

Tape 1020

Interview with Mr. & Mrs. Joe Rodwick, March 10, 1975, by Judi Reich:

Judi: We are talking with Mr. & Mrs. Joe Rodwick of Joe's Market. Mr. Rodwick, when did you come to Lafayette? Joe: 1923, June 6. Judi: Were you married at that time? Mrs. Joe: No, he was just a baby. (laughter) Judi: Where did you come from? Joe: West Frankfurt, Illinois. Judi: How old were you then.....just a child? Mrs. Joe: He was about 13. Judi: Did you come with the rest of the family? Joe: I came with my folks, yes. Judi: Were there any brothers or sisters with you? Joe: Two brothers and one sister. Judi: What made your family decide to come here? Joe: On account of Mother's health. Judi: Where did you first settle here? I mean, how did you decide to come to Lafayette? Joe: Oh, some doctor told her to come out to a higher climate, it would make her feel better. Judi: And so you chose Lafayette. Joe: Yeah, that's when we chose Lafayette. Mrs. Joe: Because it was a coal mining town. Judi: Was your father a coal miner? Joe: He was a blacksmith. Judi: Was his shop right here in Lafayette? Mrs. Joe: He was a blacksmith, but they had a store back in Illinois so they came out here and opened a store here in Lafayette--a grocery store. It was up there where Anspach's is. Joe: Yeah, up there where the jewelry store is. Judi: Did you help out in the store? Joe: A little, not too much. I worked part time.

Judi: What was Lafayette like then, what sort of things.....?  
Joe: Oh, there were quite a few mines, then, when we came here. Judi: What did you do during the day. Did you go to school? Joe: Yeah, I went to school here, yes.

Judi: Would you like to describe-----it might seem boring to you, but it is interesting to other people-----what an average day was like. I mean, like, when you got up. Joe: Yeah, I got up in the morning and cleaned up and went to school and helped the folks in the store in the evening.

Judi: How far was school away from your home? Joe: It was up here on Baseline.  
Mrs. Joe: That would have been about 3 blocks. Judi: Were there very much other children in the school? Joe: There wasn't too many, no. Judi: Were there many teachers? Joe: Just one teacher was all we had. Judi: And then you would help in the store at night? Joe: Yeah, in the evenings when I came from school.  
Judi: How long did you stay at school? I mean, how long during the day?  
Joe: I think it was around 3:00 or 3:30.

Judi: How about you, Mrs. Rodwick, when did you come to Lafayette?  
Mrs. Joe: 1938. Judi: Where did you come from? Mrs. Joe: Denver. Judi: And what made you decide to come to Lafayette? (laughter) Judi: Did you meet in Lafayette? Joe: No, we met in Denver. Judi: How did you happen to get to Denver? Mrs. Joe: Oh, he used to come to Denver all the time. Joe: I used to spend my week-ends there. Mrs. Joe: I knew a friend of his, and he introduced us. Judi: Was Denver the place to go for action on the week ends? Joe: Yes. A whole bunch of us used to go down there over the week-ends, yeah. Judi: What was there? Joe: Oh, taverns. (laughter) Judi: How long did it take to get to Denver? Joe: Oh, around 35 or 40 minutes. Judi: Oh, that's not bad, quicker than now, really. Mrs. Joe: Well, there wasn't much traffic. Federal was the main highway. Joe: It wasn't like today. It has all changed quite a bit.  
Judi: Do you get to Denver much now? Joe: Not very often. Judi: So you two got married and settled in Lafayette? Joe: Right. Judi: And then, how did you open the store? Was that right away, or what? Mrs. Joe: No, he had a store. Joe: We had a store from '29 to '43 up here. Mrs. Joe: You see, his folks left and went to Oregon and they closed that store down, or did you sell it? Joe: We sold that store up on the highway. Mrs. Joe: And they went to Oregon and came back and opened the Highway Food Store which is where the television place is now. His father opened that and that is where Joe's mother

died. Then Joe ran that store for his dad. His dad was sick and he ran that store for a few years and then he and his dad had a falling out and Joe opened the store down here. Judi: This one here? Mrs. Joe: No, a couple of doors up. Judi: And that was in '29? Joe: Yeah, 1929. Mrs. Joe: And he ran that until what? Joe: Until '43. Mrs. Joe: Then he closed that one down and went to Denver to work because of the war. I had two children and I couldn't run the store so he worked in Denver then until after the war. Then he went to work for Safeway and Miller's cutting meat and then in 1950 we opened this store. Joe: I worked for Swift's there for about 2½ years.

Judi: What did you do in Denver during the war? Joe: I worked in a beef cutting department cutting beef, boning beef. Judi: Was that for the war? Joe: Yes, the government had it for the army.

Judi: What were the changes from the first grocery store from the one you have today. Mrs. Joe: Well, our store is the same old-type store as they used to be. That's what we have kept. Judi: How would you describe that for someone who wouldn't know what an old-type store is? Mrs. Joe: We carry a little bit of everything which the supermarkets are doing now. and then, of course, we still heat with coal and we stay open for the children mostly. They come in here and we are friendly. We never rush anybody. They come in to visit more than to buy. (laughter)

Judi: Have you noticed any differences in the types things people buy? Mrs. Joe: Oh, yes, definitely. Judi: How has that changed? Mrs. Joe: Over the period of years.....now, they are very close, they buy only what they need, not what they want.....but when we first opened up you could sell anything. Because they seemed to have quite a bit of money then. It wasn't what they needed so much, it was just spontaneous buying. Judi: Do you find maybe the difference now and perhaps in the '30's, during the depression, did you notice the people were awfully tight, too? Mrs. Joe: Then they bought what they needed,

only what they needed. Joe: Back in those days everything was charged.

Judi: Did you find that was one of the hardest times to run a business was

during the depression? Joe: Yeah. Judi: Did most of your credit become paid

back? Was it paid back in cash or in other things? Joe: The jobbers would

usually carry us from 4 to 6 months. Mrs. Joe: Then when the miners would

get their pay checks they'd come in and pay us. Joe: They's pay us in the

fall.

Judi: Now you've started collecting the mining tools. I've talked

to you about this before. Mrs. Joe: Yes, as an advertising project for

Lafayette Days. I don't know, but I think it was about 20 years ago. When

Lafayette Days was over I started taking them down and the miners said, "Oh,

no, leave them up." And over a period of time they kept bringing other things

to go with the mine tools until I have quite a collection as you can see.

Judi: Maybe you can describe some of the things you have on the wall above.....

Mrs. Joe: Well, the first things that I put up were the augers, the pick, and

the track hammer. And then Mrs. Bell brought the needle and I don't really

remember who brought the scraper. The tamper came from Erie. And then one

of the blacksmiths brought the homemade wrench. Mrs. Stewart brought the pie

fork and I don't remember who brought the track gauge. Judi: Do people still

bring in things? Mrs. Joe: Yes, not mine tools so much, but last week I got

a horseshoe and a railroad spike. Some youngsters brought those in to me.

Then last summer a young girl I'd never met before brought me a cherry pitter.

So you see they are still bringing things in to go with the collection. Judi:

What do you hope to do with these things? Mrs. Joe: They go into the museum.

Judi: Oh, when they build a museum here in Lafayette? Mrs. Joe: Yes, that

is definitely our plan, because it is history of Lafayette. We have the old

iron that they used back in those days which is a modern thing and yet they

are old. There's an old coffee grinder that Jack Maxwell gave us. I have Rose Williams' stamper there. She was a notary public in the bank and I have here stamper. Let's see, what else? Bill Moon's clock and Mrs. Dyer's cans that she used to can with. Then Mrs.....what was her name?.....well, anyway her milk cans over there that she used to deliver milk with. And Mrs. Ben (Mary) Cundall gave me that licorice box which is quite an antique.

Judi: Do a lot of people come in to learn about different things. Mrs. Joe: They come in to see and show their grandchildren or great-grandchildren what people used to use.

Judi: Mr. Rodwick, you were here a little before Mrs. Rodwick, do you remember many things about Lafayette that maybe have changed or that you particularly liked when you were first here as a child? What were your favorite things? Joe: Oh, I guess the mines were my favoritest thing when I first came here, because West Frankfurt, Illinois, was a mining camp, too.

There were coal mines there. Judi: Did you ever go down into the mines?

Joe: I went down in the Highway Coal Mine up here. Judi: And what was that like? Joe: Well, it was like going into a big tunnel that was really dark

only they had the lights down there in the caves, where they have those caves dug out, entries they called them, and timbers up on top to keep the coal from caving in on them. They had their track and the little motore that hauled the coal out to the air shaft at the top, to the tipple, and dump it out those little chutes. Mrs. Joe: We were friends with Frank Jakes who owned the Highway Mine.

and everytime he'd get a new 'toy' we'd have to go down and see it, By "toy" we mean one of those great big motors. Judi: Was it scary to go down in them or would you have liked to have been a coal miner. Joe: No, I wouldn't. When I work under the ground like that, it's damp...of course, they've got the air shaft on top where they put the air down to them, you know, to purify the air

through the mine. Judi: Were you friends with very many miners? Joe: Quite a few. Judi: And do you remember them talking about mining and all? Joe: Oh, they used to talk about it sometimes when a whole bunch would get together, they'd talk about things they used to do and how they used to work and everything. Judi: Do you remember any things they used to say? Joe: No, I sure don't. I wasn't very too much interested in mines there when I was a certain age. I had some other stuff on my mind. I never took much interest in the mining then, but when I got older....

Judi: Were there any other grocery stores in Lafayette or was your family the only one? Joe: Oh, no there, I think there were 8 grocery stores here at one time. Judi: How many are there now? Joe: Let's see, there's 3. Judi: Was the competition very big or did you just carry different things? Joe: Competition was very great. I had to go out in the mornings and pick up the orders and deliver them the same day. Everything was delivery service. Mrs. Joe: He had to go from house to house for the order, go back and put it up and deliver it the same day. Judi: Did that include everything....milk and eggs? Joe: Yes, everything....eggs and produce. Judi: Then people didn't come down and shop as much? Joe: No, it was all delivery service. Judi: It was more luxury. (laughter) Mrs. Joe: That is the one thing that I could not understand is how they used to go from house to house to customers and take his order and go back and put it up and then deliver it. Judi: How many houses would you say you served a day? Joe: Oh, around 40 or 50, we didn't have any customers you know. Judi: Did you have any help? Joe: I had 3. Mrs. Joe: The women did take advantage, they would only order one little thing which is ridiculous to have a person deliver one thing like a cake of yeast or a box of matches. Joe: Yeah, they'd call up.....(laughter).....oh, the competition was great, it was something. Trying to hold customers.....Judi: Were you toward the

top of the competition? Joe: No, I was down about in between, I guess. Oh, we all done a little business.....everybody done some. Mrs. Joe: Everybody shopped at home then, they didn't go to Broomfield, Boulder, or Denver to shop like they do now. Joe: Well, everybody had charge accounts, you know, you would carry them from 3 to 6 months and then they'd go back in the fall. When they got the work they paid. If they had a bad winter, they'd still owe on their bill, you know, and you'd have to carry them over to the next year. It seemed like you never got out of debt, they just always owed you something.

Judi: Were most of your debts eventually paid? Joe: Yes. Judi: Were they.... I think I asked before, were they ever paid with anything except cash? Joe: No, they never did pay cash, everything was chang. Mrs. Joe: Oh, they paid in cash or by check. Judi: It was never trading or cars or something like that? Now, today I guess you can't deliver. When did you stop delivering.(laughter) Joe: When we closed the store in '43 we stopped delivering. Then Lee Baker was here and he quit. He went out of business. Then Horace Davis quit deliveries and then Mr. Roberts quit about 2 or 3 years after we started here.

Judi: What about the products-----what sells now that maybe wouldn't have then or what was a big item then? Mrs. Joe: Well, we sold flour and lard mostly then whereas now we don't sell very much of either flour or lard. Joe: A lot of beans and dried fruit like apples and raisins. Judi: Now? Joe: No, in those days. And sugar, well, everything was bulk then. Nothing was sacked up. Judi: And now what do you find,....mostly instant things? Mrs. Joe: Mostly, yes. Women used to make their own bread and now they buy bread. People wouldn't think of buying a cake then and now we sell cakes.

Judi: What did you do in the evenings in those days? What were the social activities? Mrs. Joe: There used to be a show here. Judi: Was that every week-end? Joe: He had it open every night except Sundays. Judi: There

was one show in town? Joe: There was one, but it's burned down now....it's gone. Judi: And to most people that was..... Joe: That was the entertainment, yeah. Judi: Were there dances. Or was the town itself very close socially? Mrs. Joe: They had dances quite a bit here in town. Judi: Did you know a lot of your neighbors and have a lot of get togethers with them? Joe: Not too much. Mrs. Joe: Not this town, no. It is not social as other towns are. They had their clubs but it was a very chosen few who belonged to those. Joe: If you belonged to a clique....if you didn't you were just out of luck. Mrs. Joe: So I would say this town is not as social minded as most small towns are.

Judi: So how did you spend your time? You say you have two children? What sort of family things did you do? Mrs. Joe: Well, we fished and went to Denver most of the time to see things. We've been to shows in Denver and mountain trips and things like that. The kids were very active in school. Then as soon as they got through school they went their ways.. Judi: Did you have sons or daughters? Mrs. Joe: I have a son and a daughter. Judi: Do they live in Lafayette? Joe: No, they don't. Mrs. Joe: Our son lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico. and our daughter lives in Longmont. Judi: Do you plan to stay in Lafayette? Mrs. Joe: Oh, yes. Judi: You're established then. (laughter)

Judi: You mentioned before that you might be closing the store in a while. Mrs. Joe: Now, we don't want that to get out, because it hurts business, you know, so we don't want that to get out until we're ready to close.



## JOSEPH RODWICK

Joseph Rodwick Jr. of 103 E. Simpson St., Lafayette, died at Community Medical Center, Lafayette, on Wednesday, April 17, following an extended illness. He was 75.

Mr. Rodwick was born Dec. 29, 1909, in Harrisburg, Ill., the son of Joseph and Victoria Urban Rodwick Sr. He married Ruth Martin in Denver on April 7, 1937. He owned a market in Lafayette for 47 years, from 1928 to 1950 at the Friendly Market on Public Road, and Joe's Market on Simpson St. from 1950 to 1975.

He came to Lafayette from Illinois in 1923.

Survivors include his wife, Ruth, of Lafayette; a son, Joseph Rodwick III of Albuquerque, N. Mex.; a daughter, Joan Sheley of Longmont; a sister, Mary Berwick of Bellingham, Wash.; and five grandchildren.

Memorial services were Friday, April 19, at 10:00 a.m., at Darrell Howe Mortuary Chapel in Lafayette. Dr. William R. Griffiths of United Methodist Church of Lafayette officiated. Services concluded at the chapel.

Contributions in his memory can be made to Lafayette Miners Museum, 108 E. Simpson St., Lafayette, CO 80026.