

Summary of oral history interviews with Mr. Roger Granat May 11, 2026 and June 4, 2026. The interviews took place at the kitchen table in the Granat home in Palisade.

Note: Some portions of this summary are direct quotations, often edited for brevity, and most of the balance is a summary of Mr. Granat's spoken words. He provided a written story of his birth.

Notes in italics were added by the Palisade Historical Society editor for purposes of clarification.

Introduction: Mr. Granat (hereafter referred to as Roger) grew up in Palisade and has resided in the town for most of his life. He lists his occupations before retirement as peach rancher, heavy equipment operator, welder, and office manager. He served on the Palisade board of trustees for 4 years, served as mayor pro-tem and was Mayor of Palisade for 9.5 years. He has served as a volunteer firefighter in Palisade and Pine Junction, CO. He is a Hunter Education instructor.

Roger tells the story of his birth

It was 1942 and Dad was just getting started in the peach business. The home place didn't have a lot of mature trees on it, so Dad had talked to Max Sisson about getting on a crew that was checking the trees for Mosaic. Max was the foreman of the different crews that were checking all the orchards in the Valley for the Mosaic disease.

Mom and Dad were expecting their second child anytime, so Mom was in a waiting game. Carl Asmussen (who we called Uncle Carl) was a good friend, and had told Mom that if she needed to go to the hospital while Dad was working that he and Aunt Mable, Uncle Carl's wife, would take her to St Mary's Hospital which back then was located on 11th and Colorado Ave. in Grand Junction.

About three in the afternoon Max came out to where Dad was working to tell him that Uncle Carl had taken Mom to the hospital. Dad told Max "Naw, since it's almost quitting time, I'll finish out the day."

Dad took time to get cleaned up before driving to Grand Junction, and when he got to the hospital a nurse told him Mom was still in labor and it would be a while.

Back then the hospital didn't have a cafeteria and only fixed meals for the patients. Dad walked down to the Quincy restaurant which was on Main Street.

When he returned to the hospital the nurses were whispering back and forth in quiet tones. The Head Nurse asked, "Is there a Mr. Granat here?" Dad said "Yeah, that's me." She smiled and said, "Come with me and meet your family."

Little did my Mom and Dad know that they would be the parents of twins. My sister Ruth was born 15 minutes before me and as they were getting Mom and the new baby girl cleaned up, one of the nurses said, "Hold up, we have another baby coming." My sister always called me her little brother, to which I told her that I was just being polite, "ladies first."

Growing up in Palisade during the 1940s-1950s

Roger's family lived in the Vineland district, where "there were not a lot of neighbors and no streetlights, and you had to make fun for yourself. The first thing I learned to do was get into trouble. That came naturally." He spent a lot of time in the orchard with his father. "There was always something to help Dad with. He was my best friend." His mother introduced him to drawing, which "kept me out of trouble. Somewhat. (Laughs.) We had a great young life. Everyone knew everyone and I couldn't do anything wrong here in town and pedal my bike home--about one mile to the east-- without my mom already knowing about it when I got there."

There was a theater near the corner of 3rd Street and Main. The Elberta Theater had good movies and with 15 cents, you could see movies and get a bag of popcorn too.

Boy Scouts had meetings in the former CCC camp where the filtration ponds are now. A lot of organizations used those buildings. "I had a paper route in the evening and delivered *The Daily Sentinel* using my bicycle, which was a coaster and didn't have three speeds or an electric motor like they have now. I went down Main Street, then to Logan, the CCC camp and then delivered Vineland. My brother had a route delivering *The Denver Post*."

"Palisade High School seniors painted a P on the side of the Bookcliffs at the time of graduation. All the old timers remember it, but we don't have any photos. The kids climbed as high as they could on the top cliff, on the side of it, and painted as high as they could reach, then came down from the top and finished the rest. After School District 51 came in 1951, it was determined that we were not going to be doing that anymore. That's when they brought the P over to Horse Mountain."

"The streets in town were gravel; the town had a rock crusher set up in De Beque Canyon. The rock that was used was red rock like you find on the west end of Glade Park and was easily crushed so the town crushed it, hauled it here and stockpiled it. The ladies got upset. They would do their washing on Mondays and hang it on lines to dry. Traffic would raise red dust from the road, so they'd have tinted laundry. They went to the town council about it. George Nisbet was the foreman then and said that pavement as well as curbs, gutters and sidewalk could be installed. But it would mean that they would have to take out the open ditches.

The Palisade dump was along the Colorado River located about where the restrooms were and extended west to about where the park's road meets the canal. The town used a

bulldozer to dig a deep trench about 8' deep and 12' wide for you to dump your trash in. Everyone in town had an incinerator in their back yard where they would burn their trash. About every two to three months the public works crew (two men) would come around and clean them out. The dump was managed by a man named Bill, who lived in a trailer onsite with his dogs and decided what could be accepted for disposal.

George Nisbet became the Town Manager in the 1950s and Stanley Smith was Town Marshal. The Deputy Marshal, John Troxel, went out every evening at dusk with a long stick with a wire loop at the end of it. He'd reach up on the light poles and turn the switch on. Later, mischievous boys would have a long stick in their car with a loop on it and wait until he went around the corner and go turn it off. Just mischievous people, I don't know anything about it, it's what I heard happened. (Laughs.)

Getting from one place to another in the area was very different in those days. "My dad said that when he was a kid (in the 1920s), the highway---US Highway 6 & 24---came across the bridge over River Road. Just as it got next to the railroad there was an underpass under the railroad and it went past where George Distefano lived and came around and stayed above the railway until it got to the upper end of Bower Avenue and then it came down to 4th Street to 8th Street up to Front Street. From there it wound around through the valley all the way to Utah. It's gone now and people don't know about it or realize how it was."

Roger's affinity for hunting and other outdoor activities began at an early age. His extensive knowledge of the region grew through hunting trips with his father, starting with an elk hunt when he was in the 3rd grade. "I got to hunt during the golden years of hunting in the state of Colorado. There was a lot of game and not many restrictions from landowners. If you'd go up on Piceance Creek after the migration was over and you didn't count 2,000 head of deer, you didn't see any." Additionally, his family traveled to visit his grandparents who were homesteaders near Cisco, Utah. Their lifestyle was one of living off the land: they raised almost everything that they ate, and his grandfather trapped beaver on the river and sold the hides.

Roger's parents were well-known and active in fraternal service and other organizations in Palisade. "Dad was on the Peach Board of Control. He was on the United Fruit Growers Association board and at one time was chairman. He was also active in the Masonic Lodge, including three years as Master of Palisade Masonic Lodge No. 125 AF&AM. Mom was active with Eastern Star and served as a Worthy Matron. The Eastern Star didn't exist without the Masonic Lodge. The Lodge was upstairs in the Hugus Building at 3rd Street and Main. *In 1951, the Lodge and Eastern Star moved to the former Presbyterian Church building on 5th Street and Kluge Avenue.*

Harvest season in the orchards

"Harvest has changed. When I was a kid, the town grew to 5,000 people during peach harvest, and the labor camp would be full. Most ranchers, if they were very big at all, had

some kind of camping accommodation on their property for their help so that they didn't have to go into town. Dad had tents that he put up in the orchard and later he bought the Wyckoff place that had accommodation for a cook shack and bunkhouses upstairs. We eventually had about 50 people working for us during harvest. Many came from Oklahoma. Dewey Lewis came from Pineville, Missouri to help with picking and told us he had strapping young boys in his family who would love to come. He'd bring 8-10 guys with him. These were 13- to 16-year-old kids who normally worked catching chickens on the farm. A lot of these guys became like family and at the end of harvest we would have a big ice cream social for them. Dad treated his help well. He figured "Those who help me, I help them."

"Then there were some growers who would contract their help from down in the South. And they'd bring in a busload of guys and they'd turn them loose. The man in charge of the Board of Control once told my dad, "I don't know why people are like that. (He explained that) a guy down South would loan a bunch of people there some money and then tell them, 'Okay, you need to go with me to pick peaches.' He'd say to the rancher, 'I'll take care of their books. You don't pay them, you pay me.' Well, they never managed to pick enough to pay off their debt. So then it would be, 'Okay now we're going to Washington to pick apples.' They were in modern day servitude. I didn't go for it, neither did Dad. He wouldn't use them. But there were some growers who felt it was the only help that they could get. You know, that it's better than letting your fruit drop on the ground. That was (when I was) growing up. Things were like that."

How Palisade has changed in recent decades

"When they moved the 4th Street bridge to 8th Street, that was the beginning of the end of Palisade as a self-sufficient community where many businesses could succeed. Before that, it took 45 minutes to 1 hour to get to Grand Junction and so you didn't want to work there. As roads became improved—smoother, without so many ruts and washboards, you could drive there in 15-20 minutes. Pay was better there so people commuted. Palisade businesses began to decline. Most that were here then are no longer around. Of course, things change. And you've got to learn to change with them."

When Roger was first elected mayor, he was asked 'If you could change Palisade, how would you change it?' "I said that I would make it the way that it was when I was a child. Not for the nostalgic reasons, but because it was self-sufficient." Palisade had a variety of businesses and essential services, including two full-service grocery stores and five small convenience-type stores, Bennett Young's Garage, a lumber yard, two attorneys, two doctors, two barber shops and more. You didn't have to go to Grand Junction unless you had business with the county or the state. Restaurants included Lucy's Café in Vineland, run by Jack and Lucy Latham, on the first floor of their two-story home. People would need to make reservations on Sundays. It also was a popular truck stop and gas station.

“The hardest lesson I learned when I was first elected to council was that you have to accept change and do things in a way that’s not going to be hurting someone. My biggest challenge—as mayor elected after a recall—was that it seemed there was a lot of mistrust of the government. Not speaking badly of anyone who was in government at the time, but people didn’t feel that they could go to a council meeting and voice an opinion. When I was first elected mayor, anyone who wanted to speak before council—no matter where they’re from—could speak. Your opinion is worth something. It seemed to me that the town took a sigh of relief. Whether it was because it was a hometown boy who was there or he was doing things the right way, I don’t know. That’s just the way I felt.”

“When I was growing up, Palisade was the poster child of a Norman Rockwell type of a place where people would help each other out. You don’t have that today.

I remember how the town would get together and help a grower that for one reason or another couldn’t get his work done. The community would come together and help.”

Cameo Shooting and Educational Complex

Roger’s most memorable event was the creation of the Cameo Shooting and Educational Complex to benefit the area’s economic development. “I could see that places I had gone shooting around here when I was a kid were being encroached upon by housing. It got my attention when I saw that Colorado Parks and Wildlife offered a \$5,000 grant for small shooting ranges. We invited them to speak at the town board meeting, and the Mule Deer Foundation was there too. They talked about the Ben Avery shooting complex in Phoenix, AZ and how they throw over 25,000 targets a year. That piqued our interest because we were thinking economic development: how’s that going to help us here in Palisade?

Other agencies revealed interest in having a shooting range and saw possibilities for it as a significant economic development opportunity. “I preferred Horse Mountain as the location, but Parks and Wildlife said no, that’s a winter range for deer and elk. Cameo was for sale by Xcel Energy at the time and had advantages of 2,000 yards of landscape and vertical cliffs as excellent backstops to reduce noise. We all started looking into development of the concept and Cameo Shooting and Education Complex (CSEC) was my suggestion for its name. J.T. Romanski with Parks and Wildlife was instrumental in working with Xcel Energy (which was Snowcap Coal then) and got a price we could afford. Our Dept. of Local Affairs representative was instrumental in identifying a \$2 million grant for the property, ‘but you’re going to have to do some talking.’ I thought that Town Administrator Rich Sales would be our mouthpiece and promote the project, but no, he said that I was mayor and should take on that role. There’s no way that I had ever in my entire life expected that I was going to go over and testify before the US Senate or the House of Representatives. Well, guess what? It was not at the same time, so I had to make two different trips.

“On the 19th of May 2014 we did first shots there rather than have a ribbon cutting. John Hickenlooper was governor at that time, and he got to take the first shot. It so happens that May 19 is my birthday, and J.T. had arranged that I take the second shot. ‘The target’s out there and it’s a cake.’ My first shot left the cake standing there. They said, “You missed.” So, I told them the second shot would make the cake explode. I held right for the bottom of the cake, and it blew to pieces. A couple days later my wife Marie and I went back there in our jeep and saw bighorn sheep where the cake had been. One was standing there eating cake!”

Fire Department volunteer and continued community involvement

Roger said that he has “always” been involved as a volunteer with Palisade’s Fire Department, and during the several years he lived on Colorado’s Front Range, he was part of the firefighting team that tackled the roughly 13,000-acre High Meadow Fire in 2000.

Roger continues to attend Palisade Board of Trustee meetings regularly to keep abreast of things. “Sometimes it’s hard not to say something. But ultimately, it’s ‘not my circus, not my monkey.’ Trustees have to go through a learning process and you’ve got to let them make their own mistakes, unless it’s a big, big thing that’s going to cost the town a lot of money. There are things that they’re not doing that I think they should. It doesn’t mean that I’m right.”

“It’s like right now, with the water situation we’ve got (of severe drought), they need to have already put into place water restrictions. They say we have water in Cabin Reservoir to carry the town for a whole year. But what if there’s a wildfire and we have to dip water out of it by the bucketful? Are they getting maintenance on the springs done? We have 26 springs and they need to be clean and producing. It’s things like that, but it’s not my place to tell them. If I drop a hint to the mayor and he doesn’t run with it, okay. I have no authority. Just the big “Ex” behind my name. (Laughs.)

“That was one thing that my dad instilled upon me as a young kid because he had a great interest in the water up on the Grand Mesa. That’s why one reservoir up there is named Granat, and another one is named for Ray Denison. When I was a trustee we all went up there to the Yager Ranch and dedicated the reservoirs to those two.

Wayne Aspinall had been Dad’s teacher, and both were in the Masonic Lodge together. He was concerned about water back in the 1930s and 40s. He passed on that concern to my dad and luckily, Dad passed that concern on to myself. Because that’s one of those things we absolutely need to have: air and water.