

ALFRED BOZNER'S LIFE IN ROCK SPRINGS

*W/M to father?*

Alfred Bozner was born on August 26, 1921 in Rock Springs, Wyoming. He is the son of Frank Bozner, a Union Pacific coal miner originally from Yugoslavia. In 1903, Al's father and mother, Mary Buh, came to America by boat with a group of other families in response to a call from Union Pacific for mine workers. With his four sisters and two brothers, Al lived in a house near the banks of the creek on Lowell Street. In 1924, a flood hit Rock Springs washing away their home and the homes of many others, forcing them to move to higher ground. The major form of transportation in those days was the horse and buggy. One of the first cars in town was his brothers 1927 Model T Ford.

Some of the games Al played as a child were lost-trail, marbles, tin-can, jacks, and run my sheepie run. These games are similar to the ones kids play today. The object is usually to find someone who is hiding or to test your skill and judgement. Kids were expected to be more mindful of their parents than they are today. Parents only needed to tell their children what to do once. They were required to do certain jobs around the house which often were very hard and took up much time. Al was not able to participate in sports or other activities because so much of his time was spent working. His typical day consisted of waking up at 5:30 in the morning to milk the cows. Next he

had to go sell the milk around town and then go to school. When school was over, Al had to come home to do more work and be in the house by 8:00. Al did not like this life which is very understandable to me. Children were disciplined severely when they did not follow their parents orders. Razor straps were often used to strike the back of the disobedient child.

Birthdays were not celebrated in the same fashion as they are today. Once in awhile, they would get a cake or some punch, they did not, however, have parties or give presents. Some of the holidays which were celebrated were Eight-Hour Day and Labor Day. Eight-Hour Day was run by the miners and consisted of games for children and vaudeville shows. Labor Day was usually time for rodeos and other shows. Other holidays such as Easter or Christmas were celebrated by the entire town as a big event. Often people would save money for a long time in order to have a large party during the holidays.

Health epidemics such as diptheria, hooping cough, and scarlet fever struck the Bozner family. Al himself was suspect to convulsions brought on by diptheria for about eight years. Medical facilities were not exactly the greatest around. His treatment consisted of syrup or other types of liquids.

Dating in Al's time was also very different than it is now. "Most of all, you had to treat the girls with respect," Al remembers. There usually wasn't much to do on

dates either. Often a date would be something like going to the show or going riding.

Many changes have taken place in the lay-out of Rock Springs. Different sections of town consisted of places such as Chinatown on the north side, Japanesetown on the northeast, and even a section of people living in tents on Northfront Street. Most of the residents were mine workers whose houses did not have any indoor plumbing. Water was taken from wells dug in the ground. Only one shop existed which was the Clondike Building owned by Ben Pacheto.

The Rock Springs of old has to remind us of the ghost towns we see today or the towns we see in western movies. Gunfights or shootouts occurred in the streets after the miners went to bars on Pilot Butte or K Street following work. These such fights often were between whites and other races which worked in the mines. The competition between each other at work caused these acts of violence as well as the many racial problems.

Even though there was no KKK activity in the area, people were hung on the bridges over Bitter Creek. The responsible parties were never brought to trial. Usual reasons for hanging included fights at work or maybe just because of the different races. Because many races were competing at work, people did not mix together very much. Children often played with each other which is always the case since they are smart enough not to hold grudges against people for what color their skin is.

Rock Springs had all types or denominations of religions. Catholics dominated while Protestants, Baptists, and Methodists came also. Although many different churches were around, no problems occurred over religious feelings.

Al Bozner worked as a coal miner for Union Pacific and later worked for FMC in the shipping department. While working in the mines, Al associated with people from about 56 different countries. No major problems arose from this fact basically because each person was mostly concerned with his job rather than what others were doing.

Working hours were 7:30 to 3:15, however his schedule often varied according to the demand for coal. Al's free time was spent fishing, hunting, or picnicing with his family. Sporting activities dominated his spare time keeping him busy swimming or pitching horse shoes.

Many of the clothes he and his children wore were made by his wife. When it became too cold, they would just stay in the house because there was not much else to do. The Bozner's maintained a garden and lived on much larger lots than people do now.

Al belonged to the United Mine Workers Union for sixteen years while he worked for Union Pacific as a miner. When the UMWU joined forces with the United States Steel Workers Union, Al was with the USSWU for twenty-eight years. With the exception of a few times, he generally agreed with the policies of the union. In order to be a mine worker, you had to join the union. His union supplied them with a

paper every month which came from Union Pacific and his dues were first \$1.50, then went up to \$3.00 and just kept rising. By the time he retired in 1982, Al's union dues were \$28 per month.

The union which Al belonged to often held parties for their members. These were usually things such as shows for kids, roller skating, or just get-togethers. The Miner's Merchantile was a store which the union urged its members to support. John L. Lewis was a union leader who was very effective and to whom the miners listened to. Mr. Lewis represented the miners well each time they needed to revise their contract but was especially good when they were fighting for a pension. In order to win this settlement, the workers went on strike for over three months surviving on potatoes and canned meat donated by the welfare system. The one bad thing about being part of this union was that there was no insurance policy covering a workers life. Women were admitted into the union after World War I started because so many men were off to war. Non-whites were accepted. The average strike was about two to three weeks but were never violent. Mr. Bozner participated in these strikes in the form of picketing which everyone was all but required to do. The union definitely did help its workers in making conditions better and ensuring their wages be fair.

Mr. Bozner is a Democrat, has been ever since he heard other mine workers say, "stay with the Democrats, that way

you will always have work." His political ties are not very strong and he is not extremely active. Al first voted for Theodore <sup>FRANKLIN</sup> Roosevelt as president. Teno Roncalio's father was a junkman around town. Roncalio went on to become a lawyer and successful political figure. Al does not recall hearing of any Socialist or Communist parties in this area. His favorite presidents include, Roosevelt, Truman, Eisenhower, and Kennedy.

The Great Depression was very evident to the Bozner family. Shoes were not always warm or comfortable and his mother made shirts from used flour sacks. His father had stocks in the Denver Bank which were lost. They did have chickens and cattle but there still was not very much to eat. "We barely had enough to get by let alone have luxury items." They could not buy coal so they burned railroad ties in their stoves.

Prohibition was very strict but people always had some liquor which came from Kemmerer. Wagons went around trying to collect all booze, however, everyone seemed to always have something to drink. Moonshine or home-made beer and whiskey was popular in Rock Springs.

The boom brought people in from everywhere. "They were coming in faster than you could imagine." Some were living in tents or trailer homes on the outskirts of town. Al did not like the idea of all these new people coming into his town because it seemed more friendly before the boom. "The new people were different in the way they acted and now

it seemed as though you never saw anyone that you knew." Crime rose as a result of the boom and there were basically not any good things to come out of the boom.

The report of 60 Minutes characterized Rock Springs as "Sin City." Al thought that about 80% of the report was true, however, it did not really bother him. Prostitutes were walking down K Street all the time and after the report, they were mostly gone. "The report surely did not help our town any." When Al traveled to other places, others asked him about if the accusations were true to which he replied, "what else will happen with all the new people coming in?" The situation is much better now.

Al Bozner's fondest memories of Rock Springs are just plain being a kid. Although there wasn't as much to do in this area, he and his friends made best with what they had and enjoyed life.

The best years of Al Bozner's life were the 1945 to 1955's. He enjoyed them so much because things were starting to become more modern and yet other people still had a sense of the "old ways". Neighbors used to help each other but now even your neighbors don't talk to each other.

The biggest change in our country is the new things that we have now such as television and motorbikes. When he was growing up, Al only had radio and bicycles. So many new inventions are helping today's children lead easier lives. "Today's children have so much but are not as appreciative as they should be."

The future is hard to predict. A major problem is that our population is much too large. Today's generation has too much to choose from. They now have so much that they are becoming too choosey.

The current president is trying but is not as effective as those in the past. No longer can the two parties get together over issues which causes our country to become weak.

Al would wish to relate to his grandchildren and others who are just getting started that you should do what your elders ask. Compared to how it used to be, things are much easier now. Kids now don't work like they should. It is much too easy now and it is really too bad.

*Bill Ince*

*11/30/84*

*MWF 9-10*



NAME: Alfred Boyner

PRESENT ADDRESS: 359 H Street

- 1.-Present profession or occupation: *retired*
2. Occupations followed in the past (give dates): *FMC*
3. Date of birth: *August 26, 1921* Place of birth: *Rock Springs*
4. Date of moving to Wyoming:
- 5.-Full name of parents (give mother's maiden name)  
*Frank & Mary Buh Boyner*
6. Names of brothers and sisters (and to whom married):  
*Mary - Frank Nupence Molly - Jean Myers Joe - Evelyn*  
*Angela - Cyril Yanko Carl - Isabell*  
*Annie - Finnegan John - Rosalia*
7. Schools attended (give dates):  
*Rock Springs,*
8. Places of residence in Wyoming (give dates):
9. Military service (dates, awards, area served, rank, etc.):
10. Political offices held (give dates):
11. Political affiliation: *Democrat*
12. Religious affiliation: *Catholic*
13. Marriage (spouse's name, date and place of marriage):  
*Ann, 1941, March 1 Farmington Utah*
14. Children (names, dates of birth, grandchildren, etc.):  
*Alfr. - 1942 Mike*  
*Marilyn - 1946 Kyle, Mitch*  
*Richard - 1955*
- 15.-List of clubs and societies of which you are a member:  
*quarterback club*