

TRANSCRIPT: BABE HINRICKS

Q (by Julie Jones-Eddy) This is Julie Jones-Eddy in Rangely, Colorado on June 21st, Thursday, in the afternoon, speaking this afternoon with two sisters who are early pioneers in this area. The first sister we will talk to is Mrs. Hinricks and the second sister on the next tape will be Mrs. Kirby.

Good afternoon, Mrs. Hinricks. How are you today?

A (by Mrs. Hinricks) I'm just fine, thank you. How are you?

Q Well, I'm pretty good, too. I think we've got a lot of things to talk about here. If you would like to give me some background information on your parents, I understand that your mother came to this area very early, and we would like to know what date, and where she settled, and if you have any stories about her life before you came along, we'd like to hear that.

A My mother came to Rangely April the 9th, 1899 when she married my father in Lamar, Missouri. He was an early cattleman in the Rangely area, having come here in October of 1885. He brought three trail herds of cattle up the old Chisolm Trail from Texas to Rangely, and he brought the last one in 1885. It was getting late in the fall when he came to Rangely, and he thought he might not have time to ride back to Texas, so he decided to stay all winter. So he spent the rest of his life in Rangely.

Mother came, of course, when they were married. They lived at what is known as the old Brick Ranch, three and one-half miles west of Rangely. There were three children: my brother, Richard, my sister, Ruby, and myself, and we were all born at the Brick Ranch at Rangely as there were no hospitals and no doctors in this country.

Of course, there are lots of stories that my mother told. Life was not easy living in this country at that time. We had no electricity; we had no running water; we used a large cistern and carried the water in buckets. In the winter, we sawed huge blocks of ice and put them up in an ice house and covered the blocks with coal dust from our coal mines, and they would keep all summer, so we had ice to keep the water cold. And we also had ice to put in a refrigerator in the basement in

the old cellar. We were lucky that way, because many people did not have facilities to store ice. The lights that we had were kerosene lamps, and you didn't do very much work in the evening. Most of the work had to be done during the daytime.

Q Well, if you were that far away from hospitals or doctors, or really, any other people, did your mother tell you what it was like when she had her first child there?

A When Richard was born, I think I will have to go to Ruby for this information to get it straight. I would like her to fill in right now.

A Well, this is Ruby speaking. Dad went to Vernal, Utah, and he got a Doc Hullinger to come to the ranch, and he spent a week there before Babe was born. Oh no--correction. That was for Richard--Doc Hullinger. Now there was a midwife from Missouri that had come out here to be with Mom when Babe was born. You know, a midwife was one that could deliver babies and do things like that.

Q Did she come just for that reason, all the way from Missouri?

A No, she stayed, and she later married and settled in Rangely.

Q I see.

A Her name was Addie Fitzpatrick.

Q Auntie Fitzpatrick?

A Addie Fitzpatrick.

Q Did your mother have any difficulties with the birth, or did it go pretty smoothly?

A Evidently not.

Q It went pretty--

A Because if she'd had serious problems, she probably would have passed away.

Q Uh-huh. Did you know of women who did have serious problems with a birth, and had--

A. Not to my recollection, because there was so few families here then.

Q. And the ones who did have children made it all right?

A. Made it all right. I don't remember of anyone passing away of childbirth.

Q. Good.

Do you know when you were a little child, Mrs. Hinricks, about how many families there were in the Rangely area? Do you have any idea?

A. Oh, there were 12-14 families. Some of them were large families. The Hahn family was a large family; the Coltharp family was a large family.

A. John Kenney family.

Q. John Kenney?

A. And the John Kenney family, and the McNew family.

A. The Jack Welch family went away back when, and the Banta family. They were down the river.

Q. I see. How far away was your nearest neighbor?

A. About a mile and a half.

Q. About a mile--did you see them often?

A. Oh, yes. We would go after the mail, about three time a week the mail came to Rangely three times a week, and everybody went to the post office so you saw your neighbors at the post office about three times a week.

Q. Did you ride horses to get to the post office?

A. Always.

Q. One question that I'm very fond of asking is, Do you have an early childhood memory, a first childhood memory or something that sticks out in your mind when you were pretty small?

A. Not particularly. I have so many that are very dear to me. The large gatherings that we had at our home. Our home was the only large home in the valley, and it was the central meeting place for everybody in the valley.

Q. I see.

A. We had lots of large dinners. We had a cabin across the road from the main house, and they held their dances there, and they would dance from dark until daylight, and then everybody stayed for breakfast before they went home.

Q. And that was at your house?

A. And that was at our house. We made the recreation for the whole country, and people played their own fiddles, and banjos, and guitars, and we furnished our own music and we had wonderful times together.

Q. It was easy to get together in the summer time. Did you have anything to do in the winter?

A. Well, we grew older, we skated a lot in the winter, on the river. We would spend all day long cleaning the snow off of the ice so we could skate for about an hour in the evening with a large bonfire down by the river, and then perhaps it would snow again, and we'd have to clean the ice off again before we could skate. We went sleigh-riding. We, of course, were in school for many of the winters, and we were not in Rangely. We were in Grand Junction.

Q. Oh--you went to Grand Junction for school? Was there any kind of school in Rangely for you?

A. No. Only eight grades.

Q. Oh, but they did go through first through eighth grade in Rangely, here?

A. Yes, I believe all of the time we had all eight grades.

Q. Where was that school house?

A. There were different school houses. We had the Lower Rangely School, which was down the river. We had the Main Rangely school house, which is now our museum building, and it

used to sit where the Conoco filling station is presently, now. Then we had the Upper Rangely School, and we had the Angora School, and they were all close to Rangely.

Q Did your teachers come and stay with different families?

A Yes, the teachers boarded with a family right near the school.

Q How far was the school house from your home?

A Three and a half or four and a half miles.

Q How did you get there?

A We either went in a buggy or, well, always in a buggy when we were little. Someone drove us.

Q Did you go to school in the summer or in the winter time?

A Winter.

Q So there was snow, and it was cold?

A I never was able to go to school, because I was too little. By the time I was of school age, we had started to go to Grand Junction.

Q I see. Okay. You didn't have to bother with all that cold trip business.

As you were growing up through those, say through age 15 at home, were there particular responsibilities that you had at home?

A Yes, ma'am!

Q Like what?

A We helped with all of the housework. There was lots of cooking. We had as high as 23 cowboys to do for. All the time we were growing up, we had certain obligations we had to do. We had to keep our own room, make our own beds, help with the dishes, feed the dogs, or the cats, help with the chickens, gather the eggs. We were busy from the time we were very small.

Q. Was there--were there different chores that the girls did or your brother did? Was that divided or did you all do the same kinds of things?

A. No, our brother was helping around the barn, and with the stock, or he could do things like driving the stacker horse, or maybe riding the horse to plow the garden, or cultivate the garden. We had a big old work-mare, and just a one-shovel plow, and you could ride the horse and guide him while someone held the plow, and my brother would do that when he was small, and of course, as he got older, then he helped handle the machinery and the horses.

Q. Were there any of those kinds of chores that he did that you would rather have done than those that you did?

A. No, not particularly.

Q. You liked your job?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. Okay.

Living out in an area like this, I hear so many women say that as children, playing outside and working and so on, they wore dresses, not pants. What did you wear?

A. We always wore dresses. Always wore dresses until we were, oh, probably 11, 12 years old. Then we wore pants--overalls, maybe.

Q. Was that easier to manage with?

A. Yes, it was. My mother made me a very nice riding habit when we wore knickers to ride in.

Q. And she made that?

A. She made it.

Q. How about your other clothes--were they bought, or--

A. Oh, no. Mother made all of them, and she was a beautiful seamstress. Everything had handwork on it.

Q. Where did she get her material?

A. In Grand Junction, mostly, or out of the catalog.

Q. Now during those early years, early 1900, how often was your mother able to go to a town like Grand Junction, or wherever?

A. Hmmm! Very, very seldom.

Q. Once a year, or not that often?

A. I can't recall that she went once a year. We would send the supply wagons, four-horse teams with double sideboards on the wagons to Rifle to buy food supplies in the fall, and bring back all of the staples for the winter supply, but that's as far as they would go, would be to Rifle.

Q. When was the first time you remember traveling outside western Colorado, further than perhaps to the eastern slope?

A. Oh, we made trips away from home. The first one probably was to visit my aunt in North Dakota.

Q. How old were you then?

A. About three, or five.

Q. How did you go, on the train?

A. On the train.

Q. As you got older, and traveled outside northwestern Colorado, and could see other places, cities, and other parts of the country, what did you think about this area--did you have any thoughts about this place where you lived?

A. Well, it was home, and I still like home. I thought it was a pretty good place.

Q. Are there advantages to this area, do you think? If there are, I wonder what they might be?

A. As of now, I think there are a lot of advantages. One of them is lack of population, which means there is not crime, like there is in so many populated places. We are free

to walk anywhere we choose. We are isolated, as far as being able to go whenever you want. We have to drive long distances from Rangely, and that's a disadvantage, and it will remain to be so until we get public transportation.

Q Okay. When you were children, say before the age of 12, other than the things you've told me about, were there things when you had time to play and have fun, were there things that you especially liked to do?

A Ride horseback. Everywhere we went, we rode horseback.

Q Did you play games at home, or play with dolls, or any of those things?

A Oh, yes. We played all kinds of games. We played outdoor games, hide and seek, beckon, beckon, I want to beckon. All kinds of games that children do not know of nowadays.

Q I've not heard of that last game. Could you explain how you do that?

A Beckon, beckon? One child is it, and they hide their eyes and they count to perhaps ten, and everybody runs and hides, and then you can change places with whoever is hidden by giving a beckon, waving a hand or something of that sort you can dash along from bush to bush or tree to tree and if you get caught, then you're it, while you're dashing around. And then somebody can holler, "Beckon, beckon, I want to beckon." So they can change places, see, with another person.

Q Oh, I see. I've not heard of that one.

A You haven't heard of that one? Oh, we played that by the hours when I was teaching school. And then Ruby and I, when we grew a little older, she played the piano and I played the violin. My brother played the trumpet, and we spent many long hours with music.

Q How did you learn to play the instruments?

A By taking lessons.

Q There was someone here among these families?

A. No. We took them in Grand Junction.

Q. Oh, when you went to Grand Junction, you had that opportunity?

Okay. When you were in the teenage years, what kind of things did you do for activities and fun things then, as you got older?

A. Well, we lived in Grand Junction then, and we had all kinds of high school activities.

Q. Did you come home for the summers, however?

A. Always.

Q. What did you do here during the summer when you were that age?

A. We rode horseback, and we went to dances, and we had parties at home, and we had all kinds of big dinners for friends. We had family gathering--just general good times.

Q. Did groups of young people go to the dances, or did people have dates, like they sort of do now?

A. I didn't have a date until I was 15 years old. Mother wouldn't allow it.

Q. When you did have a date, did you go to the dance? Was that generally what you did?

A. Yes.

Q. What was the usual marriage age for young women?

A. Eighteen to 20.

Q. When they got finished with high school, usually? Okay. As you got older, did you have any hobbies, things that sort of hobby-like sorts of things you perhaps still do?

A. I did lots of handwork--crocheting, embroidering. Oh, we pieced quilts. I was a Girl Scout, and did a lot of the projects for scouting. When you're in school, you really don't have time, really much time for crafts.

Q. That's right. You're right. Did you ever have a job, and work?

A. Not until I was married.

Q. Oh, after you were married, you did. We'll talk about that in just a minute, then.

When you were about--oh, getting ready to graduate from high school, 17 or 18, did you have any thoughts about your life, and sort of what you would like to do--some ideas about how it might go?

A. The thing that was uppermost in my mind when I graduated from high school was that I must go to college, and complete my education. I felt like I would like very much to further my education, which I did.

Q. What did you do?

A. I went to Western State College in Gunnison.

Q. For how many years?

A. For three years.

Q. And when you finished with that, what did you do?

A. I did not graduate--I got married.

Q. Where did you meet your husband?

A. I met him in Borger, Texas.

Q. What were you doing clear down in Texas?

A. Well, that's a long story. I was engaged to a man who was employed in the oil fields, and we were to be married Christmas time, and he became very ill, and he passed away at Thanksgiving. And he was working in Borger, Texas at the time, and I went to Borger, hoping that I would get there before he died, but I didn't make it. And Clarence was his best friend, so I met my husband when I went there when my fiance was so ill.

Q. How did you and you and your husband then get back

to Rangely?

A. He drove Ed's car, and I came back with him.

Q. And you decided--did he decide to settle here then?

A. No, he went back to work in Texas, and I went back to school.

Q. And then when did you finally marry?

A. We married a year later.

Q. And you didn't go to Texas to live?

A. Oh, no. He came to Rangely, and then we went to work in Iles Dome, near Craig.

Q. Where?

A. Iles Dome, out of Craig.

Q. Iles Dome?

A. Iles Dome.

Q. That's what--yeah. I know it as Iles Grove, which is just a grove of trees, I guess, there.

A. Well, the oil field was called a dome.

Q. And did you work, or you just went with him?

A. I didn't work at that time.

Q. And then from there--how long were you there?

A. From there we went to Wyoming. When you marry an oil man, you're constantly on the move, because the jobs take you here and there, and we moved around quite a bit at first.

Q. Well, after those first few moves, did you settle somewhere then?

A. We came back to Colorado, to Rangely, and that's when I taught on Morappos.

Q. So you were a teacher when you came back?

A. I taught seven years.

Q. What did your husband do when you came back?

A. Well, that was the Depression of 1930, and he worked for Tom Iles on the Iles Ranch.

Q. Oh, I see.

A. And then he was able to get on at the oil fields again at Iles.

Q. But you stayed in this area after?

A. And then we stayed here. And then after our son was ready for the first grade, we moved to Grand Junction, and made that our home until our son was through Mesa College.

Q. Those ten years that you taught on Morappos, can you tell me about your school and maybe some experiences that you had?

A. Well, I lived in a little one-room shack, in the yard of a Mr. and Mrs. Carrigan. It was about a quarter of a mile from the school house. In those days you were your own janitor. The heat for the school building was coal, and we had to carry our own water from the creek. The snow on Morappos gets five feet deep on the level in the winter, and you have to walk to school.

Q. How cold does it get?

A. Oh, about 25 below. I had fourteen children in all eight grades, and I never had a better time in my whole life. We just had a wonderful time. I loved the kids, and they loved me, and we played games when it was so bad we couldn't get outdoors. We had jack tournaments; we had marble tournaments. We played pussy wants a corner. We did everything we could think of.

Q. What's that game? Tell me about that?

A. [laughter] Well, I don't know whether I can explain it to you any more. I've forgotten about it. It's a game you

play hiding in the corners of the school building. And we sang. Those children walked as far as two and a half miles to school, and some of them didn't have overshoes, and they wrapped their feet in gunnysacks to get there, and I was really proud of them, because they walked so far and worked so hard.

Q. How far was it from your house to the school?

A. Between a quarter and a half a mile.

Q. So did you walk?

A. And I walked, too.

Q. Did your husband live there with you?

A. No. He was working on Tom Iles' ranch.

Q. So you lived apart. Did you see each other often, or live together during the summer?

A. Not very often, because the snow was so bad, and nothing came up there except a sled in the winter. However, I broke my arm election day, and Mr. Hinricks came up and stayed, and we borrowed a team of horses from some friends of ours in Axial Basin, and we would go down to see Lois and Wood Spence at Iles Grove on the weekends, and we'd drive down in the sled and drive back. So we did get out of there once in a while.

Q. Did you have any children during that time when you were at Morappos--of your own?

A. I have one son, and he was born in 1928, and he was with my mother and my sister, Mrs. Kirby, while I was teaching on Morappos. He was not of school age yet. So they kept him here in Rangely while I taught. I came to Meeker one Saturday for a teachers' meeting, and Ruby brought Jimmy up to Meeker to meet me. And he looked up at me and he said, "Mother, I hardly knew you--you've been gone so long." And it almost broke my heart.

Q. Was this job that you took as a teacher not just because you wanted to do it, probably, but because you really needed to do it?

A. It was because of the Depression. We needed the job. I could make \$85 teaching school.

Q. Was your son away from you more than one winter? Did he live with your sister more than just one winter?

A. Yes, I taught up there two years.

Q. And so he did that both winters?

A. Yes.

Q. How old was he?

A. Four and five, I believe.

Q. Then when you left that school, what did you do next?

A. We moved to Iles Dome.

Q. And did you teach there?

A. I taught there one year.

Q. And then where did you go?

A. We came back to Rangely, and then we moved to Grand Junction, and put Jimmy in school in Grand Junction.

Q. When did you finally return to Rangely, then?

A. We came back to Rangely in 1947 the last time.

Q. Did you stay then?

A. Yes, until now.

Q. Okay. Well, that's great. If you can think about the time when you were around 10 or 11, did you have any idea that when one became a young woman and went through those changes during the teenage years, did your mother tell you anything about what would happen to you, or did all of those changes come as a big surprise?

A. It came more or less as a surprise to me. It had not been really explained to me. I was at my aunt's when it happened, and she helped me through it.

Q. So it wasn't--you didn't have to wonder about it for a long time after that?

A. No.

Q. Do you remember with your friends around here and everything, was there any--I think you answered this, Mrs. Kirby, and I think you said no--that there wasn't any real concern about becoming pregnant for the first time, and going through that experience? That was just something everyone did, and you didn't worry too much about it?

A. No.

Q. Did you have any problems with your one pregnancy and childbirth?

A. Yes, I was--I had a difficult childbirth.

Q. Where did you have this child?

A. I had him in Meeteetse, Wyoming, and there was no hospital. I went to the home of an old Swedish lady. But I had a very fine doctor.

Q. Oh, that was good.

A. So I made it all right.

Q. You made it all right. That was good.

When you think about living when you were young, and you were living on the ranch down on the river, how did your mother do the cooking?

A. We had a coal stove--great big old Majestic coal stove, and she baked bread in a great big square pan--eight great big loaves in a pan.

Q. Eight great big loaves in a pan? Because you had all those cowboys to feed?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you have venison and wild game?

A. No, we butchered our own beef, and our own hogs. Dad cured his own hams and bacon. We had chickens, turkeys-- we raised practically all of our own food.

Q. So just a few things you had to get from Grand Junction?

A. Just the staples.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. We had no fruit excepting dried fruit--dried prunes, apples, apricots, peaches, and raisins.

Q. Did you dry those yourself?

A. No, we bought them in 25-pound wooden boxes.

Q. Oh, my goodness! [laughter]

How about--do you have any memories of housekeeping and clothes-washing during that time that was so different than now?

A. Oh, my--yes! [laughter]

Q. Do you want to tell me about some of that?

A. The washing machines were all different stages. We have gone from just the washboard through different types of hand washing machines. One was the gyrator type, where you turned the handle to make it swish back and forth. Another was sort of like two washboards rocking together, and you pushed the handle to make it work. We've had all kinds of hand-operated machines. Then we went to the gasoline washing machine, and then--never to electric on the ranch--we never did have electricity. But the gasoline were a great help.

Q. Since you did have a job, and worked hard all day at teaching, you weren't like other women who were able to stay home and do all that work at home during the day. You really had two jobs, I suppose?

A. Yes, I did. And much of the time I lived on a ranch, and took care of chickens, and eggs, and garden, and did all my own washing, and all my own housecleaning, all my own canning.

Q How did you do all that and be gone all day while you were teaching?

A You manage--you work at it.

Q Did you work late into the evening?

A Uh-huh, and Saturday is a very busy day.

Q What time did you have to get up in the morning to get all this done before you went to school?

A Oh, about 6:00, 5:30.

Q Did you ever--because it's so cold in this country during the winter--in your houses and things, did you ever feel that the winter had just moved inside, and it was cold inside?

A Many times. I lived in Buffalo Basin, Wyoming before Jim Ted was born. I was quite pregnant, and we lived in a cookhouse, and there was no ceiling in it. And I got up on the table and stuffed wet newspapers between the wall and the ceiling to keep the snow from drifting in. The wind blows terribly in Wyoming, and it was very cold up there. I've lived in some very difficult places.

Q Not well insulated?

A No--there was no insulation.

Q So your stove was what you sat by, because that was the only--

A We did have natural gas there, for heat. It was in the oil fields, and we did have natural gas, but it was a good thing, or we'd have frozen.

Q Can you tell me who were some of the people who were most influential in your life?

A My parents--my mother and my dad. My violin teacher, Alpha Sigfried. But I think most of all my mother and my dad.

Q Are there any things in your life--what are the things in your life that you've derived the most satisfaction from? What do you feel the best about?

A. The fact that I have had so many wonderful jobs. I have never been laid off from a job. I've never had a job that I couldn't go back to. That's a great satisfaction to me.

Q. So you've really worked a great part of your life?

A. Yes, I ended up as a secretary and an office manager.

Q. In Rangely?

A. Yes. I retired with Colorado Well Service. I worked for them 13 years, so I've really had a very good work life.

Q. Well, that's not common with most of the women your age. Many of them didn't do that, so you've had some experiences that they didn't have.

A. I worked about 30 years of my married life.

Q. And you enjoyed doing it?

A. Yes, ma'am!

Q. That's great. Do you have anything that you would call a major disappointment?

A. Well, probably losing my husband when he was age 65. He's been gone 16 years, I've been alone.

Q. Would you also call that the saddest time in your life, probably?

A. Uh-huh.

Q. Are there any things that you wished that you'd had the opportunity to do, and just for some reason were not able to do those?

A. I don't believe so.

Q. That's a good thing to be able to say.

A. I've had a very satisfying life.

Q. That's great. Do you recall any illnesses or medical

problems that you had in those early years which were difficult because there wasn't much medical help around?

A. Well, I had medical problems, but we were living in Grand Junction, and we had very good doctors there. I had the German measles, and I was very ill when I was 13.

Q. Where did you live then?

A. In Grand Junction.

Q. Were you ever here on the ranch when things like that happened?

A. Then we came back to Rangely, and in about six weeks, I came down with typhoid fever from drinking the water out of the White River that same summer, and went back to Grand Junction very ill with typhoid fever.

Q. What did they do about typhoid fever--anything?

A. I can't recall the treatment, but somehow or another I pulled through it.

Q. Good.

A. But I have had major surgeries at various times, but I've had very good medical treatment.

Q. Well, we are interested in some of the home remedies that people in this area had to use because they didn't have any real medical help. Do you recall any of those?

A. Well, we had numerous small accidents--colds, and things of that type, which we always took care of ourselves, and my mother has helped take care of many ill people in the early days, particularly Indian babies. The squaws would bring the papooses to Mother, and she would doctor them, and help with them, and they thought Mother was a wonderful person, because she helped with the sick Indian papooses.

Q. Where did those Indians live--how near by?

A. Right here on the White River. They were the Ute Indians.

Q. They were near your house, then?

A. Yes, they were great friends of our family. They thought my dad was about it. They have been in our home many, many times.

Q. Could they speak English with you?

A. No, no.

Q. How did you communicate?

A. Well, Dad had a way with him. He could get a few words so that they could understand.

Q. What did your--do you remember what your mother did for the children, what kinds of things she did?

A. No, not particularly. I was too small to remember, but I do remember that she has taken care of several small Indian babies that were quite ill.

Q. That's interesting. I didn't realize that the Indians were still here. I thought they'd gone to Utah, but some of them evidently--

A. Well, they were banished to the reservation later.

Q. But at this time, which would be about what year?

A. When was Meeker--the Indians were here until perhaps in the teens or the early twenties, and they would come back for their hunting.

Q. I see.

Well, I thank you very much for our interview today, Mrs. Hinricks, and I will look forward to hearing more about your family's life with your sister, Mrs. Kirby. Thank you for your time.

A. Thank you for coming. It's been a pleasure.

Q. You're welcome.