

Palisade Historical Society
Oral and Video History Project
Interview

Oral History # OH 447 (Mesa County Oral History Project) Date: June 1981

Place: The Palisade Tribune offices, Palisade, CO. – most likely at the newspaper office when it was located north of the railroad tracks at 117 S. Main Street. Content of interview, traffic and train sounds in the background lead to this conclusion. Length:
MP3 #1 – 1:02:00
MP3 #2 – 0:57:28

Interviewee: William H (Bill) Lorenzen
Interviewer: Judy Ann Prosser-Armstrong
Digital Production: Noel Kalenian

This is a summary an oral history transcription created for the Palisade Historical Society from two MP3 audio files in the Mesa County Oral History Project collection, Museums of Western Colorado. The original source material was an audio cassette recording made in June 1981 and published in digital format April 28, 2021. The MP3 files can be accessed at: [Interview with William H. Lorenzen | Mesa County Libraries \(marmot.org\)](https://www.marmot.org/collections/mesa-county-libraries/oral-history-project/interview-with-william-h-lorenzen)

The text herein in *italics* is not part of the original transcript and was added for clarification. Information in this transcription represents what was current at the time of the interview in 1981, so there have been some changes since then.

Early History of *The Palisade Tribune* (often simply referred to as “*The Tribune*”)

The first issue of *The Palisade Tribune* was printed June 6, 1903. The early editions had advertising on the front page, which was customary in the early days, especially in the Western United States. Early issues of *The Tribune* used a linotype machine to set the type for the printer. A boiler plate with two or three columns was used, and it came with national and state news. In exchange, the publisher was expected to print some of the boiler plate company’s advertising.

Clinton Martin was the first editor/publisher of *The Tribune*. (*from June 6, 1903 to July 1909*). At the time, the publisher was likely also the news gatherer, typesetter, and advertising salesman. Most early newspapers also served their communities as commercial print shops.

Bill believed there was one forerunner of *The Palisade Tribune*. He never saw a copy of it and did not know its name. (*Palisade Courier*) He felt it was probably in business for only about a year before it folded. There did not seem to be any record of it anywhere.

The first office of *The Tribune* was located at 2nd and Main Streets, behind Phillips Photo Shop, which was approximately where the liquor store was located at the time of the interview (*currently Hummel Real Estate and The Purple Bee giftshop*). Phillips Photo Shop is referenced in early editions of *The Tribune*. In 1906, *The Tribune* moved its operation to 117 South Main

Street (currently the location of the Palisade Trolley). The original building (known as the J.H. Sayles building) was built for the purpose of being a print shop. To Bill's knowledge, the current building was structurally the same 24 ft. x 40 ft. building occupied by the newspaper office when he took over as publisher. The "annex" on the south side of the building may or may not have been part of the original building. At one time the Western Union Office occupied that space before it moved across the railroad tracks to the railroad depot. It is evident that a doorway had been cut into the south wall for access between the annex and main building. The interior of the building was essentially the same as it was when built.

Other Tribune editors in the 1920s included C. W. Culhane and Willard McCoy, Willard's brother, Mark McCoy later became editor, working at the Tribune over 23 years, starting as an apprentice at age ten. He was also a gifted photographer, and after leaving Palisade, was employed as a linotype operator at The Denver Post. In 1936, Mark McCoy sold the paper to J. Guy Baily

Guy Baily was a colorful character. He was sharp-witted but tended to imbibe heavily. He also hated Eleanor Roosevelt with a vengeance! Guy would go to the local beer parlor and after being plied with liquor would write nasty things about Mrs. Roosevelt, things which would not be tolerated today. At one point he received orders to cease and desist from publishing such articles. After that, Baily's wife took over editing most of what was published. Bill recalled there used to be a porch between the window and front door of the newspaper office. The porch was a ramshackle structure, which the Lorenzens tore down. In the demolition, they discovered a variety of scotch, bourbon, and wine bottles under the porch. After Baily sold the paper and retired in 1948, he moved to Colona, CO where he reportedly quit drinking. *Carlisle Bare was publisher in 1949.*

Clinton Martin owned the newspaper three different times for short periods. *He sold to E. S. Sherman in July 1909, who was the editor for several years. When he left, Martin took back the paper.* After Martin sold the paper the final time, he moved to California and opened a custom print shop, where he printed wedding invitations, announcements, etc., on a selective basis. *Martin passed away August 17, 1957 in Tahoe City, California.* Another publisher, Paul Hain, was still alive when Bill moved to Palisade, but he did not elaborate on Mr. Hain.

Bill recalled a column in *The Tribune* called "Peach Fuzz," which was characterized as containing controversial topics, information, and opinions. The column was discontinued in the interest of keeping things peaceful in the community. In its life as a newspaper, *The Palisade Tribune* never missed an issue in all its years in existence and as a single newspaper with the same name, it had more continuous service in Mesa County than any other paper, past or present.

At the time of this interview, none of the former editors or publishers were still living. When the Lorenzens came to Palisade in 1953, Lincoln Coit owned *The Tribune*, and *Lloyd Slaight* was listed as publisher and owner in issues before May 1953. Coit was a Grand Junction attorney, (and Palisade Town attorney) and his wife managed the newspaper operation. They hired a man to gather stories, sell advertising, and print the newspaper.

The Lorenzens arrived in Palisade in 1953:

Bill was born in South Dakota but was raised in Iowa. During the Depression, people were grateful for any kind of work they could get, so he grew up with an ethic of working hard to meet one's financial obligations.

When the Lorenzens came to Palisade in 1953 (*with three children, Danny, age 6, Susan, age 4, and John, age 2. The youngest, Mark, was born in Palisade*), the population was quite static. Local merchants were happy to see them, but they would not advertise in the paper. Their view was that everyone knew they were here and had been for years, so there was no need to advertise. Bill and his wife, Margaret, found themselves having to go to Clifton and Grand Junction to get advertisers. Sometimes, that did not sit very well with local merchants, as they viewed businesses outside of Palisade as competition. They did have regular advertising from several large firms, such as Ford, Coors beer, US Brewers, the Colorado Press Association, and Mountain Bell. As time went on, it became increasingly difficult to get advertisers from Grand Junction, so they focused on the commercial printing aspect of the business for a more reliable source of income. It took Bill and Margaret 13 ½ years to pay off their mortgage on *The Tribune*. A few years later, they went back into debt to purchase new printing equipment.

Another problem the paper faced was that the local community was close-knit and did not readily accept newcomers. Much of the community was comprised of people who had lived here for many years, or their children, so it was difficult to break into these circles, both in business and socially. In addition, due to past poor recordkeeping by previous owners, *The Tribune's* reputation had suffered. There were inaccurate and conflicting records on subscriptions, and some townspeople quit subscribing out of frustration. Finally, after much research, Bill determined the newspaper had around 400 subscribers when he arrived to take over the operation of *The Tribune*.

Gradually, as the newspaper built up more trust within the community, things began to improve. People often used the newspaper to research and determine eligibility for issues such as collecting Social Security, State Pension funds, and to establish inheritance rights. Birth records of the day were sketchy, as there was no legal requirement to officially record births for many years, so the only records were often found in newspapers. Over the years, Bill responded to many legal requests for information. Others simply wanted genealogical information.

Probably, the biggest change at *The Tribune* occurred when it acquired a new printing press. Parts for the old machines became difficult to obtain, and the old machines were not always well maintained. At one time, Bill had a machinist come over from Denver to work on *The Tribune's* printing press.

They also replaced the old paper folder, which was the source of considerable frustration because it never worked properly. Bill recalled disassembling it and the old press and hauling the parts out the back door to be taken to the landfill. The old press was well-built, and it took Bill about two weeks to tear it apart. It weighed about 5,900 pounds.

After clearing out the old equipment, they discovered the floor needed to be rebuilt because the weight of the equipment had taken its toll on the floor. While they were at it, they put in a new ceiling and insulated it, as well as the side walls, so they could achieve a comparatively dust-free

environment. Bill recalled at one time, the temperature inside the building reached 126 degrees, so the insulation helped immensely.

At *The Tribune*, there was quite a variety of typesets on hand. They were expensive to replace, so they bought replacement typesets as they could afford to do so. Judging from the appearance of the type in the printed paper, it looked like the early papers were letterpress printed, rather than an offset press. The linotype letters tended to wear out due to the metal being repeatedly forced into the mold. This often created a gap, which was visible on the printed page. These marks were called “hairlines.” Some of the older typesets were made from higher-quality metal alloy, so they held up better than the newer ones.

The printing mats were highly machined, and a magazine could hold 2,100 mats. Handset type was used mainly for larger fonts, such as headlines. They could not afford to buy the costly larger fonts for the machines, so they relied mainly on handset type. The handset they had was probably the original equipment when *The Tribune* was first started. It and the paper cutter were made by the same company – Chandler and Price. The perforator was also likely original equipment. It was operated with a foot pedal and allowed sheets to be perforated so they could be torn in two.

Often, fruit growers would come into the print shop in June to order supplies for harvest time, such as packing cards and picker tickets. The growers sometimes charged their orders, so the print shop didn't receive payment from the growers until after they received their fruit checks from the cooperatives (*in November*). The companies that supplied paper were flexible and readily extended credit until their customers could pay for the paper sold to them.

Bill recalled a two-volume set on the history of Palisade; a project the local Women's Club worked on extensively. He loaned out archived newspapers, a mistake he lived to regret. Unfortunately, some of the borrowers were not good at keeping track of where the papers went once loaned to them. Other papers were returned with missing pages and sometimes articles had been clipped out of the paper. After this, Bill made it a policy not to loan out papers, although he welcomed people to let him know a day ahead of time, so he could retrieve papers from storage in his basement at home. Then, they could peruse the papers in the office without removing them from the premises. Bill was amused at how people often got so engrossed in the old papers they became sidetracked from what they had originally come in to look for.

Microfilming was a good way to preserve the papers, to reduce handling of the fragile paper. Bill remembered when researching old papers for *Tribune* columns on 25, 50, and 75 years ago, he noticed it took very little handling to damage the papers.

Bill's Career as a Town Official

After moving to Palisade, Bill became interested in the Town government, so he attended board meetings for several years. After a time, he decided he would like to contribute his ideas on how the town should operate. He served 14 years on the Town Board, six years as a Trustee and then eight years as Mayor. Bill served as Mayor from 1957 until 1964. He was active in the Colorado Municipal League for one term.

Bill cited a highlight of his tenure with the Town on an issue that arose with the Palisade Irrigation District. At one time, they convinced State Legislators they needed to raise irrigation fees. The burden for this increase was placed on Town residents, even if they did not use the water or own agricultural land. The irrigation district managed to move the bill through the Legislature with no ceiling on the amount of money the district could charge people. In some cases, rates increased from \$0.47 to \$5.00. Most people in town viewed this as unfair because domestic water in Palisade was inexpensive and plentiful. Furthermore, many of the irrigation lines were no longer functional, so the water could not be delivered to them. Finally, Town residents were not allowed to vote in irrigation district elections. Essentially, they viewed this as “taxation without representation.” Bill attended hearings in Denver on the issue and working through the League and with the help of a Senator from the Boulder area, they were able to get a bill through the Legislature allowing people living in town to vote in irrigation district elections. At the time, there were 450 registered voters in Palisade, but only 66 turned out for the next irrigation district election. This was disappointing after the work Bill and others had put into the issue over a ten-year period. Nowadays, it is not as easy for irrigation districts to raise rates without any interaction with the Town.

Another accomplishment Bill saw in his tenure in Town government was the paving of streets in the city limits. He cited Cora Young as a tremendous help to the Town Board, as she went out knocking on doors, and finally three paving districts were established in the Town. Cora and her husband, Bennett Young, operated the service station and garage at 3rd Street and Iowa Avenue for many years.

Bill was proud of the Town’s accomplishments in improving the water and sewer systems. George Nesbit, who served as Town Manager for 47 years, had great foresight in getting projects completed. Palisade gained a reputation as a clean community where people kept up their homes and were proud to live.

Bill had run for Mayor earlier, but Al Merlino, who was appointed to a vacancy on the Town Board decided to run against him at the last minute. Al ended up winning that election. Bill cited Al as an excellent mayor who brought a lot of good ideas to the Board and made many positive changes to how the Town operated. He was a very tough act to follow! Also interested in Town government were Norman Wycoff and Kermit Hampton, with whom Bill frequently met to informally discuss issues of the day.

As Mayor, Bill learned there were a lot of expectations here, and he viewed it as an enlightening experience. He and the Board were limited in what they could do because usually allocated funds were encumbered to pay for items such as wages, salaries, and replacement of aging equipment. Most of the time, there was not a lot of money left over for anything else. In fact, Bill recalled at one time they had only \$250 in the Town’s contingency fund, so they prayed that nothing would break! In fairness to the taxpayers, Bill favored not holding large amounts of surplus funds. Overall, Bill enjoyed his time serving as a Trustee and as Mayor. He found that often people would come into *The Tribune* office just to talk with him about an issue of concern. He was a good listener, and most people left satisfied that their concerns were at least heard.

Other Local Papers

The towns of Collbran and DeBeque also had local newspapers. Cost factors have done away with most of the smaller weekly papers, as they could not compete with the larger daily newspaper in Grand Junction. Clifton was an unincorporated area, so that made survival even more difficult. The Palisade community has always been supportive of *The Tribune* and prided itself on having a weekly newspaper of its own. *The Palisade Tribune* printed news articles from nearby towns and for a time printed out legal notices for the Town of DeBeque, which was a good source of revenue.

At one time, a man by the name of Lyle Mariner published a paper called *The Morning Sun*. He was working with *The Daily Sentinel* and got backing from the Governor. Still, the paper failed, largely due to cost factors and competition for advertising dollars from existing local newspapers, radio, and television stations.

Another attempt was made with a plan to “run *The Palisade Tribune* out of business.” Bill did not recall the names of those involved but they called their paper *The Bulldog*. *The Palisade Tribune* covered sports at the high school, and the school had a student paper called *The Bulldog Barks*. After about a year, *The Bulldog* folded because they could not build up an adequate number of subscribers. Reportedly, the people involved formerly had a newspaper in Idaho, and word was they abandoned mortgaged equipment there.

Bill said the weekly papers nowadays cannot afford to print their own papers, so they are forced to go to a daily publisher to get their papers printed. When *The Palisade Tribune* was being printed by *The Daily Sentinel*, the entire paper could be printed in four minutes, whereas Bill spent upwards of three hours to print 1,200 copies of each edition locally.

When the Lorenzens sold *The Palisade Tribune* to Marion Stocking in July 1979, he reckoned it had about 1,200 subscribers. Circulation was primarily in town and the surrounding rural areas. Some former residents still subscribed to the newspaper. In looking back on his years as a newspaper man in Palisade, Bill felt these were wonderful but not always easy years. Over the course of these years, he met a lot of great people and feels he made a positive contribution to the welfare of Palisade as a community. At the time of this interview, he had gotten out of the newspaper business and was focusing on his print business. He enjoys having the freedom this allows, since he no longer had to attend meetings, write up news articles, and get the paper out on time. Margaret was a mainstay in their newspaper business but is not currently involved in the printing business.

Military Service for both Lorenzens

Though he didn't talk about his military service even to his family, Bill was a highly decorated veteran who served 42 months as a radio operator with the Army Air Corps in World War II. He was stationed in England where he successfully flew 35 combat missions over Germany in B-24's with the Royal Air Force. For his valiant valor and courage, he was awarded five bronze stars, a silver star, and two Distinguished Flying Crosses. He met and married Margaret Sullivan in July 1943 while both were in the Army. Margaret served as a radio operator in the Women's Army Corp in WWII. They were married for 56 years.

Famous classmates:

As a high school student in Sioux City, Iowa, Bill knew the Freedman twins – Ester Pauline and Pauline Ester – better known these days as Dear Abby and Ann Landers. They worked in journalism, while Bill's focus was on printing. His printing instructor in high school told Bill he was learning a trade, and it would always serve him well. As a young man before coming to Palisade, Bill worked for the *Jackson County Times* in Kansas City. He got out of the newspaper business altogether for about six years but then returned to it.

Oldest son, Danny, passed away in 1976

Bill relayed with considerable sadness events surrounding his eldest son, *Donald (Danny)*, who was the only one of his children ever interested in the newspaper business *as an adult*. *The other children, especially the middle son, John, worked on the Tribune each week during high school.* For a time, *Danny* worked for a newspaper in Texas but came home for a short time. While here, he started going to Town meetings for Bill and asked Bill how he should write these up. Bill told him to write only what he heard and saw and not to editorialize. Shortly after that, he got a position as Editor for a newspaper in Brush, CO. He came home one evening after a hard week's work and fell asleep with a cigarette in his hand. He died of smoke inhalation *on October 9, 1976*. Later, Bill and Margaret received condolences from members of the Brush town government, expressing their appreciation of his son because he only reported the facts and never editorialized. Bill felt this was probably the most important thing he ever taught his son.

Bill and Margaret's daughter, Susan, and husband Lee Cesario were instrumental in saving archival copies of the Palisade Tribune. When Susan learned the Daily Sentinel ceased publishing the Palisade Tribune in March 2014, she called the Sentinel publisher, Jay Seaton, on his private line on a Sunday. She extracted a promise from him to donate the archives to the Palisade Historical Society. By June, the Society got an agreement and volunteers spent hundreds of hours sorting the newspapers and putting them in chronological order. In November, the building was sold, and Susan and Lee came to Palisade and finished putting the issues – from 1903 – 2014 in archival boxes and moved them to climate-controlled storage. Since then, the Historical Society has 3,347 issues digitized and continues raising funds to digitize more. Susan passed away just two years later in 2016.

Margaret was born November 5, 1913 and passed away April 21, 1999. Bill was born June 18, 1919 and passed away May 6, 2002 in Palisade.

Summary by Gary W. Hines

March 2023

(continued)

From son, John Lorenzen, 3/7/2024

Memories of Bill Lorenzen

My father was proud of the work done to get the streets paved in Palisade. It was a great team effort to convince people to pay for their share but made the town much more attractive. He often said how much work Cora Young did to make it happen.

I remember when we put the new ceiling in the building. I think I was about 16 and my father bought the material for the hanging ceiling and he had me put it up. He helped me start the frame and then I completed the ceiling using a level and wires to hang the frame. Not much in that old building was level so at times it seemed a bit uneven, but when finished it looked good and really brightened up the building.

The newspaper business was really a family business. We all worked at various times on the paper during the week and on Thursdays it was an all-out family effort to get the paper printed and mailed. My father was the only one who ran the linotype, that was his machine. I think it was too complicated and he was afraid something would happen and we wouldn't meet our deadline. My mother did a lot of the local news and put labels on the paper for a local mailing and as Susan got older she took over the mailing job. My brother Dan and I helped put all of the news in forms for the final press work and then tear apart the forms after the paper was run on Thursdays. We both did headlines out of hand type. I remember my brother taught me how to do the typesetting and I think he was happy when I took it over. I loved working with my father and did a lot of work in the paper and ran the big newspaper printing press while I was going to high school and when I was home from college. I did a lot of job printing for my father and remember doing a lot of work for the peach harvest and printing raffle tickets for the Lions and the American Legion for their annual fundraisers. This work was done primarily on Saturday mornings when the work on the newspaper was completed for the week.

Our father was a big supporter of our mother and I remember he wouldn't join the American Legion because they wouldn't let my mother join. He said she was a Sergeant in the Army Air Corps and deserves to be in the Legion as much as he did.

They were married in Alamogordo New Mexico after knowing each other for just six weeks.

They were the first all military wedding ever at the base. He was shipped out two days after the wedding and flew 35 missions over Europe in B-24 bombers. I believe the survival rate for bombers was only seven missions! He never discussed his military service with me until well after I was grown and married!

An honor was bestowed on my father after his death by Representative Scott McInnis in the US Congressional Record as follows:

PAYING TRIBUTE TO WILLIAM LORENZEN
HON. SCOTT McINNIS
OF COLORADO
IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Wednesday, July 24, 2002

Mr. MCINNIS. Mr. Speaker, it is with a solemn heart that I take this opportunity to pay respect to the passing of William H. Lorenzen, who recently passed away at the age of 82. William, known as Bill, was the former owner and co-publisher of the Palisades Tribune. Bill died on May 6th in Denver, Colorado. As his friends and family mourn the loss of an outstanding patriot, father, and husband, I would like to take this moment to highlight his achievements before this body of Congress and this nation.

Bill served in the Army Air Corps as a radio operator during WWII where he successfully flew 35 combat missions in B-24's and for his valiant valor and courage, he was awarded five bronze stars, a silver star, and two Distinguished Flying Crosses. Bill's service on behalf of freedom should help serve to reinvigorate our nation's consciousness of the sacrifices made to defend this country. He met and married his wife of 56 years, Margaret Sullivan, in July 1943 while both were in the Army, beginning a family future and legacy passed down through generations. After the war, Bill was active in his civic and public communities, providing Colorado's youth an upstanding foundation. Bill established himself as a longtime businessman and leader in the Palisade community where he owned and operated *The Palisade Tribune* for 26 years. He served six years as Town Trustee, eight years as Mayor and five-and-one-half as Municipal Judge. Bill also played an active role in the Colorado Municipal League and was a director of the League for two terms before serving as president of the Western District of the Colorado Press Association and as a chairman on the legal committee for the Press Association.

After retiring from the Palisades Tribune, Bill joined the Palisades National Bank as director in 1982 and served on the board until his death. Bill received many distinguished accolades throughout his career including the Distinguished Service Award and was named Citizen of the Year for Palisade. Bill is survived by his three children and eight grandchildren.

Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that we celebrate the life of William H. "Bill" Lorenzen. He was a remarkable man and his impressive accomplishments certainly deserve the recognition of this body of Congress and this nation. I, along with his grateful community and loving family, will miss you Bill.