

Palisade Historical Society  
Oral and Video History Project  
Interview

Oral History # \_\_001\_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_3/12/2010\_\_\_

Place \_626 Moss Way, Palisade\_\_\_\_\_ Length \_17:03\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee \_\_Shirley Rowley Craig Maurer \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer \_\_Dave Soker\_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Subjects Covered:

Shirley Rowley Maurer, born and grew up in Palisade the youngest of three sisters also born in Palisade – Ruth – three years older, Betty – six years older. Attended Palisade schools from Kindergarden through high school. Graduated valedictorian and received a scholarship to Mesa College. Attended Colorado A&M in Ft. Collins one year. Taught school in **Brighton, CO, 4<sup>th</sup> Grade in Palisade**, and later in the **Bellevue, WA** school system for 14 years.

Grandfather, **Frederick Rowley** emigrated from a coal mining family in Wales, England. Purchased **Palisade Coal Mine** at the base of Mt. Garfield. He was an English gentleman and crippled from a train accident in London. Rode an English bicycle to work, and kept horehound candy his pocket. He could always come up with a dime for her to buy milk at the store.

Grandmother (**Lora Rowley**) was president of the **W.C. T.U.** (Women’s Christian Temperance Union), which had two or three members. She was progressive and quiet, working for the right to vote. She would go to the pool hall and say “don’t you think you’d be happier at home with the wife and kids?”

The huge brick Palisade School with three stories and a basement had classes of about 20 students on a lot east of the High School. She graduated in 1947.

**Mesa College** – she was one of the first students to live in the new Mary Rait Hall.

Went to Brighton because her uncle lived there and taught fourth grade. She married **Robert Craig** from Grand Junction, an engineer with Boeing, so they moved to Seattle. They had three girls and a boy and then divorced. She retired and came back to Palisade because “that’s where I love to live.” Reconnected with school classmate Ed Maurer at a Mesa College Reunion and married in 2000.

**Harvest** – the calendar revolved around Palisade harvest – the event of the year. People came from all over Kansas, Texas, and Paonia to work, as the harvest was two weeks later. Most women packed peaches – individually wrapped in tissue paper in two layers.

Fast packers did well. All kids worked from age five until they were out of college to earn enough money to buy school clothes and even a radio. It was better than Christmas.

Most impressive about harvest was how friendly people were. The same families would come back every year – like relatives. A happy time.

Grandpa also had an orchard, but because of his injury, couldn't do the work. Her father (**Gene Rowley**) worked the peach orchard and was interested in **grafting**. He was the first to perfect grafting different kinds of peaches and was considered an expert and would travel as far as St. George. Her father's lung problem prevented him from working in the coal mine.

**WWII** was a time of surviving. Families were close. Her father worked in **WPA jobs** for extra money by building schools, roads and bridges. The **CCC workers** did most of the road across the Monument, but the WPA helped. We didn't expect presents at Christmas. There was no money. The family went to California for jobs in the defense build up. Her parents worked at Douglas building B-29 aircraft and they lived in Orange, CA. They got homesick and came back. There were **ration books** for sugar and meat. No one complained. We stood in line, and got our share for a week or month. Young men were gone - they enlisted after High School.

**Troop Trains** – the railroads were busy – two passenger trains stopped every day. Troop trains would come every two-three hours and sometimes stop so they could stretch their legs. She would take cookies and Coke's to them. They were big heroes. Everybody believed in the War.

For Thanksgiving, relatives would come from Rifle and Silt – very fun and traditional – lots of games – cards, bingo.

Orchard Hoopies.

Entertainment – at Christmas, there was a program at the Gym in the School. There was a **movie theater** in town with a movie every night. It cost a dime. They saw lots of movies because they couldn't afford anything else. Three times a year the family would journey to Grand Junction to see Shirley Temple and Will Rogers movies.

**Dances at the school.** Social Hour Friday afternoon. From 7<sup>th</sup> Grade to High School and Dances after basketball and football games.