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### **Summary of Oral History Interview with Pauline MacGregor**

Pauline MacGregor was interviewed by Ted James on February 27, 1985, about her husband, Archie MacGregor, and his experiences working in the mines of Ilse, Colorado. Archie was born on July 19, 1893, at the MacGregor Ranch in Ilse and spent much of his life as a miner, working at the Terrible Mine and later at the Ajax Mine in Cripple Creek.

### **Mining Life in Ilse**

The Terrible Mine, a lead mine in Ilse, was initially owned by the Eagle Picture Company of Joplin, Missouri, before being sold to Dr. R.D. Webb. At its peak, the mine employed around 70 miners and included a company-run town with homes for married workers, bunkhouses for single men, a boarding house, and a company store. Mining was physically demanding, requiring workers to keep water out of the shafts and transport ore to the on-site mill for processing. The town of Ilse had about 100 families, and the mine was central to the community's economy.

### **1928 Mine Fire and Rescue**

One of the most dramatic incidents in Archie's mining career was the 1928 mine fire, which started in the hoist room and spread down the shaft, trapping 14 men underground. A volunteer named Bill Callen descended a ladder to warn the trapped workers, and they managed to climb out by wetting their coats and gunny sacks for protection. Archie was among the survivors, and Callen later received a Carnegie Medal and a \$1,000 award for his bravery.

### **Life in the Mining Camp**

The mining community at Ilse was close-knit. Saturday nights featured dances, pie suppers, and live music, often performed by local musicians. The town also had Sunday school services held in the schoolhouse, which was run by the county. Special events like Fourth of July celebrations included rodeos, baseball games, parades, and fireworks.

Mining conditions were hazardous, with occasional cave-ins. Archie was involved in rescuing miners from one such collapse, where he discovered an unknown man's body in the escape tunnel. This death later led to a murder investigation, revealing that the victim was mistakenly killed in a revenge attack.

### **Decline of the Mine and Transition to Ranching**

After the 1928 fire, the mine struggled to stay operational. Archie worked as a watchman for three years before the mine permanently closed. The company allowed some families to remain in their homes, but many left to find work elsewhere. Eventually, the houses were sold, dismantled, and repurposed in other areas.

Archie and Pauline later moved back to the MacGregor Ranch, where they transitioned to sheep ranching. They remained in Custer County, raising their children and continuing their deep ties to the community.

Pauline's interview provides a vivid account of mining life, the dangers of underground work, and the strong community bonds in early 20th-century Ilse.

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