

RAYMOND AUTREY. Born 1921.

TRANSCRIPT of OH 1533V

This interview was recorded on September 4, 2008, for the Maria Rogers Oral History Program, Boulder Public Library. The interviewer is Shirley Steele, who also transcribed the interview. The interview also is available in video format at the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History, 1125 Pine St., Boulder.

NOTE: The interviewer's questions and comments appear in parentheses. Added material is enclosed in brackets.

ABSTRACT: Raymond Autrey is a descendent of the Hake/Autrey families, who were, in the 1860s, original settlers of the Superior, Colorado. It was on the Hake farm that coal was discovered in 1894. This interview is a wide-ranging one in which Ray Autrey incorporates stories told by his father and grandparents about the pioneer members of the family and their experiences in Superior and at the Industrial Mine, including the interactions between the settlers and the local Native Americans, memories of working in the Industrial Mine in various capacities, and other events representing the history of that place. Ray talks about his own happy childhood, the activities that he and his friends invented to entertain themselves, how his family worked together to make their lives better, and how coal was mined. He also details the relationships of the Hake and Autrey families.

[A].

00:00 (This interview with Ray Autrey is under the auspices of the Maria Rogers Oral History program from the Carnegie Library. We are in Ray's apartment in Balfour Lodge in [Louisville] Colorado. It is September 4, 2008.

(Ray, when were you born and where were you born?)

I was born in Superior, Colorado in October 9, 1921. I was born in the house, not in the hospital. My mother had a doctor available, but I was actually born right at the home where I lived. That's the way it was at that time, I mean they didn't make a commotion or anything like that. The house I was born in was probably one of the two biggest houses in Superior. It was built by Charlie Hake. It was built for his mother, and he had built a house right along side of it—just another big house. It was for him and his wife.

(Do you remember Charlie Hake's name of his mother?)

Of his mother?

(Yes.)

Estelle Hake, is it? I read it not long ago.

(How about his wife?)

I forget her name.

(OK)

I never did get into it too much. What I knew about Charlie Hake was what my father told me. Now actually, Charlie had four sisters, I believe, and he was more or less the one that had charge of everything after his parents died—who was William Hake and his wife. Charlie had those houses built in Superior with a big yard, grassed-in yard, with an antique, iron fence—still, if you go there—around both yards. That iron fence was probably worth about as much as the property itself, because it is an antique.

Both yards were grassed-in yards. There was no grass in other yard in Superior. When I was a boy playing, I'd always have plenty of company cause they liked to come in and play on the grass. In order to keep the grass, it had to be irrigated, and they had a one-fourth interest in the Coal Creek water district for that. We had one eighth interest in it, and we could go up and cut in off of Coal Creek about a mile above the house and run the creek water down the ditch all the way to Superior and then irrigate both yards. Also, across the road, we had a big garden and barn and so on, and that water was used to irrigate the garden. That garden had all kinds—always in that garden every year.

As I recall, when I got big enough to run around—we lived right next to Coal Creek. It's the creek that runs right through Superior and it is, actually, a tributary of the original Coal Creek up the canyon. Now in that creek, probably, I spent a lot of my time. It was a lot of little minnows and a lot of little snakes, and we used to love to go down with seining nets, catch the minnows or go along and watch the frogs and so on, and that's the way that we got our entertainment.

Then, as we got older, we would go up that creek—Coal Creek—and for entertainment we would go up maybe a mile or so to where the trees were very heavy. We'd rob the magpie nests of the eggs out of the nest and have an egg fight. Which might sound very funny, but that's what we done for entertainment.

05:15 As I got older and got able to do some work, my job became cutting the grass in the yard, irrigating the yards and then the—my grandmother who inherited part of the estate of Charlie Hake's folks—she was one of Charlie's sisters—,she married and they owned eight houses in that area. They also owned the Rocky Mountain Store.

(The Rocky Mountain what?)

Store.

(Store. OK.)

Yeah, the store. The only store in Superior. That store was used by all the coal miners and that who lived in Superior. That's what Superior was. Superior was a coal mining , was really what it was. There was the original camp for the mine up on the hill by the mine, but the rest of the town lived down there. It became one of the most important things, probably in my life, was this mine. My father worked at the mine, on the top, he did not go underground .

(And your father's name was?)

Charles, my father's name was Charles. My mother's name was Helen. She was Helen O'Brien from Louisville. He married her while she was a telephone operator here in Louisville.

We'll have to get back to—we were taking about Coal Creek and that, and going up and down. That's another thing we would do as kids, we would go along catching frogs. Now this may sound real funny. We'd catch the frogs, and we would cut the legs off them. They were pretty good size, what we'd call greenie frogs. And we would bring them home, and we would follow that creek up, follow the irrigation ditches. We'd cook the frog legs and they were just as good as chicken. And that was another thing that we learned for entertainment.

At times we would get together and each one of us—friends of mine—would bring a can of milk or some sugar or something and maybe get a dime to buy some milk, and we'd make ice cream and have a party. A party of ice cream and frog legs. Can you imagine?

([chuckling] No!)

That was the way we lived.

(Let's take a little break right here.)

We had to make our own parties. We had nothing—we didn't get nickels and dimes to go the store and buy candy and that, so we had to make our own. And to play, we'd play marbles. We'd draw a big circle out in the middle of the street. We'd shoot marbles. That was another way that we'd pass our time.

Of course, as I got older, my dad gave me jobs to do around the house. My dad took care of all the property for my grandmother. Therefore, he had to work on pumps. We didn't have electricity. All the water had to be pumped up and the pumps—they'd break every so often and we'd have to spend a whole half a day pulling pumps out of wells and fixing them up. Part of my job was to help him do that as I got older—big enough to—I guess in the seventh or eight grade or something. And then, all of us kids played together in town. We passed our time, really enjoyed it, I can remember so much. We played games, Run Sheep Run. Did you ever hear of it?

(I have heard of it, I don't know the game.)

But we played a game like that. Kick the Can.

(What's that like?)

You put a can out in the middle of the street and you choose sides and you go hide—one would be It and have to get you. If they made your name, you were caught. But then somebody would say “Kick that can.” Then whoever was It would go get the can, put it back where it was, and then all of us would hide again and try and kick the can again.

(What's Run Sheep Run?)

Run Sheep Run was when we'd choose sides, and if I had four with me and somebody else had four, well the four would hide their heads and not look,, and I'd take my four out into town, anywhere, out around the edge of town and that and hide them. So then the other four when we told them it was all right, they'd go looking for them. Well there was a can that was in the center of the street—it was the base. If they seen this, they could run and say our name and we were caught, but if they didn't we'd run out there and kick the can again and Run Sheep Run. It was one of those games that we made up.

We had to make up all our own fun. We didn't go to shows, we didn't have theaters. I used to get to go to the show maybe once a month or so, because my grandparents lived in Louisville, and I'd come over and stay over Saturday night with them and go to the Louisville theater.

11:45 (Do you remember what you saw?)

Buck Jones.

(I don't know that one.)

He was a cowboy. Buck Jones, Gene Autrey, Tarzan, movies like that—that's what we'd go see. Of course it only cost about a dime, I think, to go to the movies. I remember my mother used to give me fifteen cents—a dime to go to the movies and a nickel to buy candy. Something like that. That was a treat, and that was entertaining for us, and that's about the way our earlier life was, when we were kids, and that around the thirties.

(You started to talk about your dad, and I interrupted you.)

About my dad. My dad worked at the coal mines on the top of the Industrial Mine. I say on top because he never did go underground. He had more to do with the trains and cars and so on up on the top. He also built the dump. I don't know if there's any of them around here now, but they used go to huge dumps where they'd take cars up, and it would be the rocks and sludge from down in the mine that they'd clean out, bring up, and then haul up on this dump and dump it out up there. There was no good coal, I mean it had too much rock in it and everything.

Now, that was another thing. As I got older, say maybe fourteen—all the kids my age, practically all of them, we'd go up and we'd pick coal.

(I've heard of that.)

I—my dad bought me a '29 Dodge truck. He didn't buy it, I bought it. Ten dollars it cost. We tore it all apart and fixed it so it would run, and we'd go up to the dump and pick the coal off the dump and put it in gunny sacks. Carry it in gunny sacks down to the trucks and put it in the trucks. When we'd get a load or so, we'd take it home and put it in the coal house. My parents would use it in the winter for winter heat.

There was a time or two that in the fall of the year, I'd fill that coal house plumb full of coal pitching it off the pickup. There would be chunks, oh maybe as big a baseball, up to chunks maybe a foot square. If they were big ones, we would always save them for the heaters in the living room. Little ones, we used in the kitchen stove and stuff like that.

Of course, when we'd run out of coal, we would buy it by the ton. There was a man around town would haul it. In fact, my godfather [grandfather?] Autrey, that was one of his businesses. He had his horses and wagon, and he'd haul coal and charge people around the town of Superior to haul coal for them for the winter, and so on. My dad, when he was a young man, he used to do it too. They lived down—at that time—down off of the main part of town. They had a little farm down there.

15:28 (Your grandfather?)

My grandfather. My dad, that's where he was born, down there. He used to deliver milk and so on to people. They had a few cows, and they farmed alfalfa there. The milk, he would deliver around town everyday, and I can remember him telling me about delivering when the strike was on [the miners' strike of 1910-1914]. Now, at one time—I couldn't give you the year of the strike—but there was a strike on. The coal miners wouldn't work, they were on strike. Right then, the army came in, and I can remember him telling me he had to go up to the gate—the army put up the gates so nobody could come in—but he would get permission to go in, because he was delivering milk to the people who lived in the camp.

(So the people in the camp were not able to get through the gate?)

They could walk through. And the cars—there was no such thing as cars—I'd say probably, the person that had the first car in the town of Superior was probably my dad or his brother's family. But outside of that, people never had cars. When they came out, I think the first car my dad bought was a 1920—'24 Dodge—or something like that.

(That was early.)

Yeah, it was earlier. We always had a car, and they had a horse and wagon—horse and buggies too. It was earlier when they had a car.

Then I worked around—till I got about sixteen—around doing my chores, then I started high

school and went to high school.

(How did you get to high school?)

Well, my dad at that time was working at the mine by Louisville here, and in the morning we'd ride over with him. And at night when we got out, we'd walk home to Superior on the dirt road.

(How far is that, do you know?)

Three miles. Three-and-a-half miles. But it was fun.

(It snows, doesn't it?)

Except when it was cold. When it was real cold, then my dad might come along and pick us up or something like that. But going to high school, that's how we started. Well, by the time—time flies by—the four years went by in high school, and by then everybody had cars. I didn't have a car of my own, but I could use my parents' car then if I wanted to go to something at the high school or that. Then I stayed home until I graduated from high school.

(Which was when? When did you graduated from high school?)

1939. I graduated in 1939 and went to business college in Denver for two years, and then I got a job—I had a very good job out at the Remington Arms plant. I worked up to be a supervisor in that, and I was only 22 years old.

(That was during the war?)

During the war. I can remember the morning the war broke out, and we came out of work—I'd worked the midnight shift—and they were standing at the gate selling papers—War, War, War. I worked up and had charge of an area in one of the buildings. They worked 24-hour shifts; three eight-hour shifts. I had charge of an area of machines. So it got me a deferment. I didn't have to go to the service. I turned it down. I said, "No way." All of my friends were going into the service. I turned it down, and I joined the navy and spent four years in the navy.

(Join the navy and see the world.)

I didn't see too much of the world; I seen the South Pacific, mostly Hawaii and the South Pacific.

20:17 (Can we go back to the early years a little bit?)

Sure.

(I've talked to people who lived in the camp—in the Industrial Camp, in the mine camp—and they tell me that it was pretty close, you could go back and forth.)

Pretty what?

(Close, you could go back—.)

They were connected. Actually there was a main road. It went right by our house where we lived in Superior. The main road it went straight on to—across the tracks, the railroad tracks and the trucks used to go up it to the mine, and they'd get truck loads of coal at the mine and drive back through. Up to the mine was probably three blocks, that's about the distance of it. And all the coal—or not all the coal—they were shipping by rail then, but a lot of coal was hauled out by trucks to Denver and Boulder and different places. Some of the coal was shipped by rail. I don't know—CF&I—what railroad went through over there—Union Pacific, I think— went through Superior and on into Boulder.

Well, there are so many things you can remember. I can remember when I was, say eight or nine years old and went up to wait. The train come through, say, at ten o'clock.

(In the morning?)

In the morning, and we'd go up and stand by to watch the train go through. Funny things happened. The guys on the train got to know us. All the produce that went to Boulder and that—most of it was shipped by train in cars that had ice. These cars had ice and the fruit and the vegetables. Well, we got to know these guys and they'd throw off a chunk of ice now and then. Well, ice—there wasn't ice boxes then. There wasn't electric then. We'd always get the chunk of ice and take it home and put it in the refrigerator so we'd have ice. I can remember them throwing chunks off for us, to pick up and take home, and of course, later on—we had ice boxes for years.

In fact, to get the ice—we owned the lake three miles out of Louisville here. It's still there, named Autrey Lake, right out there in the subdivision of Rock Creek. It's still there. In the winter time—the winters used to get much colder than they do here now—in the winter time it would get very cold, real cold. The ice would get as much as 15 and 16 inches deep. Then my dad and his brother—his brother lived on the farm by the lake—they would take a saw, and they'd go over and start cutting ice. They'd cut chunks of ice—maybe three-foot long, 18 inches thick and haul it to a shed on the farm there. In that shed, which was a double-walled shed, full of saw dust. They'd put the ice in the bottom of the shed, cover it with sawdust and then another layer of ice and sawdust. They'd cut it out of these lakes and take it over, and it would last most of the summer. Whenever we needed some then during the summertime we'd go over, and they'd chip off the ice and take it to the icebox. Later on, there were refrigerators started.

(When did electricity come into Superior?)

We got electricity in Superior all the time I lived there.

(Oh, all right.)

There was only—in Superior—there was only two telephones. One was at our house, and one was at the coal mine. So naturally in the middle of the night there'd be a knock on the door. Somebody—my son or my husband is dying. He has to get to the hospital. and they'd want my folks to call the doctor or call the hospital. Which we done a lot of. We never charged. We did it as a favor.

Your telephones then, there was five people on the same line, five different phones. Later on we got more phones in town. I can remember our number OJ4. When it rang four times we'd answer. When it rang three times the neighbor might answer. And that's the way that we communicated by phone that way. Long distance, there was no such thing. I mean, even when I graduated from high school, if I'd call long distance, I couldn't afford it. The cost, it was so expensive.

It was a very, very interesting life, and I really enjoyed being a kid, doing what I was doing, playing marbles, hunting—Oh, I done a lot of hunting after I was thirteen years old—I did a lot of hunting—for rabbits and pheasants and so on. And I would get them and my father would clean them, and my mother would cook them and so on. It was a very good life.

26:44 (Excuse me, I was wondering about the store, you mentioned the store.)

The store.

(I'm confused about it.)

The store was a big building that my grandmother—I don't know who built it—well I do know who built it, actually so it was some of my father's relations who owned a lumber yard in Boulder. They got the lumber there, and then they hired men to build that store. It was called The Rocky Mountain Fuel Store. They actually—well, I guess my grand parents built it but rented it and, I remember, it was thirty dollars a month for that store. The Rocky Mountain Fuel Company did it.

(I see.)

They also—they had a store in Lafayette that two of my uncles run and—Rocky Mountain Store—they called it the Rocky Mountain Fuel Store.

(That was the coal company wasn't it?)

Yeah, it was the coal company but I don't know how it was but my folks owned the store. They called it the Rocky Mountain Fuel.

(Do you have any idea where they got the stuff that they sold in the store?)

Delivery trucks. Mostly—there was delivery trucks—some stuff came—there would be a few

packages, I remember, come by rail and they threw them off at the depot. We did have a depot right up here in Superior.

(Where would that be today?)

What?

(Today, where would you look for the depot?)

It's right up at the end of the street that we lived on—up to the mine. I can't think of the name of that street.

(Is that Fourth?)

Fourth, it might have been. I think it might have been. That was the road that went all the way up to the mine and the Coal Creek. The railroad was very important. It brought a lot of stuff in. I can remember a lot of stuff being delivered to the store by trucks. I remember bread trucks, Rainbow bread trucks, stuff like that, take them out and deliver stuff. The thing about the store was, in Superior, most of the people were foreign, there wasn't too many Irish or Americans. The biggest share living in Superior itself was Polish.

(They were miners?)

They were miners, yeah. They were miners. They were Polish and Italian, and they were the miners. What they would do, actually probably for twenty years, the way they lived—most of them had fairly large families four or five kids. The way they lived was that the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company would let them buy their groceries all summer and charge. I can still see the kid say slip it on the ticket, slip it on the ticket. Well then, the guy, he'd have to work all winter long for the coal mining company, to pay for his summer bills for the food.

30:28 (Would they have any job in the summer at all?)

There was very little jobs. The only jobs that you could get probably was helping in the fields, on thrashing machines, things like that. Now I did, when I was in high school. I went out and shocked wheat in the fields for two dollars a day.

(That was pretty good pay wasn't it?)

Two dollars a day?

(For then?)

Well, I don't know, it was ten hours of damn hard work!

(OK. I wasn't thinking of ten hours.)

Well, we got our meals—we got our lunch and two dollars a day for shocking wheat for ten hours. But that was another time, that was when I was going to high school. I do remember I saved up that two dollars for the senior prom or something like that. Big deal.

What else about Superior?

(I'd be interested to ask about what you remember about the Hake family and the Autrey family. Do you remember any of that—you could sort that out for me.)

Well, I wouldn't know any of them, they were gone when I was born, but there was—Charlie Hake was the only boy in the family. I can't remember, was there a Liza?)

(There was a Zelda. Zelda?)

Zelda was my grandmother.

(OK)

But I'm trying to think—.

(Emmaline?)

Mrs. Hake, Elia.

(Emmaline?)

Emmaline, I think, something like that. And her father William Hake. William Hake, they're the ones who came out here and stopped in Superior. He came out to make a farming community, and he wanted to sell—he actually wanted to get a store and sell parts or sell stuff to the farmers. But he ended up farming. He got his four daughters there—and Charlie was the son. One married a McCorkle, that ran the McCorkle food store here in Louisville. Another married a Miller—the Miller's started the first coach that run from Cheyenne to Denver—stopped at the Miller house right here. One married them. Zelda married my grandfather. Then one married and moved to Washington state. Let's see, that was a McCormick. And then the one in Louisville, she married Luke McCorkle. After his daughters. They were Charlie's sisters.

I assume, never been told by my father, that when the old man died—Hake—Charlie apparently took over the family. Whether there was a division or not, I don't know. Charlie built a house, a big house—one of the big houses—there was two big houses in Superior—mine, where we lived, and that one. He built this big house for his mother and his sisters, and then he built one next to it for him and his wife. I think that was 1904.

(So the Autreys came into that through the marriage of your grandfather?)

The Autreys homesteaded over where Rock Creek is.

(I see, that's what I'm trying to figure out.)

They homesteaded 180 acres over at Rock Creek.

34:49 (Do you know when they came into the area?)

Yeah, I'll tell you they came in—my grandfather came here at the time of the that Indian massacre—Sand—[Massacre at Sand Creek, 1864] Do you know that I mean?

(Sand—I've forgotten it. I know what you are talking about.)

He came there with his buddy from Missouri, riding horses, and they came right through the camp where the Indians lived. Chivington, was the name of the colonel that went through and shot all the Indians, and my grandfather's buddy—they were riding horses and they came up on a little papoose laying on the ground crying, and he said his buddy just pulled a revolver out and said, "I'll make a dead Indian," and shot the papoose.

Now my grandmother—Zelda was her name. She used to tell me stories—the Hakes built a house down by the creek and it was a big house—two-story house—and she told me stories how once in a while they'd get up and there'd be Indians looking in the window.

(Amazing.)

And she said there were certain times when some of them—most of the Indians were—if you'd give them something, they'd go away, but she said once in a while there'd be some rough ones come in—they would really like to have the family and the big dinner and all that—and they all just went out and went into another room, and the Indians came in and ate everything on the table and left them. Now they never did have fights or gun battles with the Indians, but there was Indians there. My grandmother, Zelda, when she was coming from Missouri—or Wisconsin rather—the Hakes came from Superior, Wisconsin—I'm sure that you've been told that by Billy.

(Yeah.)

But the story he might not have known and probably didn't—my grandmother, Zelda was the youngest, and she fell off of the wagon one time when she was a baby and she was rolled up in a blanket. They didn't notice it right at first when she fell in front of the front wheel. They were in sand, and the wheel kept pushing her forward and didn't run over her. She told me that story.

(Her mother would have been pretty surprised when—

Yeah.

(When was your father born? Do you know?)

My father, he was born in 1899, because he was 70 years old when he died.

(So he spent all his life in the area?)

Well, he worked in the coal mines and eventually the coal mines shut down.

(Yeah, that's right.)

And then he went to work at—actually, I was back from—by that time, I had got this job with the Remington Arms plant and was running some of that, and I talked him into getting a job down there because they were available then, we were making bullets for the war. But he never really did like it. He quit that, and he went to work for the Cudahy Packing Company, and he worked there until he retired. The Cudahy Packing Company in Denver. He drove back and forth every day to work.

Well, take the Boulder/Denver turnpike, for instance. I worked on that. I was the foreman for the months when they put the concrete culverts all down, wherever the water just went through, we had to build culverts. I was the foreman on one of them. That was one of my first construction jobs.

I worked on four buildings at the University of Colorado, and eventually I went to work in Denver for the N.V. Petrie [?] Construction Company and became a superintendent. I built four twenty-seven story high rises in Denver. I built most of the big building down at the IBM plant here, and I also put one of the biggest additions on Norlin Library. So I stayed in construction.

40:18 (Did you have your own company?)

No, no. I worked for N.V. Petrie [?].

(You continued to work there.)

At that time there were just three companies in Denver: Meade & Mount [?], Nordstrom, I think, not Nordstrom—Meade & Mount [?], Petrie [?—and there was three of them and they kind of got all the work. They bid against one another. Later, by the time I retired—when I retired I was 62 and I had drove to Denver for years and years—when I retired, right after that other companies from Canada and different places started coming in and doing building in Denver. I worked on the first high rise there, Zeckendorf built it and I think they were out of Phoenix Arizona—they were the owners. I think it was seventeen stories I believe. So I can remember when Denver was a very nice little town.

(Yes, I imagine you can.)

A very nice little town. You'd go to the theater for a quarter and get a seat all the time. There'd never be a line. The kids I went to school with, they'd get to be ushers, and they'd open the back

door and let us in for nothing.

(I heard about that.)

I actually had a very—pretty happy life, really.

(That's good.)

Of course my wife has been dead for 14 years, and I never did marry again. I have five children. One's in Alaska, one's in Arizona, one's in North Carolina—that's my three daughters. And I have a son in Longmont and a son out in Parker. The son in Longmont, he retired. He was a teacher in Longmont schools.

(I was wondering, did you know David Kerr? Does that name mean anything?)

Oh, yeah, I knew—depends upon which David Kerr you are talking about. There was a David Kerr that was a superintendent of the Industrial Mine.

(Yes. That family, I just heard that in passing.)

And then there was a David Kerr that actually was the son of the guy that owned the bar—the pool hall—in Superior. There were two different families.

(Oh, I see.)

Dave Kerr, he lived in Louisville here, just about where I built my home. He lived there, and he was the superintendent of the Industrial Mine.

(I think that's the one I was thinking of.)

He had one son, Billy. Billy, I think was his name. Was it Billy, David? I don't know, I forget now. I know he had one son. I remember his wife's name—Myrtle—because my mother used to have her hair fixed by her sister. At one time, up at the Industrial Mine, there was a huge boarding house.

(I've heard of that.)

There was up to—oh, eight or ten men that were bachelors and had bedrooms, and they had meals there. I remember the woman that run it and her people—her name was Toby.

(What was it?)

Toby, Mrs. Toby and they actually owned or run Eben Fine Park in Boulder. Their home was there, Eben Fine Park. They had one house—the old house that's there and I use to go up there and stay and go fishing with their grandsons. Their daughter, Verna was her name, she used to

come over to stay in Superior with her mother sometimes at the boarding house, and she would put up my mother's hair.

(What was her name, Verna?)

Yes. Verna. She was a sister to Dave Kerr's wife. Dave Kerr's wife was Myrtle.

(All right, I have it.)

They got to be good friends. Two different ways. My dad was a fisherman and her husband was a fisherman. They'd go fishing together. Just like we do now, if you know somebody, you go with them.

45:37 (Yeah.)

I can remember the boarding—we used to love to go to that boarding house. That woman—she had seven men—she'd feed them like kings. She would fill that table with food, and then she'd put up their lunch and it used to amaze me what she'd she put in them lunch boxes. Sandwiches and fruits and cakes. They'd take it down to the mine with them when they went down to the mine.

(Did she do their washing?)

You know, I guess she did.

(Cause those clothes would be—)

Well, I never did think about that. Well, you know, they all had two set of clothes, mostly. You had your miner's clothes that you worked in, and then you had the clothes you didn't work in. Now whether they had the dirty ones washed somewhere else, I don't know. I remember one thing, when I was picking coal off of the dump and that—there was a group of us—five or six of us—we were about the same age, fourteen and fifteen—we'd always go up to the wash house. The mine had a wash house and we'd go to the wash house and wash—there was a big shower, it was a big deal.

(Was that dump the hot one? Was the coal hot?)

Sometimes once in a while, some would come up and it would be a little hot, but you'd have to watch. Once in a while there'd be a hot one but most of it was cold when they'd dump it off. There was rock. Most of it would be rock and dirt, but there would be a few chunks of coal in it. They couldn't take time down in the mine to separate it, so there would be a few chunks of coal, and that's what we would get after.

(Well where did they actually separate the coal?)

You mean from the rock?

(Yeah.)

Well, actually they run—what they done when you run a tunnel in the mine of coal you leave a top part in and then the dirt bottom, they throw that to the side and make the track go down that. The rock that they hauled out and hauled up was from the bottom. But he top, a lot of times stayed cold [?]. That's where you used to get your accidents—men killed. I remember so many of them killed. That top would cave in on them. They'd be working the coal underneath and down it would come. I remember when one got killed. The mine whistle would start blowing and wouldn't stop. Would just blow, blow, blow. So everybody knew then there was an accident. The whole town stood out in the street trying to figure which man got caught now. So, it was—

(Did you ever go down?)

I never went down a mine. Now there were a few slope mines here I went a little ways. But I never did go to the bottom of a mine. I always asked my dad, "Take me down." But he never did take me down. Yet there were some kids—some of the Polish families here took their boys at fourteen and fifteen down in the mine. But I never did.

49:29 (I was wondering about your mother. What was her life like?)

Well, she was a telephone operator in Louisville.

(Well, before—after—while she was a housewife in Superior.)

Huh?

(When she was in Superior, when she was married.)

Well, she was a mother. She baked, she cooked, they canned vegetables galore, bushels of peaches, bushels of tomatoes and everything. She done a terrific amount of canning. She was a very good cook. She did no work—no women worked at that time.

(She was working in her own way at home.)

At home, right. She married my dad when she was a telephone operator and never worked a day after that, I think. She got pregnant I think, two months after they were married and, I don't remember ever—I don't ever think she worked anywhere.

(Were there other children besides you?)

I have a sister, two years younger than me. She lives up the road here.

(Well, that's very nice to be able to think back on those days.)

Well, I talked to you about some of it here but there are so many things that I can't—that come to me later or something.

(Well, just write them down!)

I can remember things that went on but—. I can remember one time I seen my dad running out the back porch. I said, 'Where you going?'

He said, "Somebody's robbing the store," and he grabbed a gun and away he went, they were going to catch the robbers. I remember things like that, but there was nobody there. It was a fake deal.

(He didn't run the store though or did he?)

No. My uncles managed it, but they managed it for the Rocky Mountain Fuel Company, not for themselves.

(OK. I didn't realize that.)

Billy's [see oral history interview with William C. Autrey, OH 1109V] father was a—one of the store managers. He was—him and my dad were pretty close, they were only three or four years apart, and they lived next door to us in Superior. Billy only lived in Superior about five years. His father passed away, and they moved.

(Did you go to elementary school in Superior?)

I went to elementary school in Superior, and I went to the high school in Louisville.

(Did you like the school?)

I had some very good teachers in Superior School. I don't think there was ever a better teacher than in the—probably the first up to the sixth grade. Then—I don't know what happened in seventh grade. I ended up going to the eighth grade in Louisville, because my parents didn't like the superintendent, who was teaching. They paid my tuition. I think it was eight dollars a month for me to go to school in Louisville. But the teachers were very good. When they taught you something, I can still remember _____. They taught you, you learned. There was no playing around in school or anything like that. My high school teachers in Louisville were very good, real good. Couldn't have asked for better teachers.

(You brought your kids up in Louisville, didn't you?)

All my kids graduated from Louisville, and all of them graduated from Greeley. [Ray Autrey later corrected this information: his oldest three children graduated from Louisville High School, while the two younger children graduated from Centaurus High School. In addition, while all the

children did attend the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley, it was only the oldest three who graduated from UNC.] The girls, one of them teaches now—no, none of them teach now. One retired, one when to work for the airlines, for Continental Airlines, and one works down in Phoenix—don't know what kind of work she does. My son, retired in Longmont—my oldest one. He's the one I depend on for everything—he's the only one around here. In fact, when I get in trouble I call him at night, and he's very good. The other son, he's a good son, but he's way down in Parker and Parker is a long ways down there. All of them are very good. They call me every week and that, and one of them—I talked to a grand daughter yesterday—called me from Philadelphia, and she says, "I'm coming out to see you." She works for the airlines. She said, "I'll have a layover in Denver one of these nights, and I'll be able to stay with you.

(That'll be nice. Well, I want to tell you this has been a wonderful interview. I want to thank you for it.)

I didn't know what you wanted.

(Well, this just worked out fine.)

I told you all I know of what went on, and we were dirty little kids playing in overalls.

(OK. That's the way we want to leave it.)

You know that was it.

(Thank you very much. Thank you for your time.)

55:25 [End of Tape A. End of Interview.]

