

Palisade Historical Society
Oral and Video History Project
Interview

Oral History # 005 Date: 9/10/2010
Place Floryancic home Length 28:12
Interviewee Bill Floryancic Phone: _____
Interviewer Barbara Hampton Phone: _____

Early Years:

Bill was born in Salida, Colorado in 1918. When he was two years old, his parents came to Palisade, but stayed only a few weeks before going on to the mining town of Hiawatha, Utah. They were in Utah for two years, and then moved to Fruitvale, east of Grand Junction. Bill went to school there from first grade through high school and graduated in 1936.

Family:

Bill and his first wife, Lillian Jenkins Floryancic, owned and operated Bill's Market. He and Lillian had one son, Paul. His daughter, Karen, lives in Palisade and works part time at Canyon Winds Winery as Office Manager. Bill's grandson, Kirk Bunte, lives in Philadelphia. Kirk and his wife Cindy have a son, Callahan.

Bill married Lucille (Phillips) Hampton in 1992 in Cedaredge, Colorado.

Life in Palisade & the Peach Industry:

Bill first became involved in the peach industry in 1935-36 when he worked for the United Fruit Growers Association. They came from Fruitvale to Palisade to work at the shipping platform. The growers brought in their fruit for shipment via refrigerated rail cars. Most of the peaches were packed at the farmers' sheds. Peaches were packed in 16-pound boxes. When unloading the truck, the grower tossed each box of peaches up to a worker on the platform. The platform workers formed a line and passed the boxes down to a designated place to be put in stacks of ten.

Inspectors opened up 2-3 boxes from everyone's load. They checked to see if the peaches were packed tightly (not slack-packed). Any load that did not pass inspection was turned down and not shipped. After inspection, the platform employees used two-wheel carts with clamps on the bottom to move the stacks of peach boxes into a railroad car. Once stacked in the railroad car, every other row was strip-nailed, allowing air to flow between the boxes and keep the peaches cool. After several railcars were loaded, they returned to Grand Junction to be re-iced before leaving the valley. Then in Denver, they re-iced the cars.

The ice for the railcars was cut up at Pando, east of Minturn, Colorado just before starting up Tennessee Pass. The ice blocks were machine-shaved into a uniform shape and size and grooved, so they would stack easily and not freeze together.

It was quite a sight to see the fruit growers bringing peaches in for shipment, with their trucks lined up all the way through town along Kluge Avenue and Main Street, waiting their turn to get unloaded. Most peaches were packed in boxes, but some were in bushel baskets. There was a different siding for unloading baskets on the north side of the (*United*) platform (*on the north side of the railroad tracks*).

Bill remembers when the streets in Palisade were gravel. George Nesbitt was the Town Manager at the time. They got red rock to put on the streets from the hillside by the Roadside Mine (*now Kokopelli Farm Market near Cameo*). The gravel was coarse, sharp, and of uneven size, which really tore up people's tires.

In 1959, the streets were paved. At that time, everyone in Palisade was paying for irrigation water from the Price Ditch, but they didn't have the foresight to put in irrigation water lines. It would have been easy to do this before the streets were paved. Back then, there was plenty of water, and there were no water meters. (*Everyone paid a flat monthly rate for water, not based on usage.*) People in town used domestic water for their yards and sometimes just let it run and wasted it.

There have been several fires in Palisade that affected the peach industry. In 1977, the United Fruit Growers packing shed burned. Bill recalled that he just happened to go out the back of the grocery store and saw smoke coming from under the platform. He turned in the alarm, but before the Fire Department could get there, much of the platform was ablaze. The Mountain Lion platform also burned (*in August 1971*). Bill recalled that other platforms in town had fires over the years. According to Bill, we now have very few large packing sheds in the area. He mentioned Nolan's, Talbott's, Fuller's, and C&R Farms as the ones that do the bulk of the peach packing nowadays.

The Migrant Labor Camp was shut down in 1965. There had been several hundred small structures for migrant housing. Restroom and cooking facilities were in one big building. People began coming early in the spring when the weather warmed up. The cost of living there was minimal, somewhere around \$3.00 or \$4.00 per month, so some people stayed there but did not go out to work in the orchards. The State finally decided it was not viable to keep the camp open, and there had been an increase in crime in the area. So, the decision was made to close it.

Around 1970 when I-70 and the Interstate highway bridge (*east of Palisade*) were completed, there was a big celebration in the parking lot by the grocery store. Dignitaries from the Highway Department and Congressman Wayne Aspinall were in attendance.

The Grocery Business:

Bill got into the grocery business in 1958, opening Bill's Market. For some time prior to that, Bill had worked at Bancroft's Grocery on the east side of Main Street. Next door to the grocery store to the south was the drug store on the corner, and the Post Office was on the north side. In 1966, the Post Office moved to its new building (*on the corner of Kluge Ave. and West 3rd Street*).

The owner of the Bancroft Grocery Store got behind on taxes and bills, so the store was closed up and the power was turned off on Christmas Day (1957?). When the store went up for Treasury Sale in February, Bill was the only one to make a bid that would satisfy the County Treasurer, so he got the store for about \$1,500.00. After sitting so long with the electricity turned off, the smell in the store was quite unpleasant, as the food in the freezers and refrigerators had spoiled. They cleaned it up and opened again for business in April 1958.

Bill recalls the store being very busy during peach harvest. The aisles in the store were narrow and crowded, with many people coming in to buy groceries. They started work at 6:00 a.m. and often did not finish until midnight. They tried the best they could to keep supplies on hand. Sometimes, the Holsum bread truck parked out in back of the store. Some of the farmers had cooks, so the farmers or their cooks bought bread by the case out of the truck.

In 1962, they moved the grocery store across Main Street to where the present Family Foodtown is located. Initially, they built only about half of the building. Then in 1975, they were able to buy the property to the west where Roberts' Hardware was and tore it down to build the new addition to the store. In 1987 they sold the store to Kelly Myers (present owner).

Military Service:

In 1943 after war broke out with Japan, Bill was called up for military service through Colorado, although that time, he was living in Wyoming. He returned to Colorado to go through the induction process but did not pass the physical exam because of his eyesight. Later when Bill was working in Utah, in the latter part of December as he recalls, he was called again. In Utah, you did not have to worry about passing any physical exam. According to Bill, they would touch your body, and if it was warm, you were in!

After induction, Bill shipped off to Fort Warren, near Cheyenne, Wyoming. When he arrived on January 7th, at around 7:00 a.m., the temperature was thirty-five degrees below zero. He went through three months of windy, cold, miserable weather during his Basic Training there.

Bill had further schooling at the Mt. Rainer Ordnance Depot near Tacoma, Washington. From there, he went to Riverside, California for technical training before leaving to go overseas to the South Pacific. Bill remembers that there were ships at sea with no escorts, so the ships would turn into each other, so they could be identified as "friend or foe." At times, it could get scary for them. While in the South Pacific, they hit the tail end of a typhoon, so things were shaky for about three days there. They ended up in New Guinea for about two years. Bill recalls that there was nothing there but a mud hole, so they had to get the company area fixed up so it was livable. Bill returned home in 1946 and was discharged.

Civic Activities:

Bill has been involved in the Palisade Chamber of Commerce since 1958. Has seen a lot of change over time as they work to promote business in Palisade. For many years, it was more of a volunteer set-up, plagued with inconsistent operation. The merchants tried to have events to bring people into town. Sometimes these efforts were successful, sometimes not. Then, Leif

Johnson came on board and did some more effective organization. Since then, the Chamber “has really taken off.”

Bill has belonged to the American Legion for over 50 years and is a long-time, active member of the Palisade Lions Club, an organization which he holds in great esteem as it has improved the lives of individuals and the community as a whole. When he was in the grocery business, Bill was on board of directors of Associated Grocers of Colorado for 10 years. Also, he was on the board for the Affiliated Trading Company (a trading stamp company in Denver) for 10 years. Bill was a member of the Mesa Valley School District 51 Board for six years and served as Chairman for two of those years. He recalls that for a time, he was on all of these boards at once, which kept him quite busy!

In about the year 2000, the idea came to Bill that Palisade should have a record to identify many structures in town, such as the location of former businesses and residences. He went to the Museum and collected some information and obtained some old maps of Palisade, known as the Sanborn maps, from 1912 and 1926. From these maps, he was able to identify many businesses that were in town. Bill’s grandson and his wife helped him assemble all of this information onto a DVD, which he is glad to share with anyone who is interested. Bill is happy to see that a group of people in Palisade is now showing interest in preserving its history.