

Oral History

May 9/1981
Allan Porter

Mr. and Mrs. Myran Stringer

Both of them were born and raised in the Bridger Valley. They talked openly to me and they both made a joint effort to tell me what they felt was important. During the interview they both took turns talking. When I asked them about the old days they responded - In them days everything was team and buggy. We hauled all our own fire wood out of the mountains. It was real slick and we got stuck a lot, the wheels would go down and we would have to unload the wagon, get it unstuck, and load it back up again. It was all done by horses and we'd use a sleigh in the winter. We had some real hard winters back then.

Question: Do you think the winters were harder back then than they are now.

O yes! you bet, a lot harder, we had to prepare well for winter. My dad also had 25-30 milk cows and we had to take care of them all winter. Back then it would take around ~~one~~ ^{two} tons of hay per cow during the winter now it only takes around one ton of hay per cow.

Q: Do you feel people were closer back then?

Yes because people knew each

other a lot better. Now people move in and out a lot and you don't get a chance to know them. People neighbored a lot more then than they do now. We used to go a lot to other people's houses and they came to ours. People depended more on each other then, than they do now. I miss the old party telephone lines. It used to be that all the phones were connected, and if you had a fire or somebody was sick and needed help they'd just get on the telephone and ring it six times (six times for an emergency) and everybody would run and grab the telephone off the line to listen. And they'd say - "there is a fire at somebody's house or someone's sick". And you knew everybody's business, now somebody could almost be dead and buried and you'd never know it. Any time anybody passed away they would ring the line to tell everyone what time the funeral was.

Everybody raised a garden, we had a garden and mother sold a lot of vegetables. Not very often did we have to go to the store to buy groceries, only to get flour, sugar, beans or rice. We grewed corn, potatoes and most anything else you could grow else where. For cabbage or cauliflower you had to have "hot beds". We'd dig down into the ground 2 feet and make it 4' long by 8' wide then we would fill it full of horse manure and plant

in that. We also sold butter, cheese and eggs at Kemmer.

Q: How would you make the cheese?

We'd get a big number three wash tub and fill it with 7 or 8 gallons of milk. Then we'd put it on the stove for all day to keep it warm, we also put some rennet in it. It would make a five pound hunk of cheese. Then we would have to press all the water out or it wouldn't keep good. Inside we put ~~st~~ cheese cloth and covered it up with wax and it kept all winter.

Q: What was the Depression like?

We were married in the year of the Depression, 1934. It was not as bad here as it was in the cities. My mother and father had a lot of children and I don't ever remember us going to bed without something to eat. It could have been a big pot of cereal, mush, beans or rice but we never wanted for food. We had a Sunday pair of shoes but not a lot of everyday shoes. It was real tuff because you couldn't find a job in those days but if you were on a farm or a ranch your family never went hungry because you raised everything you had. You might not pay your bills that fall or buy extras. The mothers all sewed all the cloths and even knitted the stockings and gloves. You had wood so you didn't need to buy coal or fuel, we

had coal oil lamps. we both got what they called a carbide lamp. It gave off a gas (the carbide) if you mixed it with water. It had a big tall tank, around 500 gal. and you would fill it full of water it also had a big hopper or a bail and you'd put a 100 lb. block of carbide in it. It would feed carbide down into the water and when the carbide hit the water it would give off a gas. Then you had a pipe that the gas would run in going all through the house. Each light in the house had a burner. I remember many a time dad would make us go and take a big stick, he would say "go stick the carbide up the gas isn't coming." Then you'd take a flint and light it up, it was a open flame. It would make a nice white light. It depended on how you used it but a 100 lb. of carbide could last you most the winter. It beat coal oil all to pieces. Before we got it my mother had to take a coal oil lamp in one hand and hold it over the stove to see while she used the other hand to turn the meat.

The worst depression was that people couldn't get a job, there was no jobs to get. You couldn't sell a cow, we used to get about \$65 per head and we only got \$15 or \$20. The best you could get was \$20 out of your winter animals that year. We didn't get any lay

so we had to sell them. We sold 100 and some head of cattle for \$400.

People always blamed it on the Government but President Roosevelt was voted in in 1932. He set up a lot of programs buy and for the people and that was when we had the W.P.A. They brought a lot of young men in from back east and put them to work on Government projects up in the timbers, called them C camps and payed them around \$1.50 a day to build roads and things to get em them off the grub line back East and this helped out a lot, it really did. He was a wonderful President and he saved the country and the economy that was so bad. We didn't even know anything that went on back East, about people standing in a grub line for hours to get a bowl of soup. We never had nothing like that we growed all our own vegetables and we had our milk cows, our corn, and our meat.

Another thing they did with the animals that they couldn't sell, because of depression and low prices, the Government sent out a crew of men and they gave a rancher \$15 for a cow and then they killed it and gave it back to the rancher to can for himself. If there were a lot of cattle they would shoot them in the field and leave them. If anybody wanted any meat it was their own fault they didn't get one for

themselves. They could have gotten all the free beef they wanted. It was a great program but a lot of people took advantage of it because they were lazy. The W.P.A stood for work project something but the people said it stood for "we play around".

My mother stayed up on the ranch with the children while my dad went and worked at the mine. One day as she went outside she saw an old Indian chief out there sharpening his hatchet on her grindstone. It liked to scare her to death. The Indians didn't bother us but the big ranches that had all the land for grazing didn't want us to homestead it. And they would bother us once in a while. The Indians didn't really bother anyone, they would come and ask for food. The Mormons would feed them good. If you didn't feed them they would steal it from you. The most trouble we had was with the native ranches here in the valley who didn't want new people coming here and taking up the grazing lands.

When we went to school in Robarson they were going to run us out of school because we were Mormon. We got in a lot of fights. Mountain View was a wild place and my parents wouldn't let us come to Mountain View for a dare until we got to be about 18 years old.

Q: Do you feel teachers done a better job back then?

A: Yes I do, because back then you had to get your lessons. We couldn't play ball or have any recreation at all unless our grades were up to a certain high. Now days if your a good ball player they almost give you the grade. Back then it was reading, writing, and arithmetic.

Q: How did the teacher handle discipline problems?

A: With a club! They had more discipline then. My folks always told me that if I ever got a licker at school I'd get one at home to. A person could teach grade school with a eighth grade diploma then but the children still learned more. Back then it was more one to one with the teacher and the student. They taught kids school them days, now sports and stuff have taken over.

I remember in the winter time dad would put a big rock in the stove and in the morning he would take it out, put it in a bag, and put that in a box, and then he would put the box in the sled and put his feet on it to keep them warm.

When we went to church we would heat up 3 or 4 rocks. Sometime they get so hot that they burned the sack. That way they had a heated sled.

I remember one time my folks left

us kids at home to watch the baby. (There must have been a bunch of us then because my mother had 16 children.) This knock came on the door and one of the kids went to see who it was. And it was a great big ol' Indian with long ~~braids~~ braids of hair and with a hat on his head. One of the kids screamed "Indians" so we all ran out the back door and left the baby inside. We ran out to the barn and hid. The Indian followed us out to the barn. Half of ~~the~~ us kids ~~was~~ were hidden in the loft, I'll never forget them kid-eyes. Anyway he just said "no hurt just want food". So we gave him something to eat and he left.

After the interviewed they ^{straight} brought out a lot of old pictures to show me. And they also asked for a copy of the tape. This report is just a very brief reduction of what we talked about in order to get the whole message you would have to listen to the tape.