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Medell, Eleanore

February 4, 1999

Interviewed by Irene Francis, with Herb and Ara Weimer

IF: We are in the home of Eleanore Medell, spelled MEDELL. The interviewer is Irene Francis. The date is February 4, 1999. I have with me Ara Weimer and Herb Weimer and Eleanore Medell and we're going to talk with her and find out things that happened in her life. Would you tell me when you were born?

EM: I was born in Cripple Creek.

IF: You were born in Cripple creek and then, how old were you moved to the Wetmore area?

EM: I was probably, between Wetmore and Florence from when I was 2, Wetmore when I was 4. But my mother was born in the old house up there on the Hardscrabble.

IF: And so, your grandparents came to Hardscrabble area when they were young?

EM: My grandpa came shortly after 1850 from England and my grandma moved up there to what is now, was for a long time, the old Holstein place and then they was kids and she came there from Wales when she was 14.

IF: What brought them to the area, do you know? Did they homestead or-

EM: No, my grandpa's family had a printing company in Britain, England and all the kids went into the printing company, but he didn't want to. He wanted to be a farmer. So, he came to the United States and why he ever wound up here, I don't know. He wasn't a very good farmer, I don't think.

IF: That's a kind of a hard place to farm.

EM: He found, he'd just been married a short while and he found a beautiful animal he wanted to take home as a present to his wife. It was black, it had a white scrag.

EM: Really?

IF: He caught it.

EM: He caught it. She wasn't letting him-

IF: I bet! Now, your grandfather's name was-

EM: Terat Wright, but everybody called him Teddy.

IF: And that was your-

EM: My mother's father.

IF: Your mother's father. And your grandmother's name?

EM: Her name was Florence Hiss and her dad's name was Thomas. They're the ones that had the place which was the Holstein place up there at the old schoolhouse.

IF: Ok, now tell me all about that schoolhouse. Do you know who built it?

EM: No. I don't have any idea but I know it's been there for way over 100 years.

IF: Ok, what was the name? Was there a name? Did they call it a certain name? The schoolhouse?

EM: I don't think so.

IF: You mentioned your mother. Now let's go back. What year was your mother born, do you know what year she was born?

EM: 1885.

IF: And was she born in the area?

EM: She was born in grandpa's old house there down just a little way from the schoolhouse.

IF: Then, she grew up in that area and she went to that schoolhouse?

EM: She started to that schoolhouse in 1891 when she was six years old. She went through the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Then, she went to Canon City to Normal School.

IF: Is that what they called it, Normal? Now, was that equivalent to a high school education?

EM: It was like a teacher's academy, I think.

IF: Oh!

EM: And then she came back and taught there, her brothers Theodore and John.

IF: How old was she when she was teaching there?

EM: I think she was about 17. I don't remember there. Indiana has a book that shows all the things she was-

IF: Expected to teach.

EM: You would be surprised.

IF: Do you know, was she allowed to get married or was that a-

EM: Yeah, I think she was.

IF: She was allowed to get married and teach.

EM: She never taught after she got married though.

IF: And then she got, now, how did she meet your father? Was your father in the area?

EM: I have no idea.

IF: How she met your father.

EM: I don't know.

IF: OK. Now we talked about the Wright side of the family. What was your, your grandmother's name was Gibbs.

EM: My great grandmother.

IF: Your great grandmother was named-

EM: That was grandma's mother.

IF: OK, her name was-

EM: I never knew them. They were all gone before I-

IF: You mentioned the Clarkson homestead. Do you know the Clarkson's?

EM: I knew Grandma Clarkson. I didn't know any of the rest of them. She was married to Henry Clarkson. He died, I don't know when he died, but I never saw him but once. They had, they called it the summer resort up, it was Forestdale land.

IF: Forestdale?

EM: You know where the Castle is?

IF: Yes.

EM: Yes, you go on up and down kind of a horseshoe curve. The school, as you go around that curve, the school was right there. You can still see the foundation of the school.

IF: Did they call that-

EM: They called it Fairview School.

IF: Fairview School. But it was really Forrestdale.

EM: There's a white house still there. Asbury White from Pueblo, that was their home. Bryce taught with somebody up there and she's, thinks she knows all about that area. I was asking her about that house. She said some people named Brown owned it. I said, oh, that's funny, people know that White built it. She said the Browns always lived there. I said, no, they weren't. When I lived there, Whites, it was Asbury White, from White and Davis in Pueblo. There was a creek right in front of their house. It was Squirrel Creek I think and it was, my grandmother had a big dance hall and end of that dance hall went right out over the creek. That's how close we lived to the Whites.

IF: The dance hall went out over the creek?

EM: Uh huh. And then she had this great big red three-story summer resort. She had two rooms on the first floor, was a dining room and I think she could seat 175 people in the dining room.

IF: And she did, she served the people?

EM: People would go from Florence?

IF: And she also had a post office in there?

EM: Yeah, it was across the road.

IF: The post office. The Forrestdale post office.

EM: Uh huh, the Forrestdale post office, and a little grocery store.

IF: And was that, now is this separate from Beverly Lodge and was that Beverly Lodge?

EM: No, Beverly Lodge was on down towards the old homestead. Grandma's hotel was between the creek and it ran in front of White's and Beverly Lodge. Beverly Lodge was just a home then.

IF: And this was your grandma White?

EM: Clarkson.

IF: Grandma Clarkson! Ok, Grandma Clarkson.

EM: And Beverly Lodge was just a home. They didn't have any, wasn't a lodge then. It was just along a line of houses. I can't remember. But Ruth and I went to Fairview School in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

IF: Now Ruth is your-

EM: Moses.

IF: Moses. Ok.

EM: We had seven months school-

IF: Now Ruth Moses was your teacher?

EM: No, she and I were in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade!

IF: She and you were in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Who was your teacher?

EM: Margaret Roadhouse.

IF: Roadhouse?

EM: She was from Denver and from the time I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade until, I must have been 75 or 76, I had met her from every year at Christmas time was all she found the whole year. All of her travels in Europe and all of a sudden, no more. So, I'm sure she passed away.

IF: Tell me, did you like being in one room, was it a one room schoolhouse?

EM: Uh huh, six children.

IF: Six children, and what year was that?

EM: I was eight years old. It must have been about 1922.

IF: Ok, did the people around there all farm? Is that what they mostly did?

EM: We had cows. I don't think we had a farm. My dad didn't work much.

IF: Uh huh, ok.

EM: He was petulant, get out of work.

IF: He was a professional 'getter out of work'?

EM: Uh huh.

IF: Hey, that's a good profession. (laughing) And your mother-

EM: [unintelligible] but I don't remember he did.

IF: Uh huh. What did you like in school?

EM: I liked to have my mistake box.

IF: Your mistake box! What was that?

EM: She always had a box up there with little slips in it. If you ever heard anybody say ain't, you'd say, you just said ain't and you'd sign your name. Whoever got more, heard more mistakes and wrote them down and put them in, got a prize, and whoever got less, made the least, nobody had heard, they got-I got lots of prizes doing that. (laughing)

IF: You did, now when they made the mistake, she would correct them? Would they have to write it or-

EM: She'd open the box once a month.

IF: Once a month.

EM: Uh huh. I can remember, that whole week, somebody'd say ain't, and you'd say ain't and remind them, and my little brother would just behind me and he'd heard them say ain't, and he'd say ont, ont.

IF: Oh, that's neat!

AW: What grade?

EM: I was in 3<sup>rd</sup>.

AW: Did she teach different grades?

EM: From the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 8<sup>th</sup>. Was six pupils, she we skipped a few grades. I think it was, my brother was in the 2<sup>nd</sup> or 1<sup>st</sup> maybe and I was in the 3<sup>rd</sup>. Ruth and I were in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and Emma Miller and my brother were in the 6<sup>th</sup> and Reddy Miller was in the 8<sup>th</sup>. Miss Roadhouse, that was her first year of teaching. I think she taught high school in Denver for years and years. She never married.

IF: What kind of games did you play?

EM: I remember playing the organ, the piano.

IF: You had a piano in the school?

EM: Mm hmm. We would sing like 'Annie Laurie' and 'All Those Enduring Young Charms', I can remember all those. I heard them play them on the, they used to play them on that organ and then I got an electric organ.

Tape stops and restarts.

With a later one. You'd hear an airplane go over. The whole school ran out to see it. You hardly ever, ever saw an airplane. You'd hear them, I bet you didn't hear one in a year.

HW: There would be little ones of course.

EM: They had the big ones but the teacher expected the kids to all run out and see it.

IF: You ran out too.

EM: Why, sure!

IF: Did you ever go to Westcliffe and see the trains?

EM: We went to Westcliffe when I was little. That's a long way to go.

IF: I'm sure.

EM: I used to go from Forrestdale to Wetmore.

IF: And how many miles was that? That was quite a ways. Would you go on a horse or in a wagon?

EM: We had a buggy.

IF: A buggy.

EM: Uh huh, with one horse, old Baldy chaise, did you ever see one of those?

IF: No, I bet that was-

EM: [unintelligible] My mother took me down to Wetmore one time when I was, I was almost eight I guess and she was going to leave me at grandma Wright's for a week and then come back. Well, it snowed and it snowed and Grandma Wright's house, I slept up in the attic in a big old featherbed and I just scooted way down but wasn't no place to [unintelligible] and I would look out. I got so I wouldn't

need to look out the window because I knew it was cloudy and snowing again, I couldn't go home. I was so homesick. I was down there for a whole month and then one morning, my uncle came in, you want to come with me, you better get out of bed. He said, the sun's shining and it was just before Easter. We went on the horses. You know where the south Hardscrabble is?

IF: Uh huh.

EM: we went south Hardscrabble on the horses and he took the scoop shovel and every once in a while, you'd have to scoop out the drift so the horse could get through. I was just about eight years old and my feet would drag in the snow on the side and we'd go through that. We left grandma's just after the sun come up. It took us till after dark when we got through to grandma Clarkson's. I was really glad to get home though after a month.

IF: You were going to tell me a story about Lover's Leap.

EM: Are you getting this on tape?

IF: Yes.

EM: Oh, Lover's Leap was supposed to be, there was two Indian tribes up there and one of the young braves fell in love with the girl from the other tribe and her father refused to let them marry, so they ran off. And that was on the back side of the peak, not from our side, where the road is So, they ran off and then all these people were following them to capture them and they kept getting farther and farther and they climbed up this rock up to the top. They thought they could get down. There was no way to get down off of it. They were trapped. So, they jumped. That's why they call it Lover's Leap.

IF: Lover's Leap. And you said something about there being a flag up there?

EM: There was a flag waved up there all the time when I was little girl. I'd see it every time we went up the canyon.

IF: you didn't know what kind of a flag it was?

EM: I can't remember. I don't think it was an American flag. I think it was an Indian flag. (laughing)

IF: Did you know the Mingus's?

EM: Mm hmm.

IF: Was he a farmer there or-

EM: I imagine he was. He had two daughters. I can't remember, the youngest one they called Faith. They let her pick out her own name when she got grown and she named herself Maureen Moriah. But nobody every called her Maureen. They still called her Faith. Long years after, I took care of Mr. Mingus at the hospital.

IF: Oh, did you?

EM: He was a very, very old man cause I wasn't young myself and it's over, just the other side of the Castle. You know there's some old barns, sheds back in there? That was the Little's old place that Carl and Alben Little-

IF: Was that Jim Little, are they?

EM: I don't know.

IF: Their name was Little though. Uh huh.

EM: But they, and I took care of Carl at the hospital.

IF: Are you a nurse? Did you become a nurse?

EM: Yes.

IF: I see. So, you were born in Cripple Creek and then you said that after your mother died, when you were 12 years old.

EM: Yeah, we lived on the Western slope when she died.

IF: Ok, you moved a lot, and your aunt raised you?

EM: After my mother died, we lived with my dad for about four years, then my aunt and uncle Mingus' garage and so they-

IF: And what was their name?

EM: John Wright.

IF: John Wright, and you went, so then you attended school in Rye?

EM: uh huh. Only time I ever went to school. I went four years high school without having to change schools.

IF: So where did you go to high school?

EM: Rye.

IF: In Rye. There was a high school in Rye? Yes, there is. That's right. And so, you graduated from there and then where did you have your nursing training?

IF: I did not have much training. I went, I worked at state hospital on the medical floor and got certified. I was able to assume the duties of a practical nurse. I got my license by waiver. I had to go to Denver and take the test.

IF: So, you got your training the practical way. Hands on.

EM: Right!

IF: How long did you work as a nurse?

EM: I worked 35 years.

IF: At the hospital?

EM: No, I quit the state. I worked at Parkview. I worked at state and I worked at Parkview.

IF: Where did you meet your husband?

EM: My first husband I met when I lived in Ohio. He and I divorced and I came back here and married the man that I'd know ever since I was 20 years old.

IF: How many children do you have?

EM: I just have one. I had two. My youngest daughter was killed right out there on the highway, where it picks up with Wild Horse Creek. She was buried the day before Christmas.

IF: Oh.

EM: The kids had gone to Canon and they come home and were coming towards Florence and on the roadside of the road and it was a head on. She was 16. She would have been 17 in a month.

IF: And so, you started the two rivulets.

EM: Yeah, yeah, I seen it. I lived by myself over in Sunset Park for years and years and years. But when they moved back here from California and they stayed with me before they built the house. I got real

sick, and they know, if I'd been there by myself, I would have died because I didn't know I was sick. I was tired, so tired, but I went to Denver with them. They were going up there for Christmas and I went to Denver with them. I didn't want to go because I was tired but I went because other wise they wouldn't go. I went up there on Christmas eve, I was so tired, I just laid on the couch, I didn't take my clothes off, slept all night. I wasn't sick. I was just exhausted. The next morning real early, she got up and I said, take my blood pressure. She said OK and she didn't say anything to me, went in pretty quick, she come back and said, Mother, we're going to take you to the hospital, and I said, no! She said yes, we're going. I said, well, I got to take a shower and change my clothes. No, you don't. You're going now. Before I could get to the hospital, I never even knew when we got to the hospital. I was in critical care. I didn't know anything. I had Legionnaire's. She said, if I'd been at home, I would have laid on the couch and I'd have died. I wouldn't have called the doctor. I was just tired. So, anyway, she said, you're not staying by yourself anymore.

Tape stops and restarts.

IF: What year were you [unintelligible]

EM: 1953.

IF: You were going to tell me about the Bigelow place up there?

EM: You know where the Mingus place is?

IF: Right.

EM: It is right in the same neighborhood only it's across the road on the other side of the road.

IF: And did you know the Bigelow's?

EM: Oh yeah, I've know the Bigelow's. My mother went to school with Julia Bigelow when she was Julia Jones up on North Creek.

IF: Where's North Creek?

EM: Out of Beulah.

IF: Beulah.

EM: Instead of going straight into Beulah, you turn the single. North Creek comes out close to Wetmore. Up near, right by the village in place. But before it was the Bigelow, that was the where Glenn and Auralia Bigelow lived.

IF: Bigelow.

EM: But before that was the Little place, there was May and she married a Dupree from Rye and Joseph, he married Maggie McGill from Rye. Helen, she married Dr. Crozier from Rye, Nina, I don't know what, is her husband's named Joseph? They lived way down on the Apache. But that's where they were all born.

IF: Now where's the Apache?

EM: You don't know?

IF: No, I don't know where. We need to know where the Apache was.

EM: On the highway. Highway 45, you know where you go, you know where Columbia Place is on top of the hill at the new Colorado City?

IF: I guess I don't. Why did they call it Apache?

EM: I don't know. It's been Apache ever since-

IF: Forever.

EM: But the wind blows all the time. I mean forever. I used to sleep inside, gusty winds made this, I thought they said gutsy winds.

IF: Kind of gutsy too, and so the Littles owned this place first and then the Bigelows.

EM: Uh huh.

IF: But the Bigelows got there, they got the Divide named after them. Bigelow Divide.

EM: Yeah, the Littles were even before that. Now I've been to the top of the Bigelow Divide too. You know, right up at the top, as you're going from grandma's place right at the top of the Divide there's a big [unintelligible] to me, it seemed like a mile but it probably was a quarter of a mile.

IF: What did you live in? Was it a log cabin or-

EM: Yeah, I think it was log, it had an upstairs in it. There was only two rooms, maybe three, I don't remember.

IF: How many children were there then? Was this when you lived with your aunt?

EM: No, that =

IF: With your mother.

EM: There was five of them and we could lay up there in bed and hear the-

IF: Wind.

EM: Hear the mountain lions!

IF: Hear the mountain lions?

EM: Yes. When we were at the hotel up at Grandma Clarkson's, the, you had to go upstairs, you had to go out and walk up the stairs on the outside of the building and I was eight. My brother was ten. Did you ever hear the Kohns up there?

IF: No, what's a Kohn?

EM: Kohns, Charlie Kohn and his wife and they had one son, Carl, but he rode over to our place horseback. He dad had died during the night and weren't very many [unintelligible] and all the coal mines were down because it snowed. They couldn't get, couldn't get into, so he came over to our place and my mother and dad went over to his place with the wagon when it snowed. So, all five of us kids were up in that great big old hotel by ourselves and my two brothers was ten and six, would wade through that snow down to the old homestead to milk the cows. We were there three nights by ourselves and the next night, John Harden from up there knew we were there, so he came over to see about us and we were all in bed by then, and he went upstairs and go down the hall and look in all these bedrooms, no kids. He got clear down to the little tiny bedroom back in the corner. All five of us were in one bed but the only reason we did that was because it was right up towards the kitchen stove and it was warm.

IF: And you'd have to build your own fire and everything and so you could hear mountain lions? Did they scream? What do they sound like?

EM: Everybody said they sound like a woman in pain.

IF: Yeah.

EM: To me, they just sound like a mountain lion.

IF: You already knew what they were.

EM: Oh yeah.

IF: You knew what a mountain lion sounded like. Did you know Mrs. Mingus? Was she there?

EM: Yeah, I don't remember her but I remember him and I remember the two girls. Right across from the Mingus place, there was a person, I don't know who owns it now, but that was Harry Shanks. He had a sawmill.

Tape stops and restarts.

IF: Where did the Heelys do?

EM: Well, the Sheely girl, Fay-

IF: Yeah.

EM: She ran a little creamery station. They took cream and milk, I guess. I guess they took-I don't know what they did.

IF: You're telling me someone was a freighter. Who was a freighter?

EM: It was my grandpa.

IF: Your grandpa Wright was a freighter? And tell us where he lived? Did he have a regular team wagon?

EM: He had oxen and he hauled freight from Cripple Creek to Victor down to Canon City and he hauled over to Rosita. My mother taught at Rosita school.

IF: She taught at Rosita? Did she teach, was there a two-story school or was there a small one –

EM: It probably was one story at that time. That was a long time ago.

IF: Yeah. Was that her second teaching job? Her first job was at the school log cabin.

EM: It must have been her second. I, it's been a long time since she told me about all these things. But of course, I picked some up from her letters too. I know we've got at least 400 letters.

IF: We'll have to look at those letters. I'll just talk to your daughter. What kind of freight did your grandfather haul? Did he haul any ore?

EM: He probably hauled ore down and then supplies, machinery, stuff back up. I don't know.

IF: Did you know the Draper family here in Wetmore?

EM: I knew of them. I think they was Clara Draper.

Tape stops and restarts.

IF: This is the end of the interview with Eleanore Mendell and we thank she and her daughter Deanna, who allowed us to come into her home and make this tape for your enjoyment.

