

ROSE MARY (TOMICH) DOAK

INTERVIEWED BY DEBRA J. DOAK

HISTORY OF WYOMING

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Rose Mary (Tomich) Doak was born November 11, 1912 in Rock Springs, Wyoming the daughter of John and Anna (Knezovich) Tomich. Rose's parents came to Rock Springs from Zagreb, Yugoslavia. Her father came to the United States in pursuit for work in 1902. After several years passed and with the help of a friend who was the sister to Anna Knezovich, John sent for Anna and they were married a few weeks after her arrival to the United States. In Yugoslavia the Croation people have a custom which allows men to ask for a girls hand in marriage without the consent of the girl. This is how Anna's marriage was arranged.

They were married approximately eleven months when their first child Mary was born. She later died at the age of two when she fell into an outside toilet leech field. Kathyryn, the second child was born in July of 1911 and is presently living in Casper, Wyoming. Rose Mary was the third child to be born. She is presently living in Rock Springs, Wyoming. Anne, the fourth child was born in 1914 and is a retired government employee. She is presently in Tacoma, Washington. Anthony, the fifth child was born in 1915 and lived only until he was eighteen months old when he died, because of the flu. Mary, the youngest was born in 1922 during one of the coal companies major coal strikes in Winton. She is presently living in Tacoma, Washington.

Rose recalled only a mid-wife was present at the births of her brothers and sisters. She said very little was ever said

about sex and birth control. Because they came from a very strict Catholic background and the church did not allow birth control, nature usually prevailed. She believes this is why, so many people had large families.

Rose recalls how children were disciplined and how it was unlady like to wear powder on your face in front of your parents. The men folks thought if you wore white shoes and wore powder on your face you were a whore. If you did these things, you usually had to sneak and if you got caught you were reprimanded severely. Rose said she was caught a few times. Disciplining was usually done by her mother but on occasion her father would and that meant the belt.

Their way of dressing was quite different from today too. The girls wore dresses that hit them about mid-calf. Underclothes consisted of bloomers, petticoats, and most did not wear a brassiere. The women from the old country tied rags around themselves to bind and cover themselves. It was unheard of to wear brassieres. The boys dress was similar to what it is today but the trousers were made from wools instead of blended fabrics.

Children in Rose's day were expected to be proper always. They worked very hard and had little time for play. When there was time for play they played games such as, Leap Frog, Kick-the-Can, Hide-an-Go-Seek. Hide-an-Go-Seek was played with

the camp children. They would pick a person to be the seeker and the other children would go and hide. Then the seeker would try to find all the players. You then would try to run to base before you were caught by the seeker. If you were caught you had to be the seeker. These games are games that few children play today.

Rose's early childhood was filled with many memories. The majority of her early life was spent in Winton, Wyoming. Winton was a coal mining camp about ten miles north-east of Rock Springs. The camp was a typical coal camp. The houses were all the same. The interior of these houses had four rooms with very little furnishings. Usually, they had a kitchen, a family room, and two bedrooms. They had no indoor bathroom facilities, they burned coal in pop-bellied stoves for heat. Water was hauled to the houses by buckets. Rose recalls that a Mexican man they called the "water-man" would deliver water to each miners home and they would store the water in wooden barrels outside their homes. They had no refrigeration. Most of the meat they ate they hung in the shanties that were located behind their houses. When they needed the meat they would go out, cut off a piece and bring it into cook. Cooking, was done on the old black stoves that were stoked with coal. Water was sometimes heated and stored in a reservoir that was connected to the side of the stove.

Life in the coal camp was very pleasant. The people were very friendly and always willing to help out. In Rose's day, if you needed a cup of sugar all you had to do was ask and you were given it. The sugar was never expected to be returned either.

Rose attended school in Winton. The schoolhouse was a large building with one room. Grades one through eight were taught there. The classroom had one large table that all the students sat at. There were five teachers to help all the students. Town meetings and church services were held there too. Rose remembers little about the way the teachers taught them but she said, "I learned how to read and write and that is the most important part." Her ninth and tenth grade years were spent in Reliance which was about seven miles away. A bus would come to Winton and pick them up to take them to school. Her eleventh and twelfth grade years were spent in Rock Springs. Rose never completed the twelfth grade. She said she quit because "like an dummy" she wanted to be able to buy things for herself that her parents could not give her. However, when she was fifty-five years of age she studied for a G.E.D. and passed it and received her high school diploma.

Rose's father was a coal miner by trade but, he also was a very successful boot-legger. Being successful at the business was not getting caught. She remembers times when her father would be at work and word would get to them that the federal men were

coming to camp. Her brothers and sisters would have to help hide the moonshine. They would hide the moonshine in the hills or anywhere they could find. Her father paid the local police force for protection with money which was called "hush money" and in return for the money they would send warnings to the camp that the "fed's" were coming. She recalled once when she was twelve years old some friends warned her father about some men who were plotting to rob them. Her mother, in a panic was trying to figure out where to hide the money they had. She wanted to hide it in the water reservoir beside the stove but her father told her that would be the first place they would look. Instead, she sat down, hid the money half under her breast and half under the baby she was nursing. For some reason, the robbers never showed up and they were all relieved.

In 1928, Rose met James H. Doak. He courted her for about two years. During their courtship, James would take long walks with Rose, drive her to dances in his 1928 Dodge Sedan, and just visit with her family. Rose's father did not really approve of James because he was not of their nationality and it was not proper to marry outside their nationality. So James and Rose ran away to Manila, Utah on July 28, 1930 and were married. They were remarried three months later in the Catholic church because in the eyes of the church they were living in sin. Rose did not want people to think they were living in adultery.

They were married ten months when their first son Jimmy was born. He was born May 16, 1931 and died from kidney failure in 1961. John (Jackie) Doak their second son was born March 8, 1934. He is presently residing in Rock Springs and is the father of five sons, Jimmy, Mike, Jon, Joe, and Chris. Jackie is an employee of FMC.

When Rose's children were born Jimmy was born in the hospital, but when Jackie was born Rose had to deliver him at home with a mid-wife in attendance because they were too poor to pay for the hospital. The cost for medical care then was twenty-two dollars. She also said, that most people did not take their children to the doctors, as often as they do now days. Old family remedies like a little whiskey and honey mixed was a great calmer for a common cold.

Their early married life was a very difficult one during the depression. Jim would go to work in the mine at dawn and return home at dark. His wage was \$76.00 a month. They paid \$9.00 a month rent which was automatically taken out of the paycheck before he ever received it. Electricity was the only modern facilities in their house. They had to buy coal from the Union Pacific for \$3.00 a ton. Many times Rose would pick "boney" which was coal that dropped off the rail cars when they were shipping to save a little money. But, every once in awhile they had to buy the coal because the Union Pacific would charge them,

even if they did not need it.

Groceries in Rose's day was very cheap. A sack of flour only cost 79 cents per 10 pounds and ham was only 10 cent a pound. During the depression Rose remembers how they could never waste anything. When she made pancakes and if there was any dough left she would add a little more flour and some cocoa and make cupcakes for Jim's bucket. They did not have the variety of food like today but they never went hungry. Potatoes, soups, vegetables and meat were their basic diet. They never went out to eat like people do today and when they did go out it was to a friends house or to their parents home.

Rose and Jim never left their children with anyone to go out for the evening. "Babysitting," was a word they never heard until quite late in their marriage. They used to go to friends and play poker or pinochle. On New Years they would go "first-footing." This was a customary thing that most old country people would do. You would begin by going to someone's house. Before anyone could step into the house a person with dark hair had to go first. If the person did not have dark hair, then this would bring bad luck to the household for the year to come. They would drink, eat and have a merry time. Once in awhile they would go to the movie theater to see a movie. If they could not for some reason take the children with them, Jim would go one night and Rose would go the next night. The cost for the

movie was two-bits which is 25 cents.

Rose worked most of her married life. She worked as a housekeeper and made 25 cents an hour. She later worked in the laundry where she was employed for 31 years. Afterwards, she would go home and do laundry for a boarding house to help make ends meet. During the time she worked in the laundry she joined the UMWA Union. The union she hoped would provide better working areas, give her a paid vacation, raise wages and provide medical benefits for her and her family. She later moved to the Outlaw Inn and worked as a cook until the time she retired in 1982. At this time, she no longer belonged to the Union because she felt she did not need to because she received all the benefits without belonging to the union.

When asked if she would like to change anything in her life time Rose said she wishes her son Jimmy had lived in this day and age. If he would have had the medical treatment that people today have, he might have lived. She also stated she wishes her son and his family would go to church more. Also, that she loves them and hopes they will always be good and to appreciate what they have. To always respect others as they would like to be respected. Rose feels there is nothing wrong with the world we live in except for the greed of the people.