

Palisade Historical Society
Oral and Video History Project
Interview

Oral History # __002_____

Date: _3/12/2010__

Place _626 Moss Way, Palisade_____ Length _27:52_____

Interviewee __Ed Maurer _____ Phone: _____

Interviewer __Dave Soker_____ Phone: _____

Subjects Covered:

Born in **Vineland** March 6, 1928, (not in Palisade City Limits.) Everyone was living high on the hog until the fall of 1929. Aunt owned a restaurant in Fort Dodge, IA, sent \$5 gold pieces until she lost all of her money in the stock market crash.

Parents came to Palisade separately. Mother taught at **Mt. Lincoln School**, Father managed several fruit orchards and packing sheds. They married in 1927 and moved to Cedaredge where he ran the **Palmer Packing Shed**. They moved back to Palisade and purchased property in the Vinelands.

Growing up in the **Depression** was tough. No jobs. Had to do everything yourself. Father, (Ernie) and his brother, Fred, bought a 1/2 Ton truck, loaded coal at the **Palisade Mine** and drove to Collbran to sell it, pick up a load of manure to sell to put food on the table. Always lots of work to do. In the spring, they would put a sticky substance “**tanglefood**” on tree trunks and heat it to deter cutworms. Now they use sprays.

Harvest was bedlam--he wasn't allowed to go to Palisade. Everyone worked. People came from Paonia and Cedaredge to work before their harvest two weeks later. Transits came from the Camp Bird Mine near Ouray and camped in the same spot every year. In High School, you had to do more work, like drive the trucks of packed fruit to the platforms when the line waiting to unload would be across the Highway. He would help by loading boxes from the platforms to the empty rail cars so their truck could move closer to the platform and eventually be unloaded.

WWII. Once, they heard a loud booming noise at 2 a.m. when two or three munitions cars were on fire in Grand Junction. It took a while to get shrapnel under control. There were Civilian Defense Drills and a Warden in Vineland. Ed was a bicycle messenger for blackouts. People stored scrap metal between the Grade School and High School until eventually a scrap dealer hauled it away. The money was used for bonds or troop welfare. Getting the government to buy fruit in the War was important.

German and Italian soldiers thinned their orchard in June. The Germans would goose step. The Italians were more casual and glad to be somewhere than at war. One day, the

German soldiers just stood around as they were tired from being disciplined by being forced to stand up all night. They were not too reliable.

Ed was inducted into the Army at Lowry Field in 1946 and sent to Japan for a year with the 11th airborne paratroopers. It was quiet in Japan after the war ended. His job included destroying munitions, and deactivating the huge stores of weapons. The Atomic Bombs were nothing compared to the annihilation that would have happened with ground combat in Japan. After discharge in 1948, he attended Mesa State.

In 1949, while going to Mesa College, he also leased the “Crown Orchard” from Marion Echternach – near where the Wine Country Inn is by Interstate 70. He did all the work, and the price for fruit dropped to \$1.05 a box, so he only cleared about \$500. It was a good lesson. He learned he didn’t want to be in the fruit business.

After Mesa State, he went to **Colorado A.&M.** in Fort Collins. His late wife, (Douglou Ryan) and Shirley were best friends. It is nice to be back together again with Shirley. After graduating, he got a technical soils job in California with the U.S. Salinity Lab in Riverside. He had tried the tractor business with his cousin, Bill, which didn’t work out. He worked for **Climax Uranium** in Grand Junction – at the processing plant at the end of 7th Street. He advanced and moved to Idaho, New Mexico, and Tooele, UT with Getty mining gold. An excellent company to retire from.

Orchard Mesa Power Plant. Vineland is near the River, and with seepage from the hydroelectric plant for the Orchard Mesa Power Canal, drain tile is necessary to lower the water table. The Power Plant was instrumental to develop Orchard Mesa. The Highline and Grand Valley Canals carry water from DeBeque to Mack, however, the seepage from the unlined canals wiped out apples in Appleton, and Fruita.

Frost Damage. Did very little smudging. His cousin’s orchard against the mountain was kept from freezing. The breeze in the Vinelands kept his father’s orchard from freezing. In the 1950’s orchards started to freeze. Now there are wind machines to prevent damage.

Stilts were used to prune trees in the winter, or you could stand on platforms to reach the tall branches. Trees are much shorter now, and peaches are thinned at blossom time. He used to thin right after school was out in June with a rubber tipped pole (to knock off extra peaches) for extra money.

He was 17 when his younger brother, Bob, was born. As a senior in high school, he would bring the baby brother to events and see the girls. Bob is a dentist in Anchorage, AK, and with his wife, Barbara, own Graystone Winery in Clifton. Ed played football at Palisade High School, in the Army, and at Mesa Junior College. He was a 180 pound tackle. Only first cousin alive is Nancy Taylor as her brother, Bill, died a week before. There are 3rd and 4th Cousins in Iowa. Aunt Emma Tilton May lived west of Town. There were seven Maurers in the Valley, and four in Palisade but none were old pioneer families. Lots of people came to Palisade from Iowa.