

HUERFANO COUNTY ETHNO-HISTORY DOCUMENTATION PROJECT

ORAL HISTORY REPORT  
ONESIMO REGANALDO ROMERO

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My name is Onesimo Reganaldo Romero I was born November 12, 1917 to Petrolina Ortiz and Milton Romero. My grandparents on my mothers side was Cleatilde Montoya and Antonio Avan Romero. My parents came from a place called Rio Colorado on the other side of the mountains and then my grandparents, the Romero's, they came from Antonito, Colorado and they settled here in Walsenburg. My dad owned a farm at the foot of Mount Mestas and we were raised there till I was about 8 years old then we moved into Walsenburg and started school at Hill school. I was 9 years old when I lost an eye. We never did graduate from school it was during the depression, we just, there was no way to continue our schooling so we used to help dad, he had a team of horses and a wagon, to haul wood, better wood to the people in Walsenburg and that the way he made his living and we were with him at all times. I went to the 7th grade at Pennsylvania street school house by the Methodist church and in the summer times we used to be around with the boys that lived in Loma Park who were a bunch of boys, colored boys, Spanish boys, Italian, Russians, Slaves, we were always together up in the hills chasing chipmonks of squirrels and we used to go out on picnics and stay over nite up in the hills, then come home the following day and ketch heck from the folks. As we grew, my brothers and I joined the C.C camp, we went to the C.C. camp, I went in to Bernallio, New Mexico and my brother went to Durango. I stayed up there 3 months and then we came back home and just fooled around. I got a job on the railroad worked for 3 months and helped my mom and dad and so did my brother and then a, Milton, then the was come by and we were both called but I never made it, my brother did. And then during the war I had a job washing dish-

es at the Alpine Rose, not during, it was a little before the war, for a dollar a day and thats when I was married at that time, 1930. 39 was it Celia? In 1939 I was married and I continued working for a while then I quit there and I went to work with Mr. Mauro at the Walsenburg creameary. I worked there for a year from there I went to the coal mines and I stayed till 1970 and I retired. I started working in the mine in 1943 and I worked till 43, till 1970 when I retired and I was a hoistman on the outside, I took care of all the coal that come out and loaded trucks. I was hurt a couple of times, I broke a leg there and I broke my hand when I was, the shaker was going back and forth, moving the whole structure, and a sprag come out of the car and the car came up and hit me and just run over my leg and broke it and then my hand, right there (middle of palm),I was caught in stroke of a convior inside the mine, when I slipped, and I put my hand in there and a strake came by and it came out over here, up here, like that. (left hand) It crushed the bone here and there, I ain't got no strength in this two fingers.

I remember now when the store, Kays Grocery is, used to be a skating ring and we used to go skating there three hours for a quarter and on Saturday nites we used to go to the dance at the Blue Glode hall, thats on main street, thats about it for recreation other than we used to play touch football, we used to play softball, basketball. We had our own court and own field up here on Loma Park where I lived and we used to have a swimming hole up there by the peak, by the three peaks we used to call the hog back, the three peaks, we used to have a swimming hole there where all of us used to go swimming. A whole bunch of us kids used to go swimming and horseback riding all over the field there, we even

used to play tag on horses. I remember one time Dofie Vallejos was it and he was trying to tag me and I was almost laying on top of the horse and he was chasing me and he didn't see the branch

and it hit him on the chest and he spun around the branch about three times and then fell. He was crying, " I killed myself, I killed myself". Then he got up he had a big ole bruise right across his chest, all skinned up and blood coming out. Oh! we used to have a heck of a time up in them hills. It was really fun and then we used to go fishing, you know. We used to leave the house on horseback, go up to the Martin lake an go fishing there, from there we would come up all the hills chasing chipmonks or squirrels. I remember one time a chipmonk got a hold of my thumb, she wouldn't let go, I pulled it and hit it like that on a rock and she let go, my big ol thumb, I had it, it swelled up for about 2 days, but then, at that time nobody thought about rabies or anything so we never did go to the doctor. Nothing happened so. And another thing I remember, when we used to play touch football, I got hit with a rock on a, on my shin and it just broke the skin, it never, it didn't hurt, it just stung a little bit, it didn't bother me. The next day, I seen a big red spot on my shinn there, which I didn't pay no attention to it, then it started to hurt and hurt and 2 days, three days later it got infected and pus started comming out and, like I say, we very seldom went to doctors, so my dad and my mom got scared and they took me to Dr. Baca and he said, na he took me to Dr. Lamme first, Julian Lamme, and he said that I had, what they call that, gangarine? And he wanted to cut my leg off and my dad said "No" So from there he took me to Dr. Baca and Dr. Baca told my daddy "go home and tell your wife to go out on the back of the house or on the back field there and

and get some herbo de la negrito and mash it up real good, with a rock or a hammer, whatever, into a paste and put it on there," and he gave my dad a bottle of medicine, I don't know what, it looked like water to me, and said "wash it out with this and put that herba de la negrito on the sore," on there was a big ole hole about yay big, so she did. A week later I was playing outside. It healed up. Everyday, she put it in the morning then in the evening she would take it off and wash it, then put another batch of herba de la negrito on there. And, for oshia, for asha that is good for, to, so you won't get no infection on your cuts or whatever. Thats what they claim. I really don't know. But, there was always asha, my mother always had asha and that too, we called a while ago, emortal, they always had some of that in the house. And on our working at the mine we had to join the union, a union member, until the same union threw us out. I don't know, they were oysged by the bigger companies, I guess, and we worked non-union for awhile, and then when I quit, I went to the doctor and found out I had black lung. So, I wrote in and made an application for the interview with the doctor, if I had black lung, so I come ahead with black lung. And after that, I applied for my miners pension and got it. So, thats for the mines and the union. And, on celebrations, I remember, up above, out by the hog back, where they used to have a big open field they used to hold "dio de Santiago, dio de Santava, dio de San Juan," they used to have big celebrations there, horse races, gallo, we used to call it gallo day, they had dances, oh! all kinds of good things, you know, for the young people.

And on the penitentes, my dad did belong to the brotherhood, and the year he died, he died in 44, and I was ready, I was gonna

join the brotherhood only he died about a week before they started thier, what do you call it. (to take new members) I remember when my dad belonged to penitentes brotherhood, which was a secret organization, they wouldn't reveal what went on, but there was other people that, I guess, did see, or someplace, or were told by somebody what they used to do, and they used to get a strap or something and hit thier backs, and they used to go out and dig a cactus and carry it on thier back, and when they were through there was no sign of, where they were hit with the belt or any thorns off that cactus on thier back. Thats about all that I know of, other people have said because we used to ask him but he said "You wait until you join then you find out." Because I know they used to go through some thing as what Jesus Christ went through, like carrying the cross, and being hit, and flogged by other members of the brotherhood as he was staggering with the cross and when they got to the destination where the cross was supposed to be set up, there were no marks on the man, and he felt that he wasn't even tired after carrying that heavy cross. So, there must be something to that, I don't know. But when I was ready to join, about a week before that, my dad passed away, I never did join. The penitentes brotherhood had thier own structure, it was like a church, it was called a marodo. There, is where they used to meet during lent, when lent began til good friday and on Holy week, thats when all this went on, you know when man used to walk with his cross and other members used to hit him with a belt, and anther two, three brothers would be carrying cactus or something on their back, and when it was over with, I always used to sneak a look on my dads back but I never did see no marking or anything that would, you know, tell me well he did hit himself or he got hit wit it or he carried a cactus because

theres marks on his back, because there never was. And I know if they did that he had to do it, because he belonged, and he told me he belonged to it when he joined with his father when he was 13 or 14 years old, and I really don't know too much about it, of course like I said I never, I was interested in it, you know, to join with um, but like I said dad died before I had a chance to join.

About the law, in those times, I knew a man, he used to work for the railroad cause they used to haul in coal from the mines. they used to park it there on the old spur, and people used to get, help themselves to the coal and they hired him as a watchman, and us kids used to go get coal too. We had lots of coal at home and this fellow, he did something, I don't remember, I think he killed somebody in cold blood and he got caught and they sentenced him to die and they hung him in Canon City and I knew the man, I knew him real good, but I can't think of the mans name, and he was hung in Canon city and then when they brought him back home to be buried, we went to the rosary and we seen him in the coffin, and we went to the funeral. But I can't think of the mans name. I know he killed one or he killed two, I don't remember what it was, and it wasn't here in Huerfano county, that happened out of state someplace or within the state, but I don't remember what it was if it was two persons he killed or one, and I knew the man real good, we were just kids then, just young kids. But we used to know the man. He was a nice man, you know. When we used to come and steal coal from the cars there, well if he knew you, he'd let you go and would not say nothing, take your coal and get out of here, Anyway, after that he went wrong, I guess, and killed those people and he got hung for it.

When I was courting my wife she used to live up on Bear Creek that's 14 miles from here. I used to walk that 14 miles once every week, 14 miles to and 14 miles from, and finally we decided to get married and my dad and ma went up there and asked for her hand in marriage. And so we been married since 1939. We are the father and mother of 9 children, 8 girls and 1 boy and we are grandparents of 26 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren. So, I guess that's it. When I was young, I remember some of the mischief I used to get into. A bunch of us used to be walking home from town or wherever we were at in the nite, there would be snow on the ground, colder than all heck, and if we spotted a house with a ladder leaning up against it, we'd sneak in there and climb up the ladder, and first we would look for gunny sacks or something and then we would stuff them down the chimney and then we'd tear out off of there. Pretty soon we'd see the windows going up and doors opening and people running out of houses full of smoke. We'd be up there laughing our heads off. We thought it was funny and now I realize that I wouldn't want that to happen to me. We used to do that or we used to string a piece of good stout wire across the road and about that time, very few people had cars, we used to ride on horseback or on the wagon pretty soon you'd see somebody tapple off a house. They were stopping and hitting the wire. Oh! we used to be the dickens too, you know, we were kids. When we used to, at that time too, when we were going to school if my dad had found out that the teacher had me up in front of the class and hit me with a ruler or a strap or something, for something I did. I knew if he found out I was going to get another one at home. So I used to keep mum about it, I wouldn't tell mom or dad that I got spanked or I got hit today from the teacher, if I did I'd get another one at

home. They used to punish us. They wouldn't let us, like at that time there was no T.V., we had a little radio, they'd tell us, "well you cant't listen to the radio or your not gonna go out no more for the week, you have to stay in the house or in the yard", and that was it. Boys would come out and whistle for us to go out, we couldn't tell them we can't go, we have to stay home for two, three days, Why? Well you know what we did last nite, they found out about it, so I'm being punished. That was it, and then I could not go any where.

I remember my brother and I used to fight like little cat and dog, all the time was fighting and fighting, and one day mother caught us and she made us, and she made me and my brother take our shirts off, and she says "now kneel down", and she got the razor strap where dad had it hanging and she gave it to my brother and says "now hit him", and my brother didn't want to hit and she had another belt and says "hit him", and the third time she told him to hit me, he didn't want to hit me, so she let him have it, and it must of hurt cause pow he'd let me have it, "hit him again", he must of hit me four or five times and then she says "now you get up and you hit him", so he got down on his knees and I hit him. That cured us from fighting we never fought no more. We used to argue, but we never, you know at that time we used to go to blows blows, scratch, pulling hair, and kicking till she caught us. That's what happen. She made him hit me, then I hit him. That cured us right there, no more fighting.

If your out there and somebody picks on you, try to talk your way out of it, or run away from it, and if you can't run then go ahead and defend yourself, but I don't want you comming home crying cause that boy hit me, or the other boy hit me, you take care

of yourself but if you can avoid it, walk away. Which we used to, a lot of times boys would come and pick on us, who were a little bigger than us, we take off we'd run or we talk our way out of it. If we couldn't well we'd have to stay there and fight. Sometimes we win, sometimes we'd get fixed, But that was the way they brought us up, and all of us, all the kids there on Loma Park. They used to, you know, somebody picks on um, you know we'd try to break it up, make friends, heck and before you know it the guys that were trying to fight the other guys, were friends. We used to stick around together, mess around there on Loma Park. I remember, this used to live here, Eva Dunich, used to stay with Mrs. Licorich or something, used to run that little store on Loma Park. We used to play run sheep run, and this ole lady that run the store, she was real nice. We had the run of the store. Two, three o'clock in the morning we'd still be running up by the hog back, way over on this hill here, you know, the other guy would run and see, run sheep run, or whatever, or bananas or whatever, you know, to those who had a different name or something, you know, to tell you to stay hidden that they were pretty close to finding you. I remember one nite, all the fathers and mothers were looking for his kids. Two o'clock in the morning. My gang was going up there, but there was nobody to play cause we were out running, you know, and the ole lady was there, the one that run the store, and she says Oh! the boys and the girls will be back, their playing! So we all sat there on the porch in the store. Pretty soon they came running me out and the others, pretty soon they all gone home crying. Ole Mr. Dunich was takin Eva, Rose and Ellan Dunich, and the little one and Mrs. Rodovich was takin a Sophie, cheche and Sammy and the Denizies were takin Vic-

tor and the Chacon's were takin Jimmy and Robert and Conrad. A-a-a we used to raise heck. A whole bunch, a bunch of kids. But they never did get into serious trouble or anything, just used to be mischivious and all that, buy we never did nothing wrong and, all that against the law, and we used to play hookie too. A whole bunch of us. Let me tell you. There used to be about 35 kids there in Loma Park, and we all meet sometimes in the morning when we were going to school, lets don't go to school today. So 35 or 25 of us would take off up the hills and not school. Half of the school building was empty. We used to have a lot of fun. At that time, remember over there where the laundry mat is at? There used to be the Welche's Bakery. The lady, she was Spanish, the lady just died, oh, three or four, five months ago in California Mr. Welch, they used to have a bakery there and for a nickle you could get a bag, those safeway bags, plumb full of cookies, they'd throw in a cake or two cakes, two three pies, donuts and all kind of cookies. One nickle, day old cookies. They had a great big box in the corner, and we'd go in, wanna nickle of day old cookies and Mr. Welch used to full them bags up for us. For a nickle. Thats when we used to play hookie. We used to, three or four bags up there on the hill, eating cookies. On the way one of us would have 25, 30 cents to stop by a quart of milk or half gallon of milk and go up in the hills. At noon time we'd eat our cookies and drink the milk. If not somebody would steal a quart from home, you know, one of the guys come with a quart of milk under his coat. The other guy would run out of the house with another quart under his coat, and up the hill we'd go, and the dairy was right there on Loma Park on the corner. We used to stop there too and ask Mr. Bergamo for milk and he used to give it to us as long

as we took a container, you know, a bucket or whatever, and he'd say "what are you boys doing, going to school?" and we'd say yep, can we have some milk? So he'd get the buckets and says "I know" and he'd fill the buckets up or whatever it was, and we'd go up the hill, but he used to give it to us because he had two boys, Charlie and I can't remember the other kids name, and he'd say "now make sure Charlie goes to school". Charlie go to school, my foot! Charlie was going with us. Josephine, you know Josephine Marcurrie? She's a Bergamo, she used to be a young girl then, when they lived there in Loma Park. I was talking to her the other day, asking her about Charlie, he lives in California, there someplace. She says he's gonna retire in a couple of years too. I'd like to see hem. I'd like to see some of these other guys like Vic Denizie, Sammy Rodavich, Richard Owens, Jimmy Chacon that the only ones that I had and there were a younger brother thats living ther others ones are dead. Conrad, you know, Conrad he died and Sam Rodovich he's in Denver someplace. There were two boys. I can't remember thier names now. Like Alec. Bell and his sister Madaline, I used to court Madeline when we were kids, her and I was always together up in the hills. At that time too, my dad had 38 goats and Richard Owens and his brother, well his dad, had 300 head of sheep and we used to watch them, heard um, up there in the hills, So a whole bunch of us sheep hearders, we used to call ourselves, you know, a whole bunch of us. 35 or 40 kids from Loma Park. Every day we were there in the summer time. There was goats and sheep up in the hill, and the girls, the Dun-iche's, and Rodaviche's, the two Chacon girls, there was some other girls. I can't remember thier names. Some Italian girls, they used to go up in the hills with us, stay there all day over there.

We used to have a lot of fun up there riding the rams and the Billy goat. Then in the evening we'd come home and my day and my gramma would milk the goat. I couldn't drink that milk. Yeach! When I had ulcers I used to drink it. Its good. (for ulcers). The last glass of milk that I took, I held my nose and I drowned it and all of a sudden it hit bottom and it come right back out, and that was it. I couldn't drink it no more. It was horrible. Its good stuff, its real rich, real rich and its strong. (smell). So I couldn't drink it no more for that ulcer I had. Thats it I guess.

Compairing the old days and the present, I think the old days were the best. Cause I remember when I, my wife and I were first married we'd go to the movies on Saturday nite we'd stop at Pete O'Rourick's and we'd buy a banana split, 20 cents a piece or we'd stop at a restaurant and have a sandwich, a hamburger was ten or 15 cents, cup of coffee was a nickel, a pop was a nickel, a candy bar was a nickel. Like now, if you ain't got a 20 dollar bill, you ain't gonna go noplac. If you know what I mean, going to the show, coming out and treating yourself to a banana split. We went the other nite, two nites ago to Tes's got two banana boats, a dollar forty apiece. A dollar forty! And at that time I could not even give it away, you couldn't eat all of it for 20 cents. For two dimes you couldn't eat all of it. Cause they had, I think he used to put three big ole bananas on there and about a half of gallon of ice cream and another half of a gallon of syrup and nuts and stuff like that, why heck, you couldn't eat it, and only 20 cents, and now you go pay a dollar forty for one and what happened to it, still feel like another one. But, you can't do it. Yeah! Like at that time, groceries too, when I first start working in

the mine, I was only making, every two weeks I was bringing home 18, 80 dollars the most, and by God we used to come to the store and big ole boxes full of groceries and I would still have 25, 30 dollars left. And now, you can go with a hundred bill to the store and come out with two bags. One under each arm. And at, that time they needed a pickup or a good wagon to take the stuff home. So I think, of course you know the value of a dollar then was a dollar. Like it is now, only now it ain't worth nothing. It bought a lot of milk. Clothing, I used to buy a pair of overalls for work for a dollar and a half, I bought a pair the other day for 18 dollars. A pair of mark gloves, leather palm and canvas back was 49 cents a pair now thier 4 dollars. Shoes I used to pay, for safety shoes I used to pay, the most was 7 dollars now you can't touch them under 24. And lunch why if you were working, now it cost you about 5 dollars for your noon meal if you take your lunch to work. At that time, why heck, it was 15, 20 cents and you had your bucket packed, to work, buy now you can't, it can't be done no more, So that's what I'd like to see is the ole times come back.