

Beth Smith: This is Beth Smith. I'm at 545 Ouray Avenue at the home of Erma Perri. We're talking about her life in Salida. How are you doing Erma?

Erma Perri: I'm fine.

Beth Smith: Good. Can you tell when you came to Salida?

[00:00:30]

Erma Perri: My birthdate, is that?

Beth Smith: Yeah, when.

Erma Perri: Well I was born here November 9, 1922, and lived here all my life.

Beth Smith: What hospital were you born in?

Erma Perri: In the Salida Hospital.

Beth Smith: And you know the doctor's name?

Erma Perri: Dr. Fuller.

Beth Smith: Oh, yeah, that's good. All right. You've lived here all your life?

Erma Perri: That's right.

Beth Smith: How about your parents? Did they live here too?

[00:01:00]

Erma Perri: No, my parents came from Europe, Italy. In 1917, my father joined the army to obtain his citizenship. When the war ended he was in France. He asked permission if he could go to Italy because he thought he never would return there. They granted his wish. Then when he got to Italy, of course he knew my

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mother. My mother had a brother here and so he said if your brother sends for you, he said, would you come to America and we'll get married? My mother said okay. He returned to America and told her brother to start proceedings to get her here. In 1920 he was successful and got her here in May of 1920. They were

[00:02:00]

married June of 1920 in St. Joseph Church here.

Beth Smith: What was the family name?

Erma Perri: Bartolo, B-A-R-T-O-L-O.

Beth Smith: Oh, and she lived here in Salida from then on?

Erma Perri: That's right.

Beth Smith: What did your grandfather do?

Erma Perri: My father?

Beth Smith: Your father.

Erma Perri: My father worked for the Colorado Fuel and Iron Corporation.

[00:02:30]

Beth Smith: In Pueblo? No, not Pueblo?

Erma Perri: In Salida.

Beth Smith: In Salida here?

Erma Perri: Right.

Beth Smith: Okay. That's good. Did you have any brothers and sisters that came over too?

Erma Perri: Yes, I have three brothers. One is Eric Lowell. One is Dean, and one was Richard.

Beth Smith: Any of them still here in the community?

[00:03:00]

Erma Perri: No. There was no employment here. My brother Eric Lowell joined the Navy in 1920. I'm sorry, no what do I do, I made an error?

Beth Smith: That's all right.

Speaker 3: Just correct it.

Beth Smith: Correct it.

Erma Perri: Okay now, in 1940, he joined the Navy and he was in the Navy when the World War broke out in 1941. He still is living and lives in New York. My brother Dean worked here for some time then he moved to Las Vegas. He passed away at the age of 73. My youngest brother went to Amarillo and he passed away at the age of 56.

Beth Smith: You were raised right here in Salida?

Erma Perri: Right.

Beth Smith: Did you go to the local schools?

[00:04:00]

Erma Perri: Yes, I did. I went to Longfellow School and junior high and high school.

Beth Smith: When did you graduate?

Erma Perri: I graduated in 1942.

Beth Smith: You remember any teachers in the high school that you were particularly fond of?

Erma Perri: I'm sorry I didn't get that.

Beth Smith: Did you remember any teachers in the high school that you were particularly fond of?

Erma Perri: Oh yes, Mr. Rouse and Mrs. Rouse. Mr. Soles.

Beth Smith: What did you do after school?

[00:04:30]

Erma Perri: Well, in 1942 while I was in my senior year, I went to work for Selective Service during a co-op period. Then after I graduated in May of 1942 they hired me until [00:05:00] 1943. Because all of the boys were really inducted and they didn't really have room in the office for the two of us so I was lucky to get a job with the Salida Building and Loan Association in 1943 under the direction of Alice Chinn.

Beth Smith: How long did you work for the Salida Building and Loan?

Erma Perri: I worked for the Salida Building and Loan twenty-nine years.

Beth Smith: Twenty-nine years.

Erma Perri: I was their loan officer for nineteen years. Then after that I went to work for [00:05:30] United Farm and did their escrow closings for three and a half years. Then Empire Savings came in and they wanted to hire me so I went to work for them from 1983 to 1986. Then they closed their branch office here and I retired.

Beth Smith: That's a long career in the banking business.

Erma Perri: Right, right.

[00:06:00]

Beth Smith: Yes. Now you married Frank Perri.

Erma Perri: I married Frank Perri June 15th 1946 in St. Joseph Church here.

Beth Smith: That was your church here in Salida. You had some children too.

Erma Perri: Yes. We had one son, John Perri. He graduated from high school in 1965, went on to Greeley and chose the teaching profession. Then he chose his contract in [00:06:30] Las Vegas, Nevada, where he still is teaching.

Beth Smith: Just one child?

Erma Perri: Yes.

Beth Smith: That's good.

Erma Perri: He has three children.

Beth Smith: Oh, little grandchildren.

Erma Perri: Tress, Mark and Daniel.

Beth Smith: How old are they.

Erma Perri: Tress is ...

Speaker 3: 30.

Erma Perri: ... 32.

Speaker 3: No, 30.

Erma Perri: And Mark is 29 and Daniel is 27.

Beth Smith: Do you have any great grandchildren?

[00:07:00]

Erma Perri: We have two great grandchildren, Danny and Ashton. Danny is eight and Ashton is 3.

Beth Smith: Great, they'll carry on the family, that's fine. What do you remember about Salida? Anything special that you can ...

Erma Perri: Well, I remember Salida that we had many clothing stores, men's clothing, women's clothing. We had a number of tailor shops which my husband was one

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of them. My husband was in business for 50 years in the tailoring business. He started his profession in Italy and came here in 1930 when he was fourteen years old. He went to Salida High School. He went to New York after ... He went

[00:08:00]

into the service and after the service he went to New York and obtained his designing degree in tailoring. He'd been here for about sixty years.

Beth Smith: He came back to Salida then from his New York studies?

Erma Perri: Yes, he wanted to live here because he loved to hunt and fish and hike. He was quite a traveler and we have traveled ... can I say everywhere we went?

Beth Smith: Well, certainly.

[00:08:30]

Erma Perri: We traveled many, many places. We went to Italy four times. We went to Spain and Portugal. We went to Yugoslavia, Germany. We were in Hong Kong and China. We took a Caribbean cruise and an Alaskan cruise and we were in Hawaii twice. We went to Mexico City.

Beth Smith: Well, you've been around the world haven't you?

Erma Perri: We have. He loved to travel.

[00:09:00]

Beth Smith: You must have loved to travel too as you were right there with him.

Erma Perri: Right, I did, right.

Beth Smith: That's good. Well, what can you tell me about Salida and the changes that have come over the couple of years here?

Erma Perri: Well, like I say, we had a number of tailor shops. We had clothing, men's
[00:09:30] clothing stores, women's clothing stores. We had Candy Kitchen, the theater which is still here. A number of the other businesses are not here.

Beth Smith: Yeah, they've come and gone.

Erma Perri: The downtown section I feel has really changed. We have a lot of galleries.

Beth Smith: Art galleries.

Erma Perri: Art galleries, right. Of course, the pool is still here and the high school is still
[00:10:00] here. At one time had St. Joseph's School which my son graduated at the grade of eight, 8th grade. Then he went on to high school.

Beth Smith: Where was your husband's tailor shop?

Erma Perri: Well, at one time he was in business with his brother on Lower F and then in
[00:10:30] later years he was near the theater. In 1969, he went near the theater but he tailored all those years in both places.

Beth Smith: We had a lot of tailoring going on in this town didn't we?

Erma Perri: Yes.

Beth Smith: Why?

Erma Perri: Yes, up till 1942 a lot of the citizens from Salida really had tailor made suits.
[00:11:00] Then in 1942 it seems like the industry changed to ready-mades. Then, of course, they also did alteration along with their tailoring, making their suits.

Beth Smith: When did he retire?

Erma Perri: He retired about 10, no about 12 years ago.

Beth Smith: He's no longer with us?

Erma Perri: No, my husband passed away December 3rd of 2002 but was here many, many, many years since 1930.

[00:11:30]

Beth Smith: Yes, both of you put a lot into Salida haven't you?

Erma Perri: Right, right.

Beth Smith: Were you active in any of the local groups, a church group or ...

Erma Perri: Yes, I have been involved in many, many organizations. I belonged to the hospital organization, the American Legion Auxiliary, the Altar and Rosary, let's see I'm trying to think. There's more than that but ...

[00:12:00]

Beth Smith: I'll be there was.

Erma Perri: I think so.

Speaker 3: ..the hospital...

Beth Smith: I'll bet you were very active.

Erma Perri: Right, right. I was their president, I attended many conventions for the American Legion. Matter of fact, we attended three national conventions in Florida, in Seattle, Washington, and in Denver.

[00:12:30]

Beth Smith: Good.

Erma Perri: For the American Legion Auxiliary. My husband was also a life time member of the American Legion and life time member of the Elks organization.

Beth Smith: Do you remember any characters around town that were particularly amusing to you or different than the rest of the town people?

[00:13:00]

Erma Perri: What's that?

Beth Smith: Characters, people who were quite different than.

Erma Perri: Important people you mean?

Beth Smith: Well, yeah, some.

Erma Perri: Alice Chinn was very, very, an important person. She owned Salida Realty and was manager of the Salida Building and Loan. Then in 1945 Ted Jacobs bought half interest of the Salida Realty and he was associated with the Salida Building and Loan. In later years Bob Kurtz. I worked with Harold Thonhoff, and Karen Adams, John Brejcha from Empire Savings.

Beth Smith: How has the Salida Building and Loan changed?

Erma Perri: Well, they changed their name.

[00:14:00]

Beth Smith: Now they're High Country Bank.

Erma Perri: Right. We were originally on F Street, next to the building and Woolworth's. Then in later time we bought the building where they are downtown now. It was a garage so they bought that. They converted it to the Salida Building and Loan from a garage. Then, of course, they have expanded. They have one on the highway now and other various places.

[00:14:30]

Beth Smith: Mm-hmm (affirmative). Well that's a good idea. You just suggested something to me here. Let's back up to your family now, your husband's family. We've got your family down let's see where he came from.

[00:15:00]

Erma Perri: My husband's family also came from Italy.

Beth Smith: Where in Italy, do you know?

Erma Perri: No. I will mention this. My parents came 45 miles south of Rome. My husband's family came a little south from Naples. It's called [Buchita 00:15:18]. They came to America as far back as 1880. My husband's grandfather came here first, then he sent for Frank's father. They worked on the railroad, the Denver and Rio Grande railroad. Frank's father obtained his citizenship in Buena Vista. At one time we had the court house in Buena Vista then they changed it here to Salida.

[00:15:30]

[00:16:00] Frank had two brothers, Pete and Bill. When they were born, because their father was a citizen, they were born American citizens and then when they came to America they came with their American passports. Then in 1926 his brother came from Italy and then in 1930 they sent for Frank's mother and Frank and his brother Bill. They've been here since 1930.

[00:16:30]

Beth Smith: In this valley, right here in Salida, right?

Erma Perri: Right here in Salida. The father went to New York to meet them and brought them to Salida.

Beth Smith: Good.

Erma Perri: Yeah, they were here since 1880 and worked on the railroad from here to Denver. They laid many of the tracks from here to Denver.

Beth Smith: Salida was quite a railroad town.

[00:17:00]

Erma Perri: It was. Salida had a lot of industries. Salida had the railroad, mining and then, of course, we had Climax and the reformatory. We still have the reformatory.

[00:17:30] Although there wasn't a lot of jobs for the younger people. Then when they graduated some of them had to go elsewhere. Well, they went elsewhere to get their education and then some of them stayed here.

Beth Smith: Some like you came back and went to work.

Erma Perri: Right, right.

Beth Smith: What else can you tell us about Salida? Do you remember during World War II and the ...

[00:18:00]

Erma Perri: Oh yes, I remember World War II because I worked for the Selective Service.

Beth Smith: Yes, of course.

Erma Perri: I was the one that ... I had my three brothers in the service along with Frank. I was going with Frank at that time. Then we waited until he got out to be married. I went with him four years while he was in the service.

Beth Smith: He was in the army?

[00:18:30]

Erma Perri: He was in the army. I had two brothers in the army and one in the navy.

Beth Smith: We had a Camp Hale, an army camp up here just a little bit further north. Do you remember anything about Camp Hale?

Erma Perri: Yes, I remember Camp Hale and I remember Dr. Hoover used to be at Camp Hale. Ed Touber was at Camp Hale. The way I remember them is because they

[00:19:00] came into the tailor shop and got suits. Then Ed Touber retired here and so did Dr. Hoover.

Beth Smith: Ed Touber went on to become mayor of Salida for many years.

Erma Perri: Ed Touber was mayor, that's right, for many, many, many years. Then I worked for Ed Touber one winter, helping with income tax. One winter I was there with him.

Beth Smith: Well, good.

Erma Perri: You know that math was my specialty?

[00:19:30]

Beth Smith: I can tell that. That's good. Have you enjoyed being retired here in Salida?

Erma Perri: Yes, I've enjoyed, although I kept busy, I keep busy with all my organizations. I still belong to my organizations and I also had belonged to the Elks Ladies and the Daughters of Isabella, which is a group of St. Joseph. I have really been active. I still am active in the three groups.

[00:20:00]

Beth Smith: I hope you stay active for many years.

Erma Perri: I'm sorry?

Beth Smith: I hope you stay active for many years.

Erma Perri: Well, I'm going to try. I try to walk a mile a day.

Beth Smith: Good for you.

[00:20:30]

Erma Perri: I still live alone. I try to maintain my home and do whatever I can.

Beth Smith: Well, that's great. You're doing fine. You're still active in the community.

Erma Perri: Right, right.

Beth Smith: Can you think of anything else you'd like to tell us about Salida?

Erma Perri: Well, it's a great town, as you know, or I wouldn't be here all my life. The people are friendly. It's just really a grand place to be.

[00:21:00]

Beth Smith: What about FIBArk?

Erma Perri: Oh yes, FIBArk, Ted Jacobs and a couple of other men are the originators of the FIBArk. I was working with Ted Jacobs in the Salida Realty and the Salida Building and Loan at that time. We would register foreign contestants all the time when they came here. Matter of fact, Ted got two of the German contestants to live here which was Tony Kolbak and Xavier Richmondauber.

[00:21:30]

Beth Smith: They moved over here then?

Erma Perri: That's right. They're here because Ted Jacobs got them here.

Beth Smith: Good.

[00:22:00]

Erma Perri: We would register all the contestants. I have judged the slalom. We used to have floats all the time, representing the Salida Realty. Enjoyed working all the time for them.

Beth Smith: You didn't do any boating did you?

Erma Perri: No, I didn't do boating but I did judge a slalom. My son used to help. The one
[00:22:30] year he did the timing when the boaters reached Cotopaxi, he helped time what time they stopped.

Beth Smith: Yeah, it takes a community to get that FIBArk races going.

Erma Perri: Right, it's still active. It's a big event.

Beth Smith: It is, getting bigger every year.

Erma Perri: That's right, it's getting bigger and bigger and bigger every year. I was real active at one time in the FIBArk.

[00:23:00]

Beth Smith: What else were you active in here? Hospital Auxiliary?

Erma Perri: Yeah. I was their president and I was also, I would go ... I was a liaison between the auxiliary and the state office, attended many of their conventions in Vail.

[00:23:30] We would go around to various hospitals and do installation of officers. That came under the title of District Manager for the hospital.

Beth Smith: What do you think about the new hospital now?

[00:24:00]

Erma Perri: Well, I think that it's going to be historic. I think that once it gets built I'm sure it's going to be an nice building. Then, as I understand, the future hospital will be a ... I'll think of it. I can't think ... Which they're going to convert it to, oh, assisted living.

[00:24:30]

Beth Smith: Yes, the old hospital will be assisted living.

Erma Perri: Yes, the old hospital will be assisted living. I think that will add to the community because I'm sure there are a lot of citizens that would like to go to assisted living. I think it's an asset to Salida.

Beth Smith: I'm sure it will be. Can you think of anything else you'd like to tell us about
[00:25:00] Salida growing up? Not you growing up, Salida growing up, it's changed over the years.

Erma Perri: Yeah, right. Well, there have been new homes going up and now we have

condominiums which we never had before. I'm sure that's an asset to Salida. There's just a lot of wonderful people still living here and I'm enjoying them, you know.

[00:25:30]

Beth Smith: Yes, and you're one of them.

Erma Perri: Thank you.

Beth Smith: Thank you very much for talking to us this evening.

Erma Perri: Well, thank you very much for doing this for me.