

ZULA MEYER
11/17/79

These are notes taken at Allison Nursing Home. Mrs. Meyer did not want to be tape recorded because she was a little hoarse.

I was born in 1889. My family came from Kansas in a covered wagon when I was seven years old. They came to Hoehne, Colorado which is northeast of Trinidad. My father was a rancher. He worked on a ranch at Hoehne. He was a County Commissioner in Las Animas County. He was in his third term as County Commissioner when he died. He was in the Courthouse, and we moved to Trinidad in 1911.

In 1913 I married a rancher and moved to Denver during the coal mine strike years. We moved to the JM Ranch after a few years in 1925. My husband inherited the ranch from his father, with his brothers. My husband and his family ran the ranch until 1945, when we moved to Walsenburg. The JM Ranch was in his family for 60 years.

My husband's family were from Germany. His parents were natives of Germany. They settled in Central City. His father worked as a butcher, and then bought the JM Ranch. They were from the Rosita Country. He was 10 when the family acquired the ranch. They didn't homestead the ranch. They bought it outright.

The three sons took over the ranch work. My husband finally took over the operation of the whole ranch. There were over 5,000 acres of land. He had cattle and sheep. Raising a family on a ranch in those days was alright. The kids had jobs and responsibilities. They got their education in a one room school, and then went to Walsenburg to high school. Then they went on to the University of Colorado. One son, Robert, was in the Navy, and he ran the ranch with his father after he came home. Then we moved to Walsenburg, and my son still has land in Huerfano County. Another son, Harlan lived in Wheatridge, and he is with the Rubbermaid Corporation. Norman lives in Conifer in the big yellow house on the road. He was a pilot for Continental Airlines. He retired at 60 in 1977. Robert lives in Walsenburg and has Meyer Insurance Agency, and a cattle ranch.

After we sold the ranch, it has changed hands three times. There aren't many of the old timers left in Gardner. Charlie Schmidt was just buried there. Mrs. Waggoner, Mrs. James, and the Bakers are still there.

Ranching has changed over the years. My husband's father had thousands of head of cattle. They would wander down to Rye, from Summer Pasture on Greenhorn Mountain. There were no fences anywhere. They used to raise potatoes on the Divide. between Gardner and Westcliffe, until conditions changed. We were 8,000 feet high. We raise a big garden. We raised roasting ears several years. We always raised lots of root crops. We planted apple trees. They were just starting to bear when I saw it last. They had torn down the hitching rail and the old road, and the barn. We had a big cellar and did a lot of canning. We went to Canyon City one time with a neighbor. Each of us bought all the fruit on a cherry tree. We stripped it, and took the kids along, and we picked both of those trees. That was all in one day. We canned and canned. We pitted all of those cherries.

We put up a lot of alfalfa and grass hay and fed it to the cattle in the winter. We originally did all work with horses. When we changed to tractors" our son said. "I guess you've become sissies'."

We used to go into Walsenburg for sugar, and flour. We bought them in 100 pound sacks. We rendered our own lard, and used it for shortening. We stored our potatoes in the cellar. We butchered our own meat, and home cured the pork. We had beef and lamb when we needed it.

I was a musician and an organist. We moved to Walsenburg, and I was the organist in the church for 28 years. I taught piano lessons. I had gone to the DU Conservatory of Music for my education.

My family's name was Harlan. They came from Illinois to Kansas. Their first four children were born in Kansas. There were eight of us children altogether. I had 10 great grandchildren, nine still living. My granddaughter and husband in Longmont raise sugar beets, corn, and Mexican beans.

A ranch wife couldn't get along without working. Women's roles are quite different now. Women were at home taking care of their family and homes. Now they get and want jobs. Sometimes it seems like the children lose a little bit that way. It is important for someone to be there when children get home from school. Our kids took their lunch buckets to school with them. The kids drove the spring wagon to school, and they took their lunches for themselves and hay for the horses.

First we were in Denver on the Bijou Ranch near Kiowa. Then we moved to Missouri for four years. That was in 1920. We did real farming there during World War I. We were 50 miles south of Kansas City, Missouri. The Fall was beautiful. There was hickory nuts, pecans, and walnuts. It was a good place to live. We came out to Trinidad in the summer to see my mother.

The Parfit Ranch was the third farm we had, where we raised apples and cherries and milked cows. The first year we had a freeze that froze everything. We tried another year, and had apples everywhere. We got a box car on the railroad, and took the apples out east on the plains of Colorado to sell them.

There were four Meyer families who lived near Gardner. My husband's sister-in-law is a widow, and she is in the Trinidad Nursing Home. Her name is Mrs. Henry Meyer.

Mrs. Reed was a librarian at Walsenburg High School. She had a tape recording done by Mitchell Meyer. He is in Greeley studying Geology.