK: Oh, in my husband's family-

IF: Ten-

MK: Five girls and five boys.

IF: Yes.

MK: And then, his parents had passed away before I met him.

IF: Uh huh, so is he old enough, who was raising the family?

MK: The sisters. He had five sisters and the younger sisters were raising the younger children.

IF: Uh huh, so he was working then Did they have a ranch there.

MK: No, they were working for Joe Beck.

IF: I see.

MK: Two brothers.

IF: And then, after you were married, and you moved to Gardner for a while.

MK: That's where we moved when I was a new bride.

IF: And then, what was the next school you were at?

MK: Well, then we moved to Westcliffe because of the drought, because of the grasshoppers that ruined our crops and so, we had to leave that place and we moved to Westcliffe and that was now during Depression days and that was when Carl worked for the county for \$1 a week.

IF: So, the county was kind of broke at that point too.

MK: Yes, the county was broken too. There was very little going on and that's when I took the Adobe school after my second baby was born. I taught the Adobe school for one year.

IF: Who would take care of your children while you were-

MK: I had the Eikelman girl, Grandma Eikelman's granddaughter, Myrtle and Bessie, were my babysitters, and the younger sisters of the Eikelmans had gone to school to me there after I'd left the Adobe school and taught the Canda school. So, the Eikelman children attended the Canda school.

IF: So, you knew Mrs., Grandma Eikelman?

MK: Eikelman.

IF: Molly Eikelman, first white child in the Valley.

MK: That's right.

IF: Did she tell you any stories?

MK: Yes, she told stories about her life and how hard it was to make ends meet. They didn't have anything. It was real, real hard for Mrs. Eikelman. I can remember one time she told about hitching up the team and going to Pueblo to buy groceries and I think it took them several days before they made it back. Yes, Mrs. Eikelman told about, she used to tease me, and she says, 'you'll like Westcliffe' cause I would go and sit and talk with her and she would say, 'you'll like it because it's a beautiful valley' and she said, she told me that 'after you see some of our beautiful sunsets and smell the hay, well, you'll understand why you'll never want to leave.' That was her little saying, that-

IF: Did you feel that way?

MK: Yes, I loved Westcliffe.

IF: Did you like it?

MK: Yes, I loved Westcliffe. I liked the people up there, just very, very good to you. Mrs. Eikelman told about the time when she was, could hardly have a pair of shoes to wear, they were so poor and it was hard to get shoes and it took them two weeks to go to Pueblo and come back, and they drove oxen then to Pueblo and back. But she said, all those rewards, living up in there in the Valley were precious moments to her, and her granddaughters would talk about it too. She used to tell them a lot of pretty stories and the children would come to school and tell about Grandma Eikelman. I got to know her quite well.

IF: Then you, did you teach at the Canda school after you taught at the Adobe?

MK: Yes, I taught the Adobe one year and I had-

IF: And tell us why you didn't there another year?

MK: They didn't have any money to pay the teacher.

IF: So, they just closed the school down.

MK: They had to close it, yes. There just wasn't enough money. The Dolan children attended there for a while, Cass Dolan's children, and after I had been there a year, why, it was just too hard to put money enough together to keep a teacher.

IF: So, you went to the Canda school. Did those children go there then?

MK: Yes.

IF: Go to the-

MK: They had to move them up there and they bought a place farther west from the Canda school, and then they attended the Canda school.

IF: I know that the Canda school is still standing, and it's a log cabin. Was that a warm building?

MK: Yes, it was. It was rather comfortable.

IF: And did you have a wood stove in there?

MK: It had a wood stove in there and we had to haul water for drinking during the day and we had no restrooms in the building. We had a little outhouse and I enjoyed teaching that school because-

Break in the tape and restarts.

MK: Well, it wasn't Italy then. It was Austria.

IF: Italy was Austria then?

MK: And then in 1918, during the World War, it was taken over by Italy. So, it's now Italy.

UI: Are you actually Austrian? Instead of Italian? Instead of Italian?

MK: Actually, Austrian born, but we speak, in that community, I tell it here too, there was about, oh there was a lot of villages that came in. Some of them were German, Russians, you know, any kind and they didn't have schools to teach up there. So, Italy sent schools to someplace. Germany sent them to another village and so forth, and that's how we learned the Italian language. Really, what we speak is a broken Italian, like you would say, like the Spanish and the Mexican.

IF: A dialect.

MK: Yeah, just kind of a dialect.

IF: Like high and low German and those kinds of things.

MK: Yeah, there's always the dialects. That's what it was. I can still speak it but I don't have anybody around to speak-

IF: To speak it to, huh?

MK: That's why we forget it.

UI: Can you still speak it?

MK: Very little. I don't have my mother anymore. When I used to go home to see my mother, that's all

we would talk, Italian, and after she passed away, wasn't anyone to talk to. My younger brothers and sisters didn't want to learn it. But that's all I could speak.

IF: Ok, Lacey.

UI: I don't want to break up-

IF: That's ok, we were at the Canda school. I need to know, who were your students at the Canda school?

MK: Alright, we had the Ernest George children and I had the Dolan children.

IF: Did you have any of the Canda children?

MK: And two of the-

IF: Who were the Canda-

MK: The Canda boys, Rock and Roddyville.

IF: And how long, how many years did you teach at the Canda school?

MK: I think I was there four years, and then, from there, we moved to Wetmore.

IF: And then you taught at the Wetmore school.

MK: Wetmore school, right, and that's the first big school that I'd been in where there were two teachers, and Mrs. Hall taught the lower grades and I took the upper grades and that's when I became principal of the school and I was there two years.

IF: Now, by that time when you would become principal, how much education did you have?

MK: I had gotten my life certificate then and I was working, of course, life certificate lasted just so many years and then-

IF: It didn't last for life, huh?

MK: No, it didn't change. They called it a life certificate but it was not. Credentials began to change and then I had to go back and work for my B.A. so I was still going then in the summers.

IF: I'd like to, have, I would, right here in when talking about the Custer County schools, I would like to refer people who are listening to this tape to Mary's book again, 'Rain and rainbows' and in there are a lot of your beautiful quotes on life, on your philosophy of life. So, I hope that the people will, and maybe I'll go through the end of this tape and give a few of the quotes so that people can hear some of those things. I'd like to have your opinion as to the one room schoolhouse and maybe I'll ask each one of you ladies this. If, what do you think was the plus for the small one room schoolhouse? What do you think was the advantage in having the one room schoolhouse? Do you think there was an advantage?

MK: Yes, I think there's an advantage because you get acquainted with the children and you become so

29 Kiesler

well acquainted, that you have that one-to-one contact where you can do more teaching and you don't have the interruptions in a one room school that you do in a consolidated school.

IF: How about you, Angela?

AK: I think, my philosophy always was, one teacher, one pupil is the very best. Then, anymore, that you have, you have to give some time to all of them.

IF: You split yourself a little bit more each time, right?

AK: That's right. I fought consolidation in Custer County. I fought it. I didn't want consolidation at all.

IF: Well, how about you, Dorothy?

DP: I think it was an advantage in the younger children hearing the lessons of the older children and actually learning from them, and the social part of the school was very important. They all socialized and they were not segregated and so they all played together, the teacher with the children, whatever they played, recess.

IF: So do you think that some people are striving for home schooling. Do you think that's a good idea in some cases or is one room school not that different?

DP: Do you mean the mother teaching the children at home? I don't think so because I think the children like the social life that they get and learning how to get along with other children and I just don't believe in it myself.

IF: You think it's good to have someone else-

AK: I didn't think I was doing my girls justice to teach them. I really didn't.

IF: You feel that same way?

MK: I agree with that, yes. I feel that a mother probably could do a good job in some respects but I think you have to have more experience enough to be among other teachers and give the children the very best that you have.

IF: What is, do you feel there is a plus in consolidation? I mean, if there is a plus, what do you feel it is, Mary?

MK: Oh, perhaps you get more supplies. You get more things to work with and they're already made and yet it isn't a plus, because I think making your own, we used to write our own health books and our own nature books and our own social studies books, coming right from the children. We wrote our own books. I had huge tablets and when they had an idea, we would jot it down on these large tablets and we would read our own stories. So, I don't know that I would say that consolidation is a plus in many ways, only that perhaps the children meet other, more children. There's more communications with others.

IF: There's more advantage to sports.

MK: To sports, but-

IF: But I'm not sure that-

MK: But I don't know that the sports are the making of all of the fields in education because there are too many interruptions. This is what I didn't like about consolidated schools and coming to a big building where all the grades were there, but you had your children such a short time and the bell would ring and they'd run for something else, and you couldn't hold their attention or do much teaching, because it would even distract the teacher. So, I really never have been for it.

IF: So, you'd like the one room schoolhouse.

AK: You bet!

IF: How about you, Dorothy?

DP: I taught high school, My first high school teaching was at Penrose High school before consolidation and then I went into Florence after consolidation and so those children came from Penrose to the Florence High School. The plus that I saw was that in Florence, they could have a larger curriculum, more choice and I felt, a broader education because of lack of money not as many teachers, not as educated in certain areas. There was some plus.

AK: Yes, there was bound to be some advantage but, I don't know.

MK: They could afford more supplies for them but the supplies were not always the very best because I think that the ideas of young children put in books, their learning is far greater than it is than taking somebody else's word for things. They did more research on their own.

IF: Yeah, I was interested in your book when you were telling about going to the haystack and measuring it and telling-

MK: Yes, learning from actual experience, the measurement there and tons were in a stack. I don't think they do that in our schools here.

IF: No. I really appreciate all you ladies coming and I hope that people, through the years will take from your experience and from your wisdom and put it to use. Thank you.

DP: We enjoyed it.

MK: Very much.

End of recording.