MAX GREENLEE, JR. Born February 1, 1929.
BEBE GREENLEE. Born February 18, 1929.

Summary of OH 1183V, recorded at 870 Juniper Avenue, Boulder, Colorado, on February 7, 2004, for the Maria Rogers Oral History Program. The interviewer is Marvin B. Woolf. This interview also is available in video format, filmed by Marvin B. Woolf.

Greenlee family birth dates:
Max Greenlee, Sr., born February 10, 1899, died in 1999
Helen Greenlee, born July 23, 1904, died in 1994
Max Greenlee, Jr., born February 1, 1929
Bebe Greenlee, born February 18, 1929
Lorance (Lorrie) Greenlee, born April 12, 1935

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000 Max Greenlee, Jr. introduces his father. Born in 1899 and lived a little more than 100 years. He spent the last 50 years of his life in Boulder.

001 Max, Sr.’s past, before coming to Boulder. Born in Lineville, Iowa, in modest circumstances. At college age went into animal husbandry at Ames intending to become a farmer. Studies were interrupted by WWI and his father running out of money. Neither Max, Sr. nor his father were good businessmen. After his military duty Max, Sr., changed him mind and decided on a career in medicine. Description of his schooling. When finished schooling it was middle of The Depression and he and his wife, Helen, decided to settle and practice in Oskaloosa, Iowa. Had a successful practice there. He had his boards in both eye as well as ear, nose and throat. This versatility gave him the option of practicing in a smaller community. Then WWII came along. Enlisted in US Navy as Lt. Commander in the Medical Corps. Spent three-and-a-half years in Navy.

007 The move to Boulder and the reasons for the move, which included the health of two asthmatic sons and desire to limit practice to eye surgery. Main operation for ear, nose and throat surgeons had been the mastoidectomy, which was then being cured by antibiotics.

009 Delighted with move to Boulder in 1950. Lived at 762 8th St, north of Chautuaqua. Max, Sr. rented a space with Dr. Duane Botts and then after 6 months he was invited to join the Boulder Medical Center.

010 History of Boulder Medical Center: its founding in 1949 and early members, with brief descriptions of each doctor and Clyde Gelwick, the administrator. Doctors in original group included: John Gillespie (mayor of Boulder at one time); Carl Gilman; Howard Huston; Joe Cowgill, Dr. Swetts; Chris Martin; Joe Mauer; Bill Allison; Jack Bartholomew; Claude Bottom; and John MacDonald. Talks about Clyde Gelwick, who was a high school football coach before becoming a very effective medical center administrator. Describes some of the doctors’ areas of
Max, Sr. replaced Dr. Swetts, who left after about six months. He practiced until he was 74 years old. He enjoyed the medical center.


Max, Jr. joined the Boulder Medical Center in 1959 as a Dermatologist. Ben Wells, a psychiatrist, and Bob Willard, an allergist, joined at the same time. Max, Jr. and his father collaborated at times to solve medical problems, such as when there were tumors around the eye. There were times that they did surgery together.

Photo#1: Max, Sr. with Max, Jr. and his wife Bebe, taken in the 1990s.

Photo #2: Max, Sr. and Helen (1930s).

Photo #3: Max, Sr. with his great-grandchildren, whom he names.

Photo #4: Max, Sr. in front of his mountain cabin, purchased from Willard Humpal in the 1960's in the Overland Hill area west of Boulder, where Max spent a lot of time. (Photo taken in the 1990s).

Other interests of Max, Sr. Joined Lions Club. Active in St. Aidan’s Episcopal Church, especially when Father Pat was rector. Served as Warden when the church was having problems with a bishop, an interesting and rocky time.

Impressions of Father Pat.

More on interests of Max, Sr.: included golf. Not interested in politics of Boulder because too liberal for his taste—he was very conservative. In 1964 built a house across the street from Max, Jr. on the north side of Juniper. Enjoyed gardening and caring for bees at his new property. Was a very serious gardener.

When first got to Boulder, Max, Sr. got season tickets to CU football games, which the family still has. In his last five years, Max, Jr.’s brother, Lorrie, invited his father to watch CU Women’s basketball team, and really got involved with supporting them. A satisfying and fun part of his life.

Friends of Max, Sr. There were some in the medical profession. Howard Walz, professor of piano music at CU, was a frequent visitor in their home. Martin Schmidt was a friend and neighbor who helped Max, Jr. overcome a problem with his residency requirements to allow him to get into medical school.

Max, Sr. was a private and quiet guy. Enjoyed several-day hiking and fishing trips and
did that until he was in his 60's. Did not enjoy hunting, alcohol, music, or cards, though he was a good player when forced to it. And in his nineties he decided that he should have a teaspoon of whiskey each night for medicinal purposes. Did not spend time on his investments. A steady methodical worker.

032 The philosophy of Max, Sr.: He valued being self-sufficiency, patriotism, and being conservative. Staunch Republican.

034 Voice only of Bebe Greenlee and her remembrances of her mother-in-law and father-in-law. Many fond memories. Delighted they built a house across the street. A plus for the whole family. Helen taught her grandsons how to play the piano. Family celebrations. Generous with time and love.

036 Max, Jr. talks about his mother, Helen Lisle Greenlee. Born in Mt. Pleasant, Iowa. Spent most of her early years in Clarinda, Iowa. Was college educated. Would develop a passion and pursue it diligently, as, for example, with Charles Dickens and Robert Schumann. Made her interesting to talk with. Had several good friends. Mentions a pianist friend, Dorothy, a Julliard graduate, with whom she spent hours playing piano pieces. Helen had two grand pianos. Good friends with Howard Walz, a CU music professor, and his cousin Ramona Chemic, a musician. Writer Aileen Fisher was also a friend of hers. Strong relationship with her family in Iowa, extremely tied to Clarinda and wrote prodigiously to her family. A big part of her life.

040 Photo #5: Helen and Max in their mid-70s.

Photo #6: Helen and Max in front of an apple tree in the 1970s.

Photo #7: Helen and Max during their 80s.

(Video repeats the showing of these photos a couple of times.)

043 End of interview