

West Custer County Library District Local History Collection
Oral History Collection

LP2009.013.139

Miller, Carl and Bessie

May 18, 1990

Interviewed by Irene Francis

IF: The interviewer is Irene Francis, Project Director and Ara Weimer, collecting the genealogy. The date is May 18, 1990. This morning, we are in Canon City, CO and we are in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Carl Miller who were originally from the Westcliffe-Silver Cliff area. Carl, I would ask you to spell your name, and your wife's name.

CM: CARL D. MILLER.

BM: BESSIE R. MILLER, nee EIAELMAN.

IF: Carl, where were you born?

CM: I was born in a ranch house ten miles south of Westcliffe, July 11, 1916.

IF: And did your mother have a midwife or doctor of some kind when you were born?

CM: Both.

IF: What was the midwife's name? Do you know?

CM: I have no idea. But anyway, my mother said that we had a lady here, that's-

IF: You know the doctor?

CM: The doctor's name was Dr. Butterball.

IF: You, Bessie, where were you both?

BM: I was born in a ranch house out in the country and my doctor's name was Dr. Preston, PRESTON, from Silver Cliff.

IF: Where was the ranch house that your family had?

BM: Next to the foothills, about seven miles from town.

IF: Was it seven miles from town? Was the area, so it wasn't near the Colfax area?

BM: No.

IF: What area is that called now? Do you know?

BM: It was in the Canda school district.

IF: Ok, so it was down in that area.

BM: Next to the foothills.

IF: Schoolfield Road and then over-

BM: Art Nordyke has the ranch where I born.

IF: Ok, uh huh, right. Schools, Carl what school did you go to?

CM: I attended the Beck school and I started school the 21st day of September 1922. Probably one of the greatest days in my life.

IF: Really? You liked school?

CM: I thought it was great.

IF: Do you know any of your teachers?

CM: The first teacher I had was an Italian girl from Canon City here by the name of Filipina Lutz.

IF: Did she live near the area?

CM: She boarded with the Beck family that lived close to the school there.

IF: Is the school there anymore?

CM: No, it was torn down about 19-, in the 1940s. When the district consolidated, why, the school it was closed and the county tore it down.

IF: What road was that school on?

CM: Well, it would be on, I don't, down the road to Sand Creek, but I don't know really the name of the road, you know. See what, the lane ends up there, up at the old Beck place. We walked a mile and a half to school.

IF: And what grades did you attend?

CM: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7-I made two grades in one year, I think in 1925 and '26, I made two grades in that year.

IF: And you did not go on to high school.

CM: I had the equivalent of one year of high school, but that was as far-

2 Miller, Carl and Bessie

IF: But in talking to a lot of people, I realize that they got a lot out of grade school, sometimes as much as people do today out of high school. Did you go all through the winter or were there times when you couldn't get to school?

CM: Very seldom that we didn't have school. It had to be just really severe weather. Otherwise, we had school every day. The teacher lived with the neighbor up there, boarded there. It was only a short distance over from the school from there. But we had to walk and my brothers and I and later on, my sister, we just trudged up through the snow and we made it most of the time. But we had a, school never started till September and then we were always out about the 20th of April, seven months.

IF: Was this because of ranching, because people needed-

CM: No, not necessarily. It was just a seven-month school year. That seemed to be all there was to it. Later on, some of the schools went to eight months but I never went to eight months except for one year that I went to school in Westcliffe.

IF: So, you did go, your one year was in Westcliffe.

CM: Yeah.

IF: Where was that at?

CM: That was at a parochial school and I did 9th grade work there you know. You see, I was going to confirmation instructions there in the Lutheran church and in my spare time, why, I studied some Latin and some different things you know that-

IF: When you went to that school in Westcliffe, did you stay with someone?

CM: I stayed with my grandfather, Daniel and Mary Miller.

IF: And then, after that, you were confirmed into the church.

CM: I was, yeah.

IF: Mm hmm, the Lutheran church. How about sports? Did they have any type of sports when you were in a one room schoolhouse?

CM: Well, not really, but we had a pretty good hill there that we could go sleigh riding on. So, you see, there were only three families that went to school there most of the time that I did. That was the Miller family and the Beck and the Nearmans. This little school, you know, it maybe would have eight one year, seven the next, and nine the next, you know, just as new kids come in and the older ones graduated.

IF: When you graduated, did you graduate from that parochial school?

CM: No, I graduated from the 8th grade from the Beck school.

IF: I see. Were you the only one that graduated or were there more?

3 Miller, Carl and Bessie

CM: No, there was one of the Nearman girls, Hilda Nearman graduated with the, I think it was in 1929.

IF: And you had a regular graduation party kind of thing or-

CM: We graduated at the high school you know. We had graduation exercises in town at the high school.

IF: Would all the schools come together then?

CM: All the schools came together for graduation exercises, yes.

IF: Bessie, where did you go to school?

BM: I started school at the adobe school which is still standing out at the intersection of Schoolfield and Macy Lane. The building is still standing. Two years, I went to the Lutheran school in town. But the years I was at the adobe school, one year, there were only four children there, my sister, and two other children.

IF: Would you walk to school?

BM: We walked a mile and a half to school and a mile and half home.

IF: You remember any of your teachers?

BM: Yes, my first teacher was Terry Hanssen. She drove from Westcliffe out to the school. The second year I had Teresa Paine and when I went to town school, the teacher's name was Ted Schultz.

IF: Now, when you went to town, where was this?

BM: At the Lutheran school.

IF: At the Lutheran school.

BM: And the rest of the years, I had the same teacher, Anita Frank, and she drove from up in the Willow district. They were the only teachers I had.

IF: You said there were four when you went there. What did you like best in school?

BM: Everything but history. (laughing) I liked school really well, especially math, geography.

IF: And did you go into high school or did you-

BM: No, I didn't.

IF: When you went to school, was there any kind of music instruction or did you get that at home? I'm going to ask Carl this.

CM: Well, I kind of developed great when we would sing in school. The mornings, you know, was always 15 minutes. Most of the teachers could play the piano and I thought that was great you know. We sang 'Old Black Joe' and 'Swanee River' and stuff like that in school. You know I thought it was great singing in

4 Miller, Carl and Bessie

school.

IF: Did they have, you know, the big thing today is whether or not they have prayer in school. Did you ever have prayer in school?

CM: No, no we did not. Another thing that I remember about school is we were primarily called Germans. The Snyder family was German. The Nearman family was German. The Becks were German. Perse, you know. From the potter's half. But the day we started in school, the first thing the teacher said, now listen, when you're out in the county road, you can speak German amongst yourselves, but not on the school grounds, and don't forget. It was that simple. We knew when we were on the school grounds that we spoke English. But, you know, amongst ourselves, now I have a little difficulty when I went to school because my folks, you know, were German and we spoke German in the homes, to the grandmothers, you know, that was all that we spoke to them in German. We learned to speak German very well and I have a few problems, you know, going to school, you know, had to, new words and everything, but it wasn't that, we adapted very well.

IF: Now, did your family come over with the Colony? Come here with the Colony?

CM: No, the Miller family came from Missouri in 1907 and they settled for two years in Rocky Ford and they moved into the Wet Mountain Valley in 1909. My grandfather bought a ranch there which was a homestead. But in latter years, he added on to that and bought two more 160-acre homesteads and that is the ranch that I grew up on. You see, my father eventually inherited that from his father.

IF: And you, Bessie, did your family come out with the Colony?

BM: My grandmother did. She was the first white child that was born in Custer County.

IF: Did she tell you anything about that, when she was born?

BM: Born under a pine tree.

IF: As they were coming, before they-

BM: Before they had cabins built. She was born in August.

IF: And so, did she say about anybody that attended or just the women around there?

BM: Just the women around there, I guess.

IF: Did she ever talk about any Indians in the area?

BM: Yes, very much. She heard a chief had a child, a young girl about 12, 13 years old and the Indians would ride through. Some of them were very friendly. She said, one day the Indians came through and they let their horses tied at their sheep camp. And Dall? Had never a horse before and we had this pretty paint horse, boy, I sure could ride that horse and she did. She rode that horse, and when the Indians came back through to pick up their horses, the Indian lady said to Dall, God was with you. If we would have left the other horse, it would have killed you. Scared Dilah half to death but she had ridden that horse that the Indians knew when they came back that she had been on that horse.

5 Miller, Carl and Bessie

IF: And she didn't think they would, huh. Did she ever talk about any medicines or anything that they would use for the family? That kind of-

BM: No.

IF: How about their own family? Did they have any type of, when somebody got sick, was there any kind of poultice that they would put on them?

BM: Oh, they were great for, my grandfather would go out and pick all kinds of herbs and weeds and things and use for medicinal purposes. And they would say, he would save all kinds of grease from the bears and the skunks and use to mix with turpentine for colds in the wintertime.

CM: Don't forget the groundhogs too.

BM: Groundhog Day, you know, he would save the sap off and render it, mix it with turpentine.

IF: And that's what they would use as-

BM: For colds.

IF: For colds.

IF: And they would make tea out of the wild cherry bark. You'd pick elderberries and they'd, you know, make tea and things out of that for illnesses that they had.

IF: How about you, Carl? Do you remember your family doing any of those kind of things?

CM: Well, my family didn't but my mother had an uncle that always had a bottle of skunk grease that he had rendered you know and I remember putting that on for sore throats and the same way, you know, with badger grease. Well, that wasn't really grease for medicinal purposes but you know, we'd take badger grease to grease our shoes with to make them waterproof in the wintertime.

IF: What was the grease supposed to do when you had a cold?

CM: I have no idea.

BM: I think it was more of a, what would you say, on account of the turpentine you know.

IF: Oh, the turpentine was something like you'd put on straight that would burn the skin.

CM: There's something else I got to tell you. My mother's uncle would go in the balsam trees, the white fir, and he would take those little blisters. Have you ever seen those blisters on a white fir tree you know that you can squeeze out.

IF: Kind of like the sap?

CM: The sap, yeah, and it's real sticky. He would get a whole bottle full of that and they'd use that for

rheumatism and at that time, they spoke about lumbago and different things that you don't hear about much anymore. But he always done that, but he done that to himself.

IF: Rub it on the joints.

CM: Yeah, rub it on the joints. He'd smell like a freshly cut tree all the time.

IF: How about garlic? Did they ever use, onions, did they ever use any of that kind of thing?

CM: Oh yeah.

BM: They got the wild garlic.

IF: They used that. You wouldn't get many germs. Everybody'd stay away from, well, I guess if you all smelled the same way, it wouldn't make any difference, would it? To get back to you, Carl, and the music in your family. Tell me about the music in your family.

CM: Do you want me to start back at the band in 1928 when this man Franklin started the band?

IF: Sure.

CM: He started the band in Westcliffe there and there of course for a while, it went pretty good but then all of a sudden, he left and so they were without an instructor. But my father liked to play and my uncle also and so my father bought a trumpet for my brother and my uncle bought an alto for his son, so we had my father, Charles Miller, and my uncle William Lynch. We had two trumpets, we had an alcor?, a mellophone and my pop played the trombone and I played the tuba so we had a five-piece German band. Of course, my mother was musical and she could read notes, so she done the instructing and we had these self-instruction books where you played with the numbers until we could play the notes without the numbering and so my mother, and then there was a band instructor, Harry Purdy, and so we would hire him in the summertime to tutor us, the five of us, because it was really a great thing and we would play for ? well, it was one of these German Oompah-pah band. It was really fun and that lasted till about 1934. We have a picture some place of the band, remember honey?

IF: Did you have uniforms?

CM: No, no uniforms.

IF: No uniforms.

CM: But, in the interim, along about 1930, when we got the radios and then there were these singers on the radio, so I thought I think that's great, the guitar, so I saved my money and I bought a guitar and learned to play. Of course, my mother had a pretty good musical education. She played the organ in church for years and of course, my dad could play a violin too and a mandolin and a banjo. He was musical and so, as us kids grewed into it, why, little by little, Elmer got an accordion, my older brother, and Vera learned to play the piano and then for a number of years, Vera and I and my brother Dan, the three of us, well even at first, at first after I got the guitar Elmer had an accordion and between the guitar and the accordion, Elmer and I would play for dances. Well, in 1936, Elmer was married, so he was out, but in the same time, Vera was learning to play the piano and my brother had an alto saxophone and an

7 Miller, Carl and Bessie

accordion and he could play clarinet and we used to play for a lot of dances and parties there. But my sister really didn't like it all so well because she wanted to dance with boys. She didn't want to sit up there and play piano. But I must say this, that she was a real good piano player and mind you, none of us really could play any of those instruments by notes. We played it all by ear.

IF: All by ear.

CM: But Vera had a sense of rhythm that was just out of this world and with an alto sax and a piano, accordion and so on, we done real well. Then, of course, we got into the war years when my brothers went to the Air Force and so Vera got married and I was left alone, and then I packed things with the group there till about 1947 till we were married.

IF: Who was in that group?

CM: Oh, there was a lady by the name of Mrs. Walker, Hazel, played piano, and Ray Dewall and Sandy Kriger Dewall played the saxophone and we had a boy by the name of Eddie Cody, Myrtle's husband, he played tenor banjo and Elmer got back in again with his accordion and I played trumpet and alto sax and guitar, and we played for a number of years that way until it finally just broke up in 1947.

IF: Did your music change any from your Oom-pahpah German music to, you said, listening to the radio?

CM: Oh yeah.

IF: Big band sound kind of thing?

CM: Well, we never missed the Hit Parade because that's where we got our music from. That was a, I think it was the era of good melodious music.

BM: I think so too.

CM: Yeah, and of course, the whole works of us, we would improvise and Hazel Walker was one of the most unusual piano players I'd ever seen. To this day, I always considered a privilege just to play with her. She could sit up there and play music in any key, and carry on a conversation about what happened during the week and never miss a note. Once in a while, we would get a trumpet player that wanted to sit in with us that couldn't play accompaniment in C, she just transposed that down two or three notes and keep right on a wanging away. It was absolutely amazing.

IF: Did she ever take lessons or was this-

CM: Oh yes, she taught music in Westcliffe for quite a number of years.

IF: For the school, did she teach-

CM: No, she was a private teacher. Most of the girls that could, or people that could play piano around Westcliffe, they took lessons from Hazel Walker.

IF: How about you, Bessie, were you musical or did you just kind of appreciate it all?

8 Miller, Carl and Bessie

BM: No, I just appreciated it all. I always had live music and I'd have to satisfy myself.

CM: She can read music.

BM: I can read music. I can't play by ear like they do.

CM: She reads notes and plays organ.

IF: Where did you meet, Carl?

BM: We just all lived in the valley together up there and just knew each other from day 1, I guess.

CM: She was a good friend to my sister.

BM: His sister and I were always good friends. In fact, the families were good friends.

CM: Yeah, the families were friends.

IF: So, it was kind of a mutual thing when you got married. They all really agreed with it and thought that was really wonderful. You didn't go to the war, did you, Carl?

CM: No, I held an agricultural deferment during the war for the simple reason I was the only person that had a thrashing machine in the valley over there. See, my two brothers were in the Air Force but I had an agricultural deferment, and then you see when I reached 26 years of age, then I was no longer subject to draft but for two years, I held an agricultural deferment because I was the only guy that operated a thrashing rig, so I thrashed all the grain in that valley up there.

IF: You would go to one ranch-

CM: My father and I had a custom rig. We would thrash for probably 30 days or more in the fall, and then, of course at that time I was farming pretty extensively on my own. I had leased ground and so on.

IF: When you farmed, what did you raise?

CM: Potatoes and grains and hay, peas and mostly, I grew a lot of potatoes. Then of course, I had the place leased where I had hay and then eventually, when we were married in 1947, my parents left the ranch and bought a house in town and so we leased the ranch from them. Then in '55, we bought the ranch which we sold in '81.

IF: You had milk cows?

CM: We had milk cows so to speak, but we didn't milk twice a day like the dairy. We didn't milk our cows in the evening.

IF: Did you have it only for your personal use?

CM: More or less. Of course, everybody had a cream separator and they sold cream to the local creamery there. No, as far as dairy goes, we were not really in that. We were mostly in beef production,

9 Miller, Carl and Bessie

beef cattle.

IF: When you raised your crops, would you take them in town then? How would you, when you had your peas and potatoes?

CM: Well, the peas and the vegetables that we sold, why, when the railroad was still in the valley up there, we had what you call packing sheds, and they would pack those in ice and they were shipped out on refrigerator cars, mostly to St. Louis and Kansas City. But you see, that ended in 1936. So, with that, the vegetable era ended. But I still grewed potatoes long after that and I sold them wherever I could them. I sold a lot of potatoes to a guy that had a chicken plant here in Canon City and some of them went as far east as Oklahoma. See, the truckers would come in and buy a truckload.

IF: What caused it to go out in '36?

CM: The railroad.

IF: Was it the railroad?

CM: They no longer had enough revenue coming out of there. But they wanted to disband those little short feeder lines anyway at that point. So, they just pulled up the track and that was it.

IF: Did you ride on the railroad very much?

CM: 1929 I won the spelling contest in Custer County and I got to go with the Superintendent of Instruction to Denver to the state spelling contest and we rode what they called the Gallivant Moose, which is the train from Westcliffe to Texas Creek. Then we got on the main line and it took all day. We left Westcliffe in the morning and we got into the station in Denver at 8 o'clock that night. So, that was my first train ride.

IF: In the spelling-

CM: Up in Denver, yeah. I read for them in Custer County.

IF: Who was the Superintendent?

CM: Lou C. Beeman.

IF: Beeman. How about you Bessie? Did you ever ride the train?

BM: Yeah, the one from Westcliffe. The only train I ever rode was after it came to Texas Creek. Then I rode the one from Texas Creek into Canon City.

IF: You graduated from, was it the 8th grade? What did you do when you graduated?

BM: Worked for anybody that needed help. I babysat many, many children, worked where I could find something to do.

[unintelligible]

IF: But mostly babysitting. Did you live in the houses?

10 Miller, Carl and Bessie

BM: Mm hmm.

IF: Who did you babysat for?

BM: Oh, Don and Yelda Vichard and Ella Smither and [unintelligible]Canda.

IF: Was this during the day, while they, were they working?

BM: While they were working.

IF: Where was the area that you refer to as the desert?

BM: Next to the foothills to the Sangres, in the southern end.

IF: Is that also what they called Blizzard Flats, Blizzardeen?

BM: Not that far south.

IF: Why would you call that the desert? There no trees?

BM: No trees, just dry ground, prairie ground.

CM: Let me tell you about that desert. It was, what it was, it was about 1200 acres just in a plot there between South Colony Creek and Hudson Creek. There's no water on it or anything like that. It was no trees, just, and eventually, when it was homesteaded by some people by the name of Kelly. But everybody at that time referred to that block of ground there as the desert because it was dry and, in the summertime, why the grass would burn up and wither because the soil was rocky and stony. But it was just referred to as the desert.

IF: And nobody tried to homestead that until the Kellys came along?

CM: The Kellys came along and they had adjoining land and they homesteaded it. They developed some water on it but primarily it was still a dry area there. It's not arable, that you could farm it. It's too rocky. But it's pasture land now.

IF: Never any floods through the area like, I mean, this year, we had four foot of snow and possibly, if it would have rained up on the mountains, we would have probably had a lot of water around. Ever remember any-

CM: Have you ever driven out into the south end of the valley and looked up to the Sangre de Cristo?

IF: There's a cut-

CM: There's a cut in there.

IF: Towards Colony.

CM: Yeah, and that happened during the flood of 1911. That's the time that my grandfather's house washed away up on Colony Creek and it started raining about the 12th of October and it rained for four days continuous rain. No snow. Four days of continuous rain. That's when his house washed away up on Colony Creek and there was tremendous damage all away along the flat fields you know, the streams cut new channels and that was an irrigation ditch that came over the top, it was just a little bitty stream that came over the top of that hill and when that water, that high water hit it, it washed that gully down there. Of course, we always referred to it as Cut Hill.

IF: I always wondered why that, it's wonderful that you know all these things now.

CM: My mother wrote all that down when she was a young girl and we still have that, her version of it. She gave the cut a reading this one time at one of her clubs, didn't she?

IF: names a club

CM: No, she belonged to the, one of the ladies' clubs and she just-

IF: Did anybody make a tape of that when she did that? Probably not, huh?

BM: I don't think there were any tapes around.

CM: But we still have it in writing that she had written.

IF: Somebody said in an interview that somebody had dammed up a pond up above that cut.

CM: Above that cut, yeah. That sled broke loose up there. Yeah, that's right. You bet there was a pond up there.

IF: Did somebody make that pond, was a man-made pond?

CM: Oh yeah, it was made by your great uncle, old Helmut Knute. That pond up there, you know, he had to fill a depression to get that water over the top of the hill.

IF: And then, did he irrigate something with it?

CM: He irrigated some pasture with it.

IF: So, there was something that came down that. Then, it just let loose.

CM: Yeah, yeah.

IF: That was pretty ingenious though to put water up there for irrigation.

CM: Well, it came out of North Colony Creek way back in the mountains there. He had a lateral that he took out of the creek and brought it along the side of a hill and then he had to fill this low place with water, and so he dammed off the outlet, made a man-made lake and when it got high enough, then it ran over the top off the top of that bank and come down. And when that let loose-

IF: During the Depression years, did you, did the people in that area feel any hardship during the Depression years?

CM: We had no money but we had plenty to eat.

IF: How about during the war years when, I know, in the city area, when I grew up, they didn't, you couldn't get stockings or, you had rationing butter and meat and all of those kinds of things. Yeah, did you feel it in your area?

BM: We always had plenty to eat. We were getting a ration you know but nobody suffered any hardship from it. You just knew that's what you had and so you just made it do.

IF: So, I suppose being in that area too, like I said, I can remember not having stockings and it was probably very important when you were working in the city but in that area, people didn't know it mattered.

BM: You had one pair. You took care of them and they would last.

CM: The only thing I noticed about the war, it seemed like that they started drafting the young single people out of there. It seemed like that there were an awful lot of young people. They were not married, large families, and they were drafted into the service, that help became very hard to find because the ranchers depended a lot on these young boys from town, so to speak. So, even we were down to my father and I, why, we were really hard pressed at times to get the things done that needed to be done on the ranch if what we have without hired help because we used to contract our hay to the Mexican people that lived over in Huerfano County. They used to come over and put our hay up on a contract and our pea picking was done on contracts, so you see, to some extent, we had migrant labor in the summertime, and that dried up and so consequently you know you done only the things that were really important. Because we didn't have the help and then of course whenever you could hire a man, her father worked for us one summer, helped to put up hay and we hired the neighbors. You know, there was a guy that would work, you know, at times. Whenever you could get somebody, it was, and of course, then after the war, why, mechanization broke up and you could get tractors and so on like that. It made the thing altogether different. See, we done all that with horses yet during the war. We farmed all that land with horses and then in 1944, the War Production Board had two tractors and I was allotted one of those new tractors in 1944. Of course, the war was winding down at that time.

IF: Since this was a German colony and during the war, was there any ill feelings or anything like that because you were of German descent?

CM: Not in World War II, but I remember my folks talking about World War I, that there was really a lot of mixed feelings there because some of the merchants in Westcliffe were English and the German people, like my grandfather, he spoke English brokenly. You know, they called my grandfather, it was in German, the so and so Hun, you know. The hated Huns, you know. Of course, you know, but my uncle, they drafted a lot of those German boys in World War I and they went to service too. I remember one time the banker-

IF: Who's the banker?

CM: Beardsley.

IF: Beardsley.

CM: Beardsley the banker told my grandfather, he says, Mr. Lynch, you're not very patriotic. He said, why don't you buy some war bonds? And he told him then, he said, I got a boy fighting over there for you guys. He said, afterwards, he bought four bonds because, when he came to this country, that's the first thing he told his kids, he says I want you all to learn to read and write English. Forget about the German. You see, he never lost his accent.

IF: No.

CM: But, you know, in World War II, not at all. No, we lived, the Germans and the Italians and the Slovaks and the Catholics and everything it seemed that they lived up there.

IF: Everybody needed each other, didn't they?

CM: There never really was any controversy, you know, about any of that. The French people, the English people in Ula, why, nobody paid any attention to it, if there was any bigotry.

IF: So, you just mentioned Ula. Was that predominantly the English there?

CM: That was more or less the Kettle area and the Lutons and-

IF: Luton, how do you spell that name?

CM: LUTON. And Clifford Kingtham and you see, the Kettles, that was a large family. There was Bill Kettle and Harry Kettle and Rob Kettle and Sam Kettle. They all lived in that area there where Doc Kettle, you know Doc Kettle?

IF: Yes, I was, were they brothers?

CM: The four were brothers, yeah.

IF: I'm familiar with that but these other names I'm not familiar with. Did they all come around the same time to this area?

CM: Yeah, there was an English settlement that came there in the late '70s after the German colony, we had the French colony that came from Canada and then the English colony that also came up there and homesteaded some of that land.

IF: Did a lot of them come up to the Pines first?

CM: That was part of the English colony, the Waddingtons and Pusacks and Kenningtons, yeah, that was all part of the English colony there. And there were other ones. I can't just recall the names right now but there were others up there. But they were all, they were really the backbone of the country because like everything, they settled the land and developed it and they all became solid citizens.

IF: The Youngers had, did they come with money? Did they have money when they came?

CM: I don't really think that they did. I don't think they really had all that much money. But I really couldn't say either. I'm sure that some of them maybe did, like the Waddingtons and those that they came up there and they really didn't farm. They developed resources up there, like the Pines and the Double E, Spread Eagle Ranch and so on, yeah.

IF: Do you remember anything about the town of Ula? Was there a post office?

CM: Yeah, there was a post office but that's about all they could tell at Ula there.

IF: A hotel that this was infamous for the hotel?

CM: Well, it seemed as though that there was a hotel or a hostelry there where, as part of a staging deal for freighters and so on.

IF: What's that word you used? A hostelry?

CM: Hostelry, yeah.

IF: How do you spell that?

CM: HOSTELRY. There's a number of the old ones there, right over here on, as you go up Oak Creek Grade, and as you get out in the open, there's the McGriffith ranch. There used to be a hostelry there that they speak about and then there was another one that Jake Winters had up there, Barrel Springs. That's where the Pragers-

IF: Where's Barrel Springs?

CM: I could take you there. It's on the road, if you go up Oak Creek and then when you go into Westcliffe there.

IF: I see. Because that's how they came, up Oak Creek Grade first, didn't they, before they came up Hardscrabble? Did they come up Oak Creek Grade more, was that used a lot?

CM: Yeah, it was an access road into Canon City and the Coal Creek, but that wasn't, you see, the original colonists came from Pueblo and they came over through Huerfano County and came over the divide.

IF: That way!

CM: Yeah, and you see, they were what you would call, the army brought them in. They were under army surveillance until they came in on account of the Indians. You see, they came on rail as far as they could east of the plains, they didn't quite make it into Pueblo but then from then, they took their teams and horses and wagons and they were under the army, there was an army detail, I think there were eight or ten men. They went from Pueblo across and up to Huerfano and then the Muddy and came back. Heavens no, you couldn't get a group of colonists up Oak Creek Grade, cause right now you know, all that's barely there is a road that they had to blast in there and then Hardscrabble was later on built by the mining companies to get their ore out of Rosita and those places to the smelter. So that's where a lot

of the ore went down Hardscrabble to the smelter in Pueblo.

IF: Did the people go through, when they would go to Hardscrabble, too, instead of going through Westcliffe, would they go through Rosita and down that way?

CM: From over in the valley, why, yeah, they just went up to Rosita and then through Cold Springs and then down Hardscrabble.

IF: Some of the things you hear about when the colony came was that it was a political move to bring more Republicans into the area. What have you heard about that, Carl?

CM: Well, about all I heard was the fact that they wanted to bring Republicans into an area for political reasons because you see, Colorado wasn't even a state by then. It was still a territory. Statehood was not achieved till '76.

IF: So, the reason the army was bringing them was because of the Indians basically and not because-

CM: Yeah, it was an escort.

IF: Were there Indians that were in this area living or did they just kind of come through in the summer? How does the Indian-

CM: In the summertime, the Indians mostly spent the summers up in the valley there, but they wintered over here on Greenhorn Mountain and over in the Rye area. That was their winter area, there on the eastern slope on the Greenhorn. But in the summer, why, yeah, they were very numerous in the valley up there.

IF: Would they just kind of come on your land? I mean, they probably didn't know boundaries. Would they just kind of come on anybody's land?

CM: No, I don't think so because they primarily lived right along the foothills where the game was and stuff like that.

IF: They're interested in getting game.

CM: Yeah. A lot of people don't seem to realize that when some of these old timers will tell you that the valley up there primarily was covered better than 50% by red willow. All that good farmland that you see out there now with all these good meadows out south of town there, that was all red willow and brush. Beaver dams-

BM: That was right next to the foothills.

CM: See, so they settled next to there but colonists came next to the foothills at first and then they branched out and then homesteaded this land. See, they came in 1870 with a lot of these homesteads weren't really taken up until '73, '74. That's when the patents started appearing and that's when part of our ranch that we have, that's when it was patented, and most of that would have been in '72, that started already in '72. They got to thinking the better land is down in the bottom there, and so they would just say, that was all primarily red willow and brush and beaver dams and-

IF: Did the colonists clear it off, is that what happened to the red willow? They turned it into fields?

CM: Yeah, all these ranchers like Slusen and Culerod and O'Gresky and Erps and Dietz and Reister and all those guys that homesteaded up along Grape Creek, they cleared all that land. They worked for years to-

BM: Grandpa always talked about having to chop willows, you know, to clear land because he was born up next to the foothills. As far as that, they moved down into the valley and how they would chop up the willows and develop the land as they went down.

IF: So, there would be streams and creeks and this kind of thing. Then branching out from that would be these willows that-

BM: There was more water than there is now, much more water.

CM: Well, you see, there was, they had so many beaver dams and so many small streams. A lot of those old timers, they straightened out those streams and got that water into one main water course. Otherwise, it just ran everywhere and came out you know, and the beavers would dam it off one place and it'd go out another place and it was primarily, a lot of the water just stayed up here because of the beaver dams and, but they eventually took care of that.

IF: Electricity. Did you have electricity in your house, Carl?

CM: We had electricity and we got it in 1944.

IF: For many years, you didn't have it.

CM: We had no electricity.

IF: Water. Was there water in the house? Did you have to go out-

CM: We had a little lever pump. We could pump water into our house.

IF: You pump it on the outside and it would flow into the house?

CM: We had a rail right next to the house there and the pipe went down under the house and over to the well and down. We had a pitcher pump, you see, it come out of the well.

BM: In the house.

CM: In the house, yeah.

IF: In the house. Phone. When did you get a phone? Did you ever get a phone out there?

CM: We didn't have a phone until she and I were married and that had to be after, in the '50s when we finally got-

BM: '56, '57.

17 Miller, Carl and Bessie

IF: Did you string your own line?

CM: Yeah, I had to go to Denver, the neighbor and I had to go to Denver and get a big semi load of poles and dig our own holes and set our own lines and everything, and then the telephone company came up and put on to us and then we sold that tool for \$1 and they maintained it after that.

IF: How about you, Bessie? In your home, growing up, did you have electricity?

BM: No, kerosene lamps.

IF: And-

BM: We had water. We carried water in the buckets. So, every night, fill the water buckets.

IF: Would your pump ever freeze outside? Did you have to prime it?

BM: Hot water in the morning, just got water.

IF: You didn't take long showers, right?

BM: Right. (laughing)

IF: I have a teenage daughter and she just can't stand to not washing, not having a shower every night. She can't imagine people doing that. But I can. Saturday night bath, right?

CM: That was what it amounted to.

BM: When I went to school, we had one dress that we wore all week and we had covered aprons that we wore Monday and Tuesday and Wednesday and then we could take the apron off and we would just wear the dress.

IF: And then, did you have a Sunday dress? How about shoes? Did you have Sunday shoes and work shoes?

BM: Wore the same shoes.

IF: Were there many snakes around there?

CM: No.

BM: No.

IF: Too high?

CM: Little garter snakes, garden snakes, no rattlers, no.

IF: It was too wet for that.

BM: The months that we went to school, the snakes wouldn't be out anyway. I was like Carl. We only had seven-month school. We started at the end of September and were out the middle of April. Lot of times, I'd stay at school. We couldn't even get to school. The snow was too deep.

IF: Tell us about your grandfather.

CM: Ok. My grandfather always tells this story that during World War I, a stranger came into a saloon and they had a player piano there. Anybody could sit down there and they had a lot of German piano rolls. This guy sat down and played the German national anthem, The Watch on the Rhine, and this English boy up and says, you can't play that in here. And the guy pulled out his revolver and laid it up there, and says, this says I can. He finished playing it and nobody really seemed to know who the stranger was or he didn't stay around town very long, but anyway, he told this old guy, he says, this says that I can play it.

IF: Was that tavern on Dutch Row?

CM: It was either on Dutch Row or on Main St. I'm more inclined to believe that it was up there where the soil conservation building is now on Dutch Row. You see, in latter years, it burned down and it was called Pipes' Saloon.

IF: Pipes?

CM: PIPES, yeah, Pipe's Saloon.

IF: Tell us about some of the businesses in the Westcliffe and Silver Cliff area that you remember.

CM: Well, I remember my grandfather living in Westcliffe there and he used to take me down as a little boy and we used to go into the different places and I remember going into an ice cream parlor. He'd buy me an ice cream cone, and of course, a lot of that has all changed. That ice parlor is there what part of used to be the Texaco station where Calenda homes is now.

IF: Who ran the ice cream?

CM: A fellow by the name of Horace Hilton.

IF: Probably on the corner.

CM: On the corner, there was a variety store there, and that was torn down in 1929. They built that big garage there and there's the variety store and then there was Horace Hilton and the Storr residence and then the Merriam, the drug store. Then comes the alley.

IF: Where did they move the Merriam drug store to?

CM: It's up at Fairplay.

IF: At Fairplay.

CM: Yeah. It's almost just like it was when it left Westcliffe.

19 Miller, Carl and Bessie

IF: Really!

CM: Big black stove and pill bottles and everything. And then there was Snyder's Meat Market and then there was an alley again and then there was an Idol drug store, another empty place, and then on the corner, the Ray Building, that's where Jennings Market is now.

IF: Ray Building.

CM: The Ray Building, yeah. That was the Ray Building.

IF: I heard about Beeman's Hardware.

CM: Beeman's Hardware was in there. The Beeman's owned it for a while. [unintelligible] owns it now.

IF: Now you talked about a skating rink. Where was the skating rink?

CM: Upstairs in that building.

IF: Where it is now? It used to be all one-

CM: Well, that used to be the high school too from 1923 until they built the new high school. They had high school up there for 2 or 3 years.

IF: Over what is now Grandma's House, what were some of the things that were over there?

CM: Well, that was a pool hall.

IF: Upstairs or downstairs?

CM: Upstairs was a dance hall. That was the Valdecanda Hall. That's where we had all the dances.

IF: Valdecanda Hall.

CM: Valdecanda Hall, yeah. And then down below, there was, as long as I can remember, there was always a pool hall down there and a restaurant.

IF: Who owned that, do you know?

CM: Oh-

IF: Canda owned it when they had-

CM: Canda owned the building through Canda's father-in-law, old C.L. Canda, Sr. owned the building. But he always leased it, you know, and there was a fellow by the name of Jack Haley had a pool hall there, and there was Rittenstein had a pool hall there, and what's the guy from Texas Creek, related to the Chalices, and then there was a fellow name of Graham and then Canda took it himself and put a Piggly

20 Miller, Carl and Bessie

Wiggly store in there.

BM: There was a [unintelligible]

CM: Fred Brittenbach was in there. There was a guy by the name of Rittenstein and Brittenbach.

IF: When did you have dances? Somebody just say, we're going to have a dance?

CM: Oh, we'd have a dance for St. Patrick's Day or for Easter or 4th of July or shivaree, somebody'd get married.

IF: Tell me about a shivaree? Tell me about your wedding? What kind of wedding did you have?

BM: We were married in the Lutheran Church November 21, 1947 at 7 o'clock at night.

IF: Uh huh. And who was the pastor?

CM: George Weinrich.

IF: Mm hmm. What kind of dress did you wear, Bessie?

BM: I had a navy-blue suit with a white blouse and a white hat.

IF: Who stood up for you?

BM: Carl's other aunt and my sister, Myrtle, that's all.

IF: And did you have a reception?

BM: Had a reception afterwards and Carl and I went to the country and lived there for 36 years.

CM: 37 years.

BM: 37 years.

IF: Did you have a shivaree?

CM: No. We didn't have a shivaree. It was in the middle of winter and another reason, that heavy snow had broken the roof down in the Valdecanda Hall and it was no longer useful for that. They condemned it. They said, you can't have crowds of people up there anymore. So, we never had a shivaree.

IF: But when you had a shivaree, how many days, was it that next day or a week or when would they give you a shivaree when-

BM: shivaree was in a month.

CM: But then, some was in a month and then the guy that got married, well, now a lot of times the shivarees were held in the schoolhouse out in the country too. It wasn't always in town. A lot of times,

21 Miller, Carl and Bessie

we'd go to Colfax school for a shivaree or Willow school. But you know, if the guy was of any prominence, he would hire the hall up there and he'd hire the band, hire us guys to play and we'd have a real rannycaboose? So, to speak.

IF: Then what would happen? Would the people go get them? Was it like a reception?

CM: No, somebody would find them and they'd have to, he'd have to push the bride up Main St. in a wheelbarrow or just whatever happened. It all depended on the people, you know.

IF: How did that tradition start, this wheelbarrow thing?

BM: Oh, I don't know. They had a lot of friends.

CM: Just had a lot of friends.

IF: Put your bride in a wheel-did they ever steal the bride?

CM: No, not really. It was always a fun thing when they had a shivaree and of course, they'd have to hire the hall and then we danced till 2 'clock and that was it.

IF: Just kind of like a reception after the wedding but not after the wedding.

BM: There were other things.

IF: Other things. That's how people made their fun. They just decided, let's get together and have some fun.

BM: When we played for the bands, why, every holiday, whether it was Flag Day or 4th of July or Election night, or Armistice Day, you always knew there was a dance going to be that night. It was a fun thing. People would go in and have a good time.

IF: How much would you get paid for your dances?

CM: I would play five hours for \$5.

IF: \$5.

CM: For \$5 yeah, and a lot of times, if they didn't have much money or if it was a benefit or something like that, I would play for \$2 or just whatever they wanted to give. A lot of times, we would play for nothing, just for different causes, benefits for people that have a fire, give a big dance and everybody donates, and they get the proceeds, like when the Miles family had the fire, different people helped them out. To this day, I still wish that we could get the same bunch of people and the same music and go to the same hall and dance to the same music like we used to.

IF: That was going to be my next question. Do you still play?

CM: I still play my guitar. Yeah, I do.

BM: He always play for the junior-senior prom.

CM: Oh yes, we always got to play for the prom and-

BM: Graduation.

CM: Graduation.

IF: For graduation?

CM: And one night, at the high school, they would give three act plays and we'd play between the acts, stuff like that. It was, but that was a part of my life that I really dearly valued.

IF: This is a writing by Grandma Miller in the 1970s.

Wieders at Cut Hill

In 1911, on October 4, 5, and 6, there was a very heavy rain. No thunder and no lightning, just a heavy downpour for three days and nights. On the 5th day of October, the three creeks or streams were overflowing. Our house being close to the North Colony stream, the water came into the house and filled it up to the windows blew out. Had lunch and loaded our furniture and clothes and what else on a hayrack wagon. We tried to get to higher ground. With the water rising and the tumble of the rocks, we got stuck, almost upset and lost most of what was on the wagon. But mother held on to three loaves of rye bread just baked. But we finally made it up to higher ground until the pine trees, under the pine trees. Mother, Dad, Erna and me. There were two men, Mr. Pitts and another, Pipes, and another man camping and deer hunting close by. They asked Mother, Erna and me to come in their tent as we were wet and cold. The men stayed under the cowshed. Next day being Sunday, it quit raining and we could see the mountains and every little ravine from the top of the mountain had water running to the bigger streams. The water was spreading fast into the lower valley, very wide so no one could get through. On Monday, the water was going down and a few neighbors on horseback brought us some food. Mrs. Lizzie Knuth asked us to move down to her place and now is where Billy Knuth lived. For three months, a very severe and cold winter set in and when spring came and the thaw began and the ground being so full of water would not absorb much moisture. Then, one day, we heard a tremendous roar and rumbling out north in the sky. After the roaring and rumbling continued all day and night, the men walked up on the top of the hill to see. It sounded like the mountains were rolling in over us. They found there was a lake on top of the hill and when it filled up with snow water, it started running over to the south over the hill. It was not a large stream, only a trickle at first. But, as it started cutting into the hill, it soon became deeper and deeper and wider. The water and rocks pushed down the hill and cut the hill in two. The water ran about a month and pushed the rocks and mud down to about one mile to where now Leona lives. Since then, it has been called Cut Hill.

This was written by Annetta Miller. Spell it again for me.

CM: ANNETTA, two n's, two t's.

IF: Thank you. Bessie, we're going to ask you about places you've worked. Tell me some of the places you've worked.

BM: I worked for Hannah Loys up at the Pines when they ran it as a resort.

IF: What did you do up there?

BM: Helped cook, clean cabins, entertain the guests.

IF: How did you entertain the guests?

BM: We played cards at night, had dances and they had a hall up there, we had dances, played phonograph.

IF: And this was in that, you know how that building was built, the Pines building? I've heard some stories about how it was built, that it was a mail order building from Sears Roebuck. You ever heard that?

BM: I know we had kerosene lamps every morning. We'd have to go around to all the cabins and wash all the lamp chimneys and refill them with kerosene so the people would have light for the night.

IF: This is the conclusion of this taping.

'?