

Oral history with 88 year old white male, Fruita, Colorado. (Transcription)

Begin 10 A(3)

J.F. No? You take the early days up in that country, you know, they had hard times....My folks come from Belfount, Arkansas, in a covered wagon. Nine weeks on the road. In those days, you know, there wasn't no roads from Glenwood Springs, had to go clear around by Gunnison and come around by Gunnison and Montrose and Delta, and up by Grand Junction and then the road from Grand Junction up in that country was all on this side of the river...just a little old narrow road. And they had to come...all those people up there in them days had to come clear to Grand Junction for their food.

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P. From DeBeque.

J.F. From DeBeque. There wasn't a sign of a store in Debeque..there wasn't no DeBeque there, hardly, in the early days.

P. You can still see...is it on Mt. Garfield or just around Mt. Garfield on your way out of town...you can still see a very old road. Do you remember that road?

J.F. Old road..the other side of Palisade. You can still see it. The railroad took in most of that old road but there's places there you can still see the old road.

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P. Right. And that's the road you used to travel on?

J.F. That's the one we had to travel. People would come from up on Roan Creek, team and wagon, take 'em a week to come to Grand Junction and get back.

P. From the area of DeBeque you're talking now?

J.F. Yeah, 'way up Roan Creek, must be 25 miles up there. No, there wasn't a sign of a store in DeBeque and there wasn't much of a one in Grand Junction.

P. What do you remember about the stores in Grand Junction? What was there at that early period?

J.F. In the early days there was just one store.

P. Which was that?

J. F I wouldn't know the name of it but 'course it was all built out of logs.

P. Do you remember where it used to stand in relation ...?

J.F. No, I don't know, course probablyI was never there, you know, till it got to be pretty near grown, you know.

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P. Did you ever go to the old store? Do you remember any trips to the old store? What's the first part of Grand Junction that you remember?

J.F. Well, I don't remember too much about it, I was there when they started putting in streets, black topping. They was all dirt, you know. And

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(J.F.) they was putting in, I suppose black top or pavement or something, I don't remember. I come down here, another fellow and I, with some horses to sell.

P. So you were older then?

J.F. Uh, yes. I hit this old fellow up for a job, punchin' cows. I was a good bronc rider then. And the man said, "If you can ride the horses I give you to ride, I'll give you a job."

P. And you did, huh?

J.F. I went to the summer camp and I was there about a week and the old man got up one morning, and said, <gap> you throw a pack saddle on a horse and you go to DeBeque." It was thirty, about thirty five to DeBeque, from where our camp was. And he say, "You get you some winter clothes." That was in September. "I don't need no winter clothes." (laughs) "Yeah, but you will when you get back." So I went and got my clothes and fixed up coming winter. Got back up there and cut me out... I don't remember, eight or nine saddle horses. And I went to the north side, what they call the North Side, the Piceance side. You know where Piceande is?

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P. No. I'm not familiar with it.

J.F. Well, it's way over towards Rangely, and you know where Meeker?

P. Yes.

J.F. Well, it's way over there towards Meeker, you know, that Piceance country. Or you go that away to go up Piceance Creek. So I went and I was gone seven weeks on them round up, following the wagon.

P. Now did you break these horses for him? Did you train them?

J.F. Well, I broke lots of them. Broke a lot of horses. Yeah. In them days they weren't corral raised horses. They were wild bronco horses. I used to just love it!

P. Some of these horses they're rounding up, are these still some of the same type of horses you had?

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J.F. Of course, those cow outfits, see, they'd buy their horses. In them days they didn't raise many saddle horses but they'd buy 'em somebody was a-raisin' them you know. No, I broke horses, another fellow and I up there one summer broke 22 head.

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P. That's a pretty...I'd think that would be a pretty important job and one that not everybody did.

J.F. Well, they didn't, they didn't everybody do it.

P. Does that mean that you got more pay than the rest of them?

J.F. Yes, I did and that wasn't very much. (laugh) Forty dollars a month.

P. Is that right?

J.F. That's right, and that was top wages. That was, there wasn't very many got over \$30, \$35.

P. Did you ever ride for the rodeo, ever do any of that? or was it strictly work?

J.F. It was strictly work. I didn't have time...well, there wasn't any rodeo...

P. There weren't rodeos.

J.F. No, that's right.

P. Do you think today if there had been rodeos you would have liked to have done that?

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J.F. Yep.

P. Would you?

J.F. Yep.

P. Do you remember the first rodeo that you...do you recall the first rodeo that you were....?

J.F. Oh, they pulled one there in DeBeque one time, it didn't amount to much. Brought in a few horses.

P. Did you participate?

J.F. No. I went to Glenwood one time to a rodeo up there. I didn't ride. Several of the boys, cowpunchers there wanted me to ride in it but I

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(J.F.) didn't want to <stow?> myself and get throwed off.(laughs)

P. You should have had more faith in yourself than that! Do you remember the house that you grew up in? What was it like?

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J.F. A big log house.

P. One room?

J.F. No-o-o, we had three rooms, I guess, another out house that us boys usually slept in.

P. The floor was what?

J.F. The floors just...

P. <gap>

J.F. And the home place that I's raised..we moved away from there and livin' below there on a big place that belonged to a cow outfit. And they built a big reservoir up above us. And that broke one spring and it never left my mother a chicken. It washed all her buildings away on her upper place. She didn't have a chicken, drowned all her hogs, and we....no, my dad had been up there and told them that this dam was going to break. It was gettin' wet and it was....And we'd moved out of the house where we lived up onto the hill. And by golly, it come... it didn't wash that house away but it washed all the corrals, took Mother's chickens and her hogs and never left us anything like that. Never loft a corral, just took everything. ...!

P. Who did your father tell? Was it the government? Who was in charge of that dam?

J.F. Well, the farmers really built it. The farmers....no, the government didn't have nothing to do with it.

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P. You didn't have any insurance in those days?

J.F. ...the engineer that put in this headgate, when the creek got high, was to take care of all the water but it wouldn't take care of a third of it. And they had spillways....and that dam was a new dam and it just got wet and they couldn't draw the water off and by god, she just slide off

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J.F. like that!

P. Were there any other families in that area? Or were you the house that was in the direct?

J.F. We was the one's it hurt, it didn't hurt anybody down below that because it spread out over the valley, you know, over field and....the reservoir water, and it never hurt anybody else. Might have tore out some fences or something like that.

P. . Well, you didn't have insurance or anything in those days, did you? So you had to suffer the whole loss didn't you?

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J.F. No, no, no,...had to suffer the whole loss. My dad had put in 30 acres of potatoes and a lot of grain....He saved a lot of the potatoes it didn't wash them clear away but he had a lot of grain and it just ruined all the grain he had.

P. When you were riding, you were out all winter long, is that right?

J.F. No, I stayed in farm houses in the winter.

P. Were they pretty hard winters? Pretty tough? Do you remember..it was really cold?

J.F. You're darned right, it'd get cold! One winter I pretty near froze to death a time of two.

P. Probably really, right? You're not exaggerating. What happened? Did you get stranded somewhere or...?

J.F. No, just out, and maybe it was so darned cold...'course in them days you didn't have the good warm clothes as youmy hands used to freeze. Feet...'course, your body was just warm enough, but your feet and hands, couldn't hardly dress warm enough.

P. I'll bet

J.F. I've seen it pretty tough, girl, and then a few times I didn't know whether I was goin' to make her in one night or not. (laugh) I worked for my nephew up here four years ago on the mountains, and it really got tough up there, the snow got deep and I was up there all alone,

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J.F. I didn't have any circulation in this leg. That's when I had these darn blood clots hit me.

P. Is that what caused them?

J.F. No, I don't know what caused these blood clots.

P. Okay, but it affected them, they were very sensitive...

J.F. So I come home here and I'd been here the second night and I'd had this eye operated on. And there was a nurse at Fruita hospital over here come by and dressed this eye for me. And she come that morning and I was completely gone out. I just passed out and so she called the doctor, they said, over here and he said 'well I-I-I, he'd try to get over to the hospital around nine if he <gap>. This nurse told him, she said, "Well, he won't be alive if we can't get something done before then." So he come to the hospital, they said, and they took me over there. And he said he absolutely couldn't do nothing. They rushed me right to St. Mary's and my older son on the railroad, he got there then and two of the doctors examined me. Do you know Dr. Kemper...heard of him? And Munro...

P. UH huh,uh huh, sure.

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J.F. And they both was there and they said, "Well, we're going to have to take that leg off at the hip." My son said, "No, you're not going to take his leg off because I know Dad would rather die." So they said, "Well, we'll try to operate." And they operated then at two o'clock. They took a blood clot out here five and one half inches...

P. Oh, for heavens sake! I'd say you were pretty lucky.

J.F. And then ...So I lay there two weeks and then they had to operate clear down below my knee. I was only there eight weeks...

P. Oh, well, you got a lot of rest in. (laugh)

J.F. (laughs) In St. Mary's it's pretty expensive, though. No sir, my bill run a little over \$8000.

P. Oh, a thousand a week! Whew! It's kind of tough on the budget.

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J.F. I just happened to have insurance.

P. All those modern conveniences now. (laughs)

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J.F. Yeah. No sir, there'd been a woman here just before that, after I'd come off the mountain. I'd hurt my foot up there and I turned to I'd got the Blue Cross and Blue Shield notices due and I said, "You know, I'm going to drop that, I've paid and paid and paid on it." And she said, <gap> I wouldn't do it." Sol paid it and it just paid off. They had to pay about \$3000 and of course, Medicare paid about 80%, you know. Well, what'll we do now..go fishin'?

P. Got any more stories?

J.F. I don't know of any lies. (laugh)

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