



ORAL HISTORY OF MR. LOUIS MUIR

BORN: JULY 31, 1918 IN ROCK SPRINGS, WY.

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Mr. Muir is presently employed by the Western Wyoming Community College in Rock Springs Wyoming. He drives the students on field trips and runs the mail room. Mr. Muir attended the Yellowstone Elementary school and high school at the location of what is now East Junior High. The fence that now surrounds the Jr. High is built from rocks taken from the old High School building. The labor was provided by the WPA, which along with the CCC's were formed during the depression to employ the young.

Many people feel that some of the social recovery programs started during the Roosevelt administration went too far and started a trend toward socialism which continues today. Mr. Muir worked for the CCC's after high school and feels that such programs provided a necessary service to the country. "It may have started a trend" he said, "but the blame for carrying on the tradition of Federal interference cannot all be put on Roosevelt".

Louis' CCC camp was located in the Teton National Park near Jenny Lake. The young men lived in tents. Their duties included cutting firewood and clearing trails. The salary was 30 dollars a month plus room and board. The CCC job only lasted for the summer, so he went to work for the Union Pacific Railroad in the fall. A short time later, WW11 started and Mr. Muir was drafted to Iran. "I liked Iran," he said, "but it was too hot". According to Louis it sometimes reached 140-150 degrees in the dessert where he was stationed. The railroad

battalion in which he worked often had to suspend work in the afternoon heat in order to prevent illness. Even though Mr. Muir's job was non-combative, he can testify to the tragedy of war. An acquaintance of his was killed in a train wreck shortly after leaving Louis' post. Incidences like this were not uncommon, yet Mr. Muir feels that WWII was necessary and accomplished a great deal. "We were caught in the middle with no choice but to fight or give up our freedom." "Back then we didn't even think of not fighting. It was just something you done." When asked about the Vietnam war, he said that the difference is that we went into WWII to win. "Take an army equipped like the WWII forces and bomb vietnam day and night like we did Germany and we could wipe a little country like that right off the map."

Mr. Muir's experiences in the military were not all bad. He was able to see Egypt at military expense and even played basketball there for his battalion team. After the war, Louis continues his playing career at the University of Wyoming where he majored in history. He has several basketball trophies to show for the efforts.

Louis was married in 1945 and had two children. His wife passed away seven years later. Louis was remarried in 1960 but has no children by this wife. His father was a coal miner and stable boss. Louis' father did not contract black lung; however, his mother died of black lung because of indirect exposure through her husband. According to Mr. Muir, this occurrence is quite common; however, I have not been able to find any other

evidence to support this.

Mr. Muir feels that life has been good here in Rock Springs. He plans to retire here. In all his travels, Louis found that everywhere has it's pitfalls. "Here we have cold and snow, but other places have their tornadoes and hurricanes." There's plenty to do around here according to Louis. He likes to fish and has a cabin and boat in Pinedale Wyoming.

Going to school when Mr. Muir was a boy was about the same as now. "You had to study to pass your courses." During the depression his father worked one day a week in the coal mine so they didn't feel the effects quite as devastatingly as some families did elsewhere. Social life was more important than it is now. There was no T.V. so dancing and card playing were main forms of entertainment. As children they would "find our own entertainment". It included basketball, football, baseball, and even kick the can. They did not play mischevious things like some children do today, however.

According to Louis, the major change in Rock Springs has been population. It has grown from 4 - 6 thousand to upwards of 20. The biggest affect from that is that perhaps the town as a whole is less friendly. "It used to be that when you walked down the street, you knew almost everyone that you passed."

Mr. Muir sees industrial developement as being beneficial. "The trona mines have been especially good for the area. Whether we liked it or not, we will see more industry and people in our

state, and if they are forced to put in filters during construction it will cut down on costs later." One of the largest impacts of a large influx of people will be on law enforcement.

Mr. Muir was the Rock Springs Chief of Police for 21 years. His period of service ended at the same time that the term ended of the mayor he had served under for so many years. Mayor Paul J. Wataha's administration fell under many negative accusations in the last two years. Mr. Muir answered press reports of corruption by saying that only the accuser's side was aired. "I feel as though we were tried and found guilty in the press without a trial." Contrary to reports, Mr. Muir's police arrested over 200 different prostitutes and several gamblers in the short period of investigation. "The Grand Jury was here for a year and never found a thing wrong and neither did the FBI who investigated us the year before. The whole thing didn't hurt me because I was retiring anyway. If I had it to do over again, I would probably do the same thing again. The only negative thing about my public service was that perhaps my kids couldn't do everything that they wanted to because their dad was police chief."

As far as the people of Rock Springs go, most come here to make a living and raise a family. There are a few who come here and take advantage by writing bad checks and things but they are usually "your lower class of citizen". One man even held a gun on Louis at the Park Hotel, but he still never worried for his personal or family's safety. There aren't too many

towns that law enforcement people can live without being harassed.

To sum up the town the best, one might look at the attitude of the old-timers toward it. This one says "In the end I'll always end up right here in Rock Springs".