

Palisade Historical Society
Oral and Video History Project
Interview

Oral History #16

Date: 7/10/2013

Place: Clinton living room, 338 Bower Ave, Palisade

Length: 1:07

Interviewee: Keith Robert Clinton

Phone: (970) 464-7404

Interviewer : Charlene Weidner

Phone: (970) 464- 5413

Videographer: Ralph Branch

Family:

Marjorie, sister, 5-6 years older

Wife, Romona Virginia Michel Wallace - their son, Robert Keith "Robby"

Four step-children - Virginia, Kathy, Don, and Ron Wallace

Father, Claude - orchardist and started Clinton Insurance Agency

Mother, Alice - bookkeeper for Clinton Insurance. Romona took over when Alice could no longer do the bookkeeping

Keith was born October 11, 1926 at the St. Mary's hospital on Ute Avenue in Grand Junction. He developed germs in the blood when he was two. Dr. Monroe - a well respected physician whose office was in Grand Junction - encouraged his parents to move from the house in the Vinelands to property in the Town for "good water." The blood disease hampered his left leg growth which required him to wear a leg lift and limited his ability to run.

Education:

Keith went to Palisade schools - during world war II - graduated from PHS in 1944. He attended Mesa College where he studied bookkeeping and graduated with a B.S. in Music at Oberlin Conservatory of Music in Ohio in 1949. Keith started playing trombone in grade school. He taught school for three years at Telluride High School and for one year at Montezuma Cortez High School before coming back to Palisade to take over the family business--the Clinton Insurance Agency. They sold property and life insurance.

Early Palisade Memories

Keith's Clinton grandparents lived in Palisade - on 3674 West First Street (now G.4 Road), near Romona's family's place. His mother's parents lived in Longmont.

Because his parents grew fruit, Keith fell in love with tree fruits. he helped with the orchards, especially making boxes.

His father's pear orchard was in the Vinelands and was known as the Clinton orchard. Charlene recalled she and her husband lived at the Clinton place for nine years in the 1970s. She enjoyed the nectarines on the property and the smell of peach wood which they burned to keep warm.

On the last street before the River, Mr. and Mrs. Taylor raised cows and sold milk. His parents divided their property at 338 Bower Avenue - bought and sold it a few times. Keith used to play on the northern property where a few trees grew. Later, they sold part of the property to Marjorie and Roy Crow.

Keith and Romona live in his childhood home. The house was built in 1934, and his parents moved there when Keith was two. The original house has been remodeled with an added master bedroom and bath, and the location of the original doors have been changed. Tom McCall may have done some of the remodeling. It has gorgeous views of the Colorado River and the Vinelands.

The Clintons kept the pear orchard in the Vinelands and Claude made a driveway on the edge of the River all the way to 4th Street. There was the bridge which connected Palisade to the Vinelands, so he could get to the orchard easily.

Alice sold the pear orchard in Vineland to Larry Clark before Keith and Romona were married. Maxine Lundgren Clark's family's pig farm was down the road from the Clinton orchard in Vineland. The Clintons operated the Insurance business, the orchard, and the house. Keith bought his mother's half of the house and her half of the office building was left to Keith when she passed away.

He remembers family dinners at the Clinton grandparents. The place on G.4 Road was later sold to Brandt Harrison who put it back into an orchard.

Interests and Hobbies

Keith was active in the Palisade Lions Club. He was choir director at his church. He has played the trombone since grade school. Band Teacher Homer Flick looked at his lip line and said "trombone." He played in college, in the Grand Junction Centennial Band, and for his sister's 50th wedding anniversary party in Arizona.

Keith enjoys fishing, and bicycle riding. Growing up, he would bicycle with a friend, Ray Underwood, all over -- across the 4th street bridge to Vineland, and up to East Orchard Mesa.

One of his fishing buddy's friends Dad worked for the Irrigation system, so they fished by the Orchard Mesa pumping plant. Keith fished on Grand Mesa, too, with his brother in law Norman on Rifle Creek.

Other observations

Grand Junction had an important part in their life in Palisade. His Dad worked in the orchard a lot, so his mother would shop at the stores in Grand Junction - Penney's, Montgomery Ward, Gene Taylor Sporting Goods, and others on Main Street. Alice drove the car, and often they would go to a movie, or to Longmont.

Emma Gooding, Keith's grandmother in Longmont, was a quilter. She made two quilts, one for each of the two Gooding daughters, Alice and Clara. For their 25th anniversary,

Keith's sister delivered one of the two handmade quilts to Keith and Ramona at the anniversary party their five children hosted for them.

Keith was a bachelor until age 43 when he married Romona who had four children. Their father had passed away. They responded well to step father Keith.

Keith's life ended November 13, 2013. He died peacefully at home.