

Page 1

MARY BORSTNICK

Tape #1044

Interviewer: Donna Carbone 1983

(Starts in middle of sentence) Regarding the Ku Klux Klan

And he built a church over at the Columbine. Well, you know the Mexican people are mostly all Catholic. Well, they used to come every once in a while and put a cross there and burn it in front of the church. So it was a Catholic Church. It was a Catholic Church, yes. So there was no violence or anything, just the cross burning. No, no, that's the only church that was there. I think once in a while they had Sunday School. Somebody from Erie would come up there or somewhere and have a little Protestant Sunday School. Not too much. But I didn't know too much about the Klan; of course, they were pretty thick here in town.

The strike, tell me about the shooting out at the Columbine. Well, they went out on strike. I don't remember; it was for wages, I think. And, of course, the miners were all out. And of course, the majority of them lived here in Lafayette because the Columbine was one of the biggest mines at that time. The strikers used to march in every morning, a whole bunch of them. And they'd go all around the camp and then they'd go out. Well, this one morning, I don't remember the dates or anything, but this one morning - they always left the gates open - there was a fence around the camp, you know. And they had a wire gate across the road that came in. And this morning, they had the gates closed. Well, I was up every morning and used to watch them come in. And this morning they closed the gates; well that made them mad. And then they did come arushin' in. And they came down, oh just a little below - we lived up on the hill - they came in and they got to the water tank and then they began shooting with a machine gun. Well, at first, I told my husband, "You'd better get up". - he was still in bed. I said, "You'd better get up; there's going to be trouble this morning". And he got up and we all, of course, fell down on the kitchen floor, the two kids and I - I said, "Get down". And then, I don't know how much shooting they done or how much they shot, but anyhow after they quit, we got up and I opened the door and Mrs. Beranek, the old lady Beranek, she was screaming and running back of my house. Well, the Amicarellas lived right next door and they came between the two houses and run across back of the house. Well, then after it was over - I think there were six; now I'm not sure. It's been so long ago, I've really forgotten. And that was that. And then my husband went to the garage and we had a big hole in our car - about that big. So my husband asked Jackie Williams, he was the superintendent, - he said, "What are you going to do about my car?" He says, "Well, let the Wobblies pay for it", he says.

Were the Wobblies the union men? Well, they called themselves - there used to be a speaker come out here all the time - this IWW and they called them the Wobblies and they used to have

MARY BORSTNICK Tape #1044

big meetings up here in the hall. And, of course, all the strikers - oh I used to go myself. And then they called them the Wobblies. So he said, "Let the Wobblies pay for it". So we moved out of the camp then. We moved out. We moved over here. We've been here in town since. We've been here in Lafayette 50 years. And we lived at the Columbine, I think, about five years.

Now this here was a camp - the Simpson Camp, all this? Yeah, we lived here at the Simpson Camp. Well, you know when we first moved here, all these mines were working. All of them - the Simpson, the Standard, Capitol and Vulcan and then the Blue Goose down here, a little mine - they called it the Blue Goose or the Strathmore, I don't know. And they were all working. And every night - you know, the mines would slack down in the spring - and they always had a whistle. And they used to blow the whistle - three for work - and if there was no work, there was only one whistle. And, of course, everybody listened for the whistle at night.

Did they have the butcher shops and everything; did each camp have their own shops? No. The Columbine had their own store. They moved from here over to the Columbine. They used to have the company store here; do you remember that? No. Well, your dad does. And the company owned it? The company owned the store. Oh, my, there were a bunch of stores here at that time. There was Aldersons. And Lee Baker. And Bermonts. And Jack Gordon. And Bonnells had a butcher shop, Joe Bonnell. And Bill Moon had a butcher shop. Then there was a man by the name of Cousins that had kind of a dry goods store, before that.

The Leyden Mine caught on fire and we moved over here to Monarch #1; it was over there by Marshall. And then from there, we moved down to the Lucas; that's Monarch 2. And we worked there for a while. And my husband was a foreman at that time. And then we moved over to the Puritan. And then they had the Delagua - you know that Delagua - when they were on strike at the same time, you know, the Militia went in there and shot all the, killed all those people in the tent colony down there? Oh, at Ludlow. Yeah. And we got scared out and we moved away from there - we moved to Boulder. And from Boulder, we moved over to the Gorham Mine - that was still the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company. And then from there - we lived there about five years - and then we moved over here to Lafayette. And he worked at the Columbine. Well, first he worked at the Vulcan, then at the Columbine. Then he quit the Columbine and went to work for Fred Nesbitt down here at the Centennial. From there, he went over to Boulder Valley and that was the last place he worked. And you lived here, in this house? Uh-huh. That's the last place he worked and then he retired. He was 72 years old when he retired.

MARY BORSTNICK Tape #1044

Now, in the mining camps - each camp had a fence around it? People that worked there lived there? At the Simpson.

I still have his lunchpails and I think his cap is down there in the basement. And there are a lot of tools out there in the garage I'd like to give to somebody.

They mined the coal by hand and they had the drivers. And these little boys - at the Leyden, they had four of them. And they called them 'trappers'. Well they used to sit by a door - they had these doors on account of the air in the mine - the circulation of the air - well they had these doors and when the driver used to come with a car of coal, why these trappers would open the door for them to go through. Just young kids. Yeah. Now that's what your brother was - the picture of your brother - was he a trapper? Yeah. There were four boys. Well, there were only two on that one picture, but I had that one picture that had the four of them on but my sister-in-law has it; she wanted it on account of my brother too.

And then they mined the coal. And then, I guess finally, they got the machines in. The cutting machines, you know, and then they loaded - with big loaders - they loaded the coal into the cars. But before that, the men had to shovel the coal into the cars. And they got so much per car, is that it? Yeah, or so much a ton. Can you remember how much it was then? No, I don't. They had a man in the tippie that weighed the cars and then they had a man, I guess, for the union that used to have a man there too, but they never got their full wages, I don't think. That was hard work. The men used to come home so tired when they had to shovel with a shovel.

And then they had mules that pulled the cars up? Yeah, they had mules to pull the cars. My husband took care of the mules over at the Columbine Mine. He took care of the mules. He was the driver boss. Well, he was a driver boss most of the time - over at the Gorham Mine too. And they had a slope mine over at the Gorham Mine - it was a slope. And every night, he brought the mules out. And they had a big corral where they had their feed. In the summer, they used to turn them out on the prairie. And then when there was work, he'd have to go gather all those mules up and bring them back in the mines in the evening so they could go in the morning.

What did everybody do in the summer when the mines closed down? Just went fishing most of the time; that's what my husband done. We lived over at Marshall when we first moved over there and they worked maybe a half a day a week sometimes. Half a day a week. And he would just spend all of his day over at the Marshall Lake fishing.

MARY BORSTNICK Tape #1044

Now, is that when everybody charged in town - the merchants carried you that whole summer and then you would pay back so much? Yeah, pay them in the winter and then start over again in the summer. And they didn't get very much pay, either. If you got \$70.00 in two weeks, you got a big pay. I know we used to get our pay when Joe was still living and Mary first got married - we lived together up on Emma, there. And we used to take the car and go and for \$15.00 we'd get enough to last all week. (groceries)

And then you had your own butcher shops and you got your meat cut just the way you wanted it. Yeah. Of course when we lived at the Gorham, they had the store down in Marshall; it was a company store. Mr. Antoine run it. His daughter was an opera singer - Josephine Antoine; she used to be an opera singer; she died.

We used to make our own bread; we never bought bread. The ice boxes - where the ice went in - is that right? And there used to be a wagon that a guy pulled around with ice on it, is that right? I remember that, because I remember running after him and he'd give us chips of ice. They say there's still a man over in Marshall - Joe something - an Italian man - that bakes bread and sells it. He bakes it outdoors in the oven outdoors, and they say he sells a lot of bread.

What did you do for entertainment? Did you have a lot of dances and things like that? A lot of gatherings? Yes, people used to give dances in their homes, you know. Every weekend - you'd fix your lunch - and they just had an old fiddler that played. Then we used to go out in the country too and they used to have those barn dances out in the country. And the street car used to run every hour when we lived at Leyden. There was a car every hour. We used to go to Denver, to Lakeside, to Elitches or to the shows. The 11:00 car used to come at 11:00 at night that would take you from Denver back home. Yeah, oh we used to have good times. People were different then. I was down to Lakeside the first day it opened. They used to call that White City, didn't they? White City. I was there the first day it opened. I was 16 years old. It's a little different looking now, I imagine. Yeah, they say it's different. We'd just get on the street car. And when we were at the Gorham, they had the Inter-urban running. Now that went to Eldorado Springs? Yes, they had a spur that run to Eldorado Springs and it was, oh, a big resort - it was beautiful - they had a beautiful dance hall, the swimming pool. And a lot of people had their cabins and

MARY BORSTNICK Tape #1044

then you had picnic grounds there - oh we used to go there a lot. Yeah, we used to go to Eldorado a lot. And then we used to go to Boulder and go to the shows and go and have ice-cream and come home. Of course, at that time, we already started buying and having cars. The Fords came out, you know, and people had cars and we just went in the cars. But they still had the Inter-urban. I forget when the Inter-urban quit; they tore up all the tracks. It used to be just beautiful over in there. I'll bet it was. It's pretty still but I can imagine what it was like then. They've made it a state park now. Yes, it's a state park now. But I don't know, it's so rocky. Down in the mouth of the canyon, it's quite a bit of ground but up above, it's awful rocky and narrow. There was a road that goes - just before you get into the - that went up towards the Moffat and there was a road that used to go and go up into - they had a nice little lake there and we used to go up there and picnic quite a bit. Well, we used to go on picnics - we used to have good times - we never stayed home. We used to go on a lot of picnics all over. We've been all over those hills. We'd go up to Kremmling. Of course, we didn't have - we just roughed it. We didn't have no sleeping bags and cabins at that time. We'd sleep out on the ground; but we enjoyed it.

Did we have a doctor in town then? Dr. Porter. I guess your grandpa remembers him, sure. Gordon took his place. And there was a Doctor Braden here too. There were two doctors. I had Dr. Braden when my daughter was born. And Dr. Lyda used to be here - he was the one when Joe was born - I had Dr. Lyda. He lived here in Lafayette but they used to go around the camps, you know. And every night, they'd come around the camps and tend to the sick - you know, go to the houses and tend to the sick. That's something; they'd go to your house instead of you waiting in an office. When he used to go to the Columbine, he'd be there in the afternoon and whenever they had an accident, they would blow that whistle - short blasts meant that there was an accident of some kind.

How were the conditions in the mines? Were they fairly safe? Did they seem to have a lot of accidents then? Quite a few.

Of course, it was a hard living. We carried our water to wash clothes and heated it in a boiler on the stove and washed by hand. And everything was done the hard way but we still were happy. Happier than we are now. You don't know what to expect from day to day. I think you probably kept busy and you didn't have time to want. Those old dirty mine clothes!

So it was all well water then? Yeah. We have a well here now.