

Palisade Historical Society
Oral and Video History Project
Interview

Oral History # 17

Place: Palisade History Center

311 South Main St., Palisade, CO

Interviewee: Dorothy Eleanor Carver Hines

Interviewer: Charlene Weidner

Videographer: Ralph Branch

Also Present: Gary Hines, oldest son

Date: June 6, 2014

Length: 24:14

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This is a summary an oral history video recording created for the Palisade Historical Society.

The text in *italics* is not part of the original transcript and is added for clarification.

Early Life:

Dorothy was born in Clifton, Colorado in December, 1924 in a house on the corner of 32 and D Roads. The property later became a small general store and meat locker, known as the Clifton Bridge Store. When Dorothy was 1 ½ years old, the family moved to the Grand River Diversion Dam (*locally known as the Roller Dam*) five miles east of Cameo, Colorado. Her father, John Earl Carver, was the superintendent/caretaker of the Roller Dam for the next 33 years, until he passed away in 1959.

Dorothy grew up at the Roller Dam and lived there until she went to college. She had three brothers, Homer Raymond “Ray,” Archie, and John. They did everything together – swimming and hiking in the summer, squaw fishing in the pond, and ice skating in the winter. She and her brothers even had their own ball team.

Helping at the Roller Dam:

Dorothy helped her dad when she could. There was a battery house for storing electricity, where her father took readings and Dorothy wrote them down. Until she was ten or eleven years old, there was only 220-volt (*direct current*) electricity at the dam, which meant they had no refrigerator or electric lights at the caretaker’s house. Dorothy remembers studying by coal oil and kerosene lanterns. There was no water in the Government Highline Canal during the winter, so while it was drained it could be inspected for damage caused by beavers.

Schooling in Cameo and Palisade:

Dorothy attended grades one through ten at the school in Cameo. Her dad took her to school, and if he was too busy she walked home. The schoolhouse had two rooms – a small room for grades 1-4 and a larger room for grades 5-10. Being good with numbers, Dorothy recalls arithmetic

matches each Friday, where she and John Klemenic fought to the finish. When Dorothy was in 5th grade, she taught grades 1-4 when the hired teacher, Ruth Rigg, fell ill.

Cameo students were driven to Palisade High School by Mrs. Bennett and Mrs. Kerr for grades 11 and 12. The bus drivers had the students walk across the swinging bridge for safety reasons. They graduated from Palisade High School. To get to Cameo (*from the Roller Dam*) there was a narrow ditch bank road. If there was another car, you had to look for a wide place to pass. The only way to Cameo was along this road.

Cameo Bridge Burned:

Coe Miller set the wooden Cameo suspension bridge on fire one time when his motorcycle backfired, causing the oily boards to catch on fire. The bridge was the only way out of Cameo, so until it was repaired, travel to Palisade was through the empty Government Highline Canal (Tunnel #3). Fortunately, the water was out of the canal for the winter.

Social Activities in Cameo:

Dorothy and her family were included in the close-knit Cameo community, as were families from the two ranches between the Roller Dam and Cameo. The Cameo families were miners. They had parties, put on plays, and even built their own stage. At Christmas, there would be a party with Santa Claus for the kids. The Cameo Mercantile store sold feed and hay on one side of the store and groceries, fabric, sewing notions, and other merchandise on the other side. (*The store also contained the Cameo Post Office.*)

Life at the Roller Dam:

Domestic water for the caretaker's house came from the river. It was purified by going through a rock and sand filter. Dorothy's dad would get Cameo steam water (*from the mine*) every Monday and bring it back to the house for doing the laundry. This soft water was good for laundry but not for drinking, cooking, or bathing. They bathed in heated river water. At first, they had a coal stove for heating and eventually propane. They cooked with wood and coal, which was later upgraded to an electric stove.

When Dorothy was older, they got 110-volt AC electricity, so they could have lights and a refrigerator. Before then, they had an ice box and an underground ice house located in the hillside near the Roller Dam. They cut chunks of ice 2 feet thick from the frozen river and stored them in the ice house, covered with sawdust and straw to keep it frozen all summer.

The family tended two vegetable gardens, one at the house and a large one a quarter-mile down the road. Dorothy recalls growing strawberries and potatoes. They also kept a cow for milk, cream, and butter.

Roller Dam Superintendent's Job Is Important:

The Superintendent must check water levels and make sure the rollers are OK. When logs and trash backed up, Dorothy's father would raise the first roller nearest the house, the sluice roller, to let the trash flow down river. When the river level gets too high, he has to raise levers from the tower houses, which mechanically raise the rollers to let water go underneath. In summer, sandbags were placed at the bottom of the rollers to keep the water diverted into the Government

High Line Canal, instead of going under the rollers and downriver. Keeping irrigation water in the canal was critical.

There was a telephone at the caretaker's house, so Dorothy's dad could call the Grand Valley Water Users Association for help, if needed. Also, there was a man who lived at Camp 4 on the other side of Cameo where the Orchard Mesa siphon goes under the river to feed the two Orchard Mesa canals. Dorothy's father and the man at Camp 4 helped each other out when needed. The house at Camp 4 (*which was originally one of the construction camps for the Roller Dam*) is now gone.

In the winter, ice would freeze on the rollers. There were three ponds below and above the dam. They could skate up the river for about a mile, all the way up to the railroad tunnel above the dam. The water current is now different (*partially due to construction of Interstate 70*), so ice does not form as it did when Dorothy was growing up at the dam.

Palisade High School and Business College:

Palisade was a bigger school than Cameo, with more students and activities like Glee Club, Pep Club, and sports such as baseball and basketball. After graduation in 1942, Dorothy attended Ross Business College, which was located at 3rd and Main Streets in Grand Junction. (*Ross Business College merged with Mesa College about the time Dorothy was finishing school there.*) While attending business school, Dorothy lived in a boarding house on White Avenue and walked to school.

Town of Palisade:

The Plateau Market was in the Hugus Building in downtown Palisade. There was a drug store on the corner, and the Boy Scouts met in the basement of the Hugus Building. (*For a time in the early 1960s, the Boy Scouts had a shooting range in the Hugus Building's basement, where they practiced their marksmanship. They shot .22-caliber rifles at targets attached to bales of hay stacked at the north end of the basement room. Because of the size of the room and other considerations, higher powered rifles were not used.*)

Starting at the age of 12, Dorothy packed peaches at Coleman's orchard for three or four years during peach harvest. She was the top packer, packing 200 boxes per day.

Marriage to Wendell Hines:

Dorothy knew Wendell in high school, although he was two years older. Wendell's cousin, Willo Mae Harbert, was a dear friend (*and they were roommates at the boarding house when they were going to business school and working in Grand Junction*). Wendell came to visit and they went to skating parties together at the Roller Dam. After completing business school, Dorothy worked for the Department of Reclamation in the Agricultural Adjustment Agency, a Federal agency that provided government subsidies to farmers. Wendell went into the service during WW II, and when he came home from boot camp in 1945, they were married in Palisade. His Army service was in the Pacific.

Growing Peaches on Orchard Mesa and Other Work:

After Wendell returned from the service in 1946, he and Dorothy acquired a twenty-acre parcel of land at 3405 C ½ Road on Orchard Mesa, near where Wendell's father had an orchard, so they grew peaches together. (*They had two sons, Gary, born in 1948, and Kent, born in 1951.*) They sold five acres each to Dorothy's brothers, Ray and Archie. Wendell built houses on both parcels for them. Growing peaches in those days did not produce sufficient income to survive, so Wendell went to work in the steel fabrication shop at Grand Junction Steel. After a few years, Wendell and Dorothy opened their own steel fabrication business in Grand Junction. They built the steel trusses for the Esma Lewis School in Rifle and the Plateau Valley School near Collbran, as well as other projects. Financial difficulties ensued after one of their large accounts was unable to pay for work done, so they were forced to close the business.

Following this venture, Wendell found other work in the industrial construction field and Dorothy worked for a Certified Public Accountant in Grand Junction during the school year and had summers off to spend with their two sons. A long, severe cold spell in the winter of 1962-63 killed many of the trees in their orchard, so they sold the land and bought property on East 3rd Street in Palisade (*the old Colonel Bower home*). They lived there until 1970 (*when they sold the property and moved to Grand Junction*).

Wendell's experience in steel construction led to other opportunities in industrial construction in the mining and energy industries. He worked as a construction foreman for COLO MACCO, a local industrial construction company that later became The Industrial Company (TIC), headquartered in Steamboat Springs, Colorado. Wendell supervised construction projects in various mining and milling operations, including the vanadium and uranium mills at Uravan and Rifle, Colorado, a coal-loading silo at the Oxbow mine near Paonia, Colorado, and a conveyor system for the Powderhorn Mine near Palisade. He became the project manager for several co-generation projects, a newer technology which simultaneously produces heat and electricity from agricultural by-products, such as sunflower hulls and cow manure. During these years, Dorothy often accompanied Wendell, working as the Field Office Manager. Their work took them to projects in Utah, California, New Mexico, and Wyoming.

Community Involvement:

Wendell was a member of the Palisade Lion's Club for several years and was active as a leader of the local Boy Scout Troop. Dorothy was an active member of the Palisade Women's Club. Both belonged to the Band Parent's organization, which raised money for the much needed new uniforms for the Palisade High School Band in the 1960s. They enjoyed fishing, hunting, and camping with their sons in the Western Colorado mountains.

The sections *in italics* at the end of this summary were added later by Dorothy's son, Gary.