

Oral Interview  
of  
Albert Jewel Kiser  
by  
Kip Kiser

Albert Jewel Kiser was born in Colorado, on September 18, 1921. He was delivered on a farm by his aunt who was the mid-wife. There were no Doctors available where the Kisers lived but they would not have been able to afford one anyway.

The Kiser family moved to Cheyenne, Wyoming in 1922, when Albert was a year old. He started school in an all black section of town called Corlette. The pupil population was 95% black. After his first year of school, they moved to the south end of Cheyenne, and he went to Johnson school for about a year. They did move back to the north end after that but most of his schooling was actually in the southern part of town.

In those days most of the poor whites and the Spanish lived on the south side of town. The black people lived on the west side. Albert only completed school through the eighth grade. He started, but never finished, his ninth grade year. Times were hard and it was tough for the family to make a living so Albert worked at odd jobs to help his family.

The main industry at that time in Wyoming, was the Union Pacific Railroad. Most of the men in Cheyenne, were employed by the U. P., but even the railroad would have slow times when there would be very little or no work. Albert's father, like the rest of the men, would have to try and pick up other little jobs during those slow times which even included being a policeman.

The living conditions for the Kisers when they first moved to Cheyenne, were very brambly. At first they lived in a tent, and had to haul their water. When they bathed, two or three people

would use the same water, so no more water than necessary would have to be hauled. Even though Albert's father worked for the railroad most of the time, the pay was low and until they could afford a house they had to adjust to living in the tent. When the family did move to a house, at first they still had no running water and they used the coal stove to heat the water they hauled. They had no indoor toilet and had to use kerosene lanterns for light.

Food and supplies were purchased at the local grocery stores that were located on street corners. There were no super markets or malls such as we have seen in the past few years. At that time the people shopped close to where they lived and for \$5, they could buy a whole load of groceries. But, in those days earning \$5 was as difficult for them as \$50 is today.

Cat houses were very popular at that time in Cheyenne, and they were located all over town. The bars were open to everyone twenty-one years of age and older. They were pretty well policed but the laws on prostitution were not sternly enforced like they are today. Most of the cat houses were located on the west side of town around 17th and 18th streets. The population in some bars were all whites, others were all blacks, and a few were even mixed.

Mother nature over the years in Wyoming has not changed much. The amount of snow was considered more grim then, simply because there were no snow removal machines to compare to what we use today. Albert can recall one particular time in Cheyenne, when the snow was piled up equal to the height of the roof on their house. With no equipment they had to make their way through the snow the best they could.

Alberts family was not one of the more fortunate families that could live close to a doctor or a hospital; and because of weather conditions and transportation, travel even to a doctor or hospital were sometimes impossible. The vehicles available were not very reliable, and if the sick person was not critical it was just not feasible to call a doctor. Dental care was very limited so unless the pain of a tooth ache was intolerable, the trip to the dental office was not made. On some occasions the pain would be unbearable and then upon receiving dental care the tooth was pulled. Most pain or uncomfot was simply eased with the use of home remedies. The families had to pay for all medical costs because the industry at that time did not carry insurance of any kind.

When Albert was about fifteen years old he joined the C.C.Cs. (Civilian Conservation Camps) President Rosevelt set up the C.C.Cs., creating jobs for young men like Albert that were poor and had no place else to go, so to keep out of trouble they would join the camps. These young men had to sign up to be involved and Albert was stationed in Cheyenne. Some of the projects involved were taking care of forests, building bridges and making all types of improvements for the state. These jobs took young men off the streets and they earned \$30 a week. Twenty-five of which went home to the family and \$5 was kept by the laborer for personal needs. Granite, located up by Jackson, was one of the projects built by the C.C.Cs.

The racial descrimination was not as prominate in Alberts time as in years before, but it was not as accepted as it is today. There were not as many mixed marriages then as there are today. The white people did not accept mixed marriages, they considered it outlawed.

The types of dress back when Albert could recollect are not that different from some of the style that is coming back today. The changes over the years are there but are not too drastic. Around 1934, a unique style of dress was worn by the zutsuiters. They would grow long hair and pull it back like a duck tail. They also wore long coats that came down to the knees; and some hung below the knees. They wore chains that were connected from the front pockets to there back pockets that also hung below the knees. There pants were called choked legged. The top of the pants were wide and the bottoms were tight around the ankles. Shoes were just what ever they had to wear.

Females were not treated equal on jobs; but the women at that time had much more respect from the men. The men always opened doors for the ladies and always treated them with the greatest respect. Alberts opinion is that the women were better off then, than they are today. The womens responsibilities were very tough then. The wives helped equally with work like plowing the field and so on. They did the wash, prepared the meals, and also kept up with the house and the children.

The children played very similar games to the games we have today. The games of ball, run sheep run, and hide and go seek were all played very much like today. The games were played much more of the time than they are today, because that was about the only physical activities the children had. The popular sports were football, basketball and boxing. Boxing was important because it was a way of life for most of the boys.

Families getting together over the holidays to celebrate, has a longer tradition than even Albert can recall. They did not have the material quantity we have today because of the smaller amount of money available and spent. If a person received a two dollar gift he felt really lucky. The most important concept, which still exists today, is the reunion of family. As for birthdays, they were all celebrated and a cake was always made. No expensive gifts were given but some small things were received and the recognition was the celebration.

Discipline at home was treated in much the same manner as today. The male administered most of the physical discipline and the female governed the mental or verbal approach. When the children deserved a good paddeling the father administered it. At school the discipline was considered very strict. Albert can remember one particular day when he started for the door to go home after school, when he was grabbed around the neck, put over a desk and given a spanking for chewing gum. Chewing gum, whispering and talking in school were not allowed, and the students not obeying these rules were punished.

When Albert was in Jr. High he began to date or court his wife to be. Dating consisted of a show if you could afford it or just attending a dance. Albert and Maxine (his wife to be) dated through Jr. High and then Maxine moved to Rock Springs. A few years later Albert was leaving his apartment in Cheyenne and down the street he noticed a women he thought he knew. He drove down the street and sure enough, it was Maxine. From that time on they dated and about a year later they were married.

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Albert, like most Jr. High boys, did not care to dance. But he had three sisters who did like to dance and consequently he was forced to dance with one particular sister or she would beat him up. As he looks back, Albert was thankful he learned to dance because he was recognized as one of the best. The boys that did not learn, sat on the sides and watched.

Family planning was of some concern even then, because of the limit of children that were affordable. The only means of birth control available were condoms; and they were not 100% safe. For women the best and only method was obstinance ✓

Radio was the listening entertainment Albert grew up with, unfortunately T.V. was not yet invented. One of the radio shows he enjoyed the most was the Amos & Andy Show. His earliest recollection of the T.V. was about the 1950's.

Moving to Rock Springs in about 1948, Albert went to work for his brother-in-law, Howard Ruth. He worked at the Pontiac, Buick car lot as a body and fender man for about a year. At the end of that year he worked at a few other body shops until on March 16, 1955, Albert went to work for Mountain Fuel Supply Company.

When he first started for Mtn. Fuel he worked for different departments until he finally earned a position on the heavy equipment crew, and that is where he remains today. In earning his way up, he worked as a roustabout, he put time in with the engineering department, and he also worked at one time with the welding crew. The heavy equipment machinery his crew has today is very different from when Albert first started in heavy equipment in the

early 1960's. Then, the men that had ditches to dig, they dug them with a shovel. The machinery had no cabs so to keep warm in the winter they had to simply dress warmer. A few years later, they did have what was known as a curtain, but they only kept the men's bottom warm and really never protected anything else. The hours in the cold weather consisted of any-where from 8 to 20 hours a day. At the beginning of Alberts career with Mtn. Fuel, some days they would work two, twenty-four hour shifts and then have to take off the rest of the week because they had already worked the maximum 48 hours for the week.

In Alberts opinion the women of the house deserved as much credit for hard work as the men because they had to cook, clean, and take care of the children; and then try to get by on the small amount of money that was brought home.

Politics as Albert can recall when he first moved to Rock Springs, had no effect on his life. As time went on the involvement with politics and his job has become fairly important. The corruption as in any town was present and the candidates with well known names were elected to hold public offices. The beliefs and values for the state and the county offices, as far as Albert was concerned did not matter. The public elected generally the well known names, to hold offices.

To conclude, of the many states and countries Albert Kiser has been in, he is grateful to live in the United States and enjoys living <sup>in</sup> Wyoming better than any other state.

NAME: Albert J Kiser

PRESENT ADDRESS: 1309 Lincoln Park Springs, Wyo.

1.-Present profession or occupation:  
Heavy Equipment Forman

2. Occupations followed in the past (give dates):  
C.C.C's, Body + Fender man

3. Date of birth: Sept 18, 1921 Place of birth: Homestead-Grower, Co.

4. Date of moving to Wyoming: 1922

5.-Full name of parents (give mother's maiden name)  
Bessy Eliza Farr, Elmer Kiser

6. Names of brothers and sisters (and to whom married):  
1. Rebecca (Gene Young) 3. William Stanley - 6. Dorothy (Allen Pack)  
2. May (Joe Behunin) 4. Evert - 7. Robert Dale  
5. Harold -

7. Schools attended (give dates):  
Johnson in Cheyenne - 1927 Johnson 1929  
Corlette " " 1928 McCormick J.H '35

8. Places of residence in Wyoming (give dates):  
Cheyenne -  
Rock Springs

9. Military service (dates, awards, area served, rank, etc.):  
1944-1946 European Theater  
Silver Star, U.S. corporal

10. Political offices held (give dates):  
None

11. Political affiliation:  
Democrate

12. Religious affiliation:  
Catholic

13. Marriage (spouse's name, date and place of marriage):  
May 22, 1940 - Kimball NB  
Sept 3, 1983 - Pinedale

14. Children (names, dates of birth, grandchildren, etc.):  
Ron - Jan. 17, - 2 children  
Trudy - July 29 - 5 children  
Paula - July 13 - 2 children  
Brad - Dec. 29 - 1 child  
Kip - Dec 22 - 2 children

15.-List of clubs and societies of which you are a member:  
Eagles F.O.E.