

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JULIUS LUOMA
TRAPPER

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In the year 1916, a young man left the last part of his home that he knew. His father Erik, had worked in the coal mines in Hanna and Rock Springs, Wyoming. Erik died in 1904. His mother Maria, died in 1907, leaving young Julius to be raised by his sister Suzie. Along with his brother John, Julius had four sisters, Lizy, Hilda, Eunice and Suzie. They helped each other to continue there schooling. But in the spring of 1916, Julius decided it was time to go on his own. And in the spring he was waiting for the rain to cease its continual down pour. Julius had decided to leave the valley and try to get over the Cascade Mountains. With all the trails going over the mountains being blocked with snow, Julius and his horses, loaded with all his belongings rented a box-car on one of the only trains that could get over the snow-capped peaks.

Julius, sitting in his recliner chair begins to laugh and chuckle about an experience that he had when he shipped his horses over the mountains in one of the box-cars of the train that was headed over the Cascades. Still chuckling he describes how the rail road, built snow sheds over the tracks, if something went wrong with the train people could stay in these buildings till help came. Julius decided to look the country over as the train was going slow up the mountain, he crawled up on the top of the box-car, and sat down to get a better view of the mountains. In his own words "I had my back to the direction that the train was a goin,

and we went under a snow shed, and it just ticked the top of my hat. And I'll tell you I did not loose any time going down between them cars, and I stayed in between them cars until we got past that snow shed. Then I'd stick my head out, and look the way the train was a going to see if there were any more of them sheds. And when I seen the coast was clear, I went up and got in the passenger car, and you bet I stayed there."

1917, found Julius in Oregon, and a cattle drive from Burns Oregon, to Crain Creek. After that, he found a partner to help him on his trap lines. "Bear Dog Brown", sold his wagon and said he would buy groceries, Julius gave him fifty dollars to help buy his share of the groceries. Julius took the train to Caldwell Idaho, and then headed for the valley that they agreed to meet in when Bear Dog would bring the supplies. Julius who was waiting on Bear Dog, did not have very much food with him, and had to hunt for what he would eat. Finding an over-abundance of rabbits, Julius would try to cook them in different ways. In the days that turned to weeks, then to a full month, he had broiled them over the fire, baked them in a "dutch-oven", and thrown them in the coals, he then had to cook them over the fire again. Bear Dog Brown was never seen again.

1919-1920 was a hard winter, but a good one for Julius and his new partner Roy Huff, Julius went back to Caldwell Idaho from Oregon and found a fur buyer. the man's name was

J. L. Proudly, from New York. Julius sold 300-400 furs to be sent back East. And with the spring turning to summer, Julius worked with the Stoffer Sheep Company in Cokeville Wyoming. He spent the summer in the upper-Labarge Creek area. Julius says the sheep would go anywhere but the direction that you wanted them to go. Kind of like fly's. He remembers another story about the sheep herder that he was working with. Julius while going around the sheep found a pit full of snakes. "There was rattle snakes a laying on every inch of ground in there". well he picked up rocks and went to killing the snakes. When all the visible snakes had been killed, "I had a hand full of rattles". And then he went on around the sheep and back to the other herder, "who was a sittin on the ground with his coat all layed out for me to sit on." Julius did not sit down but asked if the herder had ever seen any snakes? The herder had never seen a rattler before, and the herder got so exited that he jumped up and jerked his coat up off of a large catus, and said "do you know what I was going to do? Have you sit down on my coat right here." Well the sheep herder was so exited that he ran with Julius around the sheep to the pit, and the snakes had come back out. There were a lot of snakes back out on the rocks, and Julius went to throwing rocks and killing snakes again . "The sheep herder would pick up a rock and throw it at a snake, and he could not come close to a hitting one of them snakes, he was so exited". Finally the

last snake was trying to get back to his hole. Julius begins to laugh again in his chair, "I grabbed that snake by the tail and I snapped him out of his hole and over my shoulder, right toward the other herder! " Well the herder was going over the hill when Julius looked back.

Julius then had trouble with his teeth and he went to a dentist that he knew in Boise, Idaho. He then went to work in a rail road shop at Spirit lake Idaho. Julius lost his third finger while trying to move a large plate of metal. He was lucky though, he had almost lost all of his fingers. But the others had mended together, except the third one. When the doctor waited a couple of days, ("a week") then finally looked at the hand, and it was green up to the wrist. Julius had to go down to St. Mary's hospital. He spent three months in the hospital and had three operations on his hand. Finally they cut the finger off.

Julius got his horses and headed back to Oregon and Washington, Utah, Nevada, Idaho. He trapped in the winter and worked where he could in the summer. In the fall of 1928, Julius moved to the Holden Ranch which was on Fontenelle creek, between Kemmerer and LaBarge, Wyoming . Over Julius's left shoulder hanging on the wall is a pencil drawing of an old photograph. In the picture there are six horses, and his dog, Brownie. Brownie is sitting on top of one of the packs that the horses are carrying. Julius got Brownie when he worked for the sheep company in Cokeville.

When the sheep men left, there were two pups that did not follow the rest of the dogs in the herd. Julius took one and found the other a good home. Julius then trapped and hunted for furs, and helped to put up the hay at cutting time.

When Julius came into the area, LaBarge was named Tulsa, (Julius pronounced it Tulsie,) Well they changed the name to LaBarge because the mail would get mixed up between Tulsa Oklahoma and Tulsa Wyoming. Julius was trying to buy land six miles south of LaBarge at an old homestead that Mrs. Guyette had used to feed the men who worked on the freight wagons. He tried for many months to buy the land from the bank, in the coal town of Kemmerer. Finally the banker and Julius came to a deal and Julius bought one-hundred and sixty acres for one-thousand dollars. It was in the middle of the Great Depression, and when Julius moved on to his new home site, it was November, 1 1932. And it was -20 below zero, with six inches of snow on the ground. Julius was staying in a canvas tent until he could build a better shelter. He still has the tent peg drove into the ground were he first put up his tent.

Julius bought lumber and an old house from the Cumberland Coal Mine, which had recently mined all of the avalibal coal and the company was selling all of the buildings and closing down the mine. There were many small coal camps in the are around Kemmerer. Some of the towns have become ghost towns, but most have been torn down for

the lumber to build other houses and buildings. Frontier, Okley, Diamondville, and Sublette, which was west of Willow Gap. Another mine that had a camp at it was the Blazone mine, wich was north of Evanstan, It could be close to the present site of the power plant. Julius built his first home, a fifteen by eighteen building out of siding and rough-cut lumber. He heated the small house with an old stove that had come over the Oregon Trail. Still it was a cold winter for Julius, "snow would blow through the nail holes and ther'ed be a streak of snow across the room in the morning, I would get a fire a'going to try to thaw out every thing". Julius would run about one-hundred miles of trap lines all over the area of LaBarge and Fontenelle creek. The valley that the Green River ran in was very sparsely populated, "proubibly only three or four families lived close to the river." Beaver and Mink were the money makers for Julius. He also trapped muskrat and cats, and a few coyotes.

Moonshining was also a way to make a little money, although Proabition was going on, Julius laughs and says "they would make it in every corner they could get into, and every night you could hear an old truck rumble past the house at about midnight." They took the wiskey to Kemmerer, and the people would drink it as fast as they could haul it down to them. Some also made beer, which was also popular. Very few were ever arrested for making or hauling the

moonshine, but you had to be careful.

When he dismantled the house at the Cumberland mine, he marked every stud and board, so he could rebuild it exactly as the house had been. He filled the space in the walls with saw dust for insulation. "And its still there in the walls." Julius completed the house in 1944-1945, One of the interesting stories about building the house, is when he went to plaster the inside of the house, Pete Burgon told Julius not to space the laths to far apart. "But it took to long, and I started spacing them a little further each time. A ton of plaster did not do it and I ended up getting another thousand pounds of it, I'll bet there is a lot of plaster in the walls. Guess it won't blow away!"

He began to raise Foxes, and mink in 1935. He would buy old horses for slaughter, and mix the horse meat with vitamins and fox feed, grind it all together for the foxes. He raised Yukon and Silver and Platinum foxes. He also had Minks that he had bought, and some that he trapped alive. At the time you could make good money in raising animals for furs. Shortly after this, the price of fur dropped and Julius had a hard time selling the furs.

Julius was the Water Master for many years in the noth Lincoln, and Sublette county's. When telephones first came to the area, Julius was one of two people who had one. "You could tell when some one was upset about there water, the phone would be a ringing a lot." He is still remembered as a

fare and honest Water Master. He also bought land south of Fontenelle Creek for pasture for the cows and horses that he had. When the Government started to build the Fontenelle Dam, Julius made a fifty-two space trailer park in the middle of his pasture. "It was full with the men working on the dam, and there were people living along the river too". The dam was built in the 60s and it leaked from the very first. "Built on shale rock. It leaked a stream on the east side as big as LaBarge Creek". Also on the other side next to the spill way. The Government bought most of the ground along the river above the dam, "Flood Control". Julius says "it was to stop people from developing something along the river or reservoir".

Names Hill had always been a popular place to stop. The names of the Pioneers who traveled the Sublette Cut-Off, are carved in the soft sand stone. The valley was a good spot to rest after crossing the Green River, it had wood and lots of grass with plenty of water. Today there are still many names visible to the tourists who stop and look at the rocks along the highway.

Julius married Zelma, in 1948 while they were visiting relatives in California. After they returned to Names Hill, Zelma thought a cafe would make money. Julius began to build the cafe in the early 50s. They had sold the horses and cows, along with the ground that was down by the dam. Julius got the lumber from the Tie Camps along Horse Creek

and LaBarge Creek. The construction crews working on the damn helped the business, along with the trucks going to the oil fields around Calpet, and out in the desert, east of LaBarge and Big Piney. Poor health sent Julius to the hospital in Salt Lake City, he stayed in there for forty five days, and on his return back to Wyoming, Zelma and Julius decided that they would retire from the work of the cafe.

I asked Julius if he had any regrets , and he said no, but he might have a different out look on some things. Despite his health, Julius likes to get out of the house and look the area over. He knows exactly where the stake that he used for his tent is, and he remembers the pain and work of his life. Yet when you look at him, there is a smile and a look of pride in his eyes that age and pain will never dim.

NAME: Julius Luoma

PRESENT ADDRESS: 37 RT Kemmerer, Wyo, 83101

1. Present profession or occupation: retired, stovep
2. Occupations followed in the past (give dates): most everything.

3. Date of birth: Oct 25, 1900 Place of birth: Lincoln Creek

4. Date of moving to Wyoming: MAY 1920-1924 Washington

5. Full name of parents (give mother's maiden name)

ERIK LUOMA 1904

MARIA LUOMA 1907

6. Names of brothers and sisters (and to whom married):

JOHN LUOMA, LIZY LUOMA, HILDA LUOMA, SUZIE EDUICE

7. Schools attended (give dates): GRADE SCHOOL 1904-1916

8. Places of residence in Wyoming (give dates): COREVILLE 1920,
STARVALL, ~~Home~~ 1924.

9. Military service (dates, awards, area served, rank, etc.):

NO

10. Political offices held (give dates): WATER COMMISSIONER

SUBLETTE LINCOLN

11. Political affiliation:

12. Religious affiliation:

13. Marriage (spouse's name, date and place of marriage):

ZELMA AUG 25 1948, BERKELEY CALIFORNIA

14. Children (names, dates of birth, grandchildren, etc.):

NO

15. List of clubs and societies of which you are a member:

NRA, WOODMAN OF WORLD, WYO HIST SOCIETY,

FATHER
ERIK

