

Pat: This is Pat Warner. We're recording Frank J. Butala.

Frank: Born on 10/7/1926. My dad, Jake Butala, there was no middle name, was born 1/9/1894 in Chernome, Yugoslavia. My mother's name is Ann Bayuk Butala. Her birthdate was ten, excuse me ...

Pat: November? Eleven.

Frank: November 10, 1904. She was born in Leadville, Colorado. What else we need to say then?

[00:01:00]

Pat: Then your sister's name?

Frank: My sister's name is Mary Ann Butala. She was born in June 1924. I don't know what this is.

Pat: 1926.

Frank: No, she was born ...

Pat: June 26, 1924.

Frank: No, I was born in twenty-six. She was born in twenty-four.

Pat: That's what I put there. That says twenty-four. She was born June 26, 1924. She died January 9th ...

Frank: Of 1982.

Pat: Her married name ...

Frank: Her married name was Mary Ann Veltri. Her husband's name was Mike Veltri. I don't have any dates on him. Wait a minute, maybe I do. He was born ... what's the fifth month, June?

[00:02:00]

Pat: May the fifth.

Frank: May the fifth,

Pat: 1913.

Frank: 1913 and died ...

Pat: November.

Frank: November 27, 1993. Then what?

Pat: You were born ...

Frank: I was born ... We already give that up here, I think.

Pat: But then, you lived at that address.

Frank: I just can't read it.

Pat: You were born on I ...

Frank: On I Street and lived there for six months then moved to the house that my dad built at 605 West Second until ...

[00:03:00]

Pat: 1951.

Frank: Until 1951. The school that I attended was Saint Joseph's ...

Pat: Parochial School.

Frank: Parochial School from ...

Pat: The first.

Frank: The first to the eighth grade and then on to Salida High School, 1940 to 1944.

Pat: How long was your paper route?

Frank: I delivered all of Second Street, Third Street and the Mesa. Mesa had very few houses but it was a very long route because the houses were spaced a good distance apart.

[00:04:00]

Pat: What year was this, do you think?

Frank: That would have been 1932. Some of the friends that I had to play with were at that time, our neighbors who was George and Tom Theotakatos and Tom Evans and Ralph Capelli and the Dickinson boys, Buster, and I can't think of the other one's name. That's why I wanted these notes so that I'd have it.

Pat: That doesn't matter. Tell them about how much money you made. How much money did they pay you for delivering this paper?

Frank: I already give you that.

Pat: That wasn't recorded at that time.

Frank: It wasn't?

Pat: Mm-mm (negative).

[00:05:00]

Frank: The boy that I was helping which was James Sweeney, was getting a dollar ten a week. He gave me ten cents to deliver that half of the west end of town.

Pat: Ten cents a week?

Frank: A week.

Pat: A week?

Frank: A week, yeah. He kept the dollar. In two years later, he gave up that job. I had the whole route. I hired Raymond Gentile for half of the route for ten cents a week and I kept the dollar.

Pat: What did you do with all this money?

[00:06:00]

Frank: I wanted a bicycle real bad and I couldn't get it until I paid for it myself. It took me two years to accumulate ten dollars to buy a used bicycle keeping every dime as well as doing a few errands for people and getting a little extra money. Let's see.

[00:07:00] After I did that, I got a job with the Salida Mail. They paid a dollar and a quarter a week. I was able to keep all of that because once I had the bicycle, I done the whole route. The Daily Reminder was a free paper and the Salida Mail was a subscription paper. We didn't have as many places to stop. The friends that I had, do you have that down?

[00:08:00] The friends that I had were Tom and George Theotakatos who was next door neighbors and Tom Evans who was a neighbor on the other side and Ralph Capelli who was a neighbor across the street and James Sweeney, a neighbor a block away and the Dickinson boys, Buster and I can't think of his name. I'll have to think about that. Buster and his brother which was about two blocks away. We played ball in the street, K Street, which is between George and Tom's house and our house. We played ball and kick the can and things of that nature.

Also, we'd go with a few or most of us up one block to what we called the sandbags on Third Street and dig tunnels and play in the sand. It was a blue sand so it was real easy to dig. We'd done some dangerous things. Dug some deep, deep tunnels that we crawled in. Very luckily, they didn't cave in. Why'd you stop it for? Think what's the next step.

[00:09:00]

When I started high school, the ninth grade, I also got a job at Patterson Hardware for twenty-five cents an hour. I had to be there at seven o'clock in the morning. I worked until just a few minutes before nine and then had to run to

[00:10:00] school. After school, which ended at four o'clock, I had to be down there by ten after four and work until the store closed. My job was sweeping the front sidewalks, washing the windows occasionally, and cleaning all the dishes and separating hardware that was misplaced by customers. I worked all day Saturday from seven in the morning until usually about eight o'clock at night is when they closed the store.

[00:11:00] On Sundays we went to church with my family, Saint Joseph's which is on D Street, Fifth and D. Quite often went to my grandparent's ranch, Nick and Catherine Bayuk. We played in the fields and on the haystacks in the barns and occasionally was able to ride a workhorse. Let's see, what else did we do? I think that's all. Why don't you shut it down again?

During the time I was growing up until about the age of ten, I had worked with my dad and uncle on numerous jobs like pouring sidewalks and building sheds and cutting wood. My dad put an addition, a back porch on the house that we worked on and built two rooms upstairs, one for my sister and one for myself. My uncle put a major addition on his house. On weekends, we worked on Sundays generally, helped him doing carpenter work.

[00:12:00] During the time that we was remodeling the upstairs steps you had to put in, I was using a ladder on the outside of the house to get up there to do the work.

[00:13:00] During that time, I was in grade school. I had a terrible cough. The sisters sent me home in the afternoon. I went through the alley and found an electrical plug-in. It had about two inches of wire sticking out of them bare. I was twisting them together. When I come home, I didn't say a word to anybody. I plugged it into one of the outlets, of course, and caused a small fire and scared my mother to death. She was after me, so I ran up into the attic on the ladder and then kicked the ladder down so she couldn't get me.

[00:14:00] The summer that I was a junior, I went to Minturn, Colorado. Our next door neighbors had moved to Minturn. His dad was transferred on the railroad. He was a railroader, boilermaker. He was transferred to Minturn. I went to Minturn for the whole summer and worked at Camp Hale. I was fifteen years old. No, I guess that would have been when I was in the tenth grade, not the eleventh. The tenth grade. I worked with Tom Evans who was my very closest friend and lived in Minturn with his folks. I'd lived with them.

[00:15:00] Their next door neighbor was also working at Camp Hale. We had a ride every day to go to Camp Hale. Our job was making beds for the construction workers. There were several teams doing that. Tom and I worked as one team. Our job was to make three hundred beds a day for the construction workers. The rooms were set up to where there was ten beds in each room and three rooms in each building. We had to make the three hundred beds a day, seven days a week, ten hours a day. We was paid seventy-five cents an hour and thought that was the most money in the world.

Come back and went to school and went back to work for Patterson for that

[00:16:00] next year. The following year I didn't work. I went out for football. Gov Gruenler was the assistant coach and Neil Marion was the coach. Gov was extremely upset with me because I didn't start playing football when I was a freshman. I didn't get much playing time, but I had a lot of fun.

When we graduated from high school, I was seventeen years old. I had to get my parents' permission and practically had to beg on my hands and knees to be able to join the service. I would have been drafted at eighteen and they wanted me to wait. I just couldn't wait to get into World War II. They finally consented. I joined the Marine Corps in June of 1944 as I got out of school.

[00:17:00] Bob, a classmate of mine, wanted to go to Denver. His dad worked with a man that went back and forth to Denver about once a week. We rode into Denver with him. The next morning, we went to the new custom home in Denver and joined the service. Bob joined the Navy and I joined the Marine Corps. When we went into the building, the Navy office was first in the custom house. Bob gave his information and joined and then the man who was in charge of the Navy there wanted me to sign up and I says no, that I was going to be a Marine. He says, "Anybody that wants to be a dumb Marine has to go down the hall to the Marine office." I did and signed up for the Marine Corps.

[00:18:00] I signed up as a ... I can't think of it. Anyhow, I signed up. A few months later, they called. I had to report to Camp Lejeune, South Carolina. We rode trains from Denver to Kansas City, then onto Chicago. From Chicago, we went down south and finally ended up at Parris Island, South Carolina. Every time we changed trains, the trains were in little worse shape and had cars that were very poorly lit. Going from Beaufort, South Carolina to Parris Island, we finally rode in cars that were just gas lights in them.

Pat: Oh my goodness.

Frank: When we got to Parris Island, we got off the train. They had two big semi-trucks and trailers with stock racks on them. We all had to get in them trucks. They took us the last six miles into Parris Island. I was there for nine weeks with boot camp and then was allowed a two-week furlough to home before I went on to Camp Lejeune, North Carolina for advanced training. We was there five weeks and then shipped across the United States in troop trains to Camp Pendleton, California. We were in Camp Pendleton for several months or a couple of months, I should say.

[00:20:00] We was to go overseas but we wasn't eighteen years old yet so we stayed at Camp Pendleton until our birthdays. Right after that, we shipped out to Hawaii, Honolulu. We was in a transit camp there for about thirty days, that's nearing the war-end. They didn't know what to do with us so they put us on a ship and said we was going to Okinawa. When we got to Guam to refuel, they held us there for about five or six days on the ship. They called the names of twelve guys to get off the ship to be stationed at Guam. I was one of the twelve. We

[00:21:00]

got put into a construction company there in the Marine Corps, not the Seabees. We was actually in the Marine Corps. They was doing a tremendous amount of work building PXes, sewer plants and churches.

[00:22:00] I was there for a little bit less than two years. The last six months, we was living in tents which was perfectly okay. There was sixteen to a tent. There was a terrific typhoon that wiped out all the tents and numerous warehouse buildings and several other things. We had a few barracks that had been built by the prior Seabees that they put us in. I was there for six months and then headed home or back to the States.

[00:23:00] We caught a ship that was just coming out of the United States and they'd first stopped at Guam. We went from Guam to the Philippines and from the Philippines to Shanghai, China. When we was in Shanghai, we had gone up the Yangtze River to get to Shanghai. Because it was so recent after the war, the channel wasn't dredged. It was sand before it went into the ocean. They took on fuel at Shanghai. Next morning we was supposed to leave. A couple of tugs come to push us out from the dock. The ship wouldn't move. We had to wait until the next day for the tide to come in. The same thing happened for the next three or four days.

[00:24:00] Finally, I heard this terrible noise. They had two big pumps pumping a bunch of fuel off right into the Yangtze River and lightened the ship. The next morning, which was about a week later, they had about five tugs that came and we finally got out of the harbor around to the docks and went back into the ocean and went on to a port that was near Tangshan. It wasn't in Tangshan, China. It was there for a few days and then went on to Japan, Yokosuka, Japan. We spent several days there and then headed back to Pearl Harbor and just took on fuel at Pearl Harbor and left within a couple of days and came back to Treasure Island in California. We was in Treasure Island for about four days while they processed us for discharge.

[00:25:00] We didn't have any leave during all this time so they told us that they would put our leave onto the end of our journey there and that we were still Marines until July of 1947. Then we was discharged. They mailed our discharge papers to us.

[00:26:00] When I first come home from the service, I went to work at the Poncha Fluorspar Mine. It was owned by Everett Cole who lived in Canon City. He was a very crippled man but a very nice man to work for. My job was then building compressor buildings. We had to build a concrete portal for the tunnel. There was an existing tunnel of six hundred feet. The mine inspector insist they put a portal on it right away out of concrete with a steel trap door. Then I built a compressor house that housed the compressors. Then we built a dry house for the miners to come so they could hang their wet clothes up at night on racks in the dry house.

They shut down in February because the weather was so cold. A particular few days before that it was forty-seven below zero up at the mine. They said they

[00:27:00] would be down for about a month. They were down longer than that. I was getting anxious to go to work. Finally in February, I tried to get a job in Salida and I couldn't get a job anyplace. I went to Denver to get a job. I went on the weekend and checked things out and thought that on Monday morning I would get a job. I stayed in a motel on South Santa Fe for five dollars a night.

Monday morning when I got up real early, I looked out the window. There was about ten or twelve inches of snow. I drove by several of the jobs that I thought I would try to get a job at. There was not a soul around anyplace. I decided to come home and reorganize and see what I could do.

[00:28:00] On my way home, I happened to notice a big cabinet and mill shop. I loved doing cabinet work so I stopped there. The name of it was Hallack and Howard. It was near the Colfax viaduct. I found a way to get down there and went in and talked to the personnel man. He said that they was probably going to be needing another cabinet maker in about a week. Go ahead and fill out an application. I filled out the application and handed it to him; it was a very simple thing. The phone number I used was 353W which was our home number here. He says, "What the heck is this?" I says, "What do you mean?" He says, "This phone number. Where'd you get that?" I said, "That's where I live in Salida." He was all upset. He said, "If you're in Salida, how you going to work here?" I says, "I'm going home." I said, "If you need me in about a week, give me a call and I'll come down." He says, "No, we can't do that." I said, "Okay then."

[00:29:00]

[00:30:00] I went on and drove home. When I got home, this was in the very late afternoon, the next door neighbor and friend, Mr. Chris Theotakatos, was living next door at that time. Sam and his family moved about a block away into one of Chris's other houses. Chris had five houses and he needed some work done on one. He saw some of the work that I had done on off hours or off time for my mother and dad changing the kitchen, putting in new cabinets and remodeling the bathroom and everything. He was very impressed. He says, "Can you do some work for me?" I said yeah.

[00:31:00] I went in the next morning to the house. He told me that he would have a little bit of material delivered there. The house was empty. The fellow that he had put the windows and doors in was eighty years old. There wasn't a window that worked or a door that worked. They was either hinge bound or stuck. I told him that I could fix them. I went ahead and started that morning and worked. He come home and looked and was very, I assume, satisfied with what I had done and said, "How much do I owe you?" I said, "Oh no, Chris." This was Mr. Chris Theotakatos, Christopher Theotakatos. He was a single man and never been married. He said that he wanted to pay me. I thought I was being fired. I wouldn't tell him what I wanted or anything. He said, "Is a dollar an hour good enough?" I said, "That's fine." He gave me eight dollars because I worked there eight hours. He said, "What do you need for the next day?" I said, "I thought we was done." "No, no, no," he said, "I want you to finish."

I worked for about a week there fixing all the doors and windows. It was a small

[00:32:00] house. He paid me every night. I asked him why he'd done that. He said he might die. He was an older man and he might die. He didn't want to beat me out of anything, which I thought was really something. When I finished his job, he lined me up with about three or four more railroaders that needed a door changed or a window put in, something. That's the way I started and went from that point. He really lined up about the first four or five jobs for me besides the work he had on his house.

In 1948 when I started my construction business because I couldn't get a job anyplace, there wasn't many jobs in Salida at that particular time, I started doing some very small jobs and remodeling rooms and kitchens, bathrooms, so forth. In about 1949, I got the first house job on F Street, built a brick house. Got along very well.

Pat: Whose house was that, Frank? Do you remember?

Frank: I can't think of his name right now. Oh, Tuttle. Mr. Tuttle.

Pat: I remember that.

[00:33:00]

Frank: Not the one that had the store here in Salida. He moved over from ...

Pat: The valley.

Frank: From the San Luis Valley. His wife had died and he sold the ranch and he wanted to build a house. His daughter knew of me. She lived in Salida.

Pat: That was in the thirteen hundred block of F Street.

Frank: We built a nice brick house for him. After that, we built several more, quite a few more houses around, all through my construction career.

[00:34:00] In about 1954, is when I bid on and got the job to build the first section of what now is Longfellow School. It was the first six rooms that was built for first for kindergarten and first grade. In 1957, I built the original sewer plant. Also in 1957, later in 1957, I built the Larimer gymnasium for the school district. 1958, the Salida High School had burned down and in 1960, we got the job for building ... let's see, 1958, I guess, we got the job to build the new high school and the new shops, cafeteria and library.

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[00:36:00] In 1960, we built the annex to the existing courthouse. Also, the jail and judicial rooms in that building. In 1960, we also built the post office building in Salida and the bowling alley in Salida. Toward the end of 1960, we started building the Spa Restaurant which is now called the Country Bounty. There was a skeleton of a building with numerous businesses in there. There was a restaurant in there and there was a dining room and a liquor store and one-bay garage for the station there. It was called the Skelly Inn. We took all of that stuff out and redid

the building, remodeled the building into what was known as Spa at that time. In late 1959, we got the job to build two lifts in Sun Valley, Idaho. The ...

Pat: Ski lifts.

[00:37:00]

Frank: Ski lifts, yes. I made an error on the high school. We started the high school in 1962 rather than 1960. In 1965, we started the Monarch ski area and two new lifts.

Pat: And two more.

Frank: In 1968, we built two additional lifts and rebuilt the parking lot and a shop building and two lifts. We also built two lifts at Westcliffe in 1968, no. That don't sound right. It would have been 1970 on the two lifts at Westcliffe. We built two lifts at ...

Pat: Geneva?

Frank: Geneva Basin and then ...

Pat: In 1984.

Frank: Wait a minute, Tina. 1984, we also built the headquarters building in Salida on ...

Pat: Arkansas Headwaters.

Frank: Arkansas Headwaters building. The original Arkansas Headwaters. During that time, we put the last two lifts in and remodeled in large the Day Lodge at the ski area, also added the handball courts at the Monarch Inn. Ownership had transferred to Jerry Rogers. He had a manager that was named Jay Clarity.

[00:39:00] Clarity wanted to build up business. This was at the same time that United States was trying to promote Susan B. Anthony silver dollars. Jay Clarity thought it would be a good idea to get a whole bunch of silver dollars and pay us in silver dollars. We in turn paid the subs that was working with us.

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They sent a truck, a heavy duty van to Denver to the bank to pick up all these silver dollars and brought them back to Salida. On the day that we were paid, we received probably sixty or seventy thousand dollars for the work and paying the subs. He paid us in the silver dollars and they was in bags; a thousand dollars in a bag.

[00:41:00] One of the subs that I had working was redoing the parking lot and putting in drainpipes and so forth and had a large force of men up there at the ski area. He had approximately thirty thousand dollars coming for that month's work. I put them in my pick-up plus silver dollars for the electrical work and the plumbing work and all that of that kind of stuff. I had put them in the front seat of my

pick-up on the passenger side. It was so heavy that I could only go about five miles an hour from the lodge up to the ski area because it almost turned the truck over. I paid the sub-contractors in silver dollars. Then, let's see, how am I going to say that?

Pat: The sheriff's posse rode along, didn't they?

[00:42:00]

Frank: He wasn't with me. They had a sheriff's posse ride with the van to Denver so that on the way back, they would have protection with all this money. They probably picked up between seventy and eighty thousand dollars to pay us for our work and for the subs. When they were at the bank, they had just got the money and getting ready to leave. My son, Tim, was with him in Denver and just living on the streets. He happened to see the license plate and recognized the van from the ski area. He walked over to that van and stuck his hand in and said, "Hi, I'm Tim Butala." The sheriff pointed a double barrel shotgun right at him thinking that he was going to try to rob him. He just wanted to tell him who he was. It was quite a comical deal. When they found out that it was my step-son, they let it go and come back to Salida.

[00:43:00]

[00:44:00]

In 1984, I had bought some mining plants from Elmo Bevington on Missouri Mountain, which is adjacent to Taylor Mountain. It was a white lime rock quarry, calcium carbonate, really. We developed the quarry and improved five miles of road so we could get to the quarry easier. We brought the marble down to the site that I own which is known as the Old Smelter Plant, a creosote plant. I had a gravel operation there, crushing equipment and so forth. We crushed the marble. It was all in large chunks. We'd crush the marble down to many different sizes and had a bagging plant to bag the rock. It was mostly sold for decorative landscape work.

[00:45:00]

We had a very large customer at Antonito, Colorado. We sold most of it to them, however, we did have some sales in Denver and different cities in Colorado. Let's see, what was I going to say then? Some of the material at the white quarry was used for the facing of the former May D & F in Colorado Springs which is now Foley's. Also another May D & F in Denver. I don't remember where it was. Neiman Marcus building and Lord and Taylor's, that was the other one on Sixth Avenue.

Pat: On Cherry Creek.

[00:46:00]

Frank: In Cherry Creek Shopping Center. They liked it for two reasons; the material was sort of a glitter and being white, they wanted white buildings without having to paint them all the time. This material was very white.

Now, I haven't run the quarry in several years. We've been just operating our gravel pit for concrete production. We have a concrete fleet of trucks. Also, landscape material that we sell through brokers in Denver and other parts of the

[00:47:00] country. Basically, I semi-retired and trying to turn it over to my children.
Goodbye.

Pat: All right, Frank. Thank you so much.