

Oral History of Mr. Celestino Cordova

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Green River, Wyo. had a population of around 3,000 when Celestino Cordova first moved back to Wyo. Celestino Cordova was born in Chamisal, New Mexico. Mr. Cordova married when he was 23 years of age - and - had six children, 3 boys and 3 girls. He got his first job at 16 as a summer help laborer for the Union Pacific, he later joined the Army when he was 18 years old, having thought at the time that it was the worst thing that had ever happened to him.

Being young and homesick, he missed his family and friends, but decided later as he got use to being away - to make a career out of it. After serving his country for over 20 years, Mr. Cordova retired at the age of 39 and then returning to Green River for vacation. There was a lot of work at the time, so he went out just to see if he could get a job, hoping not to get anything and was hired at the first place he went. So, he stayed in Green River making it his home. Mr. Cordova worked for Texas Gulf for 18 years, thus retiring for a second time, at the age of 61.

As a kid, Mr. Cordova remembers that work is what brought people out to this cold windy state, thus, causing the growth of this area to increase quite a bit. His father worked for the Union Pacific Railroad, while his mother stayed home raising the family. At the time, there were 9 kids in his family, and the house they lived in had 2 bedrooms, a kitchen, and a

living room. They use to put a mattress on the floor in the different rooms to accommodate all the family members for sleeping at night. Mr. Cordova says, "We didn't have plumbing." He recalls having to carry water in buckets from a local water pump. He didn't have to use an out house though. He says "We had a room in the back of the house that we would use to empty the buckets in, especially in the winter when it was so cold." Mr. Cordova does remember having electric heat at the time in his home. His family kept warm in the winter by a coal stove and wooden stove.

A friend of his dad's, along with himself or a brother would go to Rock Springs in a pick up truck to pick up this coal once a week, or whenever it was needed. "Mail was received at the local post office, they had a window you went to, to ask for your mail," Mr. Cordova says. A special occasion for him was going out to eat or payday at the "New Grand" a local diner. A business that was passed on from generation to generation, this was the place to eat. Another treat was that of a carnival or a rodeo. "Going out with girls was also fun," Mr. Cordova states.(He whispers this.) Recalling his hunting days, Mr. Cordova says,"My dad was a great hunter. We hunted deer and rabbit." Other foods were purchased at a small grocery store right around the corner from his home.

Clothes were purchased from a clothing store in Rock Springs, as well

as some toys. Mr. Cordova remembers his mother sewing clothes for him, but not a lot.

As he recalls the toys he used to make, you can see him slipping back and visualizing the process of this invention. With a smile, he states, "We used to use sardine boxes to make toy trucks. We'd put wheels on them and use rubber bands to make them run." Parades back then were pretty much like what you see today.

The railroad was already here when he moved here, but he did enjoy riding the train. Mr. Cordova says, "I use to love to ride the train. In fact, I use to ride the bus to Rock Springs just to ride the train back, mostly they were freight trains." He attended some school in Green River, having approximately 30 students in a class room. Not graduating from high school, later graduated after doing the military service. Mr. Cordova definitely remembers having to walk to school when he was younger. He says, "I never heard of school busses back then." The winters were extremely hard for he walked about a mile or so. He never belonged to any sports in school, but did play sports with other kids. Baseball back then was the most popular, that he could remember.

Mr. Cordova remembered his first girl's, but doesn't recall his first kiss. His favorite music is Country/Western and his favorite artist is

Pats Clinching. He listened to music mostly by radio. There was a lot of prejudice back then, he says, " Most places wouldn't serve blacksmith, his, or Indians, if you weren't white, you were nothing." He went to church as a child and still does. His religion is Roman Catholic. He doesn't ever recall divorces back then. But with his religion it wasn't allowed because it just wasn't common back then. Mr. Cordova doesn't remember alcohol being illegal or when it became legal. But he says," I was an alcoholic for 20 years." And he remembers looking in the window of the Oxford Club-a bar- he wasn't of age then.

There was one bank, it was in Rock Springs. People lived from payday to payday so there wasn't much need for a bank for his family.

His favorite magazines are: "Playboy"(he whispers), and "Sports Illustrated". His favorite book is anything by Lois Lamar, and his favorite movie star was Betty Grable. He was fascinated by her beauty. His most memorable fad was growing a mustache and a Pacheco haircut.

Mr. Cordova remembers the Boom in the 70's there was a lot of work. Housing was hard to come by because there was a lot of people moving to look for work, but there was no housing to accommodate them.

He believes that this area is a good place to grow up in. That the country is beautiful ,if it wasn't for the wind and the cold, it would be perfect.

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Natural Disasters: The winter of 1948 to 1949 was the worst winter Mr. Cordova remembers. He says, "There was a lot of snow. The town was paralyzed. The traffic didn't move and it was cold."

Holidays: Christmas was his favorite holiday. Mr. Cordova says, "I loved receiving presents." The family would go out and cut their own tree. They decorated it with popcorn strings and bulbs, but never had lights on the tree.

Politics: Mr. Cordova says that he believes politicians were as crooked back then as they are today. He votes now and has always voted since he was of age. He also is a Democrat. He believes the president we have now has done a good job. He says, "We have had better presidents but then we've had worse." He also believes that some day it's possible that we'll have a woman president. He says, "I'm all for it, if a woman can do the job." He feels the country today is getting better.

Professionals: Green River had 2 doctors in town. Everyone went to the Doctor's office for services. Even pregnant women. Babies were then born in the hospital, which was in Rock Springs. This was the only hospital in the area. Times had already changed by the time that doctors had made house calls, never having a need for this service- a doctor never came to his home. There was also a local dentist, but Mr. Cordova had never

visited one until he joined the Army.