

## Oral Histories

Number: OH 39

Date: 1/19/90

Condition:  
Good

Holdings:  
WP Library

Initials: DP

Interviewee: Vela, Francis & Retta

Interviewer: Davine Pera

Abstract: Side A

00-30 Date of births and early years. Married at age of 20. They ranched in Eckert until the depression hit, lost their ranch in 1932. Charles Fairlamb suggested Francis get a job in Telluride in 1933.

30-134 Describes how the Telluride Mine was started. Five men from Denver started up the mine in 1932. Grimes had purchased the mine for taxes and he put up the money and equipment to start it up again. The miners worked for \$4 a day, which was paid in stock and tobacco. The mine furnished room and board. Francis lived at the Bullion and walked back and forth to work. Later he rode the tram. Speaks of the fire at the mine and how the men survived it.

134-186 Retta moved to Telluride in the fall of that year. She names different places in town they lived and the amount of rent paid. They moved back to Eckert in 1935 and ranched for a year. Francis worked next five years at the mine. He names different jobs held at the mine. Speaks of generating own power at mine while he was plant operator.

186-242 Blue Lake supplied water for power. Describes the explosion at the tunnel at Blue Lake. Francis worked a total of 20 years at the mine.

242-268 Francis speaks of being the County Assessor and the difficulties with the position when he first started. He was the assessor for 14 years and retired in 1971

268-313 They ran the bowling alley above the drug store in the late 40's for 2 years then started the bowling alley in what is now the Excelsior building in 1950. Ran it until the mine close in 1954. Speaks of John Wise refusing to hire miners on the Telluride side after the mine started up again. Speaks of the prices on houses and lots in town in the 50's.

313-359 Francis pushed a bill through legislation to change taxes, to benefit Telluride on production taxes. Previously all monies from the mine went to the Ouray County. Describes the process of getting the bill passed.

359-438 Retta ran the bowling alley while Francis traveled on assessor business. They had bowling teams from Norwood and Rico. The bowling alley burned while leased out and they did not reopen.

438-527 Retta worked at the Nugget Theater as cashier and also at the Opera House. The Telluride Mining Company ran the theater next to the drug store. She worked for the Western Colorado Power Co. for the Gustafsons. They moved to the house next to the CourtHouse in 1936, which they sold in 1974.

527-588 They talk of social activities as young couple. Describes the dances at the Opera house with live music. They name different bands. Retta belonged to Commonweal Club, describes activities.

#### Side B

12-78 The Commonweal Club met above the old drugstore and also above the Power Company office. Describes formal parties at recreation hall, which were always formal. Speaks of the private parties held in the room behind the Opera House. She belonged to Lady Elks. Young couples did a lot of hiking, had picnics, and played softball at Society Turn. Roads were not paved then. They rode the Galloping Goose only once.

78-118 Francis speaks of women working in the mine during the World War II. The government sent soldiers to work in mine.

118-185 There was three girls still on the line when Francis arrived here in 1933. Tells story of the girls being run out of town. He spoke of Big Billie and her place. They speak of different town characters.

185-255 Stories of prohibition and people that drove cars loaded with whiskey to Denver. Prohibition kept Telluride going during the depression. The town stayed alive because people worked to survive.

255-375 Names various businesses in town. Memories of the gambling houses and saloons. There were three grocery stores in town when they moved into Telluride, each one was a specialty, such as butcher shop, pastries and etc.

375-581 Many stories of working at the assessors office. They were always involved in children's activities. Both of their children graduated from Telluride High School. They both loved to dance and recite stories of social life.

581-600 Francis talks about Mr. Zoline's first arrival in town and the beginning of the ski area.

Description: sound cassette (90 minutes)

Subjects: Side A

Early history

Telluride Mine

Mining years

Blue Lake

County Assessor

Bowling Alley

Legislation for taxes

Bowling

Social life

Side B

Social life

World War 11

Red Light District

Prohibition

Businesses in town

Social life

Zoline