Oral Histories

Number: OH 44 I

Date: April 12, 1990

Condition: Good

Holdings: WP Library

Initials: DP

Interviewee: Thompson, Arvo

Interviewer: Davine Pera

Abstract: Side A

00-59 Arvo's parent's were born in Finland and came to Telluride separately. They were married in Telluride in 1903. His father worked at the Smuggler, Liberty Bell and Black Bear Mines. Arvo was born in Finland while parents were there visiting their parents.

59-100 Memories of growing up in Telluride. He talks of the flood in 1914. Remembers the mud was 10 to 12 feet deep coming over the falls and down the streets. Over 300 miners used picks and shovels to clean it up which took 3 or 4 months.

100-141 He speaks of illnesses and the different doctors in town, the flu epidemic in 1917 and all the young men who died with it.

141-226 He left school after the eighth grade and went to work on a ranch on Wilson Mesa, but quit after a year and half as the rancher never paid him After that he worked for a rancher in Norwood, where he worked 10 to 12 hours a day when he was only 13, earning \$20 a month plus room and board. He started working at the Tomboy at the age of 17 in the mill. When the mine shut down in 1926, he went to Utah and worked for a few months, then "bummed" his way back to Grand Junction on a freight train. He names different mines he worked for until Grimes started the Telluride mine up again in 1933. Worked there until he retired in 1976. After that he worked for the ski area for a few months making signs.

226-284 Tells of being married at age 24 in Grand Junction. They rode the Galloping Goose home the same day and a wedding party at Finn Hall that night. He had \$50 saved. The first year they were married, he earned \$2.35 a day at the Telluride mine, working 10 hours a day.

284-358 Miss Lorig was his teacher in the 6th, 7th and 8th grades. Schools had better discipline in those days. He did lots of hiking and fishing as a young man. He would walk to Alta Lakes and back in one day. Talks about hunting elk and deer for meat. They climbed up the hill and skied down the south side. They made their own skies and describes the process. Used skis to trap in Prospect Basin. He trapped animals for their fur.

358-374 His father died when Arvo was 8 or 9 after being sick in bed for 2 years.

374-453 Arvo herded cattle in Norwood, 500 or 600 herd at a time. It took about 11 hours to ride horse from Telluride to Norwood. The Bank of Telluride and Norwood Cattle Company owned the ranch he worked on, in fact owned most of the property and ranches in Norwood. Area. At that time a whole beef sold for \$15. Tells of rancher shipping cattle to Omaha on the train, but could not sell them, so the whole outfit went broke.

453-510 He had a tough life after his father died. Mother worked for the bank as a janitor. Arvo picked up buckets of coal from railroad track to use for heat. The oilers on the train would throw large lumps out for the kids, and they would bury them and then chip off as much as they could carry home to us for fuel.

510-600 His wife was Irish and Dutch. Talks of the depression. There was lots of bootlegging in town during the depression. Tells of Roy Stone's big still and how he shipped whiskey out to Denver and Salt Lake City. Recalls stories of stealing whiskey and getting drunk for 5 to 10 days at a time as a young man. Names different bootleggers in town.

Side B

00-45 The revenuers arrested the bootleggers, gave them a year in jail and released them. Tells story of sister's husband running whiskey between Canada and the United States. When he was caught, sister divorced him. Speaks of various laws concerning drinking, smoking, etc.

45-77 Describes the Finnish community he lived in as a child. Perhaps 200 Finns and just as may Swede-Finns. There were many different nationalities in our community. The dances at Finn Hall always had live music, usually accordion. Describes celebration of Christmas at the Finn Hall.

77-100 His mother worked at the bank and for Mrs. C. D Waggoner. There was a large community across the river. The floating population of Telluride including all the area mines and ranches on the mesas, was about 10,000, about 5000 in town.

100-181 Arvo's mother came to Telluride because her parents had arranged a match for her in Finland and she was unhappy about. She worked her way to the United States on a boat, landing in Boston at the age of 16, then worked her way to Telluride where she later met her husband. Mother was a very small lady and her husband was a tall, large man. He use to hold her on his lap and sing to her. He would work until they made some money, then would quit and they would take back to Finland. Arvo was born on one of these trips on the boat. Years later the boat burned at sea and sank, and they could not get a birth certificate for him, for many years. Arvo speaks of the bread his mother made and all the different Finnish dishes. Childhood was very unhappy after his father died.

181-267 He spent a lot of time outdoors and hunting as a young man. Stories of hunting days.

Description: sound cassette (71 minutes)

Subjects: Side A Parents' history 1914 Food Flu epidemic Jobs he held Wedding Hunting, hiking and skiing Father's death Ranching Mother's work Bootlegging

Side B Bootlegging Finnish Community Telluride population Parents Hunting stories