An Oral History With Christine Bozner
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April 26, 1983
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As Christine Bozner looks back on her life, a look of satisfaction comes over her. Her broad smile reflects her love of life. Not one aspect of her life is regretted as she pauses to look behind her. She has passed through both good times and hard times and has been left unscarred. The times have left their mark, however, on the thoughtful face of this Yugoslavian.

During the time when people from all over the country were moving to Rock Springs, Christine was moving out. Moving not only from Rock Springs, but from the United States. She was born in Rock Springs April 13, 1915 and was taken to Yugoslavia when just an infant. Christina and her brothers and sisters were all born at home with a midwife in attendance. Warmed bricks were placed on the babies feet to help stimulate the blood. It was not until 1928 when she returned to Rock Springs. She came back with her mother and her 8 siblings.

Like many others, Christina's father was a miner. He worked alongside all of Christina's uncles in the coal mines. Even though their family had their own place to stay, the mining companies did provide housing for those who needed it. The
company houses consisted of 3 rooms. They had running cold water, and electricity. Rent was only $10 a month, including the water and light bill. At $3 a ton, the miners were able to heat their houses with coal. The coal mines were responsible for naming certain sections of town. For example, coal mine #1 was referred to by everyone as hill #1. The same is true for mine numbers 2, 3, and 4. The mines were run 7 days a week, with some workers working 4 days and the others 3.

Present-day companies of Rock Springs are continuing some of the policies of the coal mines. For example, company housing is provided to some of the workers, and shift working is comparable to the 3 or 4 working days for the miners.

When Christine first returned to Rock Springs, she did not get a very good impression. The only thing that vividly stood out in Rock Springs, she says, were the tumble weeds. "Tumble-weeds everywhere, and they all look alike." This is in sharp contrast to her earlier memories of Yugoslavia. There she remembers the abundant vegetation. The different varieties of flowers took the place that sagebrush has here. Also were trees, bushes, lakes and small brooks; all combining to form beautiful memories, and a beautiful picture in her mind. As she talks about Yugoslavia, one might think she was reading directly out of a travel brochure, but it is clear that she has very fond memories of the land she grew up on.

Cars were a luxury 60 years ago. Christine's first car
ride was in 1928 in her uncle's Model T. It was quite the experience for her and she thought she was "something special" when riding around in it. They often took the car to Green River on picnics and it was an all day affair. The ride was long and less than smooth because of the unpaved dirt roads, but it was always a pleasurable experience nonetheless. There was usually one car to a family and it was the husband's to drive. Mrs. Bozner never did learn how to drive.

Upon her new arrival to Rock Springs, Christine took on many jobs. For awhile, she had a job working for one of the few doctors in Rock Springs. Her responsibilities included cleaning, some cooking, and looking after the children. This job was held while she was also attending school. She was paid $5 a month with free room and board. Christine soon learned the value of a dollar. For example, she was able to purchase with this money her school clothes. At this time, a dress costed a dollar, as well as a pair of shoes. Babysitting was perhaps one of the more lucrative jobs she ever held, but it was not the only one. Christine would wash windows for local business; this she did for 10¢ a window. It got to be tedious, but she was a hard worker and could always use an extra dime. Another job she used to do in her spare time was peddle milk. Since her family owned cows, she milked the cows and sold the extra milk for 10¢ a quart.

Aside from not being able to enjoy the scenery, home life
in Rock Springs was very similar to that in Yugoslavia. Cows, pigs, chickens and rabbits were raised for family use. The children usually helped tend to these animals. The women cooked, did laundry, and kept house; the men worked outside the home for paying jobs. The laundry was boiled in huge copper boilers and then hung out to dry. The cold running water in the house helped somewhat in the cleaning chores. Christine says that her mother hauled water to her house in 1912, but she did not know where it came from or when her mother stopped doing this. The responsibility of disciplining the children was left up to the mother. Christine says that this wasn't much of a responsibility for her because her children were well-behaved. Her daily jobs included taking care of the livestock. She cooked 3 meals a day plus a dessert. This was done, mind you, without the aid of a microwave oven. Weekly work done was the scrubbing of the floors and washing clothes. Some of the finer things in life were left to be granted. There was no running hot water and no inside toilet. The toilet was located outside—in the cold. Toilet paper was another missing luxury. Therefore, catalogs were first used (read) and then reused. It was their own way of recycling paper.

Christine attended school both in Yugoslavia and in Rock Springs. She attended the Yellowstone Elementary School for a few years, but never did graduate. According to Christina, her mother (then living in Yugoslavia) was taught how to read and
write by her father. Religion was also taught in the home.

The Yugoslavians were very close-knit. The adults did not attend any functions that were not directly related to other Yugoslavians. However, the children were more open to other races and religions. Christine's son was a very good friend of a black boy his own age and through this friendship she was first exposed to a black. Because the older generation basically kept the themselves, Christine does not know much about any other ethnic group in Rock Springs. She does know, however, that there are people of Chinese, Japanese, Greek, Dutch, Italian, German and Indian descent living in the vicinity. She does not know much about their customs, and does not know anything about the Ku-Klux-Klan.

The young and old alike enjoyed participating in the yearly holidays. Mrs. Bozner, her family, and fellow Yugoslavians observed birthdays, Easter, Halloween, Labor Day, Fourth of July, and Christmas. Birthdays were celebrated differently than they are now. Now, when a child has a birthday, his family and friends celebrate it and give gifts—not then. Birthdays were celebrated by everyone with any connection to the child. Relatives, friends, the families of friends, and neighbors celebrated. A traditional cake was baked and there was always dancing. The event lasted all day. Like most Yugoslavians, Christina's family was Catholic, and Easter was very important. Everyone usually got a new dress or suit to attend mass in.
Each child received one Easter egg.

Halloween was characterized by mischief. Before receiving candy was a custom, young goblins overturned outhouses, soaped windows, booby-trapped doors, and the like. It was not until one-too-many outhouses was overturned that candy was handed out. Christine recalls one episode in which she and her friends were about to turn over an outhouse when they heard a voice from within yell, "Please! Don't do it, I'll give you money, I'll give you anything!" The young friends decided not to overturn the outhouse and the man inside in return doused them with cold water.

Labor Day was a day when people of all nationalities could dress up in costume and display to others their proud heritage. There was always a parade in which representatives of each ethnic group marched. Christine was a frequent participant in these parades.

On Christmas, instead of hanging out a stocking, Christine put out a cup with her name on it. The other children did likewise. In these cups was placed oranges, apples, and candy. Candy was a rare treat for them. Presents were not exchanged, but again, everyone usually received a new outfit for church. The practice of decorating a tree was an important family event.

There were quite a few things to do in Rock Springs on a date. There was rollerskating, 2 movie theaters, and an almost infinite number of dances. At the Playmore Dance Hall, an
orchestra played every Saturday night. Many dances were also held at the still-present Slovenski Dome. When walking to the dances, an old pair of shoes were always worn and the good ones carried in a bag. This was done to keep the mud off of the nicer shoes.

One dating ritual unique to Rock Springs was "Whitewalling". There was a white wall behind Yellowstone school and when the couples wanted to be alone, they would wander off behind the wall. Another place they went to to be alone was the cemetery. This practice was done by the older couples and was replaced by cars when they became more common. The boys would often tell their dates that a ghost was coming in order to receive a big hug from their frightened girlfriends. The girls, of course, soon realized their tactics but went along with them anyway.

Christine met her future husband, Karl Bozner, while rummaging through the dump yard. Christine, a collector of dishes, saw that Karl had a cup that she liked and offered to trade it for a diamond ring she had just found. Karl accepted the offer and the deal was made. Their vows were made soon after in the Our Lady of Sorrows church on September 13, 1933. Christine does not know what happened to that diamond ring, but she does know she didn't get it. On her wedding day, she says she received a "cheap" $3 ring. For the bride, the wedding was most
tedious. After the ceremony, the wedding party and guests went to her in-laws for a two-day celebration. Pigs and cows were butchered and much beer and wine was consumed. Dancing and merry-making were the order of the day. When all of this was finally over, the whole thing was repeated at the bride's mother's house. After this long week, Christine was finally able to move in her new abode and set up house. She painted, made the curtains, and scrubbed the house down to make it "cozy" for she and her husband. Within a year, their first baby was born. After the marriage, the industrious young woman did not pursue any money-making adventures. That, as was most cases, was left up to the man.

Her husband was a blacksmith and he belonged to the union. However, he did not talk to Mrs. Bozner about the union and she was consequently left in the dark. She did not know where even the meetings were held.

Like the others in her family, Christine did not go see a doctor or dentist very often. Unlike the others in her family and even other Rock Springs residents, however, Christine did use the medical facilities to deliver her 4 children. In fact, with the delivery of her first child in 1934, she was the first woman in the city to deliver her baby in the hospital. She had had a hard labor and was taken to the hospital where she was given ether. Her husband did not especially appreciate the fact that she had to go to the hospital. He asked her what kind
of a woman was she that she didn't know how to have a baby.

To take care of her babies' colds and other maladies, Mrs. Bozner made her own remedies. For example, she used an assortment of herbal teas to combat a cold. She used cammile, elder, and sage teas for a cough. Honey and onion was frequently added to these teas for added strength. She also prescribed onion soup and hot-mustard baths. Because not many people went to the doctors, there were not many in town. Mrs. Bozner can recall only 3 doctors (one of which she babysat for) and 1 dentist. The doctors did make house calls and were summoned when there were outbreaks of polio, measles, chicken pox, and spinal meningitis. The dentist especially did not have many patients because the use of sugar was very low.

Christine Bozner first voted in 1935 when she was 21. She had had her first baby when she was 18. She is a member of the Democratic party because she believes that it is the best for the working people. She feels that Roosevelt and Kennedy were very good presidents and would like to see a new president with similar qualities. She, as well as most others she knew, supported the Social Security System. Now she is having second thoughts about it, however. Christina has no recollections about the Ku-Klux-Klan. She does, however, remember the prostitutes. She never paid much attention to them because they did not affect her. She doesn't even know when they left.

Prior to World War I, Rock Springs was a small, horse and
buggy town. These were the days that Christine liked best. They bring back fond memories of the ice-cream man in a horse-pulled cart. Those were the days when stores delivered, and doctors made house-calls. She was able to purchase a month's worth of groceries for $15. People were working and no one went hungry.

From Christine's account, the Depression did not affect Rock Springs residents as much as it people in other parts of the country. Some people had to cut down on costs by sewing their own clothes, raising livestock, and planting a small garden, but most people were virtually unaffected. Most residents had their own home and there were not too many rentals.

One evidence of the Depression was visible with the influx of the transient bums. These bums did not stay in town long, but there was a steady in-coming flow to replace those leaving. The bums were often given money, food, or pay for small jobs they performed. The odd jobs included cleaning barns, chopping wood, and painting.

Looking back on the changes Rock Springs has been through, Mrs. Borner thinks the most dramatic is the new shopping mall and the trailer courts. The shopping mall has taken business away from the once crowded streets of downtown. The trailer courts, or "houses on wheels" as she calls them, have brought in people that are not as desirable as the more permanent residents of Rock Springs.
NAME: Christine Bozner

PRESENT ADDRESS: 8/10 Perry

1. Present profession or occupation: Grandma

2. Occupations followed in the past (give dates):

3. Date of birth: 4/13/1915 Place of birth: Rock Springs

4. Date of moving to Wyoming: 1926

5. Full name of parents (give mother's maiden name)
   Mike Kozola Ersele Aydonik

6. Names of brothers and sisters (and to whom married):
   Mike Kozola + Frances
   Leo Kozola + Katherin Zembo
   Carl Kozola + Died
   Angela Kozola + John Angelov
   Justine Kozola + Joe Nagy
   Anni Kozola + Frank Labar
   Antone Kozola + Roy Ames

7. Schools attended (give dates):

8. Places of residence in Wyoming (give dates):
   Rock Springs 1915

9. Military service (dates, awards, area served, rank, etc.):
   None

10. Political offices held (give dates):

11. Political affiliation: D

12. Religious affiliation: Catholic

13. Marriage (spouse's name, date and place of marriage):
   Carl Bozner Sept 15 1933 Rock Springs Our Lady of Sorrows

14. Children (names, dates of birth, grandchildren, etc.):
   Dorothy 1934 Terri Woodward, Terry, Bridget, Kathy Diane
   Carol 1941 Christina, J.J. Roshan, Nicklos
   Christine 1935 Fela, Jerry, Jimmy, Carl, Jack, Jill, Marry
   Carl 1938 Sandy, Dave

15. List of clubs and societies of which you are a member:
   None