

Beth: This is Beth Smith. I'm going to let John Bayuk talk to you on the tape this afternoon. We're at a hundred and thirty nine Chilcott which is his address. This is the twenty-first of February. Now we're going to go back in time a little bit and see what John could remember about living in Salida.

John: I was born March 3, 1934 in Salida. The delivery doctor was Doctor Parker. My parents were John and Mamie Bayuk. I have one sister, Elizabeth, better known as Bubbles Bayuk, since married. Her married name is Thompson now.

[00:01:00] My mother was a stay-at-home mother. My father developed two fluorspar mines in the county. He employed about seventy-five to a hundred people. After working the mines for about fifteen years, he sold one of the mines to General Chemical. That was in Browns Canyon. He sold the other one to Reynolds Aluminum which is up at Poncha Springs where basically the hot water's at.

[00:02:00] Later he retired from Reynolds Aluminum and both of my parents, as of this interview, are deceased. Some of the memories that through my teen years were many; of course, like all youngsters, riding my bike all over town, playing rubber guns, playing lots of sandlot sports. The most challenging was sneaking into the theater or else one of us would pay and the other one would open the back door and let everybody in. Money was kind of tight. A lot of the time I spent on my uncle's ranch, my mother's brother up in Nathrop and then a lot of fishing.

One of the things that I really liked to do was go to the high school and watch the big boys practice football and thinking someday I'm going to do that. That was a big memory and the most memorable, I think, that I had.

The schooling I had was grades one through six was Longfellow. Seven through eight was Kesner Junior High School. Nine through twelve was Salida High School. I graduated in 1953. I entered the University of Colorado on a football scholarship after graduation. I graduated from the University of Colorado with a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1957.

[00:03:00] Talk a little bit about my athletics experience. Of course back then, there was no Pee Wee League football. There was really no organized football for children unless they were in junior high or high school. After I started high school, I worked and I went out for athletics. I delivered groceries for Stancato Grocery which now is an antique shop. I saved my money. By the way, I also was shining shoes.

[00:04:00] Now we're in about the forties. The war was going on. Salida was a destination for all the soldiers from Camp Hale 10th Mountain Division up by Leadville. They used to come into Salida and get the shoes shined and then drop off their boots. They had to be spit-shined so they could pass inspection. Some of them come in pretty ratty. We had a hard time shining them up but we got the job done.

[00:05:00] I saved my money. They were very good tippers. Some of the guys that were coming into town, it was their last hurrah on their way to Italy or Germany for the winter war. They threw money around like it was nothing. There was times that I would make more money shining shoes than most of the men working in Salida. It was nothing to take home fifty, sixty dollars for a week and more. I used to save my money in a coffee jar. It was a one-pound Folger's jar. I just came home with all my money and I threw it in the jar. I never counted it. I never did anything with it. I just kept getting jar after jar after jar.

[00:06:00] Of course, when I turned sixteen years old, I was in high school now, and I needed a car. I went down to Allphin Motors which is now High Country Bank downtown. They used to be a Ford dealership and Castaldo's Bar and Grill. I walked in there. There was a forty-six Ford in there. I walked in there and I talked to Mr. Wilkinson, Wilkinson's son I think, and wanted to buy the car. I asked him what he wanted and he said, "I want six hundred and seventy-five dollars." I said, "I don't know if I have that much money, but I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll give you twelve jars, one pound jars of money. You can count it out. Have your secretary count it out or whatever."

[00:07:00] Anyway, I was seventy dollars short in buying that car. I told him, I said, "I guess I can't buy the car because that's all the money I've got." He was a big Kansas fan from the University of Kansas. He said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll sell you the car for the amount of money that you have in the jars if you would consider going to the University of Kansas when you graduate from high school." I said, "That would be not too hard to promise you that I would do that." That's how I got my car.

[00:08:00] There were only two cars in high school, mine and my cousin's. Everybody else, all the other people or students or children had to borrow their folk's cars, but we had our own. When we would have parties and we would go someplace, we were the bus. We would go pick everybody up and take them to the party. I've got to stress this because there was no drinking, no smoking and everybody acted like gentleman and ladies in all of the parties that we went to. It was a time that athletics meant more to me than drinking and smoking. Everybody wanted to, I can hardly wait until I get to be twenty-one years old. My father always told me, he said, "If you drink or if you want to get drunk, you could get drunk at home." Knowing that, it wasn't any fun anymore because I didn't have to sneak around. I can honestly say that I probably ... I don't think I drank anything until I graduated.

[00:09:00] While I was in high school, we played football with other schools like Pueblo Central, Pueblo Centennial, Colorado Springs, Alamosa, Canon City. Canon City had not beat Salida for fifty-some years. We weren't about to relinquish that record. While I was in high school, I was High School All-American. I was leading ground gainer in the state. I had fifty offers to go to different schools on scholarship. One of them was Kansas. I had to keep my promise to Mr. Wilkinson. I had talked to those people.

[00:10:00] I decided on going to the University of Colorado. The reason I did that, I'd like to have went to UCLA or to Louisiana State. Those were the ones that I preferred. My mother and my father never missed a football game that I played in when I was in junior high, high school. I felt like I'd better stay close to home. Tony Delmonico was my coach and Gov Gruenler and Rudy Aganski. Tony Delmonico was a graduate of CU. They ran the single wing up there at CU. We ran the single wing in high school. I fit right into the mold there. I kept my promise to Mr. Wilkinson. I talked to him. I very politely told him, "I think I'm going to stay close to home."

[00:11:00] While at the University of Colorado, I started as a freshman there. I was just a little guy, six foot and two hundred and twenty-five pounds and probably the lineman never weighed that much. While I was in high school, I forgot to mention, there were no girl sports, no soccer, no baseball, no wrestling. Everybody played football, basketball and track of which I was part of. I'm going to back up a little bit.

[00:12:00] While in the high school our senior year, we went all the way to the state finals and got beat by Lakewood by two points. We took, I think, if I'm not mistaken, ten track guys to the state track meet with Coach Moline and ten guys, we brought back the state championship. We had to go in cars. We didn't have a bus. We had to go in cars. Everybody was laughing at us because here are these little guys from Salida coming with just ten people. Here are these guys are in them fancy suits. All we had was white shorts and a T-shirt. We didn't even have purple and white. Everybody on that track team, we either took first or second, mostly first. That's how we came away with the state championship. That was against all the big Denver schools, all over. That was quite an event. Go back now. I had to put that in there because I think that was significant as far as the athletics in Salida.

[00:13:00] The other thing that I want to make mention, when Salida would play Canon City, there would be a special train coming to Salida and take all the people that wanted to go to the football game and I'll guarantee you it was most of the town. If anybody wanted to rob anybody, that was the best chance because there was nobody in town. I think even the police went. It was quite a rivalry. Like I said, they never beat us. I'm almost sure, maybe fifty, fifty plus years. It was quite a rival. People in Salida really backed the schools, the athletics. Anything that you wanted to do with athletics, you could go around, get a donation, do whatever. It was quite a time.

[00:14:00] I think I'll go ahead and say a little more about football at the University of Colorado. First of all, I'll tell you a little story. It's a true story. I was going with a girl from Salida by the name of Patricia. Everybody called her Sue Moore. She was going to go to Western State. There was a guy here that asked me one day if I would like to go fishing with him. I said, "That would be good." He said we're going to go over to Gunnison." I said, "That's even better." You had to know some people to fish on the Gunnison River.

[00:15:00] We got in the car. We went past Western State. He said, "By the way," he said, "how would you like to go watch them practice football?" I said, "That'd be all right." We pulled off over there. We sat there for a few minutes. He said, "How would you like to practice?" I said, "That might be really fun." Lo and behold, I went in the locker room and they had my helmet size, jersey size, everything fit me to a T. I put that on there. I went out there and start practicing with those guys. They made me look like a hero. I was returning punts. They made me look like a hero because I would be running and some of them would fall. It just made me look like an All-American.

The guy's name was Steve Frazee, a long-time resident of Salida, very well-liked. I love him to death even though he left me at Western State. I had no way to get home. Of course, I was enjoying myself. There was a lot nice guys over there. I played against Bill Rhodes and Jerry Church and Aaron Bradford. All those guys were from LaJunta. We played them. It was kind of fun over there playing with them.

[00:16:00] The word got out. I don't know how it got out that I was over at Western State. To be honest with you, I really didn't try to go home. I was having a good time even though I didn't have a lot of clothes either; just washed them in the night. The word got out. Ray Jenkins from the University of Colorado come to Salida and asked my mother where I was. I was supposed to be at CU. They said he's at Western State.

[00:17:00] Then, transportation was not what it is today. They didn't haven't the cars to go over Monarch. My mother didn't go over and pick me up. Ray came over there. I'll never forget. He walked in where we were staying and grabbed me by the neck. He said, "We're going home and going to CU." There was a big guy, a tackle from Durango. I knew him because we played against him. His name was Armstead. He stood over there by the door. He was big. Big, big guy, maybe two sixty-five, six seven. Big. He said, "Over my dead body." Ray Jenkins said, "Son, I hope you have your insurance paid up because we're going out that door." Ray Jenkins was the wrestling coach at CU. Armstead moved over and we walked out. Ray Jenkins who was the end coach at CU said, "Let's stop by your house, get your clothes. I'll follow you all the way to Boulder in your car." By that time, [00:18:00] I had my dad and mother had bought me a brand new fifty-three Ford when I graduated. I really thought I was uptown.

Got to CU. It was about maybe a week. I stayed with Ray and Bea Jenkins at their house. Ray wouldn't let me go anywhere. There was a scandal about CU coming to Western State and stealing me away from there. The presidents of the university got into an arguing match. It was a scene. It was a real scene. Anyway, I landed up at CU and played four years there. I made the team as a freshman and played with some real, real athletes.

[00:19:00] While I was there, I won't go into a lot of games, but we used to beat the dickens out of Nebraska. I scored all the touchdowns in one game. I still have the football signed by all the players and everything. We got to go to the Orange

Bowl January 1, 1957 to play in the Orange Bowl. I was leading ground gainer in the nation at CU. I was leading scorer in the nation there. When we went to the Orange Bowl, we played the University of Clemson.

[00:20:00] I'll make mention of this because I see a real change. There were only two colored athletes on our team, John Wooton and Frank Clark. Frank Clark played with the Cleveland Browns. John Wooton played with the Cleveland Browns after they got out. We got down to Miami and they would not let those two athletes eat where, I wanted to say white guys, white guys were. All the guys on the football team said, "Look, if you don't honor them, you don't honor us." We wouldn't go in there until they let Frank and John go in there.

[00:21:00] One of the funny things is, we went to a show down there. Harry Belafonte was the entertainer. They still wouldn't let John and Frank in there. We said, "Okay, fine. We're not going in there either." It got to the point, Clemson never had a colored guy on the team. They would not play football against us. We said, "Fine, then forfeit the game. We don't have to play. We'll just come down here and have a good time." Finally, they had a big hoopty doo about it. Finally the said, "Okay. We'll play with Frank and John on the team."

[00:22:00] Needless to say, without getting into a lot of the game, we just kicked the stuffings out of them the first half and got a little overconfident. The coach for Clemson told those guys, "If you don't play football, I'll resign right after this football game." They came back roaring like a bunch of tigers. Anyway, it got to be a close game. I scored the winning touchdown and we beat them. I think it was twenty-seven to twenty-one.

[00:23:00] After that, I went to Dick Stapp who was our guard. Went to the Senior Bowl in Mobile, Alabama. We had our choice. We could either go to Hawaii for the trip to Hawaii or go to the Senior Bowl and make five hundred dollars. Five hundred dollars then was like a million dollar now. It was hard. Nobody had any money. We had a lot of money but no money, I guess I'll put it that way. We went down there and played in the Senior Bowl. I was number one pick for the Green Bay Packers. While I was at the Senior Bowl, I was talking to the Canadian scouts. The Canadian people were paying a lot of money for the people from the lower U.S. come up there and play.

[00:24:00] I didn't sign any contracts. I didn't do anything. When I got back home, we used to have to take our oldest son, Steve, and I'll get back about my marriage, but we had to take him for a ride all the time to put him to sleep. Marsh Wells who was a scout for the Cleveland Browns came down and told me, "You haven't been drafted." I said, "What are you talking about I haven't been drafted. You saw all the letters. I'm number one pick for the Green Bay Packers." They said, "No, they picked Paul Hornung because they said you had signed a Canadian contract." If you had signed a Canadian contract at that time, they lost their draft choice.

Anyway, I went to the Cleveland Browns. I got drafted by the Cleveland Browns.

I played five exhibition games there, got hurt, was released. When you played back then, there were no such thing as no cut contract, million dollars deals where you can't trade, you can't do this. We were pretty much like cannon fodder. I was making ninety-five hundred dollars.

[00:25:00] Jimmy Brown who was a number one pick for the Cleveland Browns was making sixteen thousand and they gave him a new car as a signing bonus. That tells you what kind of organizations that we had back then. After I healed, I came back to Salida and went up to Canada and played for the British Columbia Lions in Vancouver. Played a season up there. Wife didn't like it, me being away all the time. Now we've had a child.

[00:26:00] I'm going to go back now and tell you when I was a junior in college, I married Patricia Moore. In 1955, that was my junior year in college and in that time at my senior year, we had our first child, Steve. Sue got to go to the Orange Bowl, but Steve was still in the oven. It was quite a year at CU. Sue worked as a court reporter. I wasn't making any money. I think I got fifteen dollars a month. This is a true, true statement. Nobody on that team got any money except the fifteen dollars. That was for laundry money. For that, I had to rake the sawdust pit when the high-jumpers jumped. We didn't get that free.

Our apartment cost fifty dollars a month. That was utilities, furniture, everything. I think Sue was making maybe two hundred, two hundred fifty a month. We were really living high on the hog.

Beth: Tell me John, what position were you playing on the team?

John: I was a fullback, just a little guy. When I went the University of Colorado, I was still six foot and two hundred and twenty-five pounds. That's where I ran.

[00:27:00] After all the athletics and everything was done at CU, then I was honored by being Sports Illustrated All-American. That is one tough thing to get because it comes from the coaches not the writers of the paper or anybody else. There's a bunch of coaches and then the people from Sports Illustrated. That was quite an honor to get that one.

[00:28:00] Let's see. I must mention this. Everything comes to my mind. I sometimes get confused, Beth. I am, without being boisterous, I am the only All-American to come out of Salida in the Twenty-First Century. Hopefully, there'll be more. There were some good football players back then in the thirties and the forties. You can go in the gymnasium right now and see all those banners up there where they won the state championship. Some of them guys could play football when they were twenty-three and twenty-four years old. There were guys like Stan Provenza, little bitty guy. To this day he's a little bitty guy and meaner than a tiger. We had Tuffy Chambers who went to Northwest University. Just a number of guys that ... I could go on I guess for an hour just talking about those guys. I'm sure that we'll run out of tape.

[00:29:00] That summed up my athletic life from Salida to the big time and then back. After I come back from Canada, I went to work for the Martin Company. There was a guy from Salida by the name of DeLeo who was the personnel man for Martin Marietta. He hired all the guys from Salida. Anybody that wanted a job could get a job at the Martin Company. I went to work at the Martin Company as a project supervisor and worked there for ... I'm going to say maybe ten, eleven years. In that time when I was there, I was coaching Little League Football. Of course, we had our other little boy, Jimmy. I coached them in baseball and football. They'd become good athletes.

[00:30:00] I will mention that Steve followed in my footsteps. He went to Calgary, Canada after he played football at TCU. I'm getting ahead of myself. We moved to Texas in 1966. I left the Martin Company. Now I'll go back.

Steve played football for Trinity High School. If you know football in Texas, there was probably a hundred and seventy-five, a hundred and eighty kids out for football. They actually have a cut, where if you can't perform, you don't play. Steve played quarterback for Trinity. He had a number of offers to go anywhere in the Southwest Conference that he wanted to go to. He chose TCU because he felt like they were in the cellar losing all the time and he could help them out.

[00:31:00] Jimmy also played at Trinity as linebacker. He also went to TCU, both of them on full football scholarships, never cost me a dime except what they spent. That was a bunch. Jimmy was a freshman All-American. He was two years behind Steve. They both got to play on the same team. Steve went to Calgary, Canada and drafted from Calgary and played professional football up there, came back. Wasn't his cup of tea. He tried out with the New Orleans Saints. They had to cut him because they said they just didn't have time to train another quarterback. Steve went to work at General Dynamics.

[00:32:00] Jimmy was still playing. He was drafted by the Seattle Seahawks. Jimmy said, "I have enough. I don't want no more football." Both of them graduated from TCU, Steve in communications and Jimmy in law enforcement. Steve now is coaching in the junior high school where he went to school. Jimmy is the Chief of Police in Sulfur Springs, Texas.

[00:33:00] My wife of forty-nine years now, we moved back to Salida in 1986. We went to Texas in sixty-six and came back in 1986. We decided that this is where we wanted to be. When I came up here, I retired from down there. I worked as Vice President of Purchasing, Project Manager for Bell Helicopter. I thought if I can work as hard for them as I am, I can work that hard for me. I bought a little shopping center. Had a carpet store. Ran that from about 1989, I think, until we ... No, no, no. I'm sorry. Sixty-nine and then we came back up here in eighty-six, sold the carpet business, sold the little shopping center. I come up here to Salida to retire.

[00:34:00] While I was down in Texas, I had three or four businesses going of which I won't mention. We probably would run out of tape or record. I had a brick factory

down there. I built a number of houses. I was a general contractor. I didn't pound any nails. We sold all of the businesses. I decided I was going to come up here to retire in which I did in 1986.

Played around up here for the better part of six months riding a motorcycle all over the mountains. I was riding that trail from the top of Poncha Pass to Monarch. I thought to myself, if you fall off this, got hurt, broke your leg or something, the bears are going to eat me. I said that's enough motorcycle.

[00:35:00] Frank Butala who is my cousin has a contracting business here told me that Mr. Hyman Greenberg wanted to sell the furniture store. I told him, I said, "Look, I don't want to work. I come up here to retire." He said, "No, you better go down there and talk to him," he said, "because I think you could get a good deal." The Greenberg family had that furniture store for over ninety years. They used to sell stoves, hides and then Hyman and there's the other brother, I'll think of it in a minute, they had the furniture store.

[00:36:00] I went and talked to Hyman Greenberg about buying the place. He said, "John," he said, "I just sold it to Don McQueen." Don McQueen owned the Coca-Cola Bottling Company here for a long time. I said okay. I needed some furniture because I'd left a lot of our furniture with our oldest son who moved into one of the houses that I built. We needed furniture.

[00:37:00] I went down there and talked to Don McQueen and bought the furniture. He said, "How would you like to go to work?" I said, "I don't know." He said, "Come on. I need some help. I just bought this place." I said, "Okay. I'll work for you two days a week and I pick the two days, Wednesday and Thursday." He said, "That's okay. That'd be great." What turned to be two days turned out to be six days a week. I ran that store for quite a while with Don and Marilyn. Then Don and Marilyn got tired of it. They sold out to the present owner, Mr. McNabb. He vacated the building and took the Coke building that Don had out on the highway. I bought into the building that was Greenberg's.

The funniest thing, there were either one or no furniture stores in Buena Vista and Leadville so we would do all that business. Vail and those things never existed. They would come down here. They would come in there, some of the Leadville people would come in there. Funniest thing, they didn't believe in banks. They would come down there and they would have a tray of money just perfect in there. If you wanted five hundred, they could peel out five hundred. If you wanted a thousand, they could do that. I'm sure some of them did. The people that we dealt with mainly in cash.

[00:38:00] A lot of people would come down there and ask where Hyman was, Mr. Greenberg. He hadn't been there for a long time. We told them, "Hyman is not here, but we give better deals than Hyman." We'd get their business.

Beth: Tell me, where was the furniture store?

John: Where it is right now on ... what's the address? I don't know. It's right next to the theater, a couple stores up from the theater. When I was a kid, the Shakes lived upstairs. There were apartments up there. There's still apartments up there, beautiful apartment. I was quite familiar with the building.

[00:39:00] I bought into the building. Steve came up. Steve was working for General Dynamics. The one day they laid off five thousand people at General Dynamics in Fort Worth. Not having a job, he calls up and he says, "I don't know what I'm going to do." I said, "Good, I was getting tired anyway." I said, "Come on up here and run the furniture store." He came up 1990 or ninety-one. He ran the furniture and I went fishing. When he'd say, "Come back and help me." I said, "Nah, I don't want to do that." I did that.

[00:40:00] I said a little bit about my wife. I went with her, Patricia Moore, Sue to everybody. I went with her from junior high school so you could say the seventh and eighth grade, the ninth through the twelfth, four years of college and I've been married forty-nine years as of this recording. We've had a wonderful relationship. We've had a wonderful marriage, two wonderful children. Three grandchildren and one great-granddaughter. That fills you in a little bit about that.

Sue's dad was an engineer on the railroad. Worked down there for probably, I guess, from the time he was sixteen years old until the time he died. Just wonderful people. I never had a problem with my in-laws. Let's see, what else did I want to tell you?

[00:41:00] Some of my accomplishments, I guess, since I've been in Salida, I ran for the city council. I didn't like what was happening with the city so I ran for the city council in 1987. I served fifteen consecutive years on the city council and then the state of Colorado voted in term limits. I had to retire or get out because of term limits.

During that time of fifteen years, I'm pretty proud of my voting record; a lot of decisions, good, bad, big, little. Hopefully, I voted the way that I thought was best for the city of Salida. I had no agendas. I didn't have anything, (that) I wanted to get rid of people or anything or change anything. Whatever was best for the city of Salida is the way I voted.

[00:42:00] Some of the things that I guess that I'm most probably big decisions were with the hot water line from the source at Poncha Springs to Salida. I was part of that.

Beth: To the swimming pool?

John: To the swimming pool. We're having a problem with it now, as of this date. It's because I think we had some bad engineering on this job. I think they're in litigation. I can't say much more about that.

One of the other achievements that I saw that I thought needed to be addressed was there was nothing to do for the middle school kids. There was nothing where they could vent their anger or frustration ...

Beth: Energy. Energy.

John: ... or their energy or whatever. I started the dances at the middle school. I got with the principal of the school, told him what we had in mind and we'd have the dances. We probably at any one time had probably two hundred and fifty, three hundred kids there. They had to pay to get in. We used some of the money. We put it in a school account and we bought the band T-shirts and whatever they needed to do. That went on for probably two years, maybe three.

[00:43:00]

[00:44:00] I was instrumental in doing the recreation program. It wasn't much. I kept hitting the desk and pounding it and saying we need a recreation program. Finally, we had the right council, we had the right mesh with the council. We put the recreation program in there. We hired a recreation director who was doing a marvelous job right to this date.

At the swimming pool, we had that fifty, four feet of snow here at Salida. It broke some of the ceiling joists. The insurance company paid for most of the damages at the pool. I think we're in litigation with them too as of right now.

Beth: That snow happened about 2001, didn't it.

John: Yeah, about 2001. They don't want to pay for all the damages. The city of Salida went ahead. We'd done as much as we could. Instead of tile on the swimming pool, we put a new system in there of fiberglass and things that it just made a better deal.

[00:45:00]

The tennis courts were redone. I take pride in making sure that we had another baseball field. We called it the Pee Wee League Field. As of this day, I was blessed for doing the fifteen years and being an advocate of this baseball field. One of the fields right now has Bayuk Field on it. Hopefully, that will stay.

Beth: Right. What about Christmas Mountain? Did you have anything to do with that?

John: Yeah. Let me get a couple other things here. These are important things, Beth. I was part of the, not negotiation, but the Vandaveer land and water deal where the city bought that land and bought it from Vandaveer. That guaranteed the city of Salida that there is no way that Salida will ever run out of water. I don't care if it gets twenty-five, forty-thousand people, we will have ample water.

[00:46:00]

We did a big project at the sewer plant. We, through negotiations and things that happened back when Salida built the sewer plant and Poncha built the sewer line, Salida would process the sewage for Poncha. We had our choice. We could either expand the plant or put in what they call a centrifuge. This

[00:47:00] centrifuge takes the water out of the sewer. If you know anything about the sewer, about ninety-five, ninety-six percent of sewage is water and not solids. We got that. Now we're in good shape with the sewer plant.

The sewer plant makes money. The water fund loses money. Now, the city has gone and said we'll take some of the sewer profit and we'll apply it to the water so we don't have to charge the people so much for water.

That was a big project. The trail projects, I was in on that. I still serve on the airport board for the city of Salida. I still go to the Upper Arkansas Water Conservative District meeting and sit there and fill the administrator if there's any problem or anything that has to go with the city.

[00:48:00] You asked about Christmas Mountain. Christmas Mountain, I can't remember the guy that was here but he worked for the cable company when cable come into Salida. He said, "It would be nice to put something up there on the mountain." I guess everybody said, "Yeah, it would be nice." What they did is they painted a bunch of four by eight sheets of plywood and laid them up there like a decoration. When you look at that four by eight sheet of plywood I guess to seven hundred foot mountain, you couldn't even hardly see the plywood.

[00:49:00] There was a guy here by the name of Darrell Bailey. He was the administrator. I was on the council then. I told him, I said, "I'm going to light that mountain." He said, "You can't do that." I said, "Yes, I can." "No, you can't." I got me a committee. Some of the people are still on the committee, Bonnie Bondurant, she's still on it. We've just let other people take it over. I got with Chris Schirmer who owns Master Electric. I said, "If we go up there and put floodlights in, we could flood the mountain with lights."

We did that. I had the privilege of the countdown. There probably, I'm going to say, twenty-five hundred, three thousand people downtown wanting to see this mountain light. I did the countdown. Sue was standing by my side. We counted down, flipped the switch. There was nothing, just some lights on a pole. She says, "Are you going turn the rest of them on?" I said, "I think that's all there is, Sue."

[00:50:00] Anyway, Mr. Bailey said, "I told you, you can't get it done." Being hardheaded, I said, "Yes, I will get it done." I got with Patty Montellero who is at the University of Colorado. I asked her if she would get in touch with the engineering department and tell me about lights and tell me about all this, which she did. I got with Bob Biglow. Bob Biglow stayed down there on the parking lot of the Pueblo Bank and Trust. I was up there on the mountain with this, I think they call it a sphere or something. We shot the points of what looked like a Christmas tree. We drove a stake in there and later came back and drove steel stakes in there.

[00:51:00] Knowing now what kind of lights we could do, Master Electric went up there and put more power up there. We had that outline. That was kind of nice. We

found out through the engineering department at CU that you could not use anything but probably white and red, orange lights. Blue you couldn't see or green because they're too far away. They just didn't do. I asked for people to help. We had the Christmas tree outline. I asked for help. There were some people that were retired in this town. Of course, Biglow was the surveyor. Bob Delnay retired from that place where they make the ... outside of Boulder where they made those triggers for the bombs and stuff.

Beth: Rocky Flats.

[00:52:00]

John: Rocky Flats. Thank you, thank you. That's what you get when you're getting old. I'm too old. I got Bob DelMay. We got Mr. and Mrs. Stevenson. They moved here and retired. They live right up on Shavano. Then there was a man by the name of Mr. Bement. All of those people went up there and looked at it. Being an engineer, I think Delnay and Stevenson, they said this is going to be a real job.

[00:53:00]

That mountain, I think it is seven hundred and fifty feet tall. You cannot put something flat on the ground. If you lay something flat, you will not see it. Everything up there, all of the wire for the outline of the trees done in red, of course, couldn't do the green, it had to be put up on steel stakes to keep it off the ground. All the ornaments up there are laying about, I'm going to say, close to a ninety degree angle. Bob Delnay, Bement, and Stevenson and I'm sure there were others that I'm forgetting, but they're the ones that did all the ornaments that you see up there. I got the last laugh because Darrell Bailey wasn't here. They let him go. He wasn't doing a good job.

Beth: About when were you working on all this Christmas Mountain?

John: When?

Beth: Uh-huh (affirmative).

John: You mean the year?

Beth: Yeah.

John: What is that, about five years since that's been up there?

Beth: Maybe.

[00:54:00]

John: Five or six. I've got all the notes on that. It's been a long time. There were pilots that I talked to that saw that thing when they're flying at fifty, sixty thousand feet or wherever they're at. They said, "That's the scariest thing I've ever seen." They could see it but they couldn't see the mountain. This thing just stood there. The first time they saw it, one of the guys was Skip Hillegas. I think he saw

it. He says, "Lord, I couldn't believe what I was seeing." He said, "I had to rub my eyes." He said, "Here's this Christmas tree and it's just sitting there." Anyway, we got a big laugh out of that.

[00:55:00] The public service did put the power up there. Chris Schirmer did all the electric. Gee, I'm going to probably leave some people out and I'm going to feel real bad about it. That's about all on the Christmas tree, Beth, unless you have something else.

Changes in Salida. I guess I don't know how to say this because I don't want to offend anybody, but the people that are moving in here want the same thing that they left behind. They don't want to pay any more taxes. They come in here and they've got some of the screwballs idea that you've ever seen or heard. My thing to them was why did you move here? We didn't like where we were at. Why do you want to put it here? We like it here. I'm not saying everybody is that way. There's some good, good, good people.

[00:56:00] More traffic on Highway 50. I can remember as a child, let's see, Allphin Motor had a bulk plant out there. My dad at the mines had a credit thing there. I can remember buying gas for twelve and fifteen cents a gallon. I would burn sixty-five dollars' worth a month. I was just running in my car. That was there where the windmill is right now. That used to be a bulk oil plant.

[00:57:00] The root beer stand is where Morningstar is now where they have their office. The swimming pool was up there. The Warner's had the gravestones. They're up there now where Cellular One, I think, it's up there. I think it's Cellular One. Jenny's Hamburger Stand was probably where everybody gathered all the kids after the ball games and everything. It was up there where Foodtown was. There just weren't a lot of building up there. I'm sure there's others that I'm leaving out. There was no Walmart's and no Murdock's. The Ford dealership was there. That was Danny Granzella's. It wasn't there because that Ford dealership was downtown with Wilkinson and then I can't remember who bought it.

[00:58:00] There are three new schools built. There used to be Longfellow and McCray, Kesner Junior High School and High School. Now, of course, we got three, all brand new, a brand new field house. I sure would like to play there. We played what they call Andreas Field House or Andreas Gym. It's like a cracker box compared to what they've got now. Of course, time moves on.

[00:59:00] More athletics in the school system. There were no athletics for girls. Like I said earlier, there was just three things. You could play basketball, track or football and that was it. They had a number of softball teams in the area. That was just something. People would come out and line the whole field. Now the field, it's totally different. The field went from north and south. They had a big grandstand. It was full of people. They didn't have the three fields that are there now. There was just one. People would line that field all the way to the river, all the way around, all the people in there. We played some softball.

Beth: Were these the town teams?

John: Town teams. We had D&RG was the railroad team. Stapleton Chevrolet which I played for. We were the good guys. Then they had VFW. They had, let's see, Coca-Cola. Anyway, teams would come from all over to play. We had a pitcher. I played for Stapleton Chevrolet. Stapleton Chevrolet put out more money for that softball team than you could imagine. We went all over. We went to the nationals. We went to Wyoming. We went Grand Junction. We went all over, all expenses paid. Never costs us a dime. We had suits just like the New York Yankees, we played like the New York Yankees. We used to have to practice two hours a day.

[01:00:00]

We had a pitcher. His name was Maxie Ambrosic. Maxie was unstoppable. The king and his court came here. That was where this guy was a pitcher and a catcher and a first baseman. That was a team. They wanted to play us. It was just exhibition to have fun. We thought that would be pretty neat. Maxie Ambrosic said, "I'll tell you what we'll do. I want a pitcher, a catcher and a first baseman." We played them and beat the socks off of them. This is a team that traveled all over the United States, they were that good. They all had beards, just like old-time baseball players.

[01:01:00]

I was the catcher for the team. Harold Stapleton and Vivian said, "The guy that hit the most home runs gets a trip to the World Series." I said, "That'd be neat." I had the most home runs but I could not take the trip. That would have put me out of the amateur league and I wouldn't have been able to play basketball or football. I gave it to, I think, Leonard Williamson. He went. That was fun. We went all the way. We lost one to nothing in thirteen innings. Softball's only seven innings. We lost thirteen innings one to nothing to the Florida Bombers. That was exciting.

[01:02:00]

Beth: I heard something about a John Bayuk Day here in Salida.

John: That was a day. By the way, I just happen to have that little article. It was February 14, 1957. It says, "Friends Pay Tribute to Johnny Bayuk". This was after the Orange Bowl. This was after everything. There was probably a hundred and fifty, two hundred people there. Doctor Budd was the toaster master. I mention this that Doctor Budd and his wife, Frank Butala and his wife went to every game that I played out of town when I was at CU. They had season tickets of what Irene, Mrs. Budd, still has those tickets. They went all over. I even babysatted when we played Arizona. I babysatted Doctor Budd's little boy while they went out on the town.

[01:03:00]

A lot of people there. Reverend Fred Vandaveer gave the invocation. Fred Leach was head chef of the banquet. Of course, Del Ward was here. Del Ward being the coach at CU, my parents, Sue's parents. They had the mention of you. Of course, I mentioned my mother and dad. Victoria Benjovsky was my sixth grade teacher in grade school. Bill Andreas, Charles Moline, Gov Gruner, John Held,

[01:04:00]

Harold Stapleton, Harry Cable, Eleanor Fry, Kenneth Benfold from Boulder, Del Ward. Had a nice dinner. They gave me a lot of money. I could take money then. That's when I had signed with the Cleveland Browns.

[01:05:00] Mr. Cole who was my dad's partner in these mines, he was there. Sammy DeLeo, he was one of the big guys. Florrie Shoes. When you look at Salida when I was growing up, they had what they called The Greeks. That's where the dentist office is now. I don't know who's in there right now, right above where the gym factory guy bought, that next building there. Who was in there?

Beth: That was Doctor Sites.

John: That used to be The Greeks. There were two brothers there. They would make candy. They would put Russell Stover's to shame and that's not exaggerating. That place on the weekday, weekend, was just packed with people.

[01:06:00] One of the things, I guess, that I miss is when I was shining shoes, if you come to Salida town, which the farmers or the ranchers and the farmers, miners and everybody else come to town, you dressed up. You had your shoes shined. It was a different atmosphere. We had three clothing stores in town. You had Murdock's, you had the men's shop, you had Doveton's. People patronized those places. Didn't have any Walmart's or Gibson's or anything like that. A lot of those old businesses like that, Mode-O-Day, where the ladies could go in there and buy all kind of dresses and Crews Beggs. I just can't think of all of them.

[01:07:00] Up the street was another place like The Greeks. That's where most of the kids hung out up there. Like I said, to be honest with you, Beth, we never get, not one person, not one got in trouble. Never. I was probably the worst. I probably am not proud of this but it happened. Of course, I had the only car in town. I was going up E Street. I was mad at Sue then while I was still going with her in high school. Right there on the corner where Harry Cable lived, I went around that corner about forty miles an hour, I guess. He was standing in the front yard.

Beth: Harry Cable was the police.

[01:08:00] John: Chief of police. Cork Mitchell, Frank Mitchell was one of the policeman. I hurried and I saw what happened. I hurried and I parked the car downtown. Frank Mitchell, my brother-in-law now, come up to me and says, "Harry Cable's looking for you." He gave me a ticket. I had a lead foot. I think I had six or seven speeding tickets in one month.

Beth: This was when you were in high school.

John: High school. These are memories. I would go before the judge. The judge was the mining inspector. He would inspect the mines for my dad. His wife would make these beautiful wreaths out of cedar bough with the cedar berries and all that. He would say, "You bring the cedar berries and I'll overlook the tickets."

The kids right now could never get away with that. Never.

[01:09:00] Like I said, got a lot of spankings. Kids right now couldn't do that. They're under so much pressure. There was no peer pressure when we were in high school. Nothing. As I mentioned before, people had money but people didn't have money. My dad, I think he was working for a dollar and a quarter an hour. I would make that much shining shoes in twenty minutes. It was just a good time. Like I said, you could leave your house wide open. Everybody left their key in the mailbox. Didn't have any crime.

[01:10:00] We had one incident where a guy escaped from the prison in Canon; Bundy, I think the name was. Maybe that is his name. Anyway, he pulled into the Y and R Garage. The Y and R Garage was right there where the T-shirt place is right now, that area right there. He pulled in there and I think he filled his car full of gas ... can't think of the guy's name that owned that. I'll think of it in a minute. Anyway, he shot the guy in the face and he got away but they caught him; Mr. Young. That's the only thing I can remember. That and a lot of fights, at what they called the Del Rio. That's where all the soldiers would go. Leadville was off limits to the soldiers of the 10th Mountain Division so they would come to Salida. There would be more fights down there than you could shake a stick at. It was like a boxing arena. That was Del Rio. That is now Four Season's Campground. That used to be a big dance hall.

[01:11:00] We used to go down there and just sit out there in a car because we couldn't go in. I could go in because John Davis and Jackie Davis, John's son, sometime we would sell hamburgers. We weren't allowed in there where the liquor was. We had to be in a separate little area. A lot of times we would go down there and just watch and see who was going to fight and who wasn't.

[01:12:00] It was just a more relaxed atmosphere. Most of the women didn't work. They were housewives. I can remember going to the Poor Farm which is now the bed and breakfast up there on County Road, one twenty. One forty? I don't know. Anyway, it used to be the poor house for the county. All the ladies would bring a covered dish. Ernie Kimberlin and Chris Trujillo, mostly Ernie Kimberlin and his band would play. Come midnight, they shut her down. There was no whiskey that you could buy. Most of the men had a bottle in the car, but nobody got drunk. I know this because I spent a lot of nights up there. My folks would not leave me with a babysitter. Didn't have babysitters or whatever. I would stay in the car until they got done dancing. Come midnight, they shut her down. Everybody would go in there and eat, have a good time, get in the cars, come home.

[01:13:00] There was just a lot of things happening. There was dances in Villa Grove, dances in Saguache, dances in Leadville. Just a lot of things. Leadville, what a place. When I was growing up, they used to be the enemy. Basketball. They never played football. We played in the Sixth Street Gym. If you've ever been in there, probably I'd say it's about thirty feet wide. Just people all over you. Instead of a basketball game, we'd see how many people we could knock out,

put them down those stairs where we were dressing.

[01:14:00] Anyway, they used to have boom days which they still have. They would get a lot of the miners. All the mines were going up there. They would have drilling contests. My dad and I won one drilling contest one year. Some of the holes, when you go into Leadville you see them big rocks, they got those holes in there. I don't know if our names is still on them or not. We did that. Leadville had three softball teams. Matter of fact, one of the guys that played O'Leary, I think he's the Superintendent of Schools up there now. Just going to Golden Burro and eat chicken fried steaks after the game. Old Harold Stapleton, boy, as long as we won, we could get anything we wanted.

Like I said, I know when I came back, it was not the place that I left as a kid. There's just a lot of things happened and it should happen. Good things should happen. I think that people now really want good things to happen. Getting businesses, you read the paper where a lot of them now are doing this economical developmental thing. This went on a long time ago. We even hired a guy to go do that for, I think, forty or fifty thousand dollars. He couldn't get nothing.

[01:15:00] We're kind of in a bind here because there's no transportation except UPS, now DLC or whatever the other one is. If it's not big, they can handle it. To get something like the carpet business when I was in the furniture store. I could ship carpet from Dalton, Georgia for seventy-five cents a yard, my door. If it had to go to Denver, it would cost me a dollar and a quarter a yard to ship it from Denver to Salida. They just don't have the transportation here.

Hopefully, right now, we're working on getting some instrument landing equipment at the airport. If we get that, that's going to be a big help. UPS said they would come in here as another field that they could land at. I'm sure FedEx will do the same thing. We've got things like that going.

[01:16:00] I admire the people that worked on the river project. It brings a lot of tourists in here. I don't know how much money they spend, but I guess it's a goodly amount. That's good. If we could get some jobs in here ... Back in the old days when I was in high school and before, the people that, the fathers then could have had Western State College here. We could have had a sewing machine factory here. They just didn't want it. That was Mr. Peeple's and Mr. Koster, and all these people. If we'd had had that, we would probably be in pretty good shape.

[01:17:00] As of right now, I don't think Salida is any bigger than it was back in the fifties. I think it's still sitting around fifty-five hundred people. Harvey Guest said, "We've got so many kids in the school. We need a new middle school." Lo and behold, we've got less kids now than we had in the fifties.

There's been some bad mistakes made. I want to see the city progress. I ran for the hospital board. I got beat on that because one of my campaign things is I

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wanted to see a new hospital in Salida. We've got a good hospital, but we need another hospital. This one is an old, old hospital. It takes a tremendous amount of money to keep it going. I think if I heard the numbers right, between five hundred and six hundred thousand a year just to keep it going. Now, they really need some major stuff with electricity and stuff like that. To me, I would like to see them work with the city down there on that Vandaveer property. We have land down there. I would like to see them get twenty acres of land down there or whatever they want, work with the city. All the infrastructure's there, the water's there, sewer runs down there, electric's there, roads are there. It's an ideal situation. Build a new hospital.

[01:19:00]

When you build a new facility just like they did the clinic out there, look at the fine doctors that we have that come from the big cities here. We've got all the cardiologists, the best. I can speak for myself. I see one about every three months that comes up here. Sue has seen him. Just like I said, we've got excellent doctors right now and we could attract more. I was glad to see that now we're going forward. Even though I'm not on the hospital board, I can still be vocal about it.

I had a hip operation in November. I got the doctor here to do it, Doctor Messner. I had an aneurysm, two aneurysms. I had to go to Denver to take care of those. We have a vascular doctors here, Doctor Williams and his partner here. They just said we don't have the equipment here or we could do it. Now we're getting good stuff. We've got MRI equipment. We've got all this stuff. We just need a new hospital. I'm not saying any more.

Beth:

Thank you, John. You've really done it.

[01:20:00]

John:

I hope that comes out on your recorder this time.

Beth:

I'll let you know. Thank you very much.

John:

You're welcome.