Narrator: Joseph M. Melinkovich
Interviewed By: Ann Burns and Nancy Cranford
Date: May 17, 1977
Recorded At: Pat Burns Residence, 736 N Street, Rock Springs, Wyoming
Length of Recording: Tape 1 - Side 1 - 30 minutes
Side 2 - 15 minutes

Summary of Tape

Joseph's father came to Utah because he had a cousin working in Utah at the smelters in Midvale, Utah. Shortly after his father came to Utah, his mother arrived here. (About a year later.) She had a brother living in the states and he sent for her. Consequently, she wasn't here but shortly and was married to Joseph's father. After working in Utah from 1912 to 1917 he (Joseph's father) moved to Montana. He worked for the Anaconda Smelting Company through the years of 1918 to 1920.

When Joseph's father left Austria he came by boat to New York and then from New York by railroad to Utah.

Joseph's father left Austria and came by boat to New York and then from New York by railroad to Utah.

Joseph's mother came to Utah because she had a brother living there and he sent for her. At the time she came over she couldn's speak any English at all. She was probably in her 20's at that time. The only thing that Joseph could recollect was that when she was coming on the train was that she and the three ladies that were coming with her were so frightened that one of them had to go to the bathroom but couldn't get it through to anyone that she had to go to the bathroom. She had to wait until it got dark on the train so that she could take care of herself. That was one of the difficult things that Joseph remembered his mother saying.

When Joseph's mother came to Utah, she came with four other ladies. All four ladies were married down in Utah. These four ladies that came together were living in Utah and that's where they were married because around the smelters, it was probably like it was around the mines. Around the smelters there was a great deal of bachelors that were living and working there and when these people came from Europe there were men available and the women were married because they couldn't live by themselves. There was no one to stay with.

Primarily the reason Joseph's mother and father left Yugoslavia was that they had to go find another way of living because all of the people that left the particular area that his people were from didn't have anything. They lived on farms and they lived off of whatever they could raise and they had to go somewhere to find a new way of living and life and that's the only reason these men left those countries. In fact, my father before he ever came to this country was working on a surveying crew in Germany at the age of 14. He left home when he was 14 years old and he went over to Germany and he was so young that they gave him a job as a waterboy. He would carry water to the men that were on the surveying crew. Then from there, he finally migrated over to the United States.

Primarily the reason my mother and father left Yugoslavia was that they had to go find another way of living because all of the people that left the particular area that my people were from didn't have anything. They lived on farms and they lived off of whatever they could raise and they had to go somewhere to find a new way of living and life and that's the only reason these men left these countries. In fact, my father before he ever came to this country was working on a surveying crew in Germany at the age of 14. He left home when he was 14 years old and he went over to Germany and he was so young that they gave him a job as a waterboy. He would carry water to the men that were on the surveying crew. Then from there, he finally migrated over to the United States.

I don't think my father ever intended to go back because where he lived it was so difficult, it was like poverty. There was no reason to go back. If they's had anything, they'd probably never left. They didn't have anything to start out.

My father worked in the smelters for 41 years. When he started to work they didn't have any unions and just through the goodness of their heart they gave him a pension. He received $1 a year for every year he worked in the smelters. He received $41 when he retired. $41 a month. Of course, later on, in the later part of his life he was a guard at the smelters. The type of work that they did in the smelters was lead and copper smelting. My father worked in the lead room for many, many years in all those years. The strange part about it now - the lead was smelted and it was made into bullion - each one weighed 98 pounds. If you were working where you had to handle them you's have to handle this lead bullion 8 hours a day, 98 pounds each and that was quite hard work. Later on they finally decided to smelt all this copper and also this lead in larger quantities so that nobody could steal them and they transported it in flat cars like that. The ore smelter was just over the side of the hill from the open pit copper mine in Bingham, Utah, and they would transport the ore in buckets on a trolley line and it would come down the canyon and they would dump these buckets of ore and it would go back up and they would go up into the mines and they would refill them and come back down. When we were kids it was a real dangerous thing to do, but we could sneak in ther and jump in one of those buckets and you could ride up to Bingham.

My family spoke the Slavish language at home because my mother couldn't understand English. My father did understand a little English because he did work with the men. Because my mother couldn't get out, most of the time whe was sick. The neighbors that she had were of three nationalities, Italian, Greek, and Slavish on their street. On the street they lived on , on 4th Street, of all the families I can remember there were only three English speaking families. My mother, consequently, was neighbors with all the other Slavish ladies. Everytime they came to visit they couldn't speak any language but what they knew and she didn't have a chance to learn English like my father did.

The children mixed well. The only entertainment we had was on the streets and the kids all played together even though they spoke their own language at home. As soon as they started to school they automatically learned English and from then on they spoke both languages.

My family had a cow and when they milked the cow, my mother would boil the milk in the saucepan on the coal stove and in the morning we would have for breakfast a large bowl of milk and coffee, not like coffee today, but half milk and half coffee, and we'd break homemade bread in the bowl and eat that for breakfast. I don't recall

ever having sliced bread, toast, and those things until later on in years. Of course we had plenty of eggs because we had chickens and we had ham and sausage and everything because we had pigs. We cured them at home and prepared them at home in the smokehouse. We had a garden and we'd dig large holes, a cellar, of dirt and we'd put onions and carrots and everything away for the winter and you'd have staple foods like that. Of course, sauerkraut, you'd make a barrel of sauerkraut. We bought potatoes by the bushels, stored them in the dirt cellar and had them all winter long. My mother's cooking was definitely European.

The town where I lived in Utah grew up around the smelting business just as coal camps grew up around coal mines. Everyone worked in the smelter. There were some houses owned by the International Smelting Company but primarily the only people that didn't work in the smelters were the people that worked in the stores or the government offices and stuff like that. Farming and smelting were the only industries.

In those days, everyone had a cow, your next door neighbor, etc. Later in years they did away with that. They became a little more modern because they had outside toilets and of course when they got the sewer lines and they didn't have water in the house - they finally got water in the house - as years wore on they became a little more modern. The houses were close together. In the back yard they had a barn. There was a chicken coop and a pig pen in the barn.

The kids I ran around with in Utah were all of European background and they all came over to make a better living. The older people felt that because they never had an opportunity to go to school that wouldn't it be the most wonderful thing in the world if their children ended up going to school and going on to college. Of course, going to college in those days was much different than it is now. I recall that the only reason that my two brothers ever went to college was because they were good athletes because my father couldn't ever send either of the children. They got scholarships because they were athletes and they went on to college. Otherwise they'd never been able to. I worked in order to go to college. I probably would have had to drop out because of lack of money anyway. My father felt that it was so tood to have somebody go to school and because my other two brothers went off, he thought maybe I should go and of course he had to pay my way. I presume he wouldn't have been able to finish paying even if I hadn't dropped out. Both of my brothers finished college. Practically every boy that lived on their block went on to college, about a half dozen. They were football players. Two of them went to the University of Utah. My brothers began playing football for a church team (Mormon).

The reason that I came to Wyoming was that I had an uncle and aunt living here. I had visited Rock Springs with my mother on occasion. When my uncle passed away during the time I was in college, I came her to stay with my aunt. I never went back to school and went to work, and the war came along, I went to service and when I came back from service, I got married. When you get married you need to work and that's the story of my life.

My first job was at Miner's Mercantile in Rock Springs. My uncle was working there as a butcher. That is the reason I ended up working in the store. My uncle had never worked in the mines. My uncle came to Ro ck Springs because he had an older brother that lived in Utah. He started out learning to be a butcher and meat cutter and that is what he ended up doing all his life. Some people ended up doing other things. A distant cousin of my father's didn't work in the smelters but ran the blacksmith shop in Tooele, Utah. Others hauled coal to homes. None of the people

that came over from Yugoslavia were educated at all. They had never gone to school so the only thing they could do was with their hands. They couldn't do with their minds to acquire a job. The work around the mines and the smelters was not skilled labor.

My aunt spoke English better than my mother. She was quite a bit younger than my mother. When she lived in Rock Springs, she became acquainted with a lot of the younger ladies that could speak English. Consequently, she learned it. Going to the store, etc,. and having to learn to speak English. The only lodge that she belonged to was the same fraternal organizations that all these people that came from Yugoslavia belonged to. They either belonged to the Slovenian Fraternal or the Croation Fraternal Union. My father belonged to both of those. He was a treasurer in one of those. The biggest reason they belonged to those is because they had to have some kind of protection. I will always remember that you would get $1 a day and they would have a man come to see if you were sick, to check on you, to make sure you were. The man was designated to this, he didn't get any wage. I remember one time when the man questioned whether my mother was entitled to the dollar. My father was then going to quit the lodge but was persuaded not to. He thought that anybody that was too ill to get out of bed to cook a cup of coffee for someone certainly ought to be able to say that they were sick. The meetings were twice a month and they'd report on the sick. They'd have a sick committee. They had a church hall in Utah built on the same principle as the Slovenski Dome in Rock Springs. The only reason they didn't have s Slavic name to the hall was because it belonged to St. Margaret's Parish. They called it the Lakeview Hall. That is where they held dances and also all the church functions and of course they's have the same type entertainment as they did in Rock Springs at the Slovenski Dome. They had the Grape Festival and stuff like that. One of the biggest things they had is - most of the people that worked in the mines and the smelters worked in places like Midvale, Murray, and Tooele, Utah and the mines were in Bingham, Utah and of course these people that worked in the smelters - the Midvale and Murray and Tooele was only about 25 miles apart, away, and they'd have different gatherings at these places and we'd travel to the lodge dances. They'd have regular lodge dances. One of the things that always amazed me was when someone would pass away, funerals, it would seem that everyone from these towns would come. It's a lot different than it is today because all of the people knew each other from Murray, Midvale, Tooele, and Bingham and they all came from Yugoslavia and of course when someone passed away it would seem like everyone would come to the funeral which is a little different than it is here today. When someone passes away somewhere here and 30 miles away from here it doesn't seem like everyone from these neighboring towns would go. Just the relations would. In those days when one of their people died, it would seem like everyone would go. They were closer, because they had all come here, and were here as a group in these little towns. In the early days it was that way in Rock Springs because the people knew each other real well or knew each other's relatives. I don't remember too much about Rock Springs when I was a child because most of my childhood I spent in Utah. I visited her occasionally with my mother because she had a sister living here.

Tooele was much different than Rock Springs. They had farms and they had fruit trees. Now they have chopped all the fruit trees down and built houses where the fruit trees used to be. The first time I saw Rock Springs I thought it was quite barren compared to where I had lived before in Utah. There was times that you'd go to these - for instance I spent a lot of time around Salt Lake and that's where

most of the entertainment that they had - they'd go to Salt Lake - the kids would - the only way they'd get to it was to bum rides to Salt Lake and of course everything on the outskirts of Salt Lake were farms. Draper, Bountiful, and all those places were nothing but farms. Of course now, 40 years later, it is all housing. Rock Springs was quite barren to me when I first came from Utah. I had not been in a mining town before. Even though they had a smelter and mines around Utah, the climate and the country is much different than it is here.

My mother's brother who had sent for my mother also sent for my aunt because it was his sister so that's how she came over and of course my uncle - it was the same thing with my mother - my uncle was living in Utah at that time and she and two other ladies came and they got married. They finally ended up moving to Rock Springs because he was a meat cutter.

I started working at Miner's Mercantile shen I came to Rock Springs. When my uncle first came to Rock Springs he worked at the Wyoming Meat Market. That was owned by the Radosovich's. The late father was Jake ? . He had four sons that were working ther who are all still living - Waldo, Frank, John, and Joe - after my uncle had worked there for probably five or six years he went to work for Miners Mercantile. I came here during the summer and would work over at the store. After my uncle passed away, he worked there probably 10 or 15 years, I came here to stay with my aunt and when I was staying with my aunt I went over to Miners Mercantile to work. After my aunt passed away I went off to the service. When I came back from the service I worked for awhile, was married, and still continued working there. I worked there for 25 years or so.

I delivered to the camps, right to the homes and at that time you had to deliver groceries. When you delivered groceries to the various mining camps there was a lot of people that worked in the mines that spoke the Slavish language and of course you would naturally end up everytime you went to these homes speaking the Slavish language to these people because they were eager to speak in that language.

I got along fine with the people of all nationalities. Out at Sweetwater, I remember delivering at two of the homes out there. Instead of putting the Japanese name they'd put Jap House21 and Jap House 23 because it was so long and so hard to write the Japanese name that that is what they ended up doing. I remember delivering out there - that was the only place that you could deliver rice in 100 pound sacks because with this rice they'd made Saki ? for their own consumption. At the same time the Greek families ended up making Mistaka ?, a licorice flavored drink.

The Miners Mercantile was a dry goods and hardware and meats - it was a department store selling everything. There was a delivery service and they also had a retail outlet because the people would come and buy there just the same as they do now. It was a dry good, hardware, groceries, and meats the same as they do at the present time. The only difference then is that the stores then had a delivery service. Most of the delivery service was charged. They'd get paid by - when payday came you'd collect at a lot of homes and you'd give a receipt and then bring the money. The ones that didn't pay you on the route would come into the store and pay. That was when they didn't have credit cards. The ones that stayed

at the company store wouldn't come to Miners Mercantile. The company store had a check out system.

I married a girl of another nationality but by that time we were all Americanized so much that it didn't make a bit of difference. In fact, no one could speak any other language but English. I was the only one that could speak any other language and no one could understand me and my kids couldn't understand me. I didn't teach my children the languare - if me and my wife both spoke the same we probably could have taught them.

One of the main things that the young generation can remember is foods like potica, sausage, cabbage rolls. My wife learned to make a lot of things I liked, for instance tripe soup. I liked tripe soup. It could be made anytime. Tripe is the lining of a beef or a cows stomach and of course they call it honeycomb because it resembles honeycomb. Of course, while they're making it into soup they take part of it and cut it into small cubes and put it with boiled potatoes and oil and vinegar and onions and make a salad out of it so you also have a salad with your soup. They can also do the same thing with soup meat. They can cut the soup meat up and make salad out of it. They used to call it govidina ?. People would buy chuck roast and make soup out of it instead of soup bones. You'd use part of it and then make a salad out of it with boiled potatoes, oil and vinegar, and onions. I don't recall ever seeing Miracle Whip when I was a child. The vinegar they used was made from wine vinegar that had soured and was put into gallon jugs. Thet never bought vinegar at the store. My father made wine at home. He had his own press and even had his own still for his whiskey. They'd take the grapes and not press them all so there was some wine left in them. They'd add sugar to it and they'd distill it and make what is called rakia ? whiskey in the English language.

The meat in the store at Miners Mercantile was bought from packing companys. It was shipped in by rail or truck from American Packing, Cudahy Packing, Armour's, and Swifts.

The only difference between Rock Springs now and Rock Springs then is that there are supermarkets now. Safeway was here at that time. Now everything is shopping malls and supermarkets.

When I was in service I was in Trieste serving as an interpreter in the Slavish language(about 8 months). I spoke Yugoslave. In that war there was some Yugoslave troops fighting along with the United States. I had a chance to go to Yugoslavia but was told that I was on my own and that if anything ever happened to me they wouldn't even bother to look for me or anything so I decided not to go. It wasn't that safe at that time.

My son went back to the country his relatives were from and stayed four months. Two of my aunts were still living there. One lived in a city called ? and the other lived in a small backhills. In one place, the city, they had hospitals. The other aunt - went so far on the bus - they had to travel about three hours on a horse cart with wooden wheels to get over where they were at and they still don't even have electricity in some of these places. The place where my son lived and worked in the hospital was quite modern.

I have kept in touch with relatives over the years. I still correspond with cousins there. Many years ago even in the 1940's we sent packages of clothing, etc. to relatives. Now they have gotten away from sending clothing and everything. Even the people that came here would always try to send clothing and money to their sisters and brothers that were still living over there.

THE END

136 N Street
Rock Springs, Wy
Pat Burns Tues, May 17, 1977

M

BIOGRAPHY OF Joseph M. Melinkovich P.O. Box 38
(Give name in full. Use separate sheet for each individual.)

PRESENT ADDRESS 219 Dickson St. Rock Springs, Wy.
Street City State

(If insufficient space is allowed for any question, please use additional sheets and attach to this form. This form is for use in collecting data on deceased as well as living persons.)

1. Present occupation or profession (give dates): Campground operator since 1970

2. Occupations followed in the past (give dates): 1965-1970 Wyoming Highway Dept., 1938-1965- Miners Merc. - store clerk

3. Date and place of birth: June 28, 1915 Ioaele, Utah

4. Date of moving to Wyoming: 1936

5. Full names of parents (give mother's maiden name):
Yaga Blazovick - Michael Melinkovich
Lika, Austria Lika, Austria

6. Names of brothers and sisters and to whom married:
George Melinkovich (Theresa Farrell)
Dan Melinkovich (Mildred O'Bradovick dec)
(Rosi Fitzpatrick)

7. High schools and colleges attended (give places and dates):
Ioaele High School - 1934 graduate
Utah State University - 3/4 year -

8. Places of residence after leaving Wyoming (give dates):
in service U.S. Army 1942-45

9. Military service (dates of, rank held, area of service, awards received, etc.):
served in Kiska, Aleutians - then in Italy Staff Sgt.

10. Political offices held (dates and place of service):
—

11. Political party affiliation: democratic

12. List clubs and societies of which you are a member:
Knights of Columbus
Chamber of Commerce

13. **List offices held in these societies (give dates):** Grand Knight - 1957
all other local offices - ; district deputy 1967

14. **Religious affiliation:** Catholic

15. **Hobbies:** enjoy being with people - (has helped all foreign people - interviewer's note!)

16. **Publications, works of art, etc. (please list if any):**

—

17. **Marriage(s)** (Give name of wife or husband, date of marriage, names and birth dates of children. Give the information for each marriage if married more than once.)

Emma Anselmi - July 12, 1946 wife
Paul - Nov. 1947 Michael - 1951 Joe - 1961
Mary - May - 1949 Gary - 1954

18. **Remarks:** (Please add any pertinent information on your life not covered above, using extra sheets if necessary. Reminiscences will also be appreciated.)

19. **Attach a photograph for the permanent historical files if you have one available.**

20. **Date of death:**

Information by Ann Burns **Date filled in** 5-17-77

When the form is filled in as complete as possible, return to:

WYOMING STATE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT
STATE OFFICE BUILDING
CHEYENNE, WYOMING