

Beth: Alright, this is Beth Smith. I am at the home of Tom and Mary Jo Sandell and they're going to talk to the tape this afternoon-tell us about their lives and their life here in Salida. We're at their home at 111 Shavano Avenue and this is August the 11th, 2006.

Beth: Alright - Hi, how are you doin', Tom?

[00:29]

Tom: Fine, thank you.

Beth: Tell me when you came to Salida.

Tom: We came here the end of November 1966.

Beth: And, you've been here the whole time?

Tom: Yes.

Beth: Where did you come from?

Tom: Well, actually, we came from Germany. We had been in the military for three years prior to that and had gotten home in, I think, September, that fall, and spent a little time looking around, trying to decide where we would like to go into practice and wound up coming here. Actually, my brother was in law practice here at the time, and...

Beth: What was his name?

[01:11]

Tom: Jerry Sandell, and we came to have Thanksgiving dinner with them and didn't leave... we've been here ever since.

Beth: Great. You must like it then, huh, Mary Jo?

[01:22]

Mary Jo: Yes, we've been really happy here. All our children went to school kindergarten through graduation and we thought that was a plus. The school system was very good. They all went on to college and then careers and...

Beth: We'll talk about them in a minute. Let's talk about your growing up, your schooling and your families...where you came from.

[01:48]

Mary Jo: I grew up in upper Michigan. I was born in Ironwood, Michigan and we lived in Ironwood and Bessemer Michigan while I was growing up and I was the second of ten children, all of whom are still alive back in the, um, Racine/Kenosha, Wisconsin area except for one who lives in Colorado, one brother. Um...went through elementary and high school in catholic schools up there and then went into nursing at St. Mary of Nazareth nursing school in Chicago. Graduated from there and...

Beth: When did you graduate?

Mary Jo: In 1958. It was a three-year diploma program. Then moved to Denver with four of my classmates - we all went to Denver and rented a house and nursed in Denver at Denver General and the Veterans Hospital there.

Beth: How long were you there in Denver, then?

[02:56]

Mary Jo: Well, I was there until '61. Tom and I met...

Tom: '62.

Mary Jo: Yeah, in '62. Tom and I met in Denver and were married in Denver in September of '61 and he finished his senior year of medical school and we left there and moved to San Francisco where he did his internship at Letterman Army Hospital.

Beth: So, where did you come from, Tom?

[03:28]

Tom: Well, my dad was a mining engineer, so we hit a lot of the high spots in the west. We started out in a very small town in Nevada...Manhattan, Nevada. The hospital in which my brother and I were born was in Tonopah which was the only hospital in the county at the time, and probably is .....I don't know. Anyway, we lived there about the first four years then we moved to Salt Lake City because my dad was assigned to the Bureau of Mines during the Second World War rather than going into the military. He was not qualified, physically, for the military so they sent him to work for the Bureau of Mines. So we spent the war years in Salt Lake City and then, uh, the late 40's...I don't remember exactly the date...we moved back to Nevada to live in McGill, Nevada. Spent two and a half years there. My dad worked for Kennecott Copper Corporation there. Then we moved to Malvern, Arkansas, of all places, and my dad had a job with National Lead Company there. We lived there for about a year and a half and then we moved to Silverton, Colorado and that's where I went through high school and graduated high school in Silverton. And so I...that was in 1955 and then went to the University of Colorado undergraduate school for three years, '55 to '58, and medical school '58 to '62 and, uh, graduated June of '62, the day after our first son was born...or the other way around....

Mary Jo: Yeah, graduated...

Tom: Graduated one day...he was born the next day...but, anyway, about a month later we moved to San Francisco, as Mary Jo indicated....and spent a year in San Francisco and then three years in Germany, in the Army and, uh, then wound up in Salida.

Beth: Welcome to Salida! That's good. Do you have a specialty in your medicine?

[05:21]

Tom: No, family practice.

Beth: Family practice.

Mary Jo: Tom practiced with Doctor Leonardi and Doctor Mehos when we came.

Beth: Alright, then. So, you're here in Salida in 1966. Alright, so 1966 you were settled in Salida. Alright, what happened next?

[05:45]

Tom: Well, I came here to go into practice with Doctors Mehos and Leonardi, and, um, of course, that occupied the majority of my time for the next number of years while Mary Jo raised our kids and put them through school here in Salida.

Beth: Did you do any nursing here in Salida.

Mary Jo: No, I didn't. Tom was....when Tom came here, all of the family physicians were on call to their own patients and they also took turns taking calls at the emergency room because there was no 24 hour coverage of the emergency room so they took calls for their own patients, the emergency room, and

anesthesia calls if there was an emergency surgery to be done. So it was kind of hard to leave the kids alone and well, Tom was on call, so no, I didn't do any.

Beth: Well, tell us about your kids.

[06:45]

Mary Jo: Our oldest son, Scott, is a teacher. He graduated from Salida High School, then from Colorado State University, and, as an engineer, and after, uh, I don't know how long he worked as an engineer, but....

Tom: He had in about ten years with Woodward Governor but part of that was while he was still a student.

Mary Jo: Um hum. And then after their first child was born, he decided he didn't like the traveling. He was doing quite a bit of traveling overseas and so, uh, he went back to school and got his teaching certificate and his master's and now is a teacher at Boltz Junior High in Fort Collins. He is a math and science teacher. And Beth graduated from CU school of nursing and she's married, has two little boys, and married Kurt Mitchell, who grew up here in Salida. They have two boys, Jimmy and Joey, and Beth is a nurse at the neo-natal intensive care unit in Denver at Pres. St. Luke's Hospital. Tim is a doctor in Colorado Springs, married and has two girls. Uh, he...his specialty is physical medicine and rehabilitation.

Tom: He went, also, to the University of Colorado and then took his residency at the University of Utah.

Beth: Alright, and how many grandchildren have you got, now?

[08:30]

Tom: We have six. Each of the three have two children. Very equitable.

Mary Jo: And we have three granddaughters and three grandsons.

Beth: Well, how'd you work that out? That's pretty nice, huh? But, none of them live close to Salida.

Tom: Colorado Springs is the closest.

Beth: You have to do a bit of traveling.

Mary Jo: Yeah, but that's not bad. They get to come here quite a bit. Of course, they love to come for FIBArk and...Tim does the race every year. And now the grandkids are doing the race...so it's fun.

Beth: Well, wonderful! That's good. Now think back to when you first started living here in Salida. What are some of the things that you did and enjoyed, and didn't enjoy, and...

[09:21]

Mary Jo: One thing I think about...we lived out on H street and were renting a house on H street, and Oxford's Market was still there so we did our, I did our grocery shopping there because we had only one car at that point. And then, another, we were near the swimming pool, which was nice, to walk over there and, um, I was part of the group of parents who started the Salida Cyclones Swim Team. Because, well, Scott and Tim were both on swim team. Tim loved it. Tim stayed on the swim team until the kicked him off when he was 18, I guess. But that was kind of fun. We were part of the, uh, when the swim team started, they did their practicing at the swimming pool but one year after the swimming pool exploded...do you remember there was a gas explosion?

Beth: Yes.

Mary Jo: We carted kids up to Monarch Lodge to practice in the swimming pool up there because there were no swimming pools available to us. So, we were hauling these little ones up and down the hill for that whole season, but they still did well. Yeah, it was fun.

[10:44]

Tom: I guess my major recollections early on certainly revolved around my practice. When I came here there were actually very few physicians here compared to what there are now. My two partners were in practice and Doctors Hoover and Phillips were together at the time, but just prior to our arrival here Doctor Phillips had become ill and he didn't practice anymore after we arrived here, um, and subsequently moved to Kansas, as I recall. Doctor Smith, H. D. Smith, was a solo family practitioner here. Shortly after we got here, I would say within a couple months of our arrival here, he had a heart attack and he retired, and, um, so that pretty well narrowed the field down. Doctor Hoover in his office and the three of us in our office and Doctor Ed Budd who by then was only doing anesthesia so, that was, uh, the sum and substance of the medical corp here in Salida for those first few years. And it certainly has changed exponentially since then. I don't know how many doctors there are now, so...

Mary Jo: Right.

Tom: We've seen a lot of change in that regard.

Mary Jo: And, uh, remodeling of the hospital too. I think we've been through...

Tom: Two majors, I think.

Mary Jo: There was one small one in progress when we got here.

Beth: And now we're gonna get a new hospital.

Tom: Yes, yeah...how nice.

Mary Jo: Really nice. Badly needed.

Tom: And long overdue. The old D&RG Hospital although has historic value and all that sort of thing, uh, it has just out lived its usefulness...the infrastructure and so forth is beyond repair almost anymore...parking and so forth so...a new hospital is gonna be great, I think.

[12:54]

Beth: Yep. The sooner, the better.

Mary Jo: We've seen the addition built onto the middle school since we've been here and then the new Middle School built after that...Kesner Junior High was added onto since we came.

Tom: Lots of changes in the ski area. The kids like to ski so we've seen a lot of changes at the ski area. Jo spent time running up and down the hill for them to go skiing. But gosh it was a very small operation when we started here. I think they had one chair lift there...I don't know if they were still using the rope tow or not, I can't recall.

Mary Jo: T-bar...there was a T-bar up there.

Beth: Did you ski too?

Tom: Yes, well, as time allowed. We just didn't have a whole lot of time for that then. We get a lot more since I retired...then I did then.

Mary Jo: When we first came, Scott was in kindergarten and there were so many kindergartners that year that they had three sessions: morning, mid-morning and afternoon. Scott was in the mid-morning session so we would wait for him to finish school on Wednesdays because that was Tom's day off and we would take the kids up and just leave them to play in that little cafeteria because it was so small and we'd take a run, then go check on him, take another run, come back and check on 'em. Well then Scott did start skiing right away but Beth and Tim would just play and color and drink Cokes and everybody would visit with them but it was so small that you didn't have to worry about them being in there alone at all and then they started to ski and it's a wonderful place for small families with small kids to ski because you can't lose them as easily as you can at a big area. When we first came the Berrys owned the ski area and then after that was when Elmo Bevington bought it.

Tom: The other thing that comes to mind, thinking of industries in town, is the development of the boating industry on the Arkansas. I don't recall any of that when we first came. Private boaters obviously went on the river to fish but I don't think there were any commercial boating at the time when we came and boy it's just wall to wall down there now which is kind of interesting and a big chunk of the County's economy I think too.

Mary Jo: We've seen three Safeways in our living here because when we first came there was a small Safeway on the corner, which is now the parking lot opposite the Monarch Shrine and it was just a small, narrow building and then there was parking off of 3rd Street right there...just diagonal parking...one row of cars so then they built a second one, a larger one and it was built at the back of the parking lot right kind of along where the walking trail is now. There was a big one and then they knocked down the old one and increased the parking lot and then, I don't know how many years later, they built the current one, which, well they bought out what was Foster Lumber Company, which was at the other half of that lot and built the big Safeway there and then knocked down the old one and made it parking...so, that's three Safeways.

Tom: 3 upgrades.

Mary Jo: And there was a little City Market on the corner downtown but that was independent, that was Mansheim's which owned that, ran that.

Tom: Boy getting to thinking along the commercial lines, the banking industry has changed here immensely. I don't remember if there was more than the First National when we came here or not. Was there a second Bank in town then?

Mary Jo: I don't remember one.

Tom: And now what there are five or six, something like that.

Mary Jo: And you were involved in the first Chaffee County Bank...talk about that.

Tom: I was involved to a very limited degree when the Chaffee County Bank was opened. The original was...I was a relatively small investor in it, but Joe Lionel Sr. probably was the lead guy and Dr. Leonardi and Dr. Mehos were both greatly involved in it and Rex Rhodes and Ozzy Osborne. I don't recall who else was involved in that but I think primarily with the banking guidance of Rex Rhodes that is how the Chaffee County Bank came into being which then became the Affiliated Bank and so on and now it's the distant relative of that, which is Collegiate Peaks Bank, As far as the ownership structure and so forth is concerned. That was interesting.

Beth: Did you belong to the Elks or any other social groups around town?

Tom: Yes, the Elks. We did belong to the Elks for a number of years and I think the primary motivation was that that's where all the good dances were at that time.

Mary Jo: Good parties.

Tom: Yes, so they always had a few good parties every year...that was very enjoyable. And I also am a Mason, but I never transferred my membership to the local Masonic Lodge. I would attend as a visitor periodically, but I never got really much involved in the local lodge. Mary Jo belonged to some organizations.

Mary Jo: I belonged to the P.E.O. Sisterhood and after, let's see, I belong to the chapter FN which is the afternoon chapter and there's another chapter in town that's the evening chapter...is chapter P. Also, I was one of the founding members of the Monarch quilt group. We started out with about 8 members that met in each other's homes and we were all pretty much Salidans. Then we started getting a few members from Buena Vista then a couple up from Howard and gradually outgrew each other's homes so we started meeting out at the fairgrounds and then our membership started...we had so many coming down from Buena Vista and Nathrop that the group started meeting six times a year in Salida...and...every other month in Salida and Buena Vista. And it's grown to over 120 members now. I'm not sure what the membership is but...so that was one. Then we have a little knitting group and a spinning group where we spin our own yarn, so just fun stuff mostly.

Tom: Well you've been very involved with the Catholic Church here that we belong to.

Mary Jo: That's true. We belong to Saint Joe's.

[21:00]

Tom: When we first came St. Joe's had a school still, they were operating a parochial school and I don't remember when that finally went away but...

Mary Jo: It wasn't long. They only had up to 6th grade, I think when we came and it wasn't long after that that they had to abandon it...so...

Beth: Did you belong to the hospital auxiliary?

Mary Jo: Yes, I did I belonged to the hospital auxiliary for a few years. When I joined it was relatively new and the president at the time, that was Dora Stoker, and Faye Dunavin was very active...and I chaired the gift shop for a year or two. I worked on the coffee cart, but it was pretty difficult to work in the hospital being a doctor's wife because patients would say to me, "Oh, you know my problem." Well, of course I didn't and they were either insulted that I didn't know their problem, because it was such a serious problem, or unique or something, or they were embarrassed because they thought I knew their problems, so I found it easier to work in the gift shop or in the Bargain Nook. It was outside the hospital. And then when the Bargain Nook was...they had to quit doing the Bargain Nook when they lost their place so I kind of quit working with the auxiliary then.

Beth: I understand you had a shop downtown.

Mary Jo: Oh, I had a yarn shop downtown for a while from '79 to '86. I bought a yarn shop from a lady named Marian Burr who started the Knit Knack shop out at Rainbow Mall which doesn't exist anymore, and then I moved downtown into the place which...I can't remember what's in there now...either Antero Jewelers for a while and I can't remember what's in there now...public defender's office or something and then moved up the street into the Groy Building, which is now That's a Wrap. I had a partner. Her name was Dorothy Dumas and we ran the shop for about 6 years.

Beth: What do you see now that you didn't see back then when you first moved into town? How has Salida changed?

Mary Jo: All the businesses out on the highway I think are new.

Tom: Well, there's been a lot of evolution of the businesses downtown, as well. The changing of the...

Mary Jo: So many houses being built in the outskirts...Mesa Antero was nothing when we moved here. Up on Methodist Mountain there was nothing. There was nothing across the street from us for several years.

Tom: The major growth obviously has been in the county really, not the town. I don't think the population of the town has changed significantly since we moved here in '66 but the county certainly has grown and I think now we're apparently seeing most of that growth in the north end of the county, which is interesting. There were only two pharmacies here when we came - Riley Bartley had the Salida Drug and...

Mary Jo: No...there were three - Alexander's and Salida Drug and Waggener's drugstore.

Tom: Yes, you're right...that's correct.

Mary Jo: And Alexander's became Lallier's and they're the surviving pharmacy.

Mary Jo: There's a huge group of lawyers here now. When we came there weren't many lawyers in town.

Tom: Four or five, I think.

Mary Jo: And now we have a lot. When we came the courthouse was the Old Courthouse. It was all there was and then the annex was built onto the courthouse and then the separate judicial building was built on, was built on the property and then most recently the jail was added to that, so that was all empty across the street from us there.

Beth: Can you think of any characters in town that impressed you?

Tom: A lot of characters! I guess I really would have to give some thought to that. There certainly were a lot of people who have made some significant contributions to the city, just giving up their time working in community organizations and that sort of thing.

Beth: Who were some of them?

Mary Jo: John Peeples.

Tom: Yes, John Peeples was very active around town. Bob Rush right now is still quite active but for a number of years he was very active, particularly with the hospital and hospital board and things of that sort. I think his father also was very active in the community.

Beth: They were both lawyers, weren't they?

Tom: Yes. Dick Tuttle has been contributing his time around this town for decades. I don't think anybody has any idea how much he's contributed free of charge, so to speak. I guess I can't really think of any more names pop into my mind.

Mary Jo: I can't either.

Tom: There were so many people that did so many things.

Mary Jo: Chick Melien and Ray Hosford and Howard Goff who were instrumental in getting the Aspen concerts series started.

Tom: Oh, yes that was really good.

Mary Jo: Jeff Snyder was very active in that group too.

Beth: What did those fellows do for a living?

Mary Jo: Ray Hosford was an artist and came here semi-retired, I guess. Howard Goff had been an engineer and also came here retired. They lived at Mount Princeton for quite a while. His wife Jonny is

still alive...she's 92 and still fairly active. Joe Lionel Sr. was very active in that group. Chick Melien was superintendent of the schools. Charles Melien was superintendent of the schools. Joe Lionel of course had his own business. He owned U.S. Soil at the time and had been very successful at that and was very active really in doing a lot of things for the community, share his wealth for sure.

Beth: Were you here when they put the Christmas tree up on S mountain?

Tom: Yes.

Beth: Did you help with that?

Tom: Yes, I did. I worked up there almost every year from the very beginning...that's been a very interesting thing.

Mary Jo: I think that's a wonderful thing and I think and I'm not sure but I thought when it first started that John Bayuk was the one who had the idea to do it and then Chris Schirmer had a lot to do with the technical part...stringing lights and everything and when they first...the first year there was no outline of the tree, they just had spot lights up there that showed the shape of a tree and when they turned it on everyone kind of went, "Oh, is that all?" And it was pretty, but then they kept working on it, as they still do. They keep improving it...keep adding ornaments and...but, the first year was kind of strange...but everybody had enough faith to continue and we liked it so everybody contributed and worked on it.

Tom: Chris Schirmer I think really had... I don't know really who had the idea first, I never heard who that was but Chris really, through his electric company, really devoted and donated all the time and labor and effort to string the lights and get the power up there and all that sort of thing and he continued to be involved in that for a number of years. I think he sort of stepped aside now, but Steve Borbas of course is doing lots of work on Steve's time to keep it organized and keep it going. It was a fun thing to see it evolve and I think it's been a really nifty thing for the community. It's really unique.

Mary Jo: I think it's something everybody can be proud of. What else?

Beth: What else have you done for the community?

Tom: Well, I guess really from my point of view I didn't do much prior to my retirement. I retired in '92 but subsequent to that I spent eight years on the hospital board of directors and I am still part of the...I was um, excuse me, I was on the golf Board of Directors for I don't know how long. In fact, I was on there a year longer than I was supposed to be because I was the secretary and I was supposed to be keeping track of the terms and I allowed myself to have an extra year. I forgot that my turn was up so for better or for worse...And I've been on...worked on the child protection team, which is a committee in the community that's required by law, actually, by Social Services...the Department has to have a community group sort of looking at what they do and agreeing or disagreeing with their actions and so forth. It's called a child protection team. There's also an adult protection team, which I was involved with for a number of years. I'm not involved with that anymore but I do still go to child protective team and I'm currently on the board of directors of the Housing Authority, which runs the senior housing group out behind the swimming pool.

Mary Jo: Mount Shavano Manor.

Tom: Mount Shavano Manor, yes. I guess that's about it.

Beth: Do you play golf, Mary Jo?

Mary Jo: Yes, we both do but I don't as much as Tom and I don't play as well either, but I think our golf club is a real asset to the community.

Tom: I think it's an undervalued asset, unfortunately. It does a lot more for the community than a lot of people give it credit for and it's been impressive that it's been run by the golfers at no expense to the city



for decades now and I think that isn't appreciated by a lot of folks in town. People who aren't golfers don't understand that but it's, I think it's a very big asset for the community. I wish we could get another nine holes...it would be twice as big an asset but I don't know if I'll live long enough to see that, maybe, you never know.

[34:21]

Tom: Still enjoy skiing a lot. We both ski. We love that in the wintertime.

Mary Jo: Yep.

Beth: How about fishing or hunting?

Tom: Don't do much hunting anymore. Do a little bird hunting when I get a chance, if I get a chance, but love to go fishing. Spend a lot of time in the summer time fishing. Love to go to the high lakes...love to hike into the lakes.

Beth: Mountain climbing?

Tom: Only if there is fishing at the end of it.

Mary Jo: Just...hiking more than climbing.

Tom: I did do a couple, or three of the fourteeners with our kids but no more of that. There was no fishing up there so...

Beth: You like to fish too, Mary Jo?

Mary Jo: No. I like to walk up there to the lakes and then I knit or read while Tom fishes.

Beth: And you cook the fish when you get home?

Mary Jo: Well, Tom's pretty good at it. He cooks. You cook the fish when you bring it home. We don't bring a lot home anymore just because it's...Tom usually does catch and release.

Beth: When did you build your home here?

Tom: Gosh, we lived out on H Street for what, three and a half years there then about...

Mary Jo: We moved into the house across the street from where Breunichs live now. That was our first home that we bought. Then we bought these lots and moved in in March of '72 I think.

Tom: That sounds right. I can't recall for sure but it was early '70s I know.

Mary Jo: It was March of '72 may have been '71 but I think it was '72.

Beth: And then you retired in '92 you say?

Tom: Yes.

Beth: What have you done since you've retired Tom?

Tom: Fished and golfed.

Mary Jo: You took piano lessons.

Tom: Yes, started playing the piano...that's been a real joy. I had never played the piano before and I decided "I want to do that," so I started taking lessons and I still take lessons and I enjoy it very much.

Beth: Very good.

Tom: Nobody has to listen but the piano teacher and Mary Jo, so the world is safe.

Beth: What have you done since the kids have left home and you've retired Mary Jo?

Mary Jo: Do you know, when you don't work outside the home you don't ever retire. It's still pretty much the same, although Tom shares a lot more now of the housework and we share cooking. We take turns cooking every other week but I do a lot more knitting, quilting, spinning...

Tom: Bridge.

Mary Jo: Bridge, that's right. Started playing bridge again but we've traveled a lot. We just had a nice trip in May...3 weeks in Scotland and Ireland and we've been to Alaska. We've been to New Zealand, Newfoundland...that was really fun. We really liked that and a lot of the United States in between, so that's been fun to see our kids more often than we used to. That's fun. The grandkids - we just had a week in Silverton with all of them...rented a house in Silverton and they all like to go down there where their Grandma and Grandpa used to live, where we used to take them when they were little kids.

Beth: Well, you covered your lives pretty well.

Mary Jo: I think so.

Beth: I thank you very much for sharing it with us.

Mary Jo: You're welcome.

Beth: Now I'll turn off the machine and we can think of lots of things to say.