

## George “Judo” Yaksich’s Guided Van Houten Tour

On August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2022, I received a guided tour of Van Houten from **Judo**. He was willing to drive out to the Center and show me around the town where he was born. **Judo** lived in Koehler, but was born at Soup Bone boarding house in Van Houten. Soup Bone was owned by his aunt. It was absolutely surreal for me to hear his firsthand accounts of life in Van Houten. It was a sublime experience that I am humbled to have been given.

### Beginning of Recording 1

**Judo:** In the early sixties a twin engine airplane crashed into that mountain and killed five. They were here for an antelope hunt and they must have got confused about the location of the airport and the location of the mountain. This used to be the old highway. Highway 85. What do you do here at the Whittington Center?

**Tucker:** This summer I’m working at the shotgun center. Doing whatever needs to be done.

**Judo:** Killed many rattlesnakes out here?

**Tucker:** I have in years past but not this summer; haven’t seen but two.

**Judo:** Now it’s the town of Van Houten and the town of Koehler. When I was a boy I had an old man give me a single shot .410. I killed hundreds of ‘em.

**Tucker:** Wow.

...

**Tucker:** So you were raised, then, in Koehler?

**Judo:** Yes

**Tucker:** And born out here?

**Judo:** yes

**Tucker:** How long were you out here before you moved down ther?

**Judo:** Well, my folks, my mom and brothers, moved from Van Houten to Koehler on September the First, 1937

**Tucker:** Ok

**Judo:** There was a company doctor who lived here and my aunt, who was responsible for bringing my mother over from the old country, had a boarding house; so we stayed at the boarding house. My mom came over on the 25 of October, had me on the 26<sup>th</sup> of October, and was back at work in the morning at 4:30 in the morning on the 27<sup>th</sup> of October.

**Tucker:** Wow. And what did she do for work?

**Judo:** She was the school janitor. What they did in Koelher was the schoolhouse burned down as well as the one here and the one in Sugarite, but they uh, they had converted seven of the company houses, they were 24x24 and each one of them had two stoves in it, she uh, took care of all seven building and raised us boys. I uh...I don't know how she did it.

**Tucker:** Yeah, no kidding.

**Judo:** She knew how to speak, she learned how to speak English and how to read a little English. But she uh, her day started out at 4:30 in the morning and quit at 7:30 at night.

**Tucker:** Wow. That's a long day. Now, Yaksich, that's Czech name?

**Judo:** No it's Montenegrin.

**Tucker:** Ok.

**Judo:** It's be called a little bit of everything, from Yak Shit to Yardstick so... if you mispronounce it it's not going to hurt my feelings.

**Tucker:** Our last name is easy to butcher as well.

**Judo:** And what is it? Oh, Barraclough.

**Tucker:** Yeah but its B-A-R-R-A-C-L-O-U-G-H

**Judo:** We have a Barraclough here in Raton who's an outfitter.

**Tucker:** I have heard that. People, they've asked me if I was related. It's Tim, is it not?

**Judo:** Yes, Tim Barraclough. He was an undercover game warden retired and he and his son started an outfitting business.

**Tucker:** And so you say all the schoolhouses burned down in those three towns. When did that happen?

**Judo:** Oh gosh they burned down at different times. Some of the literature I've got that you can read through. All of them burned down and the reason they burned down was they had a stove on every floor, some places two and three stoves, and they'd, in the wintertime it'd get so cold that they'd overbank those stoves and years ago burn down. You can see the location up here where the schoolhouse used to be.

**Tucker:** The one out here, it looks like it might have had running water, 'cause there was, uh, there was pipes anyways. I don't know if it..

**Judo:** yeah they, uh, all of 'em had running water, they, uh, they all had a community well, except for Van Houten. Uh, they'd have, they'd bring in a railcar of water. People would buy water. 25 cents for a 50-gallon barrel.

**Tucker:** 25 cents then is a significant portion of your day's..

**Judo:** 25 cents... I could come to Raton, growing up I could come to Raton twice a year. And with 25 cents there was an old Greek fella had a candy store and a fountain. His name was Jim Pappas and they called it the Sweet Shop. And I could go in there and have a hotdog and a small coke for 15 cents and then 10 cents for a Saturday afternoon matinee at the old Shuler Theater.

**Tucker:** That, uh, candy store is still up I believe. Or at least the sign is still there.

**Judo:** No, it's at a different location now. It used to be right next to where the El Raton Theater is on second street. He was an immigrant from Crete, Greece. And he worked in the coal mine two days. And he quit and was raising goats. And he and another Greek fella started the sweet shop and they were, and it was a huge success. Boy the country looks so green.

**Tucker:** It is, and by July first it looked so brown you couldn't believe it

**Judo:** Oh, God, didn't it though?

**Tucker:** yeah. It was dead out here.

**Judo:** Do you know where the devil's kitchen is don't you?

**Tucker:** I do not, and I have wondered that thing.

**Judo:** It's right above those targets back up there.

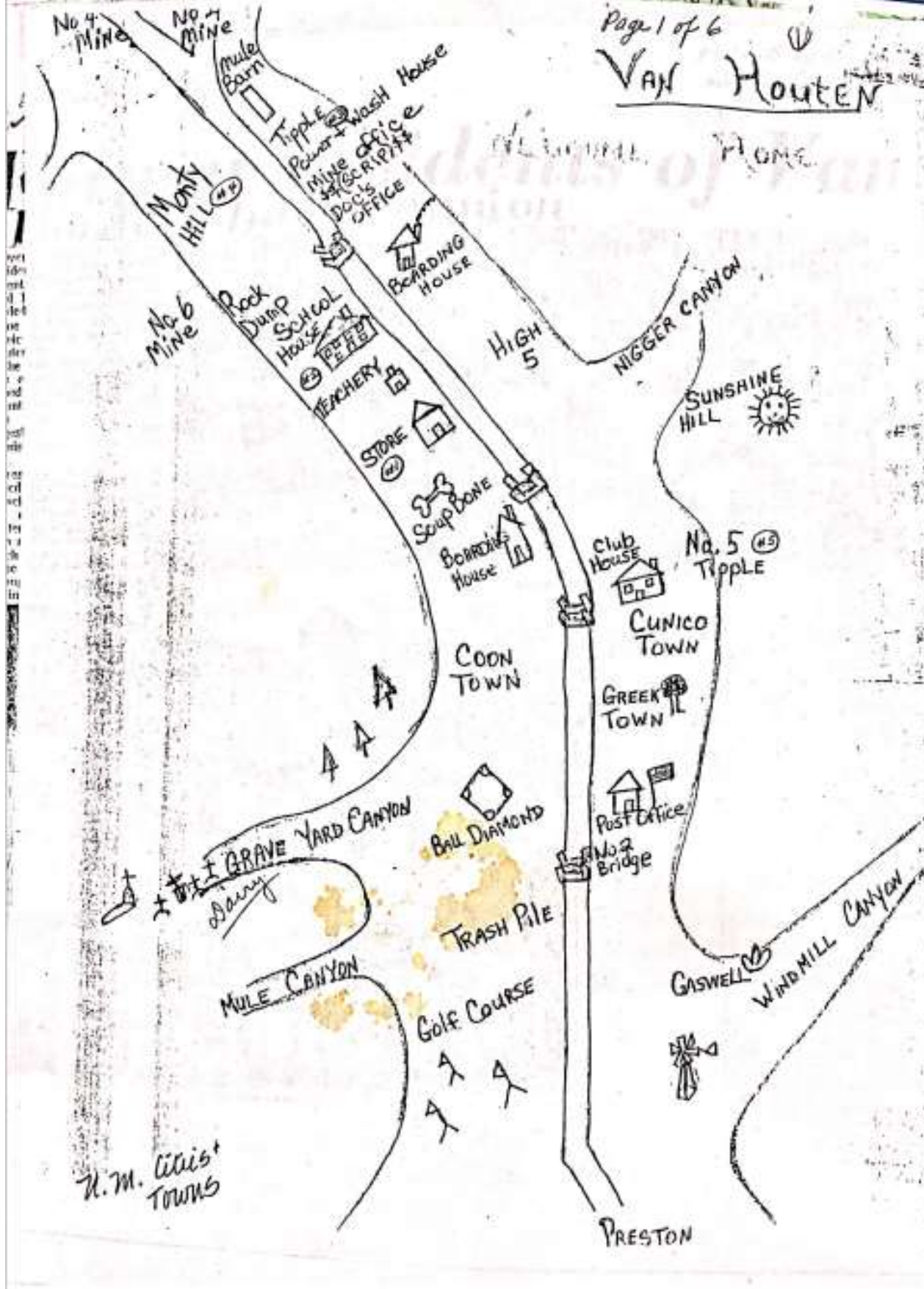
**Tucker:** Oh, up on the side of the hill?

**Judo:** Where you could go and scuff the ground and light a match and it would burn. It was methane gas from the coal seams. I wanna get up out there.

**Tucker:** Alright.

Here we got out of the truck and **Judo** grabbed a map from the back seat of his truck. It's the hand drawn map in the original camp file.

# VAN HOUTEN



**Tucker:** Oh, you've got the map!

**Judo:** Heres the map. Mike Bellew, [indistinguishable] the gas well, and Windmill canyon. So it's right up here.

**Tucker:** Right. And I had known it was at the juncture of these two canyons but I, I didn't know where it was, specifically.

**Judo:** That's Willow Canyon, and this is Van Houten, the main canyon.

**Tucker:** Yessir

**Judo:** And back over here is where the golf course was.

**Tucker:** Ok, and so it was this clearing out here?

**Judo:** Yes. In this area right out in here. (He gestures to the area between Primitive campground and the log cabins).

**Tucker:** Ok, yeah.

**Judo:** And, uh, the baseball diamond was right down in here. And they had quite a baseball team.

**Tucker:** So I've heard.

**Judo:** And that's Mule Canyon right here.

**Tucker:** Yessir

**Judo:** And that's uh, Graveyard Canyon. And the dairy used to be up in this canyon up here. I'll show you.

**Tucker:** We were back there and there was three graves that you could see, three headstones, and nothing else is visible now.

**Judo:** Yes. There were more burials there but they made crosses out of wood and wood rotted out, and rain washed 'em out, and people kicked 'em out and whatnot, but those are granite stones that are there.

**Tucker:** Yeah.

**Judo:** But you can keep that. [here he offers me the map]

**Tucker:** Oh we, I've got a copy of this.

**Judo:** Oh, do you?

**Tucker:** Yessir, but thank you

**Judo:** Oh ok. Ok. Well we'll go up here and...

[We then get back into his truck.]

**Judo:** How much longer are you gonna be here?

**Tucker:** I'm leaving on the morning of the 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Judo:** The 13?

**Tucker:** Yes sir.

**Judo:** That's when I'm gonna have a major surgery.

...

**Tucker:** The devil's kitchen, you say, is above them targets?

**Judo:** Yeah just above those targets where we used to.. all in that area right up in there. But it was methane gas coming up from the coal seams. But it was nothing for people to come down and have a picnic and light a fire and it'd burn for a while and then quit and you'd go scratch the ground somewhere else and throw a match in it and it'd light up.

**Tucker:** Wonder if its still seeping anywhere if you could

**Judo:** You know, I don't know I think that mine that was back up in here in negro canyon I think it was still leaking gas.

**End of Recording one,**

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**Beginning of Recording two**

**Judo:** Right up on that spot right there was the post office. Houses were all up in here in rows. Now the post office was right in here. And there were houses all up in here. I had two cousins: Miles Perovich and Mark Perovich and they had their initials on that big rock there.

**Tucker:** Ok! I have seen those!

**Judo:** Yeah

**Tucker:** And all of the rocks up high up here have all got initials painted on to them if you get up high enough

**Judo:** Yeah. And this right in here... there were houses right alongside the road on both sides of the road. They had three room houses and four room houses and two room houses. When my

mom and dad got married, they didn't know each other. And my aunt brought my mother over 'cause she thought my dad was such a great guy and sure enough they hit it off right away and got married. This is where the Greeks used to live. There were several Greek families here in Van Houten and this is kinda where they settled. We all got along great but the people from the different ethnic groups felt better living amongst the ethnic group that they belonged to and that's why. But everybody got along there was no friction or anything at all. There used to be an awful lot of friction in the former Yugoslavia between the Serbs and Montenegrins and the Croats and Slovenians because of religion. And uh we didn't have any of that here. My dad left, uh, Chicago, working in a steel mill. And a coal company put in a big advertisement 'if you wanna get rich come out west and mine coal.' Well there's a lot of them that, boy they took to heart and here they come. They didn't make enough money to move back out.

**Tucker:** Hmm. Yes sir. Now they used to pay them in scrip out here. I believe they outlawed that in the thirties did they not?

**Judo:** Yes they did. Uh, a lot of those people were so poor that when they went to the company store and paid an outrageous high price for their food, they had to pay for it in scrip. And the only place where that scrip was good was at the company store. And in the twenties, late twenties and early thirties, if they caught you buying groceries in town, they'd probably fire you. So a lot of people had to sneak in and sneak out. Cunico town is where a lot of Italians lived. There were houses back up in here you can see the foundations on some of 'em.

**Tucker:** I know there's also, used to be, a mine entrance or two up that draw.

**Judo:** Yes. There sure was. And I think I've got pictures of that in one of the books. But you can see where people had a wine cellar there.

**Tucker:** Yes sir, yeah.

**Judo:** Now when Mike made that map, the real name of Negro Canyon was Nigger Canyon. And I've heard two stories about that, it was because of negroes and there was the type of coals they mined. It was round and looked like a negro's head with real kinky hair. And that is where they come up with uh, negro canyon. And we told him you better change that or you'll have some uh, some problems. And that's where my mom and dad and brothers lived, was in Negro canyon.

**Tucker:** Ok.

**Judo:** Coon town is where the blacks lived. Across the way there was the clubhouse, and what went on at the clubhouse there was bar and an old Greek gentleman took care of the bar and there was a barber shop and a pool hall and a dance hall and a meeting place. And in front of that was some tennis courts.

**Tucker:** Really?

**Judo:** Uh huh. And, uh, the fella that bought that built, I think, three houses in Raton. But you can see the red brick, it's a red hollow tile brick, and uh, insulation, no insulation. Those houses were cold as hell in the winter time. And even the ones made out of cinder blocks, they, uh, at some of the coal camps in Koehler and, and um, Gardiner and Brilliant where they had coke

ovens, they made cinder blocks out of 'em. 12x15 they were very porous. And uh, our back bedroom in Koehler on the uh, north side in the wintertime it was so cold you'd see frost inside on the walls it was so cold. And there was most of the four room houses was a kitchen, living room, and two bedrooms, and there was a cook stove and then uh, we called 'em a big pot-bellied stove for heat in the other two rooms. And you had to get up during the night to stoke it, because uh, it'd run out and you'd get up in the morning it'd be colder than hell in the house. Have you ever heard of a feather bed?

**Tucker:** Yessir

**Judo:** We had feather beds and mom, when it was real, real cold, she'd put bricks underneath the stove and heat those brocks and she'd put them at our feet. To keep our feet. When you get in a feather bed you get in one position and that's the way you'd stay all night long because if you'd move you'd freeze to death. Here's one of the two room houses. You can see how they were, how poorly they were, there was no insulation of any kind. Soup Bone, that's again where some black families lived.

**Tucker:** I heard, uh, somebody mention that that was, they had a boarding house right up there as well?

**Judo:** Mhmm. That's right up here. That's where all of us boys were born. There was a set of garages here, the coal company made a set of garages for everybody and assignment 'em, one to every house but right here where that bush is is where my aunt's boarding house was and that's where we were all born. There was a company doctor by the name of Doctor Peevy. And he had quite a reputation, he drank an awful lot. And all of the old Italians, Greeks, and the Slavs they all made homemade wine and they kept the grapes the mash and added some more grapes to it and some sugar and water and it would ferment, and they'd take that juice and lot of 'em had stills where they made whiskey. And uh, I'll have to tell you a story about my dad. We'll get up here. The railroad track was right up here. And uh, I don't know if we can get into Negro Canyon or not.

**Tucker:** How did this place fair during the prohibition era, as far as that goes with people?

**Judo:** I tell you what, they, uh, they were after the people that's bootleggers and uh, if they caught you selling it oh, they'd put you in jail and fine you and all of that. But, oh damn I can't get around that. [Into Negro Canyon]





**“I’ll have to tell you a story about my dad”**

## **End of Recording 2**

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## **Beginning of Recording 3**

**Judo:** I don't know what there is about posts but if you're gonna run across a rattlesnake, you're gonna run across one either at the foot of the gate or wooden gate or whatever it is 90% of the time that's where you'll find one.

**Tucker:** Huh. I found one just on the slope of this hill last year.

**Judo:** Well, if you wanna find one, just walk up here on sunshine mountain.

**Tucker:** Oh, really?

**Judo:** Yeah. There were houses, they called this sunshine up here. And uh, I don't know how many, exactly how many, the last occupant lived in a house on a corner here and he was a barber, his name was Mark Cocherea, and old timer. And uh, when the sun came up that's the first place it'd hit; that's why they called it sunshine.

**Tucker:** Ok. I've been up there to look at the foundations and things like that. That place is a little more untouched than the rest of this.

**Judo:** Yeah. Boy that Gramma Grass sure is pretty.

**Tucker:** Yeah

**Judo:** Now my dad and a couple old Slavs dug a well right here. And it was, it was ok for, for cooking and stuff like that but wadn't that good for drinking. Had a lot of alkali in it. When my folks got married, they shared a two-room house like that one that was standing back there with a Spanish couple and it was right here.

**Tucker:** Right about where that rock is?

**Judo:** Uh, right here. Right here. 'Cause they came in and completely changed this canyon when they made this pond.

**Tucker:** Oh ok.

**Judo:** And uh, the well was right down in here. And I think, my dad's old garage is still standing here but I'm not sure. I'm surprised there aren't a million mosquitoes out here.

**Tucker:** Yeah, there was the last time I was out here.

**Judo:** Hmm. They must have knocked my dad's old garage down. But anyway, he had built a garage in the side of the mountain, and you could see the bricks or the rocks that he had lined them up. But the family house was right here. The big house. And uh, my mom didn't know a lot of English, and Dad worked the 3 to 11 shift at the mine; he was a shot firer. And uh, somebody

tried to break into the house and Mom grabbed Dad's pistol and went by the door and all she could say was "Shoot., son of a bitch, shoot!" and the guy left. So, when my dad come home from work, Mom told him what had happened, and he looked out the window. They were livin' in the two-room house here and the regular house was down here and this house down here was occupied by a man by the name of Mike Pobar. He was a Croatian; He was meaner'n sin. And he was makin' whiskey; And my dad told him, that uh, tomorrow morning we're gonna go up to the mine office and talk to the superintendent; And I'm gonna tell him that if you catch someone trying to break in the house, to kill him. He said we don't, we're not gonna put up with that. So the next morning they went up and talked to the mine superintendent and told him and he says, "Well I hate to kill somebody but I can understand your grief. He says but just please be careful". Well about a month later, my dad came home early from work, and he was completely baldheaded. And he had built uh, in between the two houses, he had built a root cellar, where he had his wine barrels and everything. And it was a moonlight night and Mike Pobar was cooking whiskey, and he saw some movement. So he, uh, snuck out of the house and he had a piece of  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch galvanized pipe 36" long. So he grabbed that and he snuck around and the cellar door was open and he stood behind the door with that and he had it raised above his head and my dad stuck his head out to come down and he stopped about right there. And, uh, I said 'what happened then?' and he said "We drink lots of wine. And celebrate that I don't kill your father".

I killed a huge buck, a mule deer buck in this canyon when I was about 16. I was on one side of the canyon and he was on the other just walkin' 'n' and I shot at him. I was shakin' so bad I had buck fever so bad that I don't know how I finally killed him but I killed him with a 250-3000 Savage. My dad had bpught that and all of us boys were able to kill our first deer with that gun and after I did mine it fell apart.

**Tucker:** And so you say this was called Negro Canyon not necessarily based on who was living here, 'cause you've got Coon Town and Cunico Town and the others but this one is not based solely on ethnicity. 'Cause that's one of the things I'd wondered is why there's two places that kind of a name on it.

**Judo:** Well d'y'know when the people, the foreigners, came to this country and landed on Ellis Island and then went to New York City a lot of them, and my mother, didn't know that there were black people in the world. And they were just taken aback 'Oh who are those?'. Well, the American people says 'those are niggers'. Well, they didn't know that it was a slang, back then it really wasn't; but uh, they didn't realize that. And uh, that's how the word nigger got broadcast so much; it was because these foreigners didn't know it and they see one and they'd say, 'oh there's a nigger', 'lets go see that nigger', or 'lets do something', you know. And, my mom, when she first saw a black man, he was selling ice cream and she got on a train from New York to Chicago and this guy came in with a pullman car. And he had ice cream in his hand and she and her girl friend were terrified, 'Oh what in the hell? What kind of sickness? What's the matter?'. Well the old gentleman recognized their fear; and he came over and put an ice cream cone in their hand and squeezed and smiled at 'em. Soon as he left the car, well they put the window down and chunked the ice cream out and went and washed their hands, y'know? What an experience.

**Tucker:** Every time we bring the campers up here to tour, I never even mention the name of this canyon and sometimes they see it, and sometimes they don't. and I've been surprised, the folks who laugh the hardest, have been, historically, the black kids; they think it's hilarious. Everybody else it too afraid to laugh, I think.

**Judo:** Yeah, you just don't know...you just don't know.

**Tucker:** For sure... and it has potential to cause a big problem in today's world.

**Judo:** Oh yeah. They had a hospital in Gardiner, or Brilliant, New Mexico. The original coal company Saint Louis Rocky Mountain and Pacific coal company. And they had an old black gentleman drive an old model a ambulance. Rough... But he was such a, such a great guy. Everybody called him Nigger Harry. And you'd, if a stranger come in he'd shake hands "I'm Nigger Harry". He was such a beautiful, wonderful old man. And one of the bosses got run over by the train the man and he had major surgery and Harry was in the same room with him and I was in high school at the time. I used to walk up to the hospital and see the guy who got run over. And this one day, I went in and, uh, Harry had just got through eatin' and they'd taken the tray and I said Terry, or Harry, how you doin' today? "Oh," he says, "I'm very, very tired and I'm gonna go to sleep". I says, "Well, we won't make any noise". I walked over past Harry and sat down on a bench beside this guy's bed and said hello and maybe a few other words. And the doctor come in and stopped at the door and looked in, he said, "How long has Harry been like that?" I says, "Oh he said that he was very, very tired and he was goin' to sleep". He says, "Well he sure did". What a beautiful way to go.

**Tucker:** Oh wow.

**Judo:** Yeah. What a beautiful...He was, he was so deserving of everything and, gosh, I could tell you stories. I wished I'd'a been born twenty years earlier, to enjoy... I got to witness some of these old timers appearin' before a district judge to answer questions to get their citizenship papers. And some of it was hilarious. They asked one old Slavic man, "If the president of the United States dies, who gets the job?". He said, "Repeat the question". He said "If the president of the United States dies, who gets the job?". Slav says, "Oh the undertaker". I said "No no no no no!". "Oh Oh Oh", he said, "The secondhand president! The living president!".

**Tucker:** ..The undertaker...

**Judo:** Yeah and they asked another old Yugoslav, "What is it that flies over the nation's capital every day? Every day..". He says, "Oh, pigeons!". And they asked this old Italian, "Have you got any family here?". He says, "Yes I got-a two kids,". "Are you married?". "No I don't like women, honest to God". "How can you have children if you don't have a wife?". "My neighbor woman's-a got-a two kids and I'm the father". They were afraid to lie for fear that they'd get sent back. So boy, they told it just like it was. But whenever you'd see these great big 'ol big husky miners go up before the judge and answer those questions and they hand 'em a little American flag and a piece of paper; They fall to their knees and tears just... It's real emotional to see something like that, how happy they were to become an American citizen. You don't see that anymore.

**Tucker:** No. No you do not.

**Judo:** So we'll head back 'n go up a little more 'n'. Well there used to be a road. There was an overpass the railroad track went over the cut in the wall for the people to drive their cars. And theres some foundations where that yellow thing is up there,

**Tucker:** Yessir

**Judo:** There's some foundations; there was some people who lived there. And everybody used to throw their trash in the creek,

**Tucker:** Really?

**Judo:** And pray for a rainstorm and the rainstorm would come and it'd take it and wash it down the river that was the way that people disposed of their trash in those days.

**Tucker:** Wow. Now I, theres several mine entrances further up this canyon, and was there, there must have been rail to get to them?

**Judo:** Uh, they had some rail. Some of them, uh, those entrances were exits of the original mine

**Tucker:** Oh ok.

**Judo:** In other words, they started on this side of the mountain, and they went back and cut this way and exited so they could have circulation.

**Tucker:** Yes sir, Ok.

**Judo:** And that was the purpose of it. And all of the track went back to wherever they called the tipple.

**Tucker:** Yes sir

**Judo:** You've seen pictures of the tipple?

**Tucker:** Yessir

**Judo:** Ok. And they would go back to that and they would unload those coal cars and they would go down and separate and go in the railroad cars. And uh, there were many a time, they would have to drop those railroad cars by handy, with a stick and a break and a lot of times it would fail, and boy, down the canyon a couple those cars would come. Thank God nobody was ever killed. But there were some pretty bad accidents.

**Tucker:** Wow.

**Judo:** I wonder what they, what kind of feed they're putting

**Tucker:** I heard they're trying to get turkeys out here, with this particular feeder. I don't know what they're putting in in to bring 'em, but.

**Judo:** Probably corn. Last time I here there was a golden bear. Boy he was just yellow as yellow could be. My mother used to run foot races with all of the girls here, but my mom would

take her shoes and socks off and run barefoot. And there was nobody that could beat her. Now I was the, we moved out of Van Houten September 1 of '37, and we moved out of Koehler, we were the last ones to leave, September One of 1966. I graduated high school in 1956 in Raton. And Koehler was 25 miles from Raton and I drove the schoolbus my junior and senior year of high school. I was the youngest licensed school bus driver in the United States.

**Tucker:** Wow, that's neat!

**Judo:** Yeah! Yeah there were houses all over. You can still see some of them, retaining walls and some of the foundations. They were all out of sandstone. And this big place up here was where the company store was. And they uh, used to bring in a boxcar of ice. People had the original iceboxes. They were made of oak and Cherrywood with brass fittings in it and, layers. Put a 50 pound chunk of ice in there it'd last a week to ten days, and keep it. If you didn't have that, what they would do on the north end of the house, they'd take the top window out and make a box with chicken wire on the bottom of it and the top of it would be covered with burlap or gunny sacks, and what they would do is in the summertime they'd water that burlap down and it would keep the cheese and the milk or whatever they had cool enough to where it wouldn't spoil. In the wintertime you stuck it in there, it froze harder than hell. I remember our first refrigerator. I was about, oh probably five years old. And our next to the oldest brother was very gifted, he was a mechanic, an electrician, he was a carpenter; he could do all of that. And he wired the house, and we, there was a refrigerator about that wide and that tall, and it had the motor on top. So he wired that thing in and boy that motor kicked in. We kept sticking our hand in the refrigerator, see if it would get cold. And mom ran us out of the house 'get the hell out of here and go cut wood or do something'. And uh, two hours later we come back and she'd put some water in a jug and, by golly it was getting cold. But that was our first experience with a refrigerator. It wouldn't seem, it doesn't seem possible, does it?

**Tucker:** Yeah, it, and especially places like this put into context how recent all of those things are. 'Cause I know at the, at the clubhouse they'd show movies and things like that. Well that seems like a more recent thing even than that, you know... puts it into perspective a little bit better.

**Judo:** yeah and uh, kids used to be able to go to the clubhouse. The miners' lunchbucket was a round deal with had two compartments. The top compartment you'd pull out and that's where the sandwiches and food went. And the bottom was where they carried their water. And if they had an apple or an orange, they'd put it in that water. And, uh, a lot of some of those old Italians used to put homemade wine, and they'd drink that wine. Cause that was... well that was... if you had wine you had everything. And uh, those lunchbuckets you don't see 'em much anymore. Well we'll go up here and show you the company store and...



**“They must’ve knocked my dad’s old garage down”**



### **End of Recording 3**

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### **Beginning of Recording 4**

**Tucker:**

**Judo:** what caliber sidearm do you carry?

**Tucker:** 9mm

**Judo:** 9?

**Tucker:** Yes sir.

**Judo:** I've got a 9mm that was made in Spain.

**Tucker:** really?

**Judo:** Yeah. It's a heavy son of a gun. My cousin gave it to me. A couple of months ago. He bought it about 25 years ago. And it's still got the original receipt and the box that it came in. This is the company store. And there was a siding where they could unload ice and water. That was the main entrance to the store there. And that, uh, there the railroad track, what we're on right now was where the railroad came in to the mine. And they had a siding here for that water tank, water and the ice, uh, ice and everything was here was high as hell, and I don't know how some of those people survived. Only welfare in those days was the venison and the turkey.

**Tucker:** These uh, houses to the right were called the high five.

**Judo:** Right here is the high five that's right.

**Tucker:** And that's some of the nicer houses, some of the wealthier folk?

**Judo:** Yeah they were nice, they were nicer houses. It was for the superintendent; he had the nicest house. The underground mine foreman was next, the head mechanic and electrician were next. There were five houses here and they were for the big shots of the company.

**Tucker:** Do you happen to remember which ones were where?

**Judo:** The very first one was the superintendent, the second one was the underground mine foreman, the third was either for the electrician or head mechanic, and then the additional electricians or mechanics. And that was, uh, and it was all owned by Scotsmen. And, uh, they weren't very popular, They uh, and uh, poor old miners... Oh that's where the schoolhouse was up there. That burned. And one of my dear friends was still alive; he and his family lived right at the bottom of that tree down there. A Spanish family by the name of Lucero.

**Tucker:** Lucero, Ok. Now what year did the schoolhouse burn, or abouts?



**Judo:** Oh gosh I don't remember. Its uh, I've got uh, I'm gonna leave some reading material for you, and uh, when you're through with it, if you'd just leave it with uh, uh, what the heck's her name?

**Tucker:** Becky Fish?

**Judo:** Becky Fish. Call me and let me know it's there I'll come and pick it up that you can read through. I've done that before and I've had people give my stuff away. And I've lost I don't know how many books and periodicals and whatnot.

**Tucker:** Well I'll be sure it gets to Becky then.

**Judo:** Well we're gonna be like president Biden, if you don't turn it in were gonna find you. Isn't that something? About our speaker of the house goin' to Taiwan?

**Tucker:** Yeah, I heard about that.

**Judo:** I am not a fan of Pelosi or Biden.

**Tucker:** No

**Judo:** I think they've sold us down the river. I wonder if the old outhouse is still here.

**Tucker:** It is. Its in them bushes right there but its still standing.

**Judo:** And this is where the doctor's office was. Oh, there it is right there. Oh here it is. And this was the last house in this canyon. But then there up here at Monty Hill; They called it Monty Hill because that's where most of the Montenegrins settled.

...

Here we hit a big rut in the road

...

**Tucker:** Yeah the rains did not do this road any favors.

**Judo:** Oh I tell you what. I won't complain, 'cause it was too damn dry.

**Tucker:** Yeah, for sure.

**Judo:** This is where the tippie was. It went right across the canyon. That structure down at the bottom was the mule barn. They thought more of the mules than they did of the workers. And what would happen: there was always a demand for coal in the wintertime and in the summertime, it slacked off and a lot of the miners would go work on farms and ranches or wherever they could work and leave their families here. But then they would come back and have to reapply for their jobs again come September. And they always had a note in there: 'Do not hire this Barraclough boy, because he was mean to a mule'. And that's uh, or 'This man killed a mule'. They thought more of the mule than they did of the human being; because that's

how they took the coal in and out of the mines was pullin' the, pulling the coal carts out by mules. And then when electricity came in, the mules barns uh, just diminished. And they sold the mules or gave them away. But this is where all of the Montenegrins lived. There was one old Montenegrin, spoke very little English, his name was Motto Mitovich. And he always carried a loaded .45 in his belt and whenever they paid the guys in cash he was there to make sure nobody tried to rob or steal or get in line. And people were scared to death of him because he had supposedly killed a priest and his wife in Yugoslavia, Montenegro, when he came to this country. He lived, from the stories and the experiences that he told, he had to live to be 110. And, uh, but he was quite a guy. He killed a lot of deer, fed a lot of people.

...

**Tucker:** So all of these mules back here, these stalls have all got names painted on them, for the mules. I thought that was kind of neat.

**Judo:** Yeah they sure do.

**Tucker:** Now I had read that this place had some electric going into the mines as early as 1902 when they opened, but they still did have the mules out here.

**Judo:** Yeah they still had the mules and they were experimenting with electricity. And right here is where the original washer was; it was made of wood. And right here, this structure right here, there was a railroad from the mine that to from the tippie from the Number 5 mine where my dad was killed. There were tracks along here and this is what they called the motor barn, where they would put those electric charged motors to pull the cars in and out of the mine.

**Tucker:** Okay. Man, you have no idea how many times I have been asked what this building is and I've never had an answer to give.

**Judo:** That's what they called it: the motor barn.

**Tucker:** The motor barn.

**Judo:** Yeah and that's, uh, they have trolleys, electricity. And a lot of miners got killed, electrocuted, hittin' that trolley line with a shovel, or a pick, or grabbin' ahold of it, or dropping the wire in water, electrocuting 'em. They had their own, they had their own power point here to begin with and that's when they were able to get electricity from local REA and from Raton. And they had a, what they call, everybody referred to it as the whistle. Back when they had the steam. Uh, it was a whistle like a railroad whistle. It would blow at seven o'clock in the morning, blow at noon, blow at three o'clock, and again at midnight, at the change of shifts. Now if that whistle blew during working hours, that meant that someone was killed, and for everybody to go home. And my mom, when my dad was killed, he was killed about seven o'clock at night. And uh, they were talkin' about dreams, when dad come home the night before, on the thirteenth of July. He uh, my mom woke up and had a nightmare and she said she dreamt of a wild dog, bit her arm off. And dad said you know that's not a very good omen. There's something. We're gonna get a notice from the old country or something but that's not a good omen. So they went

back to sleep and a couple hours later my dad woke up. And mom asked him what was the matter and he said well I had a dream that naked women were chasin' him. And he said that's really a very bad omen, he says in the morning I want you to give the boys a bath and put clean clothes on 'em cause something definitely bad is gonna happen. And uh, everything went well, and he came to work and she was, uh, sittin' outside the house and she heard the whistle blow at seven o'clock and she knew immediately who it was. And sure enough, she come up to the mine and they hadn't brought him out of the mine yet. And, uh, how my mom raised us boys I just don't, I just don't know. She was so strong and so, and she never complained about life, she was so happy go lucky. Never, never, I never heard her complain about anything.

That's the number five mine. I'm gonna show you some of the stuff I've got, see if you're interested in readin' it.

#### **End of Recording 4**

...

#### **Beginning of Recording 5**

**Judo:** Here's a book here it's got uh, stories of New Mexico ghost towns and Van Houten is one of 'em, Koehler is another one, but its all about, all of the ghost towns of New Mexico and here's uh, Colfax. Have you, you've been to the, uh, Cold Beer?

**Tucker:** I have, yes sir.

**Judo:** Okay when you cross the railroad tracks off to the right when you're goin' to Cimarron, this was the old church building on the side of the mountain. And there was an old Italian who lived there until about nineteen, oh gosh, nineteen fifty-two, fifty-three. And there was, we used to go fishin up at Eagle Nest. And every time we went by there about five thirty in the morning, he was sitting on the throne doing his morning constitutional.

Koehler, these were the schoolhouses, and each one of them had two stoves, and you're welcome to read that if you'd be interested.

**Tucker:** Okay, certainly.

**Judo:** There's uh, a lady by the name of Alice Bullock that, uh, was born in Van Houten, and her story about Van Houten. And then the NRA put this one out.

**Tucker:** Yes sir, that one I've got a copy of.

**Judo:** Okay.

Let's see if there, here's a picture of that wooden, uh, tippie, that we showed you down here where it was. Oh you've got that. And my godmother wrote a story about Monty Hill. And the first page of it, someone walked off with it. I gave a talk up at Sugarite Canyon State Park and

uh, this is my mother right here, and my godmother, and my godfather. And this is that old Montenegrin Motto. You can see where he's reachin', where he's got his gun. And, uh, now these...lets see where...this feller right here is the one who had the dairy. His name was Nikola Vousich. But you can, and here's pictures of the old tipple, picture of the mine here. This is my aunt and an old Montenegrin, and this is that old Motto and he playin' an instrument they call a Gusle. It makes the most Godawful sound you ever wanna hear; but that old man knew how to do it. And here's a front picture of the company store and of the school. And this is a very popular Orthodox priest that used to come down from Pueblo and perform weddings, baptisms, and funerals.



Motto Mitovich with the Gusle, Judo's aunt and some of Montenegrin.



*Above: Serbs gathering for Bozic, 1940. Bulaich, Chagenovich, Dabovich, Perovich, Simovich, Vuicich and Yaksich families.*

**Tucker:** Ok, yes sir. Now, there's, this here was scanned in the files at camp but it was so poor that you could hardly read some of it.

**Judo:** Oh Really? Well I had the original in the magazine and it developed legs too.

**Tucker:** And that one I have read before..

**Judo:** Father Stanley?

**Tucker:** New Mexico Tech, down in Socorro, has got a copy of that.

**Judo:** Oh ok.

**Tucker:** It seems like they didn't print very many of those.

**Judo:** No, they sure didn't. And here's a picture of what it looks like when miners... They've got different headlamps and batteries, but it gives you an idea how they mined coal, with the picks. And this is the tipple, this is what the tipple looked like here, but this is the one at Koehler. Where they, they would dump the coal. So, you can see these mine cars here?

**Tucker:** Yes sir.

**Judo:** They would dump them and it would go down and separate and different things and each one of the railcars would take different sizes of coal. And then right about in here is where they call the bone table, where they would have four employees; As the coal went by they would pick out the impurities and throw them out to the side and they'd take it and dump it like you used to

see. If you went out to Koehler you'd see where they dumped a lot of this coal; they've done a good job covering it up here.

And I think this is the same picture they have down at the headquarters. Now see here's those lunch pails I was telling you about. The very top is for the food and the bottom is for the water and the fruit or wine.

**Tucker:** That photo, do you know where that was taken?

**Judo:** This photo?

**Tucker:** Yes sir

**Judo:** Boy I sure don't. This is a copy of it and is sure don't know when it was taken. Did you want to take any pictures of any of these.

**Tucker:** That's alright, I've got copies that are.. thank you though.

**Judo:** Ok, and here's a ledger. This book, I'd kill to get this back. But it's got the minutes of the cooperate meetings, and the wages that they pay. Let's see if I can find some of them here. J. Van Houten was the president of the St Louis Rocky Mountain and Pacific coal company. That's where the name Van Houten got started.

**Tucker:** Yes sir,

**Judo:** They had to approve wages. Heres' the monthly rate for the surgeon: 260 dollars a month plus free housing. Ruby the secretary 65, Della Morales 65, Harry Thomson, employee Lilian Hamilton, Dr L.L. Fuller 217.50 a month and another, Hollerand. He wasn't here, Dr. Fuller was here for a number of years and this guy here was one fantastic surgeon. He used to get kids, 10, 15 at a time and took tonsils out. And my mom would always help him, she'd hold the light for him, And when I had mine taken out I was the very last one. And kids were coming out gaspin' and chokin' and crying and carrying on I was so damn 'fraid when they took me in. That you can see what some of the wages, lets see if, and here's the annual 1942. These are all bigshots in the company.

**Tucker:** Hixenbaugh, was he not the Sherriff out here?

**Judo:** Yeah there was a Hixenbaugh that was the sheriff out here many, many years ago in the thirties And it had my brother's. And they, all of us worked for Kaiser at one time. Here's some of the employees here. But you can see what their monthly salary, they got a raise of twenty dollars, of ten dollars, monthly salary effective April first, 1945. But this book is priceless to me. I've opened to see. Here's my brother Nicki. He was assistant mine clerk in charge of payroll. 1948 and makin' 295 a month.

**Tucker:** Wow.

**Judo:** And now, miners are makin' oh... back in the thirties they were probably makin', if they weren't under contract, uh, they were probably getting a dollar and fifty cents an hour. And now those miners are makin' 35 and 40 dollars an hour. And those guys that uh, every miner had to

have a uh, bronze tag that they had to have on their belt for identification. And then they also had a handful under contract where they loaded the coal and put their tag on the car. And if you were in good with the weight master, you might get two dollars, two dollars and fifty center per car, and if you weren't, you probably wouldn't get a damn thing; So you had to.. that's where the 'bootlicker' phrase got started.

**Tucker:** Oh, Ok.

**Judo:** Yeah. But, anyway... You can take and study that stuff.

**Tucker:** Yes sir. Will do, for sure. Thank you.

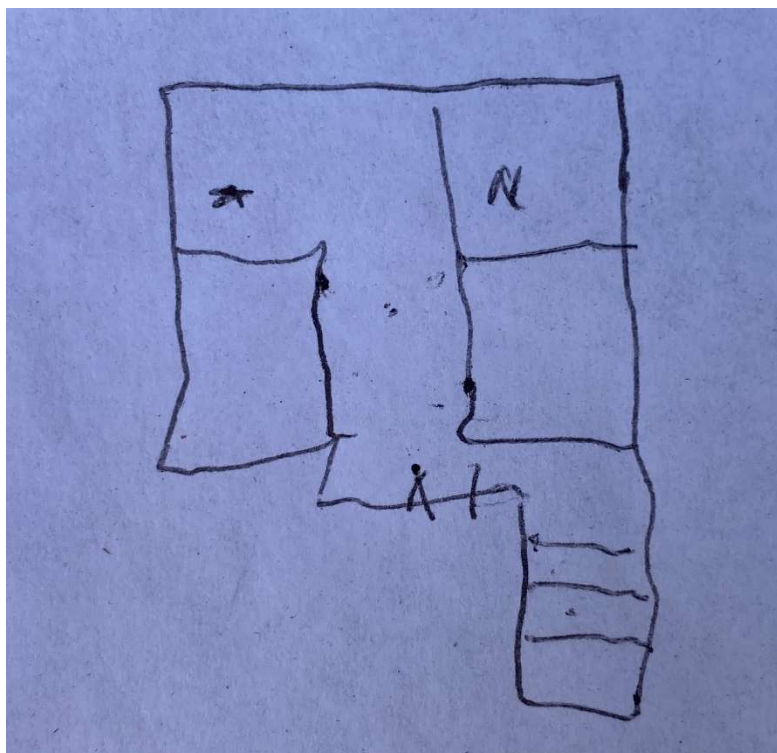
**Judo:** And just leave that with, what's her name, Becky. And call me an, if anything else you wanna know, or see?

**Tucker:** Any stories that you've got I'd love to hear.

**Judo:** Oh gosh, oh gosh. There's so many of them that I've forgotten a lot of 'em

**Tucker:** Maybe that's too vague, I guess. One question that I was wondering: do you happen to remember where was where in the clubhouse? Which end had what in it?

**Judo:** We had a clubhouse in Koehler exactly like this one here. There was uh, let me see the back end of this, in here was a pool hall, domino room, a barber shop, and this was the main entrance into the building. And this was a bar, and this was a uh, they used to have tables and chairs and whatnot here. And here was an auditorium there was a stage down at this end. And here was a meeting room. And when they modernized that, when they closed all of the seven houses down, they made a gymnasium. And the out of bounds on the walls, it was about \*that\* much. And there were hardwood floors. And all of us kids got together and they gave us a five gallon bucket of special compound to fill the cracks. Those floors turned out just beautiful, I mean they were so beautiful. But thats he way all of them were.



Here is the map he drew. The rooms on the bottom right are the pool hall, domino room, and barber shop. The two lines denote the main entrance. The 'N' is the bar, the star is the auditorium stage seating area. The Room below the N is the meeting room. The area below the star is the gymnasium that was later added.

**Tucker:** Ok. So let's see... so you had, then, the pool hall, domino room, barber shop, bar, a meeting room, and then assembly. What was out here?

**Judo:** That was the, uh, that was the auditorium, where they gave speeches and whatnot, and then they converted that into a gymnasium to play basketball and the converted, put rooms, schoolrooms here and schoolrooms here from the first to the eight grade. and then when we went through the eight grade we were bussed to Raton for the senior high school.

**Tucker:** Oh ok.

**Judo:** Yeah

**Tucker:** And I've heard that out here they conducted their church services in the clubhouse because they didn't have an established church building.

**Judo:** They sure did. They sure did and they did the same thing in Brilliant and the same thing in Koehler.

**Tucker:** Ok.

**Judo:** Yeah. Those were the days. When the old coal steam engine would come into camp of Monday, the women would all, Monday was wash clothes day, and they'd hang all their clothes



out to dry and if the locomotive was bringin' empty coal cars, the women would run like hell and get all the stuff off the clothes line because of the cinders from the coal. And boy they'd hit you and they'd burn and sting you or burn holes in the sheets or whatnot. And uh, when they went to diesel, all the women were so happy, they didn't have to worry about the cinders from the coal burning. But, uh, it was uh, we were all poor, we didn't know it, but we lived a good life. We always had something to eat. And like I said our welfare was the wildlife. My brothers and several of the old timers would go out and kill a deer and sneak it into camp in the garage and within thirty minutes that whole deer was gone cause we'd just chunk up, cut a chunk of meat off and gave it to whoever needed it. And there were a lot of people who, had it not been for that they would've died. They sure would.

**Tucker:** So was it the company that didn't allow you to harvest deer or was that the law at the time?

**Judo:** The law at the time. And the game warden was not a welcome sight.

**Tucker:** I imagine not.

**Judo:** No they uh, they always talked about moonshine, it was illegal then, too. And they tell the story about this Yugoslav company, a Croatian family lived up at Eagle Nest. And the feds came in and the husband was out in the field workin'. By the time he come running up to the house and everything well they'd searched the house and everything and the wife told here husband in Croatian, I hid everything under the sidewalk. So happened one of the agents was a Croatian. Caught 'em and took the still away from them and I think the husband had to go to the pen for a while. But everybody was makin', they'd make homemade wine, and they'd save the mash and they put some more fresh grapes in the mash and fifty pounds of sugar and fifteen or twenty gallons of water, and it would ferment again, and they would drain that and put it in the still and that's how they, that's how they made, the Slavish they called it Rakia, that's how they made the homemade Rakia, and the Italians they called it, uh, uh, what the heck was the word that they... Hmm I can't remember now. I've forgotten. Being away from it so long I've forgotten a lot of stuff.

**Tucker:** Yeah

**Judo:** But for 85 I think I'm doing alright.

**Tucker:** Certainly.

**Judo:** What else can we do?

**Tucker:** Well, other than just stories, I don't really know.

**Judo:** Ok

**Tucker:** Do you remember exactly where the baseball field was down there? Because it's got the sign for it, but

**Judo:** That's where it was

**Tucker:** Ok. In that flat spot, generally?

**Judo:** Yeah, [indistinguishable] the golf course.

**Tucker:** Do you know why there's initials on all the rocks out here? If that was just something to do or?

**Judo:** Oh that was just something for kids to do.

**Tucker:** Ok

**Judo:** And we used to take and get a chisel and a hammer and wed go up and carve our name into the rock or into the aspen trees with a pocketknife. That was quite the thing. That was quite the thing.

**Tucker:** Up on this face there some more initials and names and things up there and there a carving of a dog up there that's really not bad at all. And it's dated 1909 on it.

**Judo:** I'll be darned

**Tucker:** But anywhere on the side of these hills we've been, if you get up high enough and look on the underside of rocks, anywhere where it hasn't been washed out, there's almost always stuff there.

**Judo:** Oh yeah, oh yeah. It was quite a thing in the summertime, after supper, to gather a bunch of people together and build a bonfire and these old foreigners would tell stories, oh, some of them were hilarious, of their experiences growin' up and how they grew up in whatever country they were from. And it was so interesting, and when it got to be eight-thirty, nine o'clock, why, then it was time to, to go to bed. But, every night at seven o'clock, come hell or high water, you sat there at the radio and listened to the world news. Edward R. Murrow and those guys and you got to sit there and listen to the news and you would discuss it among the member of the family as to what was going on while the Second World War was goin' up when I was at that age. But we had seven o'clock, we didn't do anything, we listened to the news. And uh, boy you didn't talk, you didn't sneeze, you didn't do anything, you sat there. And school, they used to use the rubber hose, and oh, that used to hurt. Now some of the teachers here in Van Houten we known to drop a boy's pants and bare bottom [he imitates the administration of a spanking] with the paddle. They didn't do that very much but if they had trouble with a student, the principal of the school would go to the superintendent of the mine and say 'We're having trouble with this boy' and he's really, I only know of one time that this happened, and the boy's name was Caitano, he was Hispanic, and he was mean, he was meaner'n a barnyard dog. Now the principal of the school went to the superintendent of the mine and he explained it to him and, uh, this kid was always in trouble, always, always, always; and she told the superintendent about that and the superintendent the next day, when the miner's came out and turned in their badge and whatnot, he pulled the dad aside and said, 'You've got one week to straighten out that boy. If he doesn't, you're gonna get fired and you're gonna get kicked out of camp. A week later, he didn't; there was something mentally wrong with that kid. He was just mean. Mean, mean, mean. And uh, they fired him and kicked the family out. I don't know where they went; I really don't care. But

uh, we went to school from first grade to the eight grade, and we had some of the schoolteachers live in camp and some of them rode the bus. And their morning started at 4:30. And the road between Van Houten and Koehler was along the foothills, and it was rough as a... rough as a cob. And uh, they'd keep kids after school if they needed help, they would keep them. But uh, there was always a Christmas program and a Spring program. And even the old bachelors, they had these black wool suits that just everything would stick to 'em, and an old necktie, and a white shirt. They went because the most highly praised person in the coal camp was the schoolteacher. Because they were gonna teach my children, and everybody else's children, and uh, get an education because they were dead set against, uh dead set at makin' that happen. And uh, boy it was uh, whenever we had a, before we had the gymnasium, our basketball goal was outside, and they would use this rock dust, this white powder stuff in the mine to seal the methane gas, is what they would paint the boundary lines. And you'd be dribbling' the ball and hit a rock and the ball would go this way. Or the wind would be blowin' and you'd take a long shot and it'd blow it off the goal and, here you run across the prairie and catch the basketball, oh it was, was quite a deal. But uh, anyway, well I've got to get to Raton about seven and uh, what else can I do?

**Tucker:** Do you mind getting a photograph together? I can set this thing onto a timer.

**Judo:** Yeah sure!





## **End of recording 5**

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## **Beginning of recording 6 & 7**

**Judo:** There was a man who moved out West, wanted to start a coal mine. So he went and met with some Scotsmen and the told him, 'you have to hire Italians, and Latinos, and Greeks, cause they're short and stocky, and uh, they make real good shovelers. You need to hire some Slovaks because they're usually tall and got real good legs and real good arms and they do real good with pickin' the coal.' And then they said, 'You're gonna need somebody that'll be in charge of supplies and takin' product and takin' tools inside and out of the mine'. So this guy went out and bough him and area where there was a small coal mine and he hired some Greeks and some Italians, Latinos, and Slovaks, and found one Chinese person. So he hired 'em and they all went to work first day and everything went real well. The second day everything else went real well. Well the third day he went in and he couldn't find the Chinese guy at all. And he asked the other miners, 'Where is the Chinaman?'. They said, "Well, he was here, but we don't know where he's at.". 'Damn', he says 'I hired him to work for supplies and everything'. And he turned around and started walking out of the mine so he could fire the Chinaman and all of a sudden out from behind these timbers the Chinaman jumps out and says, 'SUPPLIES'. There was a Chinese person in one crowd and he got the biggest bang out of that.

**Tucker:** Now, I've heard that, out here, there was a lot of Europeans and a couple of Japanese, but there wasn't really a lot of Chinese folk out here.

**Judo:** No there sure weren't. Mostly Japanese and they were in Sugarite.

**Tucker:** Okay. Monte Hill really, it was a big place, there are a lot of foundations.

**Judo:** Lots of foundations all up in through here

**Tucker:** Yes sir, yeah.

**Judo:** There was an old, that old Motto that I was tellin' you. A friend and I came up and visited with him; I could understand Serbo-Croatian, speak a little of it. And he was shooting a 30-40 Krag with a 200 grain bullet. And his house was right back up in here. Back up over in here was a slack pile of rough coal. And there was this cottontail rabbit sittin' there. And we told that old man and he looks. Thar' he took a ¾ file and filed the back sight, the buck sight at an angle and filed the front sight at the end of the barrel in the opposite direction. I don't know how in the hell he could shoot that, but by God he shot that rabbit in the head.

But he sure killed a lot of venison, my God he killed a lot of deer. He'd go sit on a rimrock or a big rock where he had a big view, and he always had a whistle, and he'd blow that whistle, and the deer would jump up, run a few feet, and stop. That's when he'd shoot 'em.

**Tucker:** And then I've heard that this house here had an Italian woman in it, and the other standing house had a Greek woman in it. But it's all that was was a little scrap of paper at the

Raton Museum that somebody had been out on tour here and had heard that same thing so it's a pretty far removed source from the truth perhaps.

**Judo:** Oh I've never heard that.

**Tucker:** And then out here there's the handle of a plow sticking out of the ground somewhere and I had heard somewhere that they had done some farming and gardening out here.

**Judo:** Oh yes, everybody, in Koehler, now, we had a well down at the bottom of the camp, on the Crow Creek, the river, and it was terrible; it was hard as a rock, that water was, but, every house had a fence a square fence around it. And you could put your garden in on one side and there was a hydrant. One hydrant would serve two house. And the water pressure was humongous. The tank was up, ten-thousand gallon tank, was up on the side of the mountain. And it started out with a six-inch pipe reduced to a four, to a three, to a two, and it was distributed through the camp in a two inch pipe, reduced to  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch pipe, and the pressure was just humongous. But before they had the water tank on the mountain they had a reservoir, a cement reservoir. And oh those kids used to go swimming in it, and that was our cooking and drinking water as well.

**Tucker:** Wow. Now I had also heard that the women who lived in the houses at the High Five had imported roses from somewhere in Europe. That they had to have them just the way they wanted 'em so they paid some money to import them. Do you remember anything like that? Any stories about that?

**Judo:** No I sure don't.

**Tucker:** Okay.

**Judo:** No I sure don't.

**Tucker:** And then I know there was, supposedly, a hotel and two boarding houses and you said that one of them was over here, that your aunt had owned.

**Judo:** Yes there was a boarding house here where I was born and there was a boarding house across from the doctor's office.

**Tucker:** Okay, and that's further north in the canyon than the doctor's office?

**Judo:** Yes. Yes.

**Tucker:** Okay. That's, from that map you'd shown me, I had figured it to be somewhere there but I wasn't sure exactly where.

**Judo:** That's kinda what my dad had built, it looked like that.

**Tucker:** Okay. For a root cellar or a half-cellar?

**Judo:** Yeah, Model T's and Model A's. When I was nine years old I got to learn how to drive an old Model A pickup, cause they had a choke on one side and a throttle on the other side of the steering wheel. And I'd have to scoot around and put the clutch in, and my brother would get

out, we were feeding hay for a rancher, and he had just enough on the throttle to where I could keep goin' and drivin' in a circle, and that's how I learned how to drive.

**Tucker:** Wow... Do you remember anything about the folks who lived in any of these places? Any stories, things like that?

**Judo:** No I, I knew the Segotta family, lived here [He gestures towards Cunico town].

**Tucker:** Okay.

**Judo:** The Greek family that used to run the clubhouse, they had a daughter by the name of Evangeline; God almighty, she was a beautiful woman, oh my. But her dad was a very meek, shy old gentleman but, I tell you what, he guarded that girl with his life.

**Tucker:** Probably wise

**Judo:** Oh he, Mister Calumani was his name, and her name was Evangia. And they, so Nigger Harry, who used to run the ambulance, the senior vice president of the company had a step-brother that lived in Koehler with a Hispanic family, and he was an old drunk. He'd call the guard at Brilliant, and tell them he needed the ambulance because he was sick. So Nigger Harry would get in the old Model A ambulance and go out to Koehler and pick him up. They'd get about a mile and a half out of camp, and there was a road that would take you down to the highway 87-64 junction, they called it Hoxie Corner, it was a gas station and a bar. So across the prairie they'd go. And uh, three hours, four hours later they'd show up at the hospital; Nigger Harry'd be on the cot and Mister White would be driving the ambulance.

**Tucker:** Oh man. Oh, one other question: the station Preston was out here.

**Judo:** Yes

**Tucker:** I was wondering if you could point out to me exactly where it is, because I know within a pretty good area where it is, but I'd like to know where it sat. You know, where the building itself was.

**Judo:** Now that was the section crew for the railroad. And they lived in railroad cars. I thought sure we'd see some deer, or a bear.

**Tucker:** Yeah. We didn't today.

**Judo:** Have you seen any bear this year?

**Tucker:** Just one. And then I heard of another one that was seen in the campground. But the one that we seen this year, it was a beautiful bear. It was a cinnamon colored one.

**Judo:** Oh God, yeah.

**Tucker:** One of the more beautiful bears I've seen.

**End of recording 7**

...

**Beginning of recording 8**

**This was a discussion about the high volume of broken plates etc. on the railroad near Preston. The conversation was cut short when we saw a dead snake on the road.**

**Judo:** ...Walk the railroad, then it was the roads that they had. Cause it was, it's a wonder somebody never did got run over.

**Tucker:** Yeah. Yeah there was a snake

**Judo:** I think it's a bull.

**Tucker:** Yeah its been hit, run over.

**Judo:** No rattles on him.

**Tucker:** Nope. Have not seen a lot of snakes this summer, especially compared to summers past.

**Judo:** Oh, they used to be pretty thick in here.

**Tucker:** Yeah. Back in 2019, just a couple of years ago, there was snakes everywhere. Them gopher snakes? And they had just shed, you know, real pretty lookin'. But they were everywhere. Anywhere you'd step there'd be a snake. And this year there's just nothin'.

...

**Judo:** Now those railroaders were always catchin' badgers. I don't know what there was about badgers on the railroad. And they always had an empty can of spikes, And they'd put those badgers in that barrel and they'd show it to the people and the kids and whatnot. I wouldn't dare try to handle a badger.

**Tucker:** No.

...

**Tucker:** So you guys had basketball in Koehler, and tennis. Up here they had golf, and did they have basketball and tennis up here as well?

**Judo:** Uh, every coal camp had a baseball team for the miners. Oh my, talk about competition. Talk about some good baseball.

**Tucker:** I've seen some of the newspaper clippings of reports on the games.

**Judo:** Yeah we had a guy in Koehler, a leftie, a pitcher. He was the best Pitcher in the country. His name was Steve Ortega.

**Tucker:** Steve Ortega.



**Here we were driving the road that was washed out in the summer of 2023. We were driving from east to west (we had taken the northern road out of the canyon when I asked about the exact location of Preston station). The location of Preston seems to be below the west side of the hill on which the Whittington center storage shed sits, that is, right below where we used to shoot the South Flats. It was on the south side of the road that presently exists (last I was at the center), which was once the rail grade. It's right about where that giant concrete slab is, where the two-track takes off south from the road. I really hope these roads both exist and can be seen well enough by the time Kai and Heath look at this.**

**Judo:** That went uh, the road from Van Houten to Koehler used to follow the foothills. (he gestures from north to south along the foothills from the mouth of Mule, Graveyard, and Van Houten Canyons to the southernmost visible terminus of the ridge). And they'd tell the story about a guy, stopped to pee one time and uh, a mountain lion got in his car.

**Tucker:** Oh!

**Judo:** And he had a hell of a fight with the lion and he finally got it to, got it to get away, but he got all scratched up and whatnot. And uh, I've had several old timers tell me that story.

**Tucker:** Wow

**Judo:** So I believe it's true.

...

**Judo:** Oh God, in the summertime I'd spend my time up in the mountains. All of us kids did. We never ever saw a mountain lion never heard one, nobody ever had an encounter. Then we always had a couple of dogs with us; everybody had a dog.