

Oral Biography

Mary Radosevich

Wyoming History

Bette Baughman,  
Interviewer

Interview between Bette Baughman  
and Mary Radosevich, April 4, 1988

- B.B. Today is April 4, 1988, and I am interviewing Mary nee Bernard Radosevich.
- B.B. Where would you like to start on this? You came over here with two sisters? Frances, and Jenny? Is that the whole family?
- M.R. Yeah, I had a brother when I came, but he died about 2 years after we got here, my sisters were born here. See, my father came over here when I was three. That was 1913, before the war, then the war started and we couldn't come, so he brought us over here after in 1920. I've been back three times since.
- B.B. Have you?
- M.R. I went back in 1962, '73, and '78. My two sisters and me. My husband didn't want to go, 'cause all his family was gone. He came over in 1921, and he was from a different part of Yugoslavia. But, uh, most of his family was gone. He didn't want to go back. But, my sisters were born here and they didn't know anybody over there. That's a picture of Skofja Loka, our hometown up there. A woman painted that. This lady painted that postcard and Lee's sister-in-law painted the big picture of the postcard. And I was born just below that - there's a resort, up on top of that hill there and I was born right down here and this church. This building there is used to be where the nuns worked, down in a convent, and during the war, they run them out. So, now they got a museum there.
- B.B. So how old were you when you immigrated?
- M.R. I was ten.
- B.B. Was your father here?
- M.R. My father was here seven years before we came over.
- B.B. Why did your father come over?
- M.R. They all came over here to try and make a little money. He thought they were going to go back, but they never did.
- Interruption
- B.B. Did they think they were making good money?

M.R. Oh, they made, at that time, it was, you know, better than they'd been anywhere. They didn't make a lot of money, but they made a living.

B.B. Did John (her deceased husband) work in the mines?

M.R. No, he was a butcher.

B.B. Did he come over by himself?

M.R. No, his family came.

We lived down there on, well the creek was where Zanetti's bus lines is now, the creek used to go round there, and that house was down there, closer to the creek there. Just miners lived there.

B.B. Did you speak any English when you came over?

M.R. Oh no! When we went to school, that poor old teacher - she couldn't understand anybody. She just died here a few years back. All nationalities - Italians lived on east side, Germans lived on it, and where the Sands is - they used to call that "Jap Town". You know that old building that's still there - well, that's where the Japanese stayed. I don't know why they don't tear that old building down.

B.B. Some people live there.

M.R. Well, that's what they called "Jap Town". And behind the North Side Catholic Church is where the Chinese people lived, there where the school beside where they got the playgrounds. And Johnny's folks had a house right behind the church. Different nationalities lived in different parts of town.

B.B. Kept to themselves?

M.R. Yeah, uh-huh. The Slavs all lived on the No. Four. We called it No. Four down there. Where Clark street and Ninth Street are.

B.B. So all the different nationalities tended to stick together?

M.R. You didn't see an Italian marrying a Slav, or anything like that, like you do now. So many people spoke so many different languages. Our teacher said, "You're not supposed to speak your language to your parents." Well, how else you going to talk to them, when they didn't understand you? Now they want you to speak different languages. My husband spoke different - his was Caruscean.

B.B. Did your father speak English?

M.R. Oh yeah, he learned when he worked in the mines.

B.B. Did he have a problem understanding the other nationalities?

M.R. Well, yeah, they did for a while, you know, 'cause they couldn't understand each other. It was mostly the bosses that couldn't understand it.

B.B. What did you think when you came over? From the time you left, till you got here?

M.R. The kids, it didn't take long for us to learn, 'cause most of the kids on that street, their parents were Slav, and they could speak Slav too. You ought to see how fast you can learn that when you're little.

B.B. What can you tell me about coming over from Europe? How long did it take you?

M.R. Three weeks. It sure was something to look forward to, this coming over here. First time we saw ice cream was when we were on the train. We saw an ice cream outside a little train stop. We'd never seen bananas. It was altogether different.

B.B. When you went through Ellis Island, did you have to go through a lot of red tape?

M.R. Just like they showed you in a show, just like cattle going through. You went by a number that you had on your train ticket.

B.B. How long did it then take you to get to Rock Springs?

M. R. About 4 or 5 days on the train.

B.B..What did your mother think about coming over here?

M.R. She wasn't too happy after she got into Rock Springs! No trees, dirt streets, not a garden - anywhere. I remember she cried for two weeks. This old woman that came with us - she was the first one - I don't know where she got the seeds, but she started planting flowers and - down there, close to where Lariat Lodge is, little ways up - well, that street was all nothing but company houses -all miners.

B.B. How did your father find out about work in the mines here?

M.R. I guess one, some of them must have been working here before, and they'd write to each other. They'd write back and forth and they'd tell each other to come over.

B.B. Did you ever travel out of Rock Springs?

M.R. My dad had a car when we came. We'd go take a ride out to Reliance on Sunday. People didn't travel too far. Like it if you went out here, like up to Boulder, why you'd plan on that all winter long, and you'd go in the summertime and you'd leave by day light in the morning, get up there late int the afternoon.