

Beth: This is Beth Smith and I'm at 119 Poncha Boulevard talking to Iris Stotler who's going to tell us about her life at Salida. How're you doing Iris?

Iris: Well, okay. I'm doing pretty well.

Beth: Good. Tell us where your life started here.

Iris: Oh, well, I was born at home in a house at 548 E Street that is still there, in very good condition. I was born in 1918 and I had a brother who was twelve years old but he died of the flu in January of 1919. I have a sister and she was born in 1912, she's six years older than I. Of course, I went to grade school, it was Central School, grade school, later became McCray School. I went to Kesner Junior High School. I attended Salida High School, graduated in 1935, and I think I was probably a spoiled child, had a certainly very nice life. Growing up we had, my father worked for the narrow gauge railroad and my mother was a stay at home mom but she belonged to different organizations. She, her family were quakers. She didn't ever really join any church here but she did see that my sister and I went to Sunday school. One time with my mom we went to Christian Science Church and later I know I went to Methodist Sunday School which was very nice and we had in our Sunday school we had to learn the Lord's Prayer and the Beatitudes and the 23rd Psalm and all those things. We had little programs here at the church that we got to be in and recite what we had done.

Beth: Where was the church?

Iris: It was, where it still is on 4th and D Street. And of course it had the white house in back of it, and that's where the pastor lived. And as a smaller child, there was a city band, and they had band concerts at a bandstand at Alpine Park. And we got to go down there, I think it was Saturday evenings and all the kids we could just run around and play tag and everything. And they had benches and our parents probably sat. But most of the time we walked. We didn't have a car to drive every place. Because my father worked on the railroad, my family had passes so we did get to travel quite a bit on the train.

Beth: Where did you go?

Iris: Well, since my father was from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, he had some relatives there we visited there. My mother had sisters in California and we visited there many times. One time we went north up to Seattle and down the coast there. Let's see. Well, I don't know what else to tell you. High school, I was not a very good student. In high school, I'm sure I docked more than I should have. But I did enjoy it. We had great times. That's when we had the state championship football games and they would have very often special trains to Pueblo and Trinidad. It was just a lot of fun. I don't know what else to say on that.

Beth: Do you remember any special teachers?

4:25

Iris: Oh yes. I had an 8th grade English teacher, Hettie Rogers. She was the sweetest thing and so good. And then Francis Rouse I had for math. And then of course Dean Rouse for typing and such. And we had a Miss, oh forgot her name. But I can see her. Mosgrove. Miss Mosgrove. She was really nice. And a Mr. Soles. Our history teacher was Coach White. He was the one that had the good football team. Our chemistry teacher was Alan Hampshire. They were all very good. And our, we had Mr. King, he was our French, I think he had some history classes. And of course, Dr. Barrett was superintendent. We had the dumbest graduation of anybody I'd ever seen. In '35. Our senior sponsor, Ruth Mitchell, she taught Spanish. She had made up her mind to have it out on the football field and had a program, The Valley of the Sun, something about the valley. Anyhow, it was pretty dumb, I thought.

6:14

Beth: You were getting out of there, you didn't care!

[laughter]

Iris: No. I got my diploma.

Beth: Uh-huh.

Iris: Of course, when I was in school, [inintelligible] Young Lawson was one of my classmates and she was valedictorian in my class. Very nice lady, nice girl. Then I went to the Methodist church, Sunday school for a while. And then when I was in high school I did change some. I did join up with Lee, Blanche Lawson, was our sponsor. And she had the nicest things for us, she had teas, so maybe we'd learn to be a lady. And then I know one year there was a swimming pool at Wellsville, and there was a hotel, wasn't a real active hotel but they'd let us go down there, several of us probably six girls. We'd kind of camp at that hotel and get to swim, different things. As I say, lot of fun. Very nice growing up to have. What else to tell you?

7:45

Beth: What came after high school?

Iris: I went to Denver to business college, foreign business college. Then I worked in Denver for a few years, then of course, World War II happened and I did go to Washington D.C. and worked for a couple of years there.

Beth: What were you working for there, the government?

Iris: It was the General Accounting Office, I was a key punch operator. You remember the green checks you used to have, with the holes in them? We were the ones who punched the holes.

[laughter]

Iris: And my husband was from Salida and I knew him from high school but I never dated him in high school. But for some reason or other, well, he was home on leave. We went out and he wanted to know if I'd write to him, while he was in the army. Which I did, so we had kind of a correspondence by mail and when I was in Washington D.C. he went to Edgewood Arsenal in Baltimore, Maryland, for officers training and so I saw him some then and so I transferred from Washington. The decentralized the accounting business to four different places: Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Georgia, and Los Angeles. And we could whichever one to move to, and I chose Atlanta. And then my husband, when he finished his officer's training, he was sent to Alabama. 100 miles from Atlanta. So I saw him there, and then we got married.

Beth: Well, tell me his name.

Iris: Robert Stotler.

Beth: And he was in the army?

Iris: Yes, he was in the army.

Beth: Uh-huh. And when were you married?

Iris: We were married in June of 1943. Then he was stationed in Texas for a while. And then of course, I got pregnant right away. So, he wanted me to come back to Salida where his folks were still living and where my folks were still living. He wanted me to be in Salida because he knew he was going overseas. So, I moved back to Salida and had my first daughter here at the Denver & Rio Grande Hospital.

Beth: What year was she born?

Iris: She was born in 1944.

Beth: And your husband was overseas during that time.

Iris: Yeah, and let's see, he was discharged in 1945 and he wanted to come back to Salida. And his father had Stotler Motor Company down here. For a while, he was postmaster here for about five years. His father wanted to get out of the auto business so my husband bought the business, Stotler Motor Company from him. So, then we had the business here. Then my other three children were born here. My second daughter was born in 1947, third daughter in 1952, my son in 1956. My husband had the garage until 1970.

11:25

Iris: And then he worked as county administrator for about ten years before he died. He died in 1981. And I've been a widow since. And I stayed here in Salida.

Beth: When you were raising your family, where did you live?

Iris: Here, in this house.

Beth: In this house?

Iris: Uh-huh.

Beth: 119 Poncha Boulevard.

Iris: Well, when I first came back I stayed with my mother and dad, when my first daughter was born. But when my husband came home, we built this house.

Beth: When he was overseas, where was he?

Iris: He was in Philippines. New Guinea and the Philippines.

Beth: Well, did you have a job here in town besides raising your kids?

Iris: Well, part of the time I worked at the bank, for a while. But then after my second daughter, I guess I didn't. And I kind of helped him a little bit, with the garage, the business. Otherwise, no I didn't. However, after he sold the garage, I did go to work for social services. I worked there about five years. My husband was working at the courthouse of course. And then, I worked part time at the hospital as a ward clerk for about five years I guess. And then I decided to retire completely.

Beth: Well, I thought you were still working at the hospital.

Iris: Oh, well, I'm just a volunteer now! I go down to the gift shop once a week on Friday mornings.

Beth: As the hospital auxiliary.

Iris: Yes, hospital auxiliary, uh-huh.

Beth: Keeps you out of mischief.

Iris: Well, yeah!

Beth: Well, do you remember anything in particular as you were raising your family in Salida that was unusual or different?

Iris: Well, I don't think so. When I read these olden days were the 1950s, "I should remember that!" but I don't!

[laughter]

13:50

Beth: Life has went on pretty well.

Iris: Oh yeah.

Beth: Were you active in any of the organizations around town?

Iris: Oh yes, I belonged to the American Legion auxiliary, I've been a member of that for over fifty years. I belong to Order of the Eastern Star, I've been a member of that for over fifty years. I belong to the Hospital auxiliary probably for over thirty years. And just different things, little group of us get together. That's most of it.

Beth: Kept you busy. Did you know any unusual characters that lived in Salida?

Iris: No, I sure didn't. Of course, younger everybody knew about Laura Evans naturally, but when I was a child and everything, we just didn't go down on Sackett. We got to go to the movies, on Saturdays there was a matinee and it was right where that theatre is now. You know the same one. And it cost ten cents. My mother'd give me a dime. Then my father wouldn't know it but he'd give me a nickel to get candy, and my mother wouldn't know that but he'd give me a nickel to buy candy. But we could walk down there, of course, the neighborhood where I lived, just a lot of children, well, quite a few children, and we knew everybody for blocks around. And in the evenings we'd play games 'Kick the Can' and 'Run Sheep Run.' Different ones, 'Hide and Seek.' As I say then, to go to the park for the band, we could go down, our parents would let us go down by ourselves, or go to the show in the afternoon, we could go by ourselves. But, you don't do that anymore, with the children. So, of course, the first movies were the silent ones, and they had a piano player there that would play music and that was always fun. I liked the cowboy movies, Tom Mix, Hoot Gibson, and I don't know who else some of the other ones are.

[laughter]

Beth: Do you remember when they started FIBArk?

Iris: Yeah, sort of, let's see was it in '53 or...Of course, my husband wasn't interested in the boat racing part but I really can't tell you too much about that. Except that it was always enjoyable.

Beth: How about Christmas Mountain, do you remember when they started that?

Iris: Oh yeah, I know they started that just small, and now it's grown so much. It's really nice isn't it?

Beth: Yeah, you have a good view up there on Poncha Boulevard.

Iris: Yeah, as I say, I really can't tell you too much. I've had a very nice life here, so it's been a great place to raise my children. We had small children here and they could play out in the yard, we didn't worry about them at all. Of course, even after we got our TV, we didn't get our TV

until after 1956, even then, they didn't stay in and watch that as much as the kids do nowadays. I don't think, I don't know. There was quite a group of them that played together. We did have a ditch out there where water would run down. I'd put their bathing suits on and run down it. Wade in the water, have fun. We'd maybe take a little lunch and eat over to the park. It was real nice.

18:50

Iris: As I say, I've just had a very normal, peaceful life!

[laughter]

Beth: What changes have you noticed in Salida?

Iris: Oh well, all down on F Street everything's changed down there! My goodness.

Beth: Changes quite regularly doesn't it?

Iris: Keeps changing! The Home Bakery's gone, that's one of the oldest that's been there. There used to be several meat markets down there. Several grocery stores. I remember there was a grocery store that was where Gamble's is. Of course, my father working on the railroads, got paid every two weeks, or maybe one, I don't know. But they got to charge the groceries until payday. I would go down with my mother and they always would give us, or they always had a candy bar and they'd let us help ourselves. Or they'd give us a candy bar, whenever we paid the bill. Of course, two years ago we had a shoe store down there. And then years ago, there was a flower store, of course, Murphy's. And then there was the Golden Rule store, of course, Crews Beggs. And years ago we had a skating rink, a roller skating rink down there, I think there's now an antique place, on F Street above where that t shirt place is. That was a skating rink, a roller skating rink. I got to do that.

21:00

Iris: And of course, where the senior center is, there was this fish pond that was always fun to go look and see the big fish they kept in it. And of course, the Presbyterian church was down there on 3rd and F Street where the Moonlight Pizza is now.

Beth: Big brick church.

Iris: Yeah, brick church. Can't remember just when they moved up here on the mesa, but I kind of remember that. I think everybody felt kind of bad about that. And of course, we had several dress shops down there on F Street. There was Gilbert's dress shop in there, and we had a Mode O' Day. Of course, Mrs. Sharpe had a dress shop there for years. Then we had men's clothing stores, several of those at different times. Years ago, there was Murdock's. Of course, that was White's drug store on that corner. Oh gosh and the Candy Kitchen, there was Greek's Candy Kitchen there and then there was Murdock's clothing store. Then I think maybe a hardware store and I think there was a meat market. Then there was a grocery store, and this DJ Kramer had a jewelry store. And then of course, where Lallier's is was Alexander's. It was a drug store and a

jewelry store, I think. And we had about three drug stores, we had Waggener's and then Alexander's and then there was another one across the street. I think there was one over on First Street. As I say, there's been so many changes.

Beth: You were talking about roller skating. Did you ever ice skate out there on Highway 50?

Iris: Yeah, I did. Out on Little River, I guess they call it.

Beth: How old were you when you did that?

Iris: I was probably at least twelve, I imagine. Maybe a little older, junior high age maybe. I was never a very good ice skater! I never did learn where my ankles got, or so I said!

Beth: Were you a swimmer?

Iris: Oh yes, my sister taught me to swim. My mother used to, as I say Wellsville had an outdoor pool and couple of smaller indoor pools. We went down there, my mother took us down there often. A lot of times we went with other families and had picnics down there and we'd swim. Yeah, I loved to swim. Sometimes there'd be a big picnic we'd go up to Mt. Princeton, swim up there and then Thompson Springs, you know up on the mountain they had swimming so but our favorite I guess was Wellsville and Mt. Princeton.

Beth: You remember when the swimming pool was built?

Iris: Sort of, it was a WPA Project.

Beth: About 1938, 36.

Iris: '38. Yeah, I kind of remember that but then also see, I went to Denver in '35 and I didn't get back til 1944 so there were things there I just didn't pay that much attention to, I guess.

Beth: How about you and your husband, did you like to travel?

Iris: Well, not too... We didn't do very much because, as I say, when he got the garage and the business, he didn't take much time off, so we really didn't many traveling. Even when our children were gone and he was working for the courthouse and I was working and we still didn't do any traveling. My sister lives in Reno, near Reno, in Sparks, Nevada. We've been out there to visit a niece. We've driven out there. And also he has a brother that's a doctor in Antioch, California and we've driven out there and visited. A week was about as long as he would want to be gone. So, no we didn't do much traveling.

Beth: Can you think of something else you want to tell us?

Iris: I think that's about it.

[laughter]

Iris: As I said, I've had a normal, a very normal life, in a way! Raised my children!

Beth: That's about it, huh?

Iris: That's about it!

Beth: Okay.