

Maria Rogers Oral History Program  
Summary of OH 0101

Interviewee: Helen Miles Bradshaw  
Interviewee Date of Birth: 1905  
Interview Date: November 9, 1976  
Interviewer: Sarah Jacobus

Transcriber: Susan Becker

This interview was part of the Women in Colorado: Hidden Faces project.

[A].

000 Helen's mother was born in Indiana in 1871, where she lived till she was seven, when her family moved to eastern Kansas. In 1896, when she was 25, she moved to Hugo, Colorado, by herself, leaving her family in Kansas. In her diary, she writes about helping her family in Kansas in the fields and in the kitchen. She always wanted to be a nurse. As a mother, she was very moral and a good disciplinarian. She went to a rural school in Kansas. She was a good student when she had the chance to go to school, but her schooling was interrupted a lot by having to work for her family. In Hugo, she was a very good neighbor: whenever anyone was sick, she was always ready to go and help out.

045 Helen's mother was very industrious. In addition to taking care of the home, she helped out in her husband's office and after her husband died she was part owner of the newspaper. In her later years, she did reporting.

055 Mrs. Henry, the wife of the barber in Hugo, was the one who encouraged Helen's mother to come to Hugo, Colorado. She told her about a job available in Hugo taking care of a little boy whose mother was sick for \$3.50 a week. Impetus for leaving Kansas and moving to Colorado was financial: she had been offered a job and thought she'd make more money there.

100 Mention of a former beau in Kansas, who eventually moved to Montana.

115 Argument with her husband-to-be, moving away from Hugo, then patching it up and coming back to be married.

127 No other women in business in Hugo at the time, not even other family businesses where wives helped like Helen's mother did. Discussion of Helen's father's experience with drinking alcohol and stopping.

150 Helen's mother's character: unfailingly cheerful and witty. Very moral.

170 Helen's mother's daily routine. Sometimes had to just let things go in the home when her husband needed her to help down at the newspaper. There was a lack of modern conveniences: Helen remembers carrying water and coal and using a gas lighting system. Helen's father was always eager to modernize the home when things became available, such as a washing machine and indoor plumbing, which made things easier.

190 Everyone in the family helped out in producing the newspaper. When Helen's older brother Clarence was a baby and her mother's help was needed in the office, her mother would put him in a box and put the box in a wagon and take him up to the office.

200 Helen's recollections of growing up in Hugo. Climbing on the coal shed. Tells of running away as a child. Brother George was a member of the Colorado National Guard; was called out during the coal strike of 1919 to guard the capitol. Helen's father died in 1923. Brother George ran the newspaper until 1935, when he sold it and moved back to Indiana.

270 Elementary school in Hugo was a wooden building, two-story. There was a woman principal at that time, which was unusual. New brick school built when Helen was in fourth grade. Even that brick building now is gone. Older brother didn't finish high school; left school to work. Helen and her younger brother did finish high school.

334 Community and family celebrations. Birthdays, Thanksgiving, putting flag out for Independence Day. Story of her mother's first Christmas tree after her marriage: a Russian Thistle—there were no pine trees out there then. First tree Helen remembers included popcorn and cranberry strings and candles clipped on to it. Stockings hung on a broom handle suspended between chairs by the stove.

385 End of side A

[B].

000 Going to the fair when Helen was about 8 or 9. Games of chance. Winning a teddy bear.

015 Toys: Dolls. Books for the boys. Helen didn't get to read much because her mother thought it would be a waste of time for Helen to read when she should be learning to cook and sew and do housework. The boys had a series of books about boys and motorcycles. Helen read all of their books. Helen was taught music—three years of piano lessons from Mrs. Hathaway. Phonograph and records. Father liked band music and Irish music; liked to sing. There were public dances that her family would go to.

140 Helen's mother was very moral and tried to shelter her from anything improper. After Helen had finished high school—when she was 19 or 20—her mother still was uneasy about her going off to do things, like go on a date. Helen never was away from the family until she went to Rifle in 1935 (when she was 30 years old), except for going to college in Boulder. Even then, when Helen was 30, her mother didn't want her to go. By going to Rifle, Helen felt that she really learned about life for the first time by being on her own. Her father was less protective.

185 Tells about getting a teaching certificate after high school and going to a teaching job. Her father died shortly after she started teaching. Her mother did encourage her to finish her year's teaching contract. After that year, she stopped teaching, moved home and worked in the newspaper office. After a few years, she went to college in Boulder and received her degree in journalism in 1931. At this time though, during the Depression, there were no jobs anywhere, so Helen returned to the family business and worked for her room and board. Her brother George wanted to sell the paper in 1935 because economic conditions were so bad.

255 The paper was taken over by the people who ran the other paper in Hugo. Helen's family was Republican and the people running the other paper were Democrats. Helen's family wouldn't sell to the Democratic paper. They advertised and sold the paper to someone from another town. But when the Democratic paper's owners heard that they had sold their paper, they went and bought it for themselves. In 1948, after Helen's husband died, she went back to work at that Democratic paper.

290 In 1943, Helen, her husband Tom and her daughter moved from Rifle back to Hugo. Tom had been working in a magnesium mine in Nevada for the war effort. His health broke down there and he didn't have a job, so they moved back to Hugo. Helen took a part-time job in the superintendent's office. Tom later got a job as a marshal, but that didn't pay very well. He later worked on road construction with the state highway department.

328 Met her husband Tom in 1936 at a dance in Rifle after his first wife had died. She had gone to Rifle in 1935 to work as a reporter on the newspaper there. They were married in December of 1936. They later moved to Glenwood Springs, where Tom was under-sheriff and their daughter Carol was born. They moved back to Rifle, then came the move to Nevada. Tom had older children from his first marriage—he already had grandchildren when Helen married him. Tom and Helen's mother never got along very well: both were outspoken and their temperaments clashed. But Helen's mother was ill and needed someone to be with her so they moved in with her. Tom died suddenly of a heart attack before her mother died. Helen then went to work full time with the newspaper, where she worked for 12 years. She was happy to be back doing that kind of

work. She worked at the paper until Carol was through high school. At that point, Helen left and moved to Denver to work for the Colorado Press Association. She lost that job in 1963, at which point it was hard to find work because of her age. She took the merit exam for working for the Welfare Dept. as a clerk-typist. She retired in 1971.

545 Helen's daughter Carol joined her in Denver in 1961. Carol worked in a bank until she went back to school for a master's degree. Helen discusses the difficulty of trying to find work as an older person. At 57 she wasn't old enough to retire, but too old to be thought desirable for the jobs she wanted, and considered "overqualified" for many other jobs.

662 End of interview