

Interviewer: Today is August 10, 2005 and I'm sitting here across the table from Katherine Leyva...

Katherine: Leyva.

Interviewer: Leyva Mendoza. Okay, we got that right. We're at 525 West 16th St. Apartment 28 in Salida, Colorado. Katherine I know that you've lived here all of your life and you were born here.

[00:00:30]

Katherine: No, not here in Salida I was born in Montrose, Colorado.

Interviewer: Okay, well, that's pretty close. When did you move to Salida?

Katherine: I don't know I was very small.

Interviewer: Very young. Okay, and did you have a big family ...

Katherine: Yes.

Interviewer: A lot of kids? Yeah, and so you have a lot of brothers and sisters don't you. Did they all stay here?

[00:01:00]

Katherine: Yes, we all grew up here but they're almost gone. There's four of us dead. The rest live in Colorado, but in different parts of the state. They mostly live around Denver.

Interviewer: You stayed here in Salida?

Katherine: I don't know I just liked it. We grew up during the Depression. We made our own little things to play with. Just home for me.

[00:01:30]

Interviewer: Yeah, familiar huh?

Katherine: Yes.

Interviewer: Do you have children? No children?

Katherine: That was the only big disappointment but I adopted two. A boy and a girl but they don't live around here.

Interviewer: Oh, neat. What are their names?

Katherine: A boy and a girl? You said where are they?

Interviewer: What are their names?

Katherine: Henry.

[00:02:00]

Interviewer: Henry. And the girl's name?

Katherine: Rosemary.

Interviewer: Pretty name. You're here in Salida and I know you have some stories you want to tell us because you've lived here most of your life, right? One thing that we talked about before is that you have some information on the Steam Plant. Your father worked there is that right?

Katherine: Yes.

[00:02:30]

Interviewer: Do you want to tell me more about that?

Katherine: Well, there really isn't very much I can tell you because we were quite small. We were a close knitted family when we were growing up. He always used to tell us where he worked. They had a little saying, "My dad loved the mountains." We used to ask him, "Dad, what's on the other side of the mountain?" He used to say, "Another mountain." It's so true. Have you ever flown in a plane?

[00:03:00]

Interviewer: Yes, yes. It is true.

Katherine: It just keeps on. It follows a pattern. Are you familiar with Smelertown?

Interviewer: Smelertown? Yes.

Katherine: You know that big brick chimney that they build out there? He used to tell a story that he worked there but he never mentioned dates or how long he worked there or anything. Same thing with a Steam Plant. He used to tell us little things like that. Just little stories.

[00:03:30]

Interviewer: Do you remember anything? Did he build the Smelter town smoke stack?

Katherine: He worked there ...

Interviewer: He worked there.

Katherine: on both places. The steam plant. Like I said it was just these stories he used to tell us.

Interviewer: Did you ever visit him at work?

[00:04:00]

Katherine: Let me tell you something else too. You know the lions that are in the

Alpine Park?

Interviewer: Yes.

Katherine: My grandfather Aragon, my mother's dad, worked there. I can't give you the details because I don't know. These are just the stories my mother told us.

Interviewer: Did he helped put them up?

Katherine: I don't know whether he was a laborer or what. I really don't know. I also, [00:04:30] talking to people, like I am with you. I talked to this boy at the library. He also told me he couldn't give me that information about my grandfather because that's what I really called him about. He said he couldn't give me that kind of information because he didn't know. Anyways, but he did say [00:05:00] that the same man that built the lions there also had something to do with the Tenderfoot.

Interviewer: Oh, okay.

Katherine: I really don't know the details. It's just hearsay. The court house, that's something else.

Interviewer: What about the court house?

Katherine: Have you seen any old pictures about the court house at all?

Interviewer: Not that I recall that are different from what I see when I go now.

Katherine: What have you heard about it?

[00:05:30]

Interviewer: Nothing. You're here to tell all of us about the court house.

Katherine: Well, I was quite small I know. My mother used to have a big old fit, let's put it that way, because we'd go out to play and the first place we made a [00:06:00] bee line for the sand banks, they called them before they built the court house. Are you familiar with that area?

Interviewer: Yeah, where the court house is.

Katherine: Okay, you know where Presbyterian Church is built now?

Interviewer: Yes.

Katherine: Okay, you know how it has a little park there?

Interviewer: Yes. Witty Park I believe it is.

Katherine: Okay, across the street from the there to the other block. You know where  
[00:06:30] nothing but sand banks. There were two houses only built up there. A big, big house and the one where Dr. Bender used to live. I don't know if you remember him or not.

Interviewer: I remember the name.

Katherine: Anyways, it was nothing but sand. It was nothing up there. It was just banks  
[00:07:00] of sand and sand and sand. They also said, I never remember the burros. There is a friend here that lives here, you might want to talk to him. His names Carl Coscarelli. He said that he used to ride burros there on the sand banks and talk about a laugh. I said, "I don't remember that." He said there was hundreds of them. He said he remembered that because him and I  
[00:07:30] used to play together. He such a nice ... you know ...

Interviewer: Maybe you were just a baby.

Katherine: No, I think I must have been 6 or 7. I know I didn't go to school yet. I don't think he went because we or more or less the same age. He remembers a lot of things that I remember.

Interviewer: Don't you think maybe because he was a boy maybe he got on the burro before you were able to?  
[00:08:00]

Katherine: I guess he comes from a big family too. I remember some of his sisters. Anyways, he brought another interesting topic up. You probably have heard of Laura Evans? The lady from the ...

Interviewer: Yes.

Katherine: Okay, she was the one we were talking about. Do you remember Nigger Mary? I said who was Nigger Mary? I don't remember her at all. I do  
[00:08:30] remember Laura Evans. She's a big heavysset lady and she lived down the red-light district. My mother didn't even what us to look over there. It's a bad bad thing then. Maybe it still is, I don't know but she was good to us.

Interviewer: Laura Evans?

Katherine: Laura Evans. She would always have a hard candy and let us have some.  
[00:09:00] What really caught our eye was I guess the way she dressed. She wore these evening dresses. You know evening gown.

Interviewer: During the day.

Katherine: She smoked cigars and she fooled with the men. I saw that, that's why I tell

you. I remember that much. Nigger Mary, Carl was telling me about it. I said, I don't remember her. Maybe it was.

Interviewer: Was she in the same business as Laura Evans?

[00:09:30]

Katherine: Yes, she was. Yes, they had a whore house. They called it the red-light district at that time. It wasn't Sackett, it was Front Street.

Interviewer: It was called Front Street then?

Katherine: Yeah, then.

Interviewer: Well, that's interesting. We always like to hear a lot about Laura Evans. She was an interesting character.

Katherine: They say that she helped the poor a lot. I know she was good to us because she used to give us candy all the time. Mother didn't like it very well because it wasn't proper, I guess.  
[00:10:00]

Interviewer: You did walk over there on the street?

Katherine: Yes, we passed there in the alley. We would learn logic off of that street because of that red-light district. Now, I want to tell you something about the narrow gauge train.

Interviewer: Okay.

[00:10:30]

Katherine: Have you been in the back of the swimming pool here?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Katherine: Have you seen the narrow gauge engine and caboose there?

Interviewer: No.

Katherine: You haven't?

Interviewer: I take my stuff to be recycled. I guess we better go take a walk.

Katherine: Anyway, we had been to visit my grandpa and my grandma, my dad's parents in Montrose. How we got out of there I can't remember but I can remember coming back. We rode this narrow gauge train from Montrose to Salida. Still I can see how beautiful and how smart I thought I was because I was having a train ride on that little train. The tracks, there used to be a bridge there too. You know where the Steam Plant is?  
[00:11:00]  
[00:11:30]

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Katherine: There was a narrow ... they called it the Narrow Gauge bridge. It was a big old black thing. You don't remember that?

Interviewer: Well, I've only lived here 10 years.

Katherine: Haven't you talked to people about that?

Interviewer: Nobody's mentioned that.

Katherine: The tracks were really narrow. You know one of these days you go over there and look at that narrow gauge engine and a caboose. You can understand how thrilled we were running a train like that. When we came to the bridge we knew we were in Salida because it was a narrow gauge bridge. My dad used to mention it to us all the time that that was a good bridge. I don't know why they took it down. They even took the tracks off.

[00:12:00]

[00:12:30]

Interviewer: Well, they're not using railroads very much anymore.

Katherine: That's such a good history of Salida.

Interviewer: Yes, it is. I mean, Salida was a railroad town. No doubt about it.

Katherine: Yes, it was. Okay, now what do you want to know?

Interviewer: Well, you said you were going to tell me something about swimming. Not the swimming pool but when you were young you did a lot of swimming. Your family? No? Well, I wrote that down. Something about the depot.

[00:13:00]

Katherine: Oh, okay I have something to that. The depot was well, I can't describe it because it's not there anymore.

Interviewer: We have a picture of it in the library.

Katherine: Okay, when you go you look at that railroad depot. The main liner. You know the big D & R G. It was a rock business. It was made out of rock. It had a long patio. This is the big train like D & R G. The bridge is here in the river and the depot was here. The narrow gauge, the one I rode, they came across the bridge and for some reason there was a connection there. I can't describe it because I can't see the pictures anymore.

[00:14:00]

Interviewer: Well, there was roundhouse there a long time ago.

Katherine: No, the roundhouse is down a little ways.

Interviewer: Right, but there's nothing more left there.

[00:14:30]

Katherine: There used to be a hotel there too. Okay, where the hotel was, the railroad depot, the D & RG was here. The narrow gauge came from here and it had sort of like a meeting place there. The restaurant was over here on the river side. You can't remember that or you don't know? You can look at some pictures.

Interviewer: I'm aware of it. I just wasn't here.

[00:15:00]

Katherine: Anyways, the railroad depot, the D & R G was a big thing. The way I remember it, maybe I thought it was big because I was small. It was there. I don't know why they tore it down. No railroad tracks or anything anymore.

Interviewer: All gone.

Katherine: They're all gone. What is it about people that you wanted to know?

[00:15:30]

Interviewer: Well, I just wanted to know what it was like growing up here in Salida?

Katherine: Okay, there wasn't a swimming pool there. We had a water hole. You know where Denoyer's is? The flower nursery. It wasn't like that before when I was growing up. Everybody in town used to go to that water hole at the little river, they'd call it. It was around that area where the Denoyer's is. We used to go there all the time but it's so different now. Did you know they used to make bricks up there?

[00:16:00]

Interviewer: No.

Katherine: That I can't tell you very much because we were quite small but we used to hear stories about that. That they couldn't make any more bricks because the gravel or whatever they used to make bricks wasn't up to par, so they quit. Have you ever heard about that?

[00:16:30]

Interviewer: About the bricks? No. I heard that it was a swimming hole before though.

Katherine: Oh, have you? Anyways, being that I come from a big family I had a little sister younger than I am. She was always tagging along. Like I said it wasn't like that then when we used to go to the swimming hole. There used to be a ranch there. After we got done swimming and we got tired, we always wanted to go home but we always have to stop on that end of the pond. They used to have wild pigs there and apple trees. We didn't think nothing about that the pigs were wild. We always crossed those fences with the barb wire. We get caught our clothes on there. Boy, mother would really blow her top.

[00:17:00]

[00:17:30]

[00:18:00] Anyway, one time that we went I had my little sister with us and some other kids were with us and here come them pigs. We didn't know what to do Kathy. They were mean. We climbed the trees as fast as we could. I grabbed my sister by the hair and pulled her up the tree and here's those pigs. You know, on top of the tree. I thought they were never going to go. They finally left, we finally got down off of the tree, and made a beeline to go home.

Interviewer: Did you ever go back there again?

[00:18:30]

Katherine: No. Yes, but we eliminated the apple tree. We wouldn't go over there anymore.

Interviewer: Wow, that sounds mighty scary. I'm sorry, I was laughing, you were telling the story. It was scary.

Katherine: We lived across the street from Carl Coscarelli's place.

Interviewer: Do you remember the address?

Katherine: It's on Second Street somewhere.

Interviewer: Okay.

[00:19:00]

Katherine: I can't remember you know. It's been so long ago. I can't remember the name ...

Interviewer: That's close enough. Second Street.

Katherine: It was on Second Street but it's right below the courthouse. You see that's why I know so much about the courthouse. The courthouse, you know, just across the corner, go across the street, and there was our favorite place, the sand banks. Anyways, we used to play in the summer time with Carl Coscarelli and his sister. They're used to be a big old red barn there. We wouldn't go near that place because they used to say it was haunted. Am I boring you?

[00:19:30]

Interviewer: No, I'm having a great time. I hope you are. No, these are the kind of stories we want to hear. You don't find this information in the history books. That's why we're doing these interviews with individuals who lived here.

[00:20:00]

Katherine: Anyways, this was a big old barn and they used to say it was a spooky house. We would play along, as it was daylight that we could see. After it got dark, hey forget it. We wouldn't even look that way. My mother used to

[00:20:30] say, "don't pay attention to that kind of stuff." She didn't believe in it. Anyways, the people that lived across the street from there, Ralph Cupelli, do you know him?

Interviewer: No, I've heard the name though.

Katherine: Ralph Cupelli's parents bought that big old spooky house. You outta see the pretty house they built there. It's still standing but anyways we knew it as the spooky house.

Interviewer: When you go by it now are you still a little afraid?

Katherine: [00:21:00] Well, yes. I don't get out much. I always think of the spooky house and Carl Coscarelli because they were are neighbors. We were very close. Let me tell you something else too, when you sit around and talk about things like this you can't help but feel and think of other things.

Interviewer: That's good. You tell me whatever you think of.

Katherine: Choke cherries. Do you like choke cherries?

Interviewer: Love em.

Katherine: You do?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

[00:21:30]  
Katherine: Oh, man I just hate them. I had too many when I was growing up. They say that they're very medicinal. My mother used to eat them. We'd freeze them for her. Shed eat them froze and she never had any cold.

Interviewer: I know the Indians used choke cherries a lot.

Katherine: Okay, you know where the hospital is?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

[00:22:00]  
Katherine: It wasn't like that a long time ago when I was growing up. That church camp, you know, there's that red building there before you get to that hospital, it wasn't there. That place was full of choke cherries. We used to go there and pick all the choke cherries. Everybody in town went, I guess. Did you ever drink some of that wine?

Interviewer: No. Choke cherry wine.

[00:22:30]

Katherine: Yes, they say it's delicious. Like I said, I guess I'm burnt out with the choke cherries.

Interviewer: You remember you went with your mom to go pick them?

Katherine: Oh, yeah, we never went anywhere except to the swimming hole, we went by ourselves. Otherwise mother was always with us. Let me tell you something else too. Did you know about the band concerts we used to have at the ball park at the Alpine park?

[00:23:00]

Interviewer: The band concerts? Yeah, I've heard about it but you tell me. Because the basketball court wasn't there and there was an amphitheater there at one time in Alpine park, is that right?

Katherine: Yeah, it used to be ... you know how the back, made it ...

Interviewer: Yes, criss crosses.

Katherine: They had a big old I don't know what you'd call it but that's where the band used to play. What is it called a porch or something?

[00:23:30]

Interviewer: I thought amphitheater ...

Katherine: Is that what it was?

Interviewer: A band box maybe? No, not a bandbox.

Katherine: I don't know what it's called but it's a little house.

Interviewer: Oh, a house. Okay.

Katherine: Sort of like a little house. Like a patio. Let's put it that way but it was high. You could look up and see it.

Interviewer: There was stage then?

[00:24:00]

Katherine: Yeah, a small one. Not room for a ... we used to have a grand time. Mother used to make, her and a friend of hers, used to make homemade ice cream. Did you ever eat homemade ice cream?

Interviewer: Yes.

Katherine: Well, anyways this lady had a bunch of kids and mother had a bunch of kids, they used to get together, make homemade ice cream, and we'd go sell it. Used to be on Thursday nights.

Interviewer: You'd sell it?

[00:24:30]

Katherine: Yes. Ice cream at the band concert.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Katherine: Everybody was there to have a good time and we did. Everybody went. I saw all the kids that went to school there. It was a lot of fun, Kathy.

Interviewer: How did you sell it? In cones?

Katherine: For a nickel.

Interviewer: Did you put it in little cups.

Katherine: Yes, in a cone.

Interviewer: For a nickel. That's a bargain.

Katherine: Yeah, for a nickel. That's cheap.

Interviewer: Yup. I think this day it's \$2 and something.

[00:25:00]

Katherine: It's a lot.

Interviewer: I don't know but things have gone up. About how old do you think you were then when you were selling the ice cream?

Katherine: Well, I was going to school. Maybe I might have been 9 or 10 years old. I knew the value of money then.

Interviewer: That was in the late 20's before the depression. Did you remember any effects of the depression here in Salida?

[00:25:30]

Katherine: Well, yes I didn't go to school because I had to get out and work. I didn't learn very much but what I did learn helped the kids keep them in school. You could buy a pair of tennis shoes for a \$1.

Interviewer: Yeah, but you may have had to work a whole day for that \$1.

Katherine: We had a huge family here. The Greenbergs.

[00:26:00]

Interviewer: They had a ...

Katherine: A furniture store.

Interviewer: Right, right I've heard of them.

Katherine: Being that I worked for her during the summer, she used to make the best Jewish bread.

Interviewer: Challah. Was that it?

Katherine: I don't know what it was.

Interviewer: Was it braided.

Katherine: [00:26:30] No, they would make little buns or rolls and she used to put those black sesame seeds on them. She knew we come from a big family. I used to work on Friday's for her. She used to give me two loaves of bread to take home to the kids.

Interviewer: That's nice.

Katherine: They were Jewish people. You know, that woman always covered her head when she read the bible. Are you Jewish?

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (affirmative)

Katherine: Sorry. I didn't ...

[00:27:00]

Interviewer: No, don't be sorry. No, I'm interested in this.

Katherine: What?

Interviewer: This is interesting.

Katherine: [00:27:30] How could I tell you? She used to cover her head with a blue hat, a bandanna silk. When she put it on it more or less looked like a hat. She wouldn't talk to you or anything. She would give me instructions what to do when I got there on Friday. On Friday she sat down and read her bible. She sang, but in Jewish.

Interviewer: Hebrew.

Katherine: Oh, whatever language it was. I knew it was Jewish. I used to tell mother all the time. She said, you never mind her. You just go over there and work.

Interviewer: That's the beginning of the Jewish Sabbath, is the Friday night. Typically you'd prepare for it ...

[00:28:00]

Katherine: But I couldn't work on Saturday's. It had to be on Friday in the mornings. I got to a point where I really loved that little old lady. She was Jewish but she was good to me. Very good. Like I said. Let me tell you something else. I grew up during the Depression and being that it was hard for my daddy to keep food on the table for us. That's why I hate choke cherries and deer meat.

[00:28:30]

Interviewer: That's all you ate, huh?

Katherine: Well, we had so much of it. Anyway, when mamma went grocery shopping we could hardly wait for her to come home with all them groceries. There was nothing more we loved. This is the honest to god truth. They used to sell these four, five gallons of jelly. They'd come in a can. My mother used to buy those being that we were such a big family. We thought we were in heaven because we had bread from the store and peanut butter and jelly. That's how poor we were. We grew up but we were happy. We had enough jelly and peanut butter in our stomach.

[00:29:00]

[00:29:30]

Interviewer: During those ... oh, go ahead.

Katherine: After we grew up, we grew a little older we never made tortillas. My god, we had to make tortillas maybe five in the morning. So mother taught us how to make yeast bread. We made a lot of yeast bread. That eliminated the tortillas. My husband wouldn't have anything to do with that. He didn't like yeast bread. He liked tortillas.

[00:30:00]

Interviewer: But you never made it for him?

Katherine: Oh, believe it, I did. Have you been married?

Interviewer: Yeah. I've made tortillas too. They're pretty easy. I mean, they're easier than making bread.

Katherine: Well, you know to make yeast bread it generally takes a whole day to make bread.

Interviewer: Yeah and tortillas.

Katherine: Okay, what else can we talk about?

[00:30:30]

Interviewer: Well, I was going to ask before what did your mother do at home? She made bread and you helped. Were there other things? Did she make soap? I mean, especially during the Depression, was there a lot that was

homemade?

Katherine: Yes, she made soap. That was a dirty stinking job.

Interviewer: Did you have to help her?

[00:31:00]

Katherine: Believe it. She made it outside. She had her own separate tub and made a bonfire outside. It took her forever and a day to get all that fat. She got it started but we had to watch it. Let me tell you something, Kathy, when we went to stir it we had to go one way all the time. You couldn't go this way and you couldn't go that way. One way.

[00:31:30]

Interviewer: It was because?

Katherine: What?

Interviewer: Why? Do you know why you went one way?

Katherine: No, she never explained it. She said that if you went one way she would have better soap. Did you make soap too?

Interviewer: No.

[00:32:00]

Katherine: It's a stinking job but we learned how to do it. You asked what she did, she supervised. My mother kept us busy. Mother didn't believe for us, being that we were all girls, she made it her business we knew how to cook, we knew how to sew, we knew how to patch, we knew how to make quilts.

[00:32:30]

You name it, we knew it. She taught us what she knew. Let's do it that way. She was very strict. It's so different when I was growing up. No back talk, you honor the father and the mother, and that's all there is to it. We had a big old round table when we sat down to eat the evening meal. Sometimes we just had beans but we were glad we had beans.

[00:33:00]

My sister, the one that lives in Lakewood, my sister Rose, she was just beginning to talk. My brother, John, my two younger brothers, we all sat at the table on this round table and my dad, "No talking. You come to the table to eat." We all sat down at this big round table and my sister Rose was just beginning to talk. "Water and water." She wouldn't keep quiet until my dad would tell one of the boys, "Get her a glass of water." Okay, when she got water we were ready to eat. I can remember that so well, Kathy, that my dad was head of the house. Let's just put it that way. He was a stinker. We came to the table to eat. Not to fight, not to ... eat. That was it.

[00:33:30]

[00:34:00]

Interviewer: You obeyed him?

Katherine: You better believe it. My sister Rose, let me tell you what happened one time. I was already a teenager working already and anyway she ditched school. She ditched school and she got caught. She got the paddling of her life and she never did it again. My dad said, "You think you're playing sneaky and not go to school, you go to school." They were stricter first to go to church than school.

[00:34:30]

Interviewer: I was going to ask about that next. What activities and what church did you go to and was there a lot of your life centered around going to church and the family?

[00:35:00]

Katherine: Believe it. We learned how to pray. We made our first Holy Communion. All of us. All of the Mexican community that grew up during the time that we were growing up, all of them went to church.

Interviewer: It was St. Joe's?

Katherine: Oh, yeah St Joe's. We sold ... had bazaars, we sold food. We did a lot for the church and we were willing to do it because that was must. Come rain or sunshine. Go to church and go to school. We had to go. There was no in between.

[00:35:30]

Interviewer: What were some other things that you did at church?

Katherine: What?

Interviewer: What were some other things that you did at church besides the bazaars and learning prayers as a family? Were there picnics?

Katherine: As a family. Well, we had a lot of ... how could tell you. We all got together. The people that went to church, we got together and they fixed suppers. You know, you didn't pay very much but what you paid went to the church. We all got together and cooked. Is that what you mean?

[00:36:00]

Interviewer: Yeah. Well-

Katherine: At somebody's house. It was always at somebody's house. We all stuck together. We all worked and all that little resources that we gathered all went to the church. That's the only thing I can remember. We sang at the church, we went to holy communion at the church. If, you know, everything at the church. It's a good thing because it stays with you.

[00:36:30]

Interviewer: You may stray but you always come back.

Katherine: Yes, but you know, my husband wasn't like that. His family had a different idea about religion. They weren't very strong Catholics but we were. Everybody here in Salida were good Catholics.

[00:37:00]

Interviewer: Where did you meet your husband?

Katherine: I went to visit a sick aunt of mine in Idaho. It was during the war and that's where I met him. Believe it or not I met him in the latter part of July and we got married in November. Very fast but it turned out to be a very happy one and a very sick one. He was a sick a long time.

[00:37:30]

Interviewer: What was his name?

Katherine: Ernesto.

Interviewer: Ernesto. You got married and you moved here with him?

Katherine: No, he didn't like it here. We lived in California, we lived all over in California because his kind of job took him to different places.

Interviewer: How long have you been back here?

[00:38:00]

Katherine: After mother died ... after he died. He died in 1985 or '84. He's been dead a long time. He was a very sick man there towards the end. I had to work to support myself because I wasn't old enough to draw any pension or anything. I worked. Now, I'm living off of the hog. I don't need for nothing.

[00:38:30]

He was sheep shearer. You know what that is, don't you?

Interviewer: Yes, I do. He did that in California?

Katherine: You did?

Interviewer: I said, he did that. No I never.

Katherine: Oh, he did that in California all over the western states. Texas, New Mexico, Colorado.

Interviewer: Did you live with him in the sheep wagon?

Katherine: Oh, no. I went in, what a mess. You can't even take a bath out in the tules.  
[00:39:00] No, I didn't like it. It's hard. Yeah, it's roughing it. I could do anything at home because that's how I was taught.

Interviewer: I was just ... go ahead.

Katherine: You ask me.

Interviewer: Okay. I was going to ask you, you had to quit school because of the Depression, were you able to ever go back?

[00:39:30]

Katherine: Right. In fact I went to the city college for 2 terms, 3 terms because the job I had required me to have more education, which I did.

Interviewer: What was that job? Where is the college?

Katherine: I was nurses aide. I was bilingual aide. I enjoyed every bit of it. I used to tell my husband all the time, "I don't care ..." being that he was a Texan and I was from Colorado, you're not going to believe this but there is a lot of difference. Education wise, the way you live, the food, the way you dress, everything is different. I even had to learn how to cook different to please him because we ate different. I didn't know what a tamale was to save my soul until after I met him. Much less enchiladas and all the Mexican food that there is nowadays. I didn't know about it.

[00:40:00]

Interviewer: What did you eat then growing up?

[00:40:30]

Katherine: When I was growing up very limited ,potatoes, beans and macaroni. We didn't even know what a grapefruit was. They used to give some type of food to all the Navy families. I'll never forget the time they brought us a whole bunch of grapefruits. We thought it was great. Because we had never had a grapefruit. We'd see them at the store. Let me tell you something now that's going to blow your top, I didn't know what an avocado was until I married my husband.

[00:41:00]

Interviewer: Good you married him. You learned.

Katherine: What?

Interviewer: Isn't it good you married him? You learned a lot.

Katherine: Oh, yes and I used to tell him all the time I don't care if I don't speak Spanish. Because we didn't speak it like he did. He was born in Del Rio, Texas.

[00:41:30]

Interviewer: Growing up you're mother didn't make these huge Mexican dinners, dishes, Spanish rice, and enchiladas?

Katherine: No, because we didn't eat like that but after I met my husband it was different. We had meat when my dad could afford it and deer meat but we cooked different. You follow what I mean?

Interviewer: Yes, yeah.

Katherine: I bet you didn't know that.

Interviewer: I'm surprised. I have a good friend who's Hispanic and I know that her  
[00:42:00] whole life has been making tortillas and living like that. I would've assumed  
in a town where there was quite a large Mexican population ...

Katherine: Well, in California, yes.

Interviewer: No, I mean in Salida.

Katherine: How could I say it? They don't all want to speak Spanish in this part of the  
country. Let me tell you, Kathy. I had a very dear friend that lived across the  
[00:42:30] street from me when I lived in California. Her name was Juana and she  
came from Texas. That one could smell beans. She lived a across from ...  
when I was cooking beans she would be the first one over to my house. I  
want some beans. I said, come on. I'd call. I'd say come on and eat. We're  
[00:43:00] going to have enchiladas. She'd come but she never came empty handed. I  
didn't have a deep freeze. What she had in her freezer that's what she  
brought me. She wanted to use some of them and Mexican beans and  
tortillas.

[00:43:30] She loved that kind of food and she said that her mother, when they lived  
in Texas that she was growing up, they had a Mexican neighbor. This  
neighbor always made tortillas like this outside. They must have had a  
grate or something to cook the tortillas out there. She said that the little  
lady would give her balls of dough and she'd go like that. Her mother would  
watch her from the window and she would make tortillas like this. She said  
[00:44:00] you know, I got so I loved them. This lady that you know here, is she from  
here?

Interviewer: No, she's in Colorado Springs.

Katherine: Who is she? I have a niece that lives over there, a nephew and a niece.

Interviewer: Pearl Sanchez.

Katherine: Pearl Sanchez. My sister is married to a Sanchez man. Is she a young lady?

Interviewer: Yes, she's my age.

Katherine: Where in Colorado Springs does she live?

[00:44:30]

Interviewer: On the west side. I don't know. It's a small world sometimes.

Katherine: You know, I've been to Colorado Springs a lot of times but I don't know my  
directions. You come off of the highway and go in to the area where ... I  
wouldn't be able to take you there.

[00:45:00]

Interviewer: It's a big city now unlike Salida. All the years that you were in Salida as a young woman, when did you actually leave Salida?

Katherine: As a young girl maybe, it must have been about 19, maybe going on 20. That was during the war. The beginning of the war, second World War.

[00:45:30]

Frankly, there was nothing for me to do here. I couldn't find any kind of work. I couldn't just be depending on my dad to support me. My mother said, why don't you go over there? I went. I worked to earn my way to go over there. Maybe that was fate that I had to meet the boy I was going to

[00:46:00]

marry. He was able to work, he came back from the service. We had a very happy life. The only disappointment we didn't have any children. That would be my only disappointment.

Interviewer: Yeah, but you adopted some.

Katherine: Yes. Sometimes I wonder if it was worth it. Do you have any children?

Interviewer: I do. Three boys.

Katherine: How many grandkids?

Interviewer: Zero. Yeah, I'm working on it.

Katherine: You want me to blow your top?

Interviewer: Sure.

[00:46:30]

Katherine: I got 11 great-great grandchildren.

Interviewer: Wait a minute, how could you do that? Great-great? Wow.

Katherine: The daughter that I adopted she had a whole bunch of kids. She had 3 girls and 4 boys. They're all married now. The oldest girl's got 4, the oldest boy's

[00:47:00]

got 4, and it goes down on the line anyway. That makes my daughter the grandmother and I'm the great grandmother.

Interviewer: Wow. You're a lucky one.

Katherine: I got 11.

Interviewer: That's neat.

Katherine: To top it off, I got a set of twins.

Interviewer: You are lucky.

Katherine: What?

Interviewer: I said you are lucky.

Katherine: But I haven't seen them. I wish I was well enough so I could go see them.

Interviewer: Yeah, they need to come here.

[00:47:30]  
Katherine: No, can't. I couldn't stand the strain. All that traffic is enough to drive anybody nuts over there. That's why I don't want to go to Denver either.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's easier to get lost in Denver. Is there anything else that you can think of?

Katherine: What do you want to know?

Interviewer: Well, something that you can think of, like when you did go to school what was the name of the school that you went to here in Salida?

[00:48:00]  
Katherine: Here in Salida I went to McCray school, to the Longfellow, and two years in junior high. I didn't stop there. Let me tell you. It was required for me to go to school and get a higher education. I told my husband and my husband said ... he was a teaser. He said, "You don't have to know how to talk Spanish, you don't like to anyway." I said, "But I have to though. It's required." I knew a lot of people who went higher up in school and they encouraged me. They encouraged me to take the GED test. Boy, that was a chore but I did it. You want to hear something? I passed everything with flying colors and I needed 45 points to get the GED test. I failed completely because I couldn't pass the math. I was like 2, 3 points to get my GED test. That's how smart I am but I didn't stop there. I kept going to school. I went and took some crazy writing classes and I took more writing.

[00:48:30]

[00:49:00]

[00:49:30] I took Spanish. I mastered it and I went for 3 semesters at the city college in Santa Barbara. Thanks to my husband. He used to tell me all the time, you don't pronounce it like that but I learned. I've forgotten everything that I ... because they don't use it that much over here. My nephew comes and does my house cleaning now. He calls me Tia. "You know" Tia", he said, "I should have gone to school and learned how to talk Spanish." He said,

[00:50:00] "Now, that I go around they talk Spanish to me, half of them I don't understand." Well, you can learn. I love Mexican music.

Interviewer: Do you fix Mexican food for yourself?

Katherine: No.

Interviewer: Do you just eat potatoes?

Katherine: [00:50:30] No, I can't have the hot chili anymore. My diet is very limited. I got to keep away from salt and it kills me. I can't have it. I have very poor circulation. I don't feel nothing on my feet. See, I got one shoe on because I can't find my shoes. On this foot ...

Interviewer: Is there anything that you want to talk about Salida?

Katherine: [00:51:00] Salida has always been home to me. Salida has always been a place that I belong. You want to hear something else? We used to live across the tracks.

Interviewer: Tracks. Okay.

Katherine: It was different then. Has anybody ever ...

Interviewer: How is it different?

Katherine: I was just going to tell you about the people that lived over there. There used to be ... do you know any of the Gardunios here in Salida?

Interviewer: Yes.

Katherine: Do you know Lucille Gardunio?

Interviewer: No.

[00:51:30]

Katherine: Well, these guys that we knew were very good friends of ours. Where we used to sell ice cream at the band concerts. Anyways, they've been with us for a long ... in the community we knew each other. Let's put it that way. [00:52:00] We used to live across the tracks and the man that we rented the house from had a bunch of goats. One time, you know how the little kids are. This is what mother used to tell us. I can't remember any of that. She said that the goats went in the house. We left the door open and guess what they did? [00:52:30] She said that they had eaten all the wallpaper off the walls in the house. She said they had chewed up the bedspreads and everything. That's what goats did that. The man had to really pay mother for all that destruction the goats did. He had a lot of them, Kathy.

Interviewer: I guess, he got goat's milk and goats to eat.

Katherine: Anyways, Carl Coscarelli was telling me about the burros that ... I don't remember them. He said they used to ride them all the time ...

Interviewer: The bulls?

[00:53:00]

Katherine: Right below the court house.

Interviewer: The bulls? The burros?

Katherine: Burros.

Interviewer: Okay, right.

Katherine: It'd be interesting for you to talk to him.

Interviewer: Yeah, I got his name down here so I might give him a call.

Katherine: Carl Coscarelli.

Interviewer: Was there anything more about you being on the other side of the tracks? Was it just you or was it a Mexican community?

[00:53:30]

Katherine: We had a well. We didn't have running water, we had a well. We had an outside toilet. It was awful living back there. We didn't live very long over there. Mother moved when we went to Second Street. Where we played in the sand banks, where they built the courthouse. Have you ever been out there lately?

Interviewer: The courthouse?

Katherine: Yes. They built a new jail out there.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's a big complex.

[00:54:00]

Katherine: I know. It's not like that anymore. It wasn't like that when I was growing up.

Interviewer: No more sandbanks.

Katherine: No more. Right. All you have is trees now. It's pretty.

Interviewer: Trees and buildings. Yeah and houses.

Katherine: No more. Is my time up?

Interviewer: Well, we have a few more minutes if there's something.

Katherine: What can I tell you? Okay, let me tell you. Do you know about the cemetery?

[00:54:30]

Interviewer: I know there is a cemetery, you told me about it.

Katherine: The cemetery going out from Denoyer's up there?

Interviewer: From Denoyer's, no. I know the one off of 140. Fairview.

Katherine: No, this a Woodlawn.

Interviewer: Okay.

Katherine: It's up there, going up that way.

[00:55:00]

Interviewer: Well, anyway. They had to make a lot of contributions in the community to fence it. That father of mine was always getting us mixed up in parties and plays that we had. Being that I was the oldest I always had to get up there and say a speech. I hated it but I had to do it.

Katherine: Where were you saying the speech?

[00:55:30]

Interviewer: In some hall here in Salida. To make funds. To put a fence around that cemetery.

Katherine: To raise money and they were very successful because they finally put a gate up there and a fence. It's a shame that it doesn't have any water rights up there.

Interviewer: You just take the road to Denoyer's and go up.

[00:56:00]

Katherine: You know I'm going up the hill just on the right side of the road.

Interviewer: I've been there a million times.

Katherine: Some of them people that have families buried up there, they really take good care of the places up there. Very nice, some of them. There's even a lot of soldiers buried over there.

Interviewer: That's an old cemetery, people are still being buried there?

[00:56:30]

Katherine: Let me tell you something. Not to long ago I lost two of my brother-in-laws, they live out in California, and what they wanted to do was bury my brother-in-law being that he was a soldier on the same plot where my husband is buried. She called me first and I said, "Well, I don't see why not." You gotta be buried somewhere. In the meantime I had made a funeral arrangement for cremation here in Salida because money-wise I didn't have that much money for a big funeral. When I found out that I

[00:57:00]

[00:57:30] could be buried with him but I had to go to California, I talked to the lady, the manager in the cemetery out there, but I have to be cremated. I will be buried with him. I didn't know it at the time. It's not going to cost me nothing to have the ashes shipped over there.

Interviewer: That's great.

Katherine: Isn't that nice. Those are things that you hardly ever want to think about  
[00:58:00] but it's a must. Look how expensive the funeral is. You know, something there's nothing I get more fascinated with than to read Jewish history.

Interviewer: Really?

Katherine: I love to read history, period. There's some things I don't understand and  
[00:58:30] sometimes I do a slow burn but I get over it. Look what happened during the war what Hitler did to all them Jews. That was uncalled for. Are you a descendant from that area?

Interviewer: Not particularly, Germany, but Poland, Romania, Russia.

Katherine: You're not Catholic.

Interviewer: No, I'm Jewish.

Katherine: Some are Catholics. Look at the new pope, isn't he from Poland?

[00:59:00]

Interviewer: I believe the old one was from Poland or Czechoslovakia or something. The new one maybe. I'm not keeping up with the pope.

Katherine: I don't know Catholic. Anyway, like I said I like history period. Mostly Indian  
[00:59:30] history. I also like Jewish history because some of it is so interesting. It's so interesting with all those new scrolls that they have found. That really gets my attention. I really like stuff like that. Am I a kook?

Interviewer: No, you're not but you know this is going to go off in a few minutes so we better say goodbye.

Katherine: Okay, try and talk to Carl Coscarelli.

Interviewer: I will. I will. Thank you for all that. Thanks for meeting with me and letting me come into your home.

Katherine: I hope I wasn't a disappointment.

[01:00:00]

Interviewer: You're quite a talker. I think, you helped us a lot, so thanks Katherine.

Katherine: What?

Interviewer: Thank you.

Katherine: Will it be on the paper or what?