

ORAL HISTORY OF
ANTON F. PIVIC
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Anton F. Pivic was born in Quealy, Wyoming on April 12, 1929. Quealy was a little coal mining town about five miles south of Rock Springs. It was associated with the Kemmerer Coal Company which had its headquarters in Kemmerer, Wyoming.

Quealy was a typical mining town at that time. Not alot of houses around with no indoor plumbing and regardless of religion or ethnic background everybody was friends. As a young boy growing, Anton got around town mostly by bicycle which he used often until he bought his first car, which was a 1929 Chevy, in his early teens and he used it mostly to take his mom to Rock Springs to do the shopping. He kept the Chevy until 1949 when he was married, then he bought a new Studabacker and also in that year the Pivic's moved to Rock Springs.

In Quealy the Pivic's lived in a modest house about 800 square feet with a kitchen, livingroom and two bedrooms and a dirt cellar in which they mainly used for storage.

They used to drive to Rock Springs to do all of the shopping and they frequented Safeway, Miner's Merc and Ben's Foodliner where they bought groceries and Anton used to run the groceries back to the car making several trips until the car was full and then they drove back to Quealy.

When Anton was a young boy in Quealy he and his friends enjoyed lots of games together. They were fortunate enough to have a basketball court that was built out of dirt, a nice baseball field which was used for softball, which was the most popular game played at the coal camp, and they also had a few springs at Quealy and they would wait until they froze over

in the winter time and use them for ice skating rinks. As far as games go they played hide and go seek in amongst the sage brush, Kick the can, and lots of marbles and according to Anton the best marble player that they had was a guy by the name of Tony Toucher who was the superintendent of the Superior Coal Mine. During the summer months they did a modest amount of reading with the few books that were available and they also sleigh rided and tobogganed. When he got a little older he did alot of hunting with his dad for rabbits, coyotes and mountain cats and he also had a trap line in which they also caught some badgers.

On some of the family vacations that they went on, one of there favorite places to go was Lava Hot Springs, Idaho. Where they would rent a cabin and do some fishing. Also on some Sunday outings with family and friends they used to go up to Boulder and or Pinedale to do some swimming and have a picnic every once in a while.

When Anton was living in Quealy he was responsible for doing a number of chores at his mom and dad's house. He had to bring in the coal for the night after he got home from school and also get up in the morning and bring coal in again for the day. He had to chop wood, rack the yard and help his father butcher a couple of pigs that they would raise in the fall for smoked sausage, ham and bacon. Also he helped his father make first and second wine and brandy during the fall of the year when they would get about one ton of grapes and this was all done contrary to the law during Prohibition.

When Anton started dating he would usually go to the movies or school dances and sometimes they would get together with a group of friends and go south of town, build a fire and barbecue wieners and shot the breeze. During his freshman year in high school he meet Amy, they went together for a little while and then they were married on June 12, 1949 and according to Anton they have been "friends ever since." The marriage has been a tremendous success, they have been together ever since and they had two wonderfull children.

Anton started his education in Quealy in a country school where they had one teacher for the first four grades and then one teacher for the 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades, then when it was time to go to high school Anton was bussed to Rock Springs. When it came time for the Pivic family to attend church on Sunday's they also had to go to Rock Springs, and they went to the North Side Catholic Church because there was no churches at the coal camp at Quealy.

Medical treatment was fairly easy to come by because the coal company always had its own doctors. Anton's father had a couple of medical problems when he was working for the coal company, he broke his leg twice and also an arm once but they would then bring him to the old hospital in Rock Springs when it was up on "C" street to be treated by the company doctors. As far as drugs or other remedies that were needed at the time for other illnesses or operations they seemed like they had everything they needed and all in all it would appear that the medical facilities were as good as you could of found anywhere

else in the country at that time but it was mostly due to the coal company taking care of its own people.

Now I would like to back track a little and tell you how the Pivic family came to the Rock Springs area. Anton's mom and dad came here originally from Yugoslavia around the year 1908. They first settled in Superior, Wyoming where his father was a coal miner and belonged to the United Mine Workers Union, then in 1929 they moved to Quealy. Anton's parents were typical in there reasons for coming to this country in these days. They were constantly fighting hard economic times in there home land and coming to the United States gave them a chance to find better work and make a better life for them and there familyies. They also saved some of there money so they could send some of it back to Yugoslavia so other members of there family could come to America and work in the mines this also was a common practice during that time.

Anton dosen't think that there was ever a real problem with violence in Quealy, because everybody was very close either as neighbors or friends so you never had to lock the doors to your house or to your sheds. As far as natural disasters go nothing really big ever happened besides a couple of small floods or snowstorms every once in a while. He said that the last big snowstorm he remembers of any consequence around here was in 1949 and since then we haven't had anything really worth talking about.

The Depression that occured between 1929 and 1939 was not very memorable to Anton because he was very young at that time.

As far as holidays go, he remembers celebrating Thanksgiving, Christmas and Easter with his family and they used to take turns going to one of his relatives homes or to his mom and dads house for dinner where they usually had ham or turkey for dinner. One of the other holidays that his family celebrated together was "eight hour day" and that was done in Rock Springs. It was put on by the United Mine Workers Union and all of the people from all of the different coal camps would come into Rock Springs and play games and all kinds of contests for a really enjoyable day. Anton also remembered some of the birthdays that his mom and dad had for him, he would have some of his friends come over to his house for ice cream and cake and they would play games together just like they do today.

Anton was fairly active in Sweetwater County Democratic politics. He first started by joining the Rock Springs Jaycees and at that time there president was Paul Wataha. When Paul ran for Mayor, Anton was very active in his campaign. After Paul was elected Mayor, Anton ran for the City Council seat in his ward and was elected three times in all and ended up spending five years on the City Council. Anton also did a little work for Teno Roncalio's campaign when he ran for the house seat for the state of Wyoming.

His views on the 60 Minutes program about crime and corruption in Rock Springs were very negative. Anton said that it was a play by Dan Rather which is typical of what he tries to do and the facts of the matter are that the Mayor of Rock Springs at the time, Paul Wataha, now has many letters of apology and alot

of law suits that have been settled either in or out of court and that just goes to show you how erroneous the 60 Minutes program really was. Anton also said that the saddest part of the whole thing was that Rock Springs and the State of Wyoming lost one of the best political people we had in Paul Wataha and they also ruined the life of Ed Cantrel, who was a fantastic guy, a good law man and a great person.

During his life time Anton was and still is a very hard worker. He started when he was still in high school at the age of fifteen. His first job was with John Bunning Transfer Company where he drove a truck the bulk of the time delivering gasoline, coal, ran a moving van, or delivered furniture but the hardest work he had to do was hauling oil field mud. The wages back then were between 55 and 85 cents an hour and all of the work you could handle. He worked for John Bunning Transfer until he was married and then he went to work for F.M.C. which was the old Westvaco Corp. While he was at F.M.C., Anton had a number of jobs. He started out as a helper for a scientist that had developed the plan to convert trona into soda ash in his lab when the plant was built in 1953. Then he became plant foremen and did that for about ten years, he then transferred into to the industrial relations department and from there he headed up the employment office during some of the boom years of 1968 to 1976. From there he retired and now he along with his wife Amy run a very clean and successful trailer court called Canyon Court off of Highway 430 in Rock Springs.

As for his views on the country his opinion is that we are

lucky to have a George Bush in the White House because he has been inside our government for a long time and if anybody should have an insight about how our government works he ought to. But there's no doubt he is not going to have any money and I don't think the American people are going to give him any major tax increases. Hopefully because of Gorbachev the military can be reduced a little bit but we have to see how long he can stay in power, he is probably the best friend the world has got right now. Also he is going to have to improve the education in this country because kids now can't add, read fractions, read a ruler or even read a book. As for Sweetwater County as a whole he feels that it will probably remain somewhat stable and might get a modest shot in the arm if that gas pipeline to California goes through, as for the trona business he thinks that it should reach full capacity in the next few years if things change a little bit even though he says that we will never sell any trona to Japan. Japan has got our government scared into thinking that they can't survive without Japanese money so they let the Japanese have America as a market place but we can't have Japan as a market place and Anton does not believe in that at all.

His wishes for his children and grandchildren is that he would just like to see them remember the community as a friendly work together town which has always existed here and the people have always been friends and worked for the good of this little place and he hopes that they can help it to continue.

All in all I have found out during this interview that Anton has a real zest for life that is not very often found during

these trying times in our country. Just as he describes his life in the coal camp as "just being great" and that it is a life that could not be duplicated any place and it was a culture that was quite unique.