

Beth Smith: Hello again. This is Beth Smith and I'm at 203 Poncha Boulevard talking to T. Rex Rhodes. This happens to be April 4, 2006. Well, good morning Rex. Tell me, what does that T stand for?

T. Rex Rhodes: Good morning, Beth. Well, it stands for Thomas but I've had it longer than T-Rex the dinosaur has been popular and much longer before T-REX the construction project in Denver was named and they didn't ask my permission by the way.
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Beth Smith: Well, just curious. Thomas Rex Rhodes and when were you born, Thomas?

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T. Rex Rhodes: I was born on February 17, 1925 at the Denver and Rio Grande Western Hospital here in Salida. My mother was tended by Dr. C. Rex Fuller. I was named for him. His first name was Cassius Rex. His parents evidently were very Roman-history oriented. That's where I was born and when. I was taken home from the hospital and I don't recall that first place that we lived but I was brought up at the 304 E. 2nd Street here in Salida on the corner and very convenient location, very convenient to schools.
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[00:02:00] All the schools, it's interesting except Longfellow were located on D Street at that time. There was McCray Elementary, which I attended. There was Saint Joseph's Elementary, the parochial school. I mean a Catholic school. Then, Kesner Junior High and Salida High were all located on D Street as were most of the churches. Now, my history here and I will be talking mostly about the 1930s and the early 40s. I left here after high school and so there's a big vacant spot in my living here in town.
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Beth Smith: Let's go back for just a minute. Where did your parents come from?

T. Rex Rhodes: Yes. My grandfather whose name was Frederick G. Rhodes met my grandmother in South Dakota. She was Elizabeth DeLong Rhodes. She was a French-Canadian and grandfather had just finished up the Civil War and was headed west and met my grandmother in the Dakotas where my father was born. He was born in Minot, and I had one uncle — Uncle Howard G. Rhodes — who was born in Pierre, South Dakota.
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[00:04:00] I don't know how they met, but that's where they met. Grandfather Rhodes was a contractor, and he specialized in cement and roofing. He followed the railroads because a lot of construction work was going along wherever the railroad stopped. That's how they got to Salida through the railroad. His family came from England and my grandmother's family came from France, but I don't know in what years, but they met as I said in South Dakota.
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My grandmother, my mother's mother, and father were Swedish and their

[00:05:00] name was Kjellman. Mother's maiden was K-J-E-L-L-M-A-N. The family
[00:05:30] Americanized that and that became Shelman. So her name was Francis
Shelman Rhodes. My grandfather Shelman, Kjellman or Shelman was a
butcher and a policeman, and he and my grandmother lived in Pueblo. All
of their families and the great Swedish colony instilled in Salina, Kansas. My
grandfather and grandmother's family moved to Pueblo, Colorado. I don't
know why but there was a very large Swedish community in Salina, Kansas.

[00:06:00] Grandfather owned a meat market, and then he had a side job with the
[00:06:30] Pueblo Police Department. At the age of 45, he was killed. He was struck by
lightning while riding his horse in the police department and left my
grandmother with six children to raise, and she did it very well by herself.
She sent each of them to some kind of school. Mother got to go to music
[00:07:00] school and became a very good musician. One aunt went to business
school in Denver. Two other aunts went to nursing schools. My uncle went
to business school. I thought she did very well at that particular period of
time.

[00:07:30] My mother then was born in Pueblo and I indicated before my father was
born in South Dakota. The Rhodes family moved from South Dakota
directly to Salida. Grandfather set up his company. I don't know. There's a
rumor in the family that he constructed the F Street Bridge. I can't find
documentation on that so I don't know about that. That and the old bridge
across the Arkansas on 291 was one of his projects. Again, that's hearsay.

[00:08:00] I do know he did a lot of the roofing —the flat roofed buildings in down
town Salida. He lived to be 97. He died in 1930. Grandmother Rhodes had
the Rhode's rooms which was the whole floor above the first National Bank
[00:08:30] of Salida. That would have been above what is now the parking lots of the
Pueblo Bank and Trust — beautiful Victorian building. Should never have
been torn down.

[00:09:00] Grandmother then lived by herself in 1930 until she passed away in 1948
two years after my father died. Dad died in 1947, and he was only 55 years
old or 57 years old when he died. Am I following this logically, I guess?
[00:09:30] After my father died, mother stayed at the family home, and she worked at
the hospital for a couple of years. In 1960, she married Brad Bradford or
Lee Bradford. They called him Brad. The Bradfords had lived across street
from us for a number of years and Mrs. Bradford died just shortly after my
father did.

[00:10:00] Over a couple of years, mother and Brad struck up a fancy relationship and
became married. They had a marvelous marriage. Just very, very happy for
both of them. Pardon me. My brother, George, was born in 1922, and so he
[00:10:30] was three and a half years older than I. I was born in '25 as I indicated
earlier. Both he and I went to McCray Grade School which no longer exists.
The present post office is the location of the old McCray School. You've
probably been given a lot of this background.

Beth Smith: No. Glad to hear it again.

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T. Rex Rhodes: Well he and I both attended McCray and we both attended Kesner, and we both attended and graduated from Salida High. George, his great interest was medicine and music. He went under the service in 1942, graduated from high school in '41, and he went to the College of the Pacific in Lodi, California for one year until he was drafted into the navy. He became — in the medical area of the navy — a medical technician.

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And he served in all of the islands of the South Pacific: Tarawa, Guadalcanal. Now, I don't know he ever survived, but he did. There were just the two of us. I had a ... loved high school and especially my friends and activities in the school. I was very active in both academic and outside of school. I was a tap dancer at one time, and that was a lot of fun. In that time, of course, while I was in high school, John and Mary Held came to Salida. He is director of the music program. Of course, they became a very large part of every kid's life up at that school.

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In that, I'm going to get off myself now anyway. The 30s in Salida, they were tough but they weren't as bad economically as other parts of the country. We had a lot of unemployment but the railroad was very stable. It had less traffic at times. My father joined the D&RG Railroad when he was 14 years old and started as a callboy and worked his way up on the trainman's crew. In the 30s, we always had sufficient food and some spending money — not a lot. Then the movies were only a dime and we had the Empress Theater down on 1st Street which is now called the ... What's it called now? Never mind.

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It was a great place. It was beautiful and well maintained. It was the old opera house in the 30s. It had the box seats and a horse shoe all around the balcony. It was just a great place and spent every Friday evening there. Once in a while, we'd get to go if there were really a good adult movie we could go Sunday afternoon. Again, back to the economics of Salida, I know in our family, in fact, 1936 was for some reason a banner year. That year, we got our first real electric refrigerator, got a new electric stove that replaced the kerosene cook stove that mother had. Dad got mother an automatic ironing machine. We got a new 1936 Chevrolet Deluxe with radio and heater and cigar lighter.

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I don't know what happened that year unless it was the year dad got promoted to a conductor on the railroad. I didn't get a new bicycle that year. My brother and I shared a bicycle for years.

Beth Smith:

What were the kid in town, what did you do besides the movies?

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T. Rex Rhodes: In the summertime, I worked out of the FrantzHurst's Rainbow Trout Farm which was a big commercial trout farm and that's where Frantz Lake name came from — was a family had that property. I worked there. I learned how to play golf. We were out in the mountains just every time we could. We used to really like to hike the foothills to the north of down town Salida which would be to the east of us on Poncha Boulevard.

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[00:17:00] Full of snakes. It didn't bother us. I had friends who had horses. We'd ride horseback around the area. We hang around in this town in that time if you ever got into trouble — a kid, an individual kid — before you got home, your folks knew about it and you knew that they'd be waiting for you. We didn't get into a lot of trouble — pranks and that kind of thing.

[00:17:30] It was really a very lovely time even though it was a terrible time for the nation. There's a great depression and the world was racing toward a Second World War. As a kid, I was even fortunate enough to ... dad bought a 1930 Model A for \$25. He and I took two years to rebuild that car. That was a great deal of fun. Dad was a meticulous man and that always used to get me so frustrated because everything had to be right. It did take two years to get that car rolling but then he gave it to me and bought it for me.

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[00:18:30] Well, heck, I was sophomore when he bought it, and I was a senior when it was done. It was a lot of fun. I had a lot of fun. I had very good friends. Two of my very best friends were the Frantz children — Horace Jr. and Marcia Frantz. They lived out in the country ...

Beth Smith: Was that the Frantz family or the FrantzHurst family?

T. Rex Rhodes: Well, it was the Frantz family, but the name of the enterprise was Franz-Hertz. It was the Frantz family that had it. They were Germans. Hurst is tree, I believe, in German and that place out there was just so gorgeous, I mean down all the around the ponds. Lakes were beautiful. Trees very ...

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[00:19:30] That was a very important enterprise in this town. It was built in ... started about 1928, Mr. Frantz founded. He came from a very wealthy eastern family. His family founded American Dental Supply which is the largest dental supply company listed on the New York Stock Exchange, and his mother and father founded that business. They lived on the north shore, Long Island, New York.

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[00:20:30] That is a very important part of the history of Salida. In those times, he was a great promoter and had huge events here. They had their own airstrip out on the land. They had acquired a tremendous amount of land around here. All the old Kaess property and the location of the new hospital — that was their property on that 40 acres between the big log house. Have you seen? Yeah, that was their home. It was built as a lodge as a summer home. They were going to live in the Springs. It isn't a very practical home, but it's a magnificent inside. Huge living room, three floors high.

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[00:21:30] They had a Christmas tree each year that went up to the top of it. Anyway, that's beside the point. That is a very important historical monument for Salida. I did a presentation for our historical prospectors, historical club on the trout farm a few years ago and got a lot of research from the kids who, at that time, both were still living. Well, anyway, you asked what we did in Salida. We got through the movies. Great afternoons and evenings in

[00:22:00] November of ice skating out on the Albright ponds which is right now is in back of, right next to what would be the old Walmart which is now ...

Beth Smith: Murdoch's.

T. Rex Rhodes: Murdoch's. Yeah, I love that store. There were ponds down there. Mr. Albright was a cement contractor. Built most of the fireplaces in town at that time. He loved kids and he kept those lakes all, he'd flood them at night. They'd be all slick the next morning. He was really good. He had three daughters, one of whom I fell head over heels, had a great crush on Betty Lou Albright. They're part of the Kaess family now. One of the Albright's married a Kaess and they're all passed away, of course, at this time.

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[00:23:30] Now, where I was going? What did we do? Yes, we had a lot of dances at different places and the Knights of Pythias space, which is above the Pinon realtor now. That was the old Harold Koster building. Harold Koster was a great part of the history of this town too. The Elks club had it's doors opened to the kids for dances. We didn't know how badly it smelled at that time. I shouldn't put that because they've cleaned it up.

[00:24:00] Every once in a while when we'd get enough money together, one of the kids' family would drive us to Denver, we did this on two occasions to go to the Trochidero Ballroom down at Elitch Gardens. Glenn Miller played one night. Who are the drummer, Gene Krupa, the next time we went there. Those were great occasions. Then we had the opportunity to spend time at the different ... down to Broadmoor a few times. I met Shirley Temple down at the Broadmoor and in fact spent two full days with her on two different occasions.

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[00:25:00] She and her family would vacation at the Broadmoor and they took a whole floor of the hotel for a month. They were very good friends of the Frantz's and so Mr. and Mrs. Temple who were delightful people and who raised Shirley beautifully, they were good parents, but they wanted kids to spend time with Shirley. We were invited down two summers in a row and spend afternoons with her. I became a member of the Shirley Temple police. I have a badge which I still have.

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Beth Smith: Now she was a movie star at that time, weren't she?

T. Rex Rhodes: Yes.

Beth Smith: She is.

T. Rex Rhodes: She was at her height. In fact, she gave me a picture which she signed, "Love, Shirley" when she was playing The Little Colonel and she was in the uniform with The Little Colonel and, yes, that was her heyday in that period of time, the 30s. Well, where do we go from here now? Salida. Salida was not a growth town. The railroad came in and laid it out and that history is so very well documented. When I was brought up, growing up here the town size was 5000 people and that's the population today.

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[00:27:00] Now, we've grown tremendously on the peripheral out in the country but when I was growing up the country was the country and it was the ranchers and the farmers and the city was a city. It was interesting that the two cultures never really met.

Beth Smith: You mean the farm and the city?

T. Rex Rhodes: Yes. The kids until we all got to junior high school or high school depending on what year it was. I forgot when and then we met the Hutchinson's and Mack's and the Paquette's. We just didn't run across them and the same way with the Catholic kids. Our parents had very little intercourse with mixture between the Protestant and the Catholics at that time. It wasn't until high school that we got to know the Catholic kids.

Beth Smith: You were a protestant?

T. Rex Rhodes: Yes.

Beth Smith: In what church?

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T. Rex Rhodes: Well, I was brought up in the Christian Science Church which no longer exists in Salida. We have a very strong group in Buena Vista but this church, my mother and my grandmother, her mother, were both Christian scientists. That's how, that's why I went to Sunday school at the church. I'm not sure what year that church closed here. I wasn't here. That's where I was brought up in church school. Of course, we were a very small congregation at that time.

Beth Smith: Well, now, I got you through high school. What year did you graduate?

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T. Rex Rhodes: I graduated in 1943 and graduated in May of '43. Twelve of my male classmates and I were inducted into the navy in June. We all went to Denver and volunteered for the navy in May right as soon as we were out or maybe even before we graduated. We all were accepted into the navy and that was in May of 1943. I was just 18 years old at that time. As a group, we were shipped to Lake Farragut, to Camp Farragut which is in

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Idaho. I wondered, "What's the navy doing in Idaho?"

[00:30:00] Well, they had huge lakes up there and Lake Farragut is enormous and the camp was enormous. This was the boot camp. This was to get you physically strong and mentally tuned up and beat down, all those things to prepare you for your future in the navy. From there, I was selected to go to officer's training school. I went on in November of '43 to the University of Washington in Seattle into the officer's training program, the naval air corps training program. I spent most of that part of the war ... Well, the war started to wind down in '44, somewhat in '45. Of course, it did. The German war did. Yeah. I spent my service time in school preparing for something that never came about.

Beth Smith: Thank goodness.

T. Rex Rhodes: Oh well. I've always wished that I had more active sea. I did have sea service but I graduated from the naval part of the university as ... I was then a junior in the university and received my commission as ensign and was assigned to a cruiser out of Newport, Rhode Island, the USS
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[00:32:00] Montpelier. I went there and we had what they called the Atlantic Patrol. It was by then not a very needed contingency. At one time during the war, the Germans had landed a group of personnel on the south shore of Long Island which is just outside of New York City as you know. They caught them, captured them. This was in about '41, I think, when that happened. It set up a very strict security measure for the East Coast.

[00:33:00] Now, at that time, the navy was doing tremendous escorting of the ships from the East Coast to England and France. We had a lot of our navies escorting those cargo ships. The navy was a big part of the East Coast economy especially in Connecticut and those areas, and Long Island. New York City not so much. It was more the commercial. We went into New York every, once a month. I think we steamed into the harbor of New York, be sure they weren't any submarines that got...they had submarine screens at that time in these big harbors, and this is what you put in the water to catch submarines that might be coming through.

[00:34:00] Anyway, the war ended. We took the Montpelier into Philadelphia and decommissioned her, and then we're all discharged. I remember immediately about six of us went to New York City to see the big town. We'd been there before with the ship. I bought my first civilian suit at Sach's Fifth Avenue and it costs \$100 which was incredibly a lot of money in 1945. I wore that suit for ten years. We all had money because we'd saved it. We didn't spent it irresponsibly. I didn't need a \$100 suit. But I liked it.

[00:35:00] Then, I came back discharged and came back here to Salida. My dad started to become ill and, not really serious. I went back to the University of Washington to finish up my degree back there. That was in the summer of
[00:35:30] '46, I think. Yes. I went back there and re-enrolled in the University of

[00:36:00] Washington. Mother and dad asked, my brother was George, was attending the University of Colorado. He was trying to get into med school. He finished his tour of duty and then they called him back to go to Korea.

[00:36:30] He'd been through all of this terrible stuff in the South Pacific and he just started his reeducation again back into the college. They picked him and put him up in Korea for two years. When he got out of the service, then the med school was pretty far away. He went to the University of Colorado and got his bachelor's and master's out of there.

Beth Smith: What's his major at that time?

[00:37:00] T. Rex Rhodes: Personnel management. He was at the University of Colorado for many years after he graduated. Then, took an opportunity with what is now the University of Pennsylvania at Lochaven and became dean of students there. He had a very rewarding career. He was young people oriented and did a great job.

Beth Smith: Where were you studying?

[00:37:30] T. Rex Rhodes: I was studying at Seattle Civil Engineering and, as I said, got through my junior year with it. Mother and dad, really dad had started to deteriorate terribly and they asked if I could come back to Boulder so that I'd be closer to the family, to mom and dad. George was there and that we could all work together on dad's illness. I didn't want to do that. I wanted to for the family but I really liked ... My fraternity up in Seattle, up in the University of Washington. I was Beta Theta Pi. I like that part of my life. I love the university. I like Seattle. I got used to the rain. Once you do that, it's a beautiful place.

[00:38:00] [00:38:30] [00:39:00] I did. I came back to the University of Colorado and entered school in September. That first of October, dad died. I'd only been here a month or so. I'd been here the summer prior to enrolling. I'd been here a few months with dad. I did already enroll in the University of Colorado and started school. It started early September. Dad died early October.

[00:39:30] [00:40:00] I changed my major to business and finance from engineering. I got my degree in that from the University of Colorado. There's a humorous thing though that I have to tell about. Mother was a small lady, feisty, marvelous pianist. She could play anything on that piano and had a personality to go with it. She was very bubbly and so forth. To her, the most important thing in the world was her birthday. Her birthday was October the fifteenth and dad had died maybe two weeks before that, just the first of ... George and I, of course, came up, spent her birthday with her.

We decided—we took her out to lunch. Then, she wanted to go for a ride. We drove over Monarch Pass, where we're going to drive just as far as Sargents. She and my dad at the first part of their marriage was they lived

[00:40:30] in the Sargents. My brother was born when they lived in Sargents. We were going to go the Sargents. On the other side of Monarch on the west side, it's very steep canyon on the left side that goes down to the river. There's a point that sticks out from the highway and it is really a point. It isn't marked as a viewpoint but has a marvelous view. We stopped there.

[00:41:00] George and I were horsing around and pretended like we were wrestling. The more we pretended, the more upset mother became. Now, you boys, quit that. Quit that. The more she said that, the more we put on our show. George was pushing me back towards this tremendous ledge. It was really getting to mother. Finally, she says, "George, if you push Rex over there, you're going to spoil my whole day." That tells a lot about mother.

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[00:42:00] Anyway, I graduated from the University of Colorado. Then, came back here and worked at the trout farm for the summer. Then got married in 1949. My wife's name was Tink. We moved up here for a short period of time.

Beth Smith: It doesn't sound like her legal name.

T. Rex Rhodes: No. Victoria. Victoria Philpott was her last name. Her family were doctors — her father and two uncles — in Denver.

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Beth Smith: In Denver.

T. Rex Rhodes: In Denver, yeah. In Denver. She missed Denver very much. We decided we would move back to Denver which we did and had our two children there — R. McGregor Rhodes and Jennifer Rhodes. McGregor is now in Montana, has been, since he left high school.

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Beth Smith: What does he do now?

T. Rex Rhodes: He's in the construction business. He has a little construction company. Jennifer went to CU for one year and she didn't like school. She left there and went to work and set up her own company. She's an enterprising young lady in the graphic arts business. Her real love was horses. As computers came in, she saw the, sort of what the future of the graphic arts business was going to be. She invested money in a computer system. She's decided that she would start a writing school because she was a very good writer — Jennifer. She did that as what she's doing now.

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Beth Smith: Where is she now?

T. Rex Rhodes: Well now, it's in Castle Rock. She lives in Castle Rock. She and her husband bought acreage outside of Castle Rock. They have horses of their own there. And then she has school horses at the boarding barn.

Beth Smith: What is his name now?

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T. Rex Rhodes: David Hutchins, H-U-T-C-H-I-N-S. He's a brother of Jim Hutchins here in Salida, Jim and Kay. That's how Jim and Kay got up here was through David's relationship with Jennifer and then me. They were introduced to Salida really by Jennifer.

Beth Smith: Do you have any grandchildren?

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T. Rex Rhodes: One. I have a granddaughter, Melissa. She lives in Kalispell. She doesn't live with her father. They both had their own places up there. She's a Kalispellian. That's the only grandchild I have.

Beth Smith: She is a Rhodes too or had she married?

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T. Rex Rhodes: She's a Rhodes. I think my son will probably be the last male Rhodes as it looks like right now. Jennifer has no children. She's wanted them but just not happened. My wife and I divorced, just very, very sad. I had to make more money. I was in the banking business in Denver with a small bank. The bank in New York in Manhattan, I met them at a banking convention down in Dallas, I think. They were looking for some young people. They invited me to come out in interview with them to New York City, which I did.

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I was very flattered. They offered me a very good job. I moved to New York. Now, here so far from Salida to Seattle to Denver, now to New York.

Beth Smith: Now you've seen it all.

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T. Rex Rhodes: Yeah. I was with that bank for 15 years — the bank in New York, the oldest bank in the United States first one founded by Alexander Hamilton and still operates under the original charter which is very interesting. I worked there, and I lived in Manhattan all that time. That's apartment living. I started off with a one-room walkup, then advanced to a one bedroom walkup, and then to a real building with a real elevator up on the 21st floor overlooking the East River. I really enjoyed New York. I had great friends both from the bank and just social friends. I spent a long time, a lot of time out in the Hamptons, on the South Shore Long Island in the summertime and up in Vermont skiing. These are weekends, not during the week or vacations. I was able to get back to skiing up there. I really enjoyed it very much.

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Then, I was invited by the Colorado National Bank to come back and I came

back as senior vice president in charge of what they called the banking department. That was the major income-producing division of the bank.

Beth Smith: Where were you stationed then?

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T. Rex Rhodes: In Denver. I came back to Denver after 15 years in New York City. Then, I retired from Colorado National and spent a couple of years in Denver. Mother in the meantime had passed away. George and I had this home.

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Then, my brother passed away. He and I just let it sit vacant. I came up maybe once a month to spend the weekend up here.

Beth Smith: That home was down on E Street?

T. Rex Rhodes: No. This one — this house.

Beth Smith: This one where you're living in now?

T. Rex Rhodes: Uh-huh (affirmative).

Beth Smith: On Poncha?

T. Rex Rhodes: Yeah. I got thinking, "Well, I've got that and I have a cabin up on the North Fork." Well, maybe I'll just try Salida to see if I'll like it again. All during this period of time that I was gone, I never got rid of Salida because I had family here and I was visiting all the time. When I lived in New York, I came back twice a year. When I lived in Denver, I was up once a month. I kept a lot of good friends here. I decided I'd give it a try and it worked. It's worked very well.

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Beth Smith: When did you move back up here?

T. Rex Rhodes: In 1990. Sixteen years ago. It's not quite. I moved up in the fall. There's a couple of things about Salida. You can stop me on this. I said the '30s were pretty good around here. There's also a time, '36 to '38 that the town that the golf course, the ski area and the swimming pool — all three. You probably know all three of those were built by the WPA. We benefited greatly from the Works Progress Administration.

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The golf club house now, it was duplicated up at the ski area. It was the same lodge up there at Monarch as it was here. They just used the same plans. That worked out well. Of course, the pool was very important. That brings up the fact that we were a pretty segregated town in that time that I was growing up, no more so than any other place but for an old town, we had no blacks in town. One family, the Bustos family and quite a few we call the Mexicans and they still are. They come from Mexico and worked on the railroad basically.

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[00:53:00] I don't think the east side of town was very kind to the west side. The railroad tracks were the division points of the White Anglo WASPS in Poncha Boulevard was included on that side. That was much later. Poncha Boulevard only had two or three houses when I was brought up here. It was pretty divided. Over the years, it's become a very welcome and opening town as far as race is concerned. We still don't have many negroes.

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Beth Smith: Were the negroes and the Mexicans welcome to the swimming pool or was there a law about that?

T. Rex Rhodes: Yeah. You've heard. They could not swim there except on Mondays. At Monday night, they drained the pool, cleaned it. Yeah. That was true.

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Beth Smith: Did you ever swim in the river?

T. Rex Rhodes: Yes. Swam in the river. We were bright enough not to swim in the lower part, below the sewer, because they were doing raw sewerage at this time.

Beth Smith: Good thinking.

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T. Rex Rhodes: Yeah. Up above, Big Bend and up to the trout farm, the trout farm discharged off a lot of pollutants into the river. There was a great stretch where it was fun. A lot of the kids would swim down lower. My family said no and so I didn't do that. We had great swimming out where Frantz Lake is now, was a gravel pit which had been formed in the construction of the trout farm in making the cement. It had water in the bottom of it, a deep amount of water, seepage water. It was absolutely pure, clean. It was just marvelous except it was cold as hell.

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Beth Smith: Can't have it all.

T. Rex Rhodes: You jump in that, they're going to ... I'm telling you just shrivel up. That was a great swimming place. Then the old Poncha Springs up at Poncha, we used to swim up there. That pool was fun. That was open all winter. It was really hot. Have you been up there?

[00:55:30]

Beth Smith: No. I'm thinking about going tonight though.

T. Rex Rhodes: Up to where?

Beth Smith: Up to Poncha. They said it was open tonight.

T. Rex Rhodes: Yes. It is.

Beth Smith: It's what it said in the paper.

[00:56:00]

T. Rex Rhodes: No. That's the pool down here. Really?

Beth Smith: I think so. Look at your paper.

T. Rex Rhodes: I just threw it out. Well, I didn't realize they had it ... It's been leased to the Boy Scouts for the month of June. It's open tonight.

Beth Smith: Well, that's what I understand. Let's go.

T. Rex Rhodes: Well, that used to be a great place. They had big dressing rooms. The pool
[00:56:30] was small but we were all small at that time. We'd just had great times up there. We'd go up. Again, Mr. Frantz would take a whole bunch of us up. He had a Ford station wagon and that thing would be packed with kids. We
[00:57:00] would sing our hearts out, just had the best time. Then, not a word was spoken when we came back. We were exhausted. That hot water did us in.

Beth Smith: Now, did you ski too?

T. Rex Rhodes: Yes. Started skiing really before the ski area was built. They ran for two
[00:57:30] winters ski trains up to Marshall Pass. When I say ski trains, the railroad was very casual at that time. They would put a car onto the early morning passenger train. We had two passenger trains out of here a day — one to Gunnison over and back and one to Alamosa. Gunnison train left about seven in the morning and would go over Marshall Pass down to Gunnison. It would stay there overnight and then come back the next morning. In the meantime, a train had left from Gunnison, come over to Salida. They had a
[00:58:00] train a day. You couldn't do a round trip very easily on that. It's a little slow, slow method of transportation at that time.
[00:58:30]

[00:59:00] Well, Marshall was a pretty long pass especially the west side. It is very long. The reason for Sargents was it was what they call the Helper Town and they had crews and engines and cabooses stationed in Sargents. Then, when the big empty long empties would come from Salida, they'd send an engine up to help bring all that weight down the pass because one engine was too dangerous and especially if they any loaded going back over, they had really heavy loads of cattle and coal from Crested Butte. This would
[00:59:30] take two engines to go up the top. Then, they'd send another one from the other side and they'd meet and the Sargents engine would go back to Sargents. And the other one that came up would help that train down. They were called helpers.

[01:00:00] That's probably got, a little bit away from the subject. The D and RG would put a car on the Gunnison morning train and take it up to a siding just below the summit of Marshall Pass and park at there where they had a section house. We could pack the snow and ski down a little hill up there. The big kids they take them on up on the top of the pass. Then they could

[01:00:30] ski from the top of the pass down to the section house. Then, these helpers came along, would pick the big kids up again and take them back up to the top. They would make a three or four runs a day.

The little kids, I was a little at that time. I was pretty young. I didn't get to do that. Then, the evening train would pick the car up and bring it back to Salida.

Beth Smith: That worked out neat.

[01:01:00]

T. Rex Rhodes: It was a great outing, just a great outing. Yeah. That was my first skiing. Then, they built monarch and monarch had a rope tow. There the regiment was we'd go up Saturday morning and spend most of the morning digging

[01:01:30] the rope out of the snow because the wind during the week when it wasn't used, it was only used on Saturday and Sunday, would blow over that rope and freeze it. That was hard work because ... They only run when they're

[01:02:00] very steep when that you can see that was the only run. That was steep.

That was hard work. We had a lot of fun. I had a terrible time though. I couldn't turn. My dad had bought George skis and boots and he thought he was ... a good wood worker and he thought he could get a pair of skis and cut them down to my size. They did find a pair of about 7-foot skis. Well, I was 10, 12 years old. I'll be darned. He cut those down, reformed the front. I remember he put a washtub on the stove and got real hot water and put the skis in, tip first 'till they got soaking wet.

[01:02:30]

[01:03:00]

Then, he'd bend them back up and he'd build a contraption that would hold them up in the curve at the end until they dried. They were gorgeous. He finished them beautifully. We'd put a pair of bindings on them. I

[01:03:30]

couldn't turn. I was the only one that couldn't turn. I just go straight down. I finally have to fall to stop. Someone looked at my skis and I don't know, I don't recall who it was and he said, "Rex, no wonder you can't turn. Look at this. It had three grooves in it. They were jumping skis." Everybody's downhill, just has one groove in the middle as you know. Dad popped for a new pair of skis for me. I was so frustrated though.

Beth Smith: How about hunting and fishing?

[01:04:00]

T. Rex Rhodes: Well, I fished out of the Arkansas. My grandmother was a great fisher lady. My dad and uncle were good. Grandmother was especially interested in fishing. She had a fishing buddy, Mrs. Roberts. They would go over to

[01:04:30]

Saguache Creek. This is her favorite place to fish. I would go with them once in a while. I would go with dad over to Tomichi and go by myself down on Arkansas. That was safe. There were people around. Did that for years. I

[01:05:00]

worked at the trout farm. It was a commercial trout farm. We would package fish. We'd take the fish out of the growing ponds with a net, dump them, take them into the fish house, put them on a shelf, cut them up, split

off the guts, clean them and put them in a box. I did that for about four summers. I got so tired of fish. I lost all interest in fishing.

[01:05:30] I don't think I've been fishing since. Hunting, we did as a family, small game. I was never into big game hunting because my dad wasn't. My grandmother again loved to hunt. She was a great shot. We would go rabbit hunting and bird hunting over the San Luis Valley. I enjoyed that very much. I can't say that I was a great hunter and don't do it at all though. Just a side story on my grandmother again. Mrs. Meyers — not Mrs. Robertson — was her fishing buddy. Grandmother always drove. Grandmother had a new car every year. The Chevrolet, she got into Chevrolets. They had big touring cars when I was a little tiny kid but after grandfather died, she went to a much smaller car. They would just have it. Know what she wanted. She looked at the catalogue. The first one that came in, she got. She parked it at the Y & R Garage which is where the American T-shirt company is, American outerwear, sportswear.

[01:07:30] That was a big garage and they had a room for cars. Grandmother lived in her rooming house at 2nd & F. This was the 3rd & F. She kept the car there. They always brought her home. She'd come and they take her home. Then, bring the car back and wash it and put it in the slot. It was great service. Those were the days. This one day, she and Jessie Meyers went over to Saguache and had a great day fishing. Grandmother came back and went upstairs, cleaned her fish and had dinner, I guess, went to bed and died. It was just the most marvelous way to go. She'd done what she loved to do. She just had a heart attack and died. I've gone on long enough, I think.

Beth Smith: Well, thank you very much, Rex. You really told us a lot about Salida.

T. Rex Rhodes: Well, not so much about Salida. It's about myself.

Beth Smith: You were part of Salida.

T. Rex Rhodes: Yes, very much so at that time. Yeah.

[01:08:30]
Beth Smith: It's great. I'm glad you talked for us this morning. Thank you.

T. Rex Rhodes: You bet.