

Beth: This is Beth Smith. I'm talking again this afternoon to Alberta Mitchell. She's going to continue with her life story and how she lived in the city of Salida for a few years. Alberta, where are you going to start?

Alberta:  
[00:00:30] I think I'll start again with the hospital talking about the difference in the hospitals when I started working in hospitals today. One of the big things that I remember, people were in oxygen tents. They did not have piped in oxygen to the room. When the doctors ordered oxygen, we got these big plastic tents that  
[00:01:00] went over the entire head of the bed. Then the oxygen was connected through the tents from big tanks of oxygen that were brought up from the basement. The oxygen had to be kept cool. Otherwise, people locked in those tents would smother because it would be so hot in there. At the back of the oxygen machine, so to speak, was a chamber we had to keep filled with chunks of ice.

[00:01:30] The maintenance men would chop up the ice and put it in big buckets and put it in a big chest outside the hospital. We had to go out and get the ice in the buckets and put it in the tanks. Then, of course, as ice melted it dripped out into  
[00:02:00] a container, a receptacle, that you could detach from the oxygen machine itself and empty it. It was always my luck to either forget to empty it and have to mop the floor, or spill it when I emptied it. It was quite a procedure compared to what the nurses have to deal with today. All they have to do is get a gauge, plug  
[00:02:30] it in the wall, connect a tube, put it in the patient's nose, and turn on the amount of oxygen they want to administer to the patient.

[00:03:00] I think one of the other things I remember, the hospital in the basement had three tunnels. Primarily the basement was used for storing equipment and laundry and different things that we needed to use on the floor. The thing that I remember about the tunnels, number one, we had one tunnel that went out into the river. If we ever needed our maintenance man, we had to go and walk through the tunnel because he was sitting at the end of the tunnel with his feet dangling and fishing.

[00:03:30] After the war, they got all excited. Everybody was building bomb shelters. They turned one tunnel into a makeshift bomb shelter. I made a statement very loud and clear, if I had to go to the bomb shelter I would take my chances on the outside. This was not very appealing to me. Right now I think they are probably using that section of the tunnel as storage space. It probably went underground to the nurses' home.

[00:04:00] One of the patients that I had taken care of was Laura Evans. I got the privilege of taking care of her. She was quite a lady. I also was able to take care of a few of her girls whenever they got sick. Dr. Fuller used to go down to their place of business and do a physical every month. One time I thought I was going to be  
[00:04:30] able to go with him, but something came up and I wasn't able to go. She was quite a lady. Her girls, they just were very discreet about their presence in the hospital.

There was one other thing. In the basement was two big trunks. In those trunks

[00:05:00] were surgical supplies that the girls that worked at OR re-sterilized periodically. There were spotlights that ran by battery. These were always kept on hand in case of a railroad accident. The surgical crew and the doctors would grab this stuff. They could go anywhere on the line within the vicinity and do any kind of surgery that they had to do. They were always kept in preparation. The only thing that the trunks didn't contain was instruments. It didn't take very long to throw those in the autoclave and get them ready to go. They could be ready to go in forty-five minutes anywhere. It was amazing to me that they had that much preparedness to be able to do this sort of thing.

I'm sure there are a lot of other incidents that happened while I worked. After all, you work in a place for forty years there's a lot of things that do happen. I regret I had never kept a diary. These stand out in mind. If anything comes to my mind again, I'll call Beth.

[00:06:30] Okay, now what else? Oh, we were talking about the window that's in the front of the small Episcopal Church. That window was originally in the hospital in that department which is now medical records. At that time, it was the big ward that housed probably fifteen or twenty beds for railroad retirees. I'm not sure how the hospital came to acquire the window. When they remodeled, it made that area medical records. Probably even before when they made it into a nursing home and then medical records, they needed to get the window out of there so they could get the sunlight. It was moved from the hospital to the Episcopal Church where it still stands. I have a history of the window and when it was made. I don't have it here at home. I have it at the church. They installed it. I never figured out how they were able to move that window from the hospital, because it was on the second floor, to the Episcopal Church and install it without breaking it. It was quite an expensive piece of work.

Female: It's a beautiful stained glass window.

Alberta: It is beautiful. Um-hmm (affirmative). If you want more information about the window, if Beth can call me I can get it. I can have it for you. Okay?

Female: That's fine.

Alberta: Okay?

Female: Um-hmm (affirmative).

[00:08:30]  
Alberta: I don't know of any other significant changes to talk about at this point. It's just the whole town has changed. I get a little nostalgic, but things do change. Nothing stands. My mother used to say, "The only thing that moves is the mountains."

Female: Do you remember when they put the Christmas tree up on Christmas Mountain, the lights up there?

[00:09:00]

Alberta: Oh yeah, I remember that. That's pretty recently. I can't tell you just exactly the year that it was put up. I can remember when they did it. I thought that was quite a wonderful addition for the community. I'm sorry it took so long before it really got publicized like it has this year. I was disappointed in the TV coverage because I think they could have done a little better job in talking about Christmas Mountain and the holiday park. I thought we got shortchanged in that department.

[00:09:30]

[00:10:00]

But then, you know, sometimes I can remember when Channel 9 just really created havoc. This didn't happen at the hospital. It happened at Dr. Leonardi's. There was an old fellow in the office. He had a lot of trouble for a long time, but he also was one of these people that was always running to the doctor's office calling wolf, wolf. This particular day the office was full. They were trying to get him into the office. In the meantime he decided to die. Nobody could really anticipate that.

[00:10:30]

[00:11:00]

Some woman got all excited and called Channel 9. They sent up the helicopter and there was really quite a derogatory report written for the TV presentation, how doctors ignored patients and what terrible care they got. It was pretty unjustified. You read all these things and you need to see the whole picture. I happened to know this guy and I happened to know his history. I happened to know exactly what went on. It was at no fault of the doctor or of the people that worked in the office. He didn't look any different that day than he had any other day. His complaints were essentially the same. It kind of was a black eye for Salida for a while.

[00:11:30]

Female: Those things happen.

Alberta: Yeah, they do. Yeah, they do. Um-hmm (affirmative). I think that's about all. I will keep Beth informed.

Female: All right.

Alberta: Be a regular nuisance.