

# THE MARIA ROGERS Oral History Program

NEWSLETTER

SUMMER 2011



## What's New?

The Maria Rogers Oral History Program and the Carnegie Library for Local History are sponsoring a **program about the Fourmile Fire** on September 20 (the month of the one-year anniversary of the fire) at the Main Library auditorium, at 7p.m. The program will feature two short films about the fire, *Saving Gold Hill* and

"THE SMOKE WAS SO THICK IN HERE  
AT THAT POINT,  
NOBODY COULD TELL WHAT WAS BURNING  
AND WHAT WASN'T."

—BOB MASON, GOLD HILL RESIDENT

*Packed*; live music by Ray Smith; and, if time allows, comments from the audience. The films are based on oral history interviews.

The Fourmile Fire burned more than 6,000 acres and 169 structures in the foothills of Boulder County in September 2010. **Saving Gold Hill: The Story of the Fourmile Canyon Fire** tells how close the residents of this town came to losing both their homes and their history in this historic mining town, and of how firefighters fought the fire.

"THE LUXURY OF TIME CREATES THE  
PROBLEM OF DECISION-MAKING...  
YOU'VE GOT TO THINK: WHAT DO I WANT?  
WHAT DO I NEED? WHAT DO I LOVE?"

—JOANNE COLE, EVACUEE

**PACKED** is a film about the Fourmile Canyon evacuees and what they chose to take with them, not knowing if everything left behind would be

destroyed. Their choices might be surprising, but each response has something to teach us about the things we surround ourselves with and what is truly irreplaceable.

Please join us on September 20, at 7:00 p.m., at the Main Library auditorium of the Boulder Public Library for this free Fourmile Fire anniversary program.

Plan ahead: the **national oral history conference**, sponsored by the Oral History Association, will be in Denver this year, October 12-16. There will be a wide-variety of talks, workshops, tours, exhibits—and a movie night! Go to [www.oralhistory.org](http://www.oralhistory.org) for more information about the program and registration.

This issue of the newsletter describes **thirteen new interviews** that have been added to our collection. They are available online and also at the Carnegie Branch Library for Local History (see p. 2 for details about how to access interviews).

**OUR FEATURED INTERVIEW** for this issue is OH 1675, an interview with **Alla Levy**, the first of the Soviet Jewish families to be resettled in Boulder by Boulder Action for Soviet Jewry. She vividly describes life in the Soviet Union from the WWII era onward and speaks movingly about the process of resettling in Boulder.



Also archived this quarter is an interview about oral history technique that contains an amusing and instructive performance about **how NOT to do an oral history** (see OH 1702). You can listen to this short play at <http://tinyurl.ohplay>.

We also have new interviews about the Italian-American community in Boulder County, farming and ranching, other Soviet Jewish refuseniks who immigrated to Boulder County, and the League of Women Voters (see a video excerpt from a League of Women Voters interview at <http://tinyurl.notbridge>). In addition, there are interviews with former students of Whittier Elementary school; and another in our series of interviews about the Fourmile Fire.

## New Interviews

**Details about the newly archived interviews follow:**

**OH 1616.** In this interview from 1995, **Anthony Bessol** recalls family members and neighbors in Boulder County and in Denver, particularly those in the Italian American community. His memories of cooking and food are particularly vivid, as are his accounts of difficult economic times and discrimination against Italian-Americans. He recalls several Boulder institutions: Mt. St. Gertrude Academy, Boulder High, Casey Junior High, Sacred Heart Catholic School, the University of Colorado, Public Service Company, the Watts-Hardy Dairy, and the Blue Parrot Restaurant in Louisville. By Dee Montalbano. Transcribed by Jo Walsh and Alf McDonald.

**OH 1620.** **Freeman Clyncke's** grandparents came to Colorado in the late 1800s and settled south and east of Boulder. His grandfather and his three brothers farmed and ranched and have run the riding stables in Eldorado Springs for 42 years. He is one of seven children, three of whom still farmed (hay, wheat, barley, corn) and ranched (cattle and horses) at the time of the interview in 1995. As children, they milked cows before and after school and drove farm equipment. The family raised its own meats and vegetables and sold surplus milk to Watts-

Hardy Dairy. The interview also describes social and recreational activities from his childhood, and ends with a discussion of how farming in Boulder County was getting "squeezed out." By Steven Hall. Transcribed by Jo Walsh and Alf McDonnell.

**OH 1668 A-H.** **Charles Owen Moore** was born in 1913; his wife, **Virginia Henderson Moore**, was born in 1916. In the 1980s, their children recorded conversations with their parents about their parents' lives, including Charles' memories of growing up on a ranch in Boulder County; attending a one-room school until 8th grade; his subsequent education, work in the mining and tire industry; and his service for many years on a school board. Virginia relates details of her childhood in Colorado Springs. They both talk about their years of raising a family and the many trips that they took. Charles Moore later added to the recording, going into more detail and

## Visit Us: In Person or Online

⇒ Listen to and/or view any of our 1,700+ interviews at the **Carnegie Branch Library for Local History** of the Boulder Public Library, 1125 Pine St., Boulder, CO 80302.

⇒ Visit us online four ways!

1) Use our digital archive: **www.boulderlibrary.org/oralhistory**. Audio, summaries, and transcripts of interviews.

2) Read our blog, Listen to This!: **boulderoralhistory.wordpress.com**. Oral history news and resources.

3) Listen to our podcasts on iTunes: **www.tinyurl.com/MROHP-iTunes**.

3) Visit us on Facebook: **www.tinyurl.com/MORHP-FB** (become a fan to see new posts automatically).

⇒ Search Boulder Public Library's online catalog to find oral histories by topic: **http://www.boulderlibrary.org** (Choose "local history" for your search from the home page and include the words "oral history" in your search.)

bringing the listener up-to-date on family matters. The recordings end with Virginia elaborating on various aspects of her childhood years and her years of raising a family.

**OH1675V A-B. Alla Levy**, with her husband and two sons, was the first of the families from Dushanbe, Tajikistan, to be resettled in the United States by Boulder Action for Soviet Jewry. She recalls the highs and lows of their life in the Soviet Union where she and her husband experienced increasing discrimination against Jews and began to realize that for her sons, educational and economic opportunities would be limited. The family began to try to find ways to obtain visas to leave, and she talks about their experiences in the context of political events in the world. She also discusses the experiences of family members and other Jews from Dushanbe during and after World War II, at home, at the front, and in concentration camps. With help from BASJ, her family arrived in the United States. She details the family's initial difficulties, their adjustments to new careers, new friends, interactions with government agencies, new cultural expectations, and finally, being able to participate openly in Judaism. She talks about how BASJ supported their efforts through this difficult, but ultimately triumphant, process. In her words: "This is my home now, and I consider myself American." By Brandon Springer. Filmed by Becky Rosenberg. Transcribed by Shirley Steele.

**OH 1677VA-B. Boris Bachayev** and his family immigrated to the United States from Dushanbe, Tajikistan, in the Soviet Union, with the help of Boulder Action for Soviet Jewry. He discusses both the lack of religious and other freedoms in the Soviet Union and anti-Semitism that he experienced there. He contrasts life there with life in the United States. He also describes the process of adapting to American culture and the close ties that his family formed with the American family that helped them with that process. He reflects on the differences among several branches of American Judaism and describes being the founder of a Bukharian Jewish synagogue in Denver. By Becky Rosenberg. Filmed by Brandon Springer. Transcribed by Joan Nagel.

**OH 1688V A-B. Rebecca Bradley** discusses her involvement in the efforts of Boulder Action for Soviet Jewry. Among other related topics, she describes two trips she took to the former Soviet Union, the connections she helped forge that allowed many Soviet Jewish citizens to emigrate to the United States, her participation as a host family for one of the first families that BASJ brought to Boulder, and her perspective as both an American Jew and a Russian-language speaker. By Brandon Springer. Filmed by Becky Rosenberg. Transcribed by Emily Shuster.

**OH 1694V. Donlyn Arbuthnot Whissen**, a Boulder native and member of a pioneer family, talks with students from the Whittier Student Historians' Club about going to Whittier Elementary School for seven years in the 1960s. She recalls some of the creative and enjoyable projects she did as a student; the way that learning about people in other places ignited a life-long interest in people and history; recess games; clothing of the time; and her memories of the assassination of President Kennedy. By Jamirah Duhamel and Hannah Ybarra. Filmed by Fernando Hern.

**OH 1696V. Sue Anderson**, a member and past president of two League of Women Voters chapters, including the Boulder County League, discusses a wide array of subjects pertaining to the League, ranging from its role as an organization that provides intellectual stimulation and development of leadership skills to the organization's actions on political issues for the purpose of educating the public and improving government. She describes both the League's general goals and structure as well as some of the specific issues that the Boulder County League has tackled, including campaign finance reform, transportation policy, and the Annexation by Vote Initiative. By Anne Marie Pois. Filmed by Emily Shuster. Transcribed by Jenna Woods.

**OH 1702.** This recording is of a talk given by folklorist **Phyllis Harrison-Brose** to volunteers for the Boulder Library's oral history program in 1986. The speaker

discusses differences between oral history interviewing and folklore research, how the practice of oral history interviewing has developed over time, techniques for successful interviewing, how to overcome common challenges and pitfalls, and issues of transcription and archiving. The recording also includes a performance of an amusing skit that illustrates how NOT to conduct an oral history interview.

**OH 1704V. David Skaggs** describes his own history leading up to becoming a member of the House of Representatives and some of the work he's been involved with since leaving public office. In the heart of the interview, he focuses on his interactions with Bill Cohen and Boulder Action for Soviet Jewry as well as his involvement with the Aleksandr Nikitin case, a Russian trial in which he participated as a member of the House of Representatives. By Brandon Springer. Filmed by Emily Shuster. Transcribed by Diane Baron.

**OH 1714V. George Epp**, who went on to become the sheriff of Boulder County, describes his elementary school days at Whittier Elementary School to student interviewers from the Whittier Student Historians' Club. Topics include favorite subjects and teachers, recess activities, an amusing story about getting in trouble for a mild prank, the honor of being a crossing guard and getting to wear a badge, and working on the school's mimeographed newspaper. By Allienna Gonzalez and Fernando Hern. Filmed by Jamirah DuHamel.

**OH 1715V. Esther Romero** attended Whittier Elementary School from second grade (in 1944) until sixth grade. She tells about favorite teachers, and relates an anecdote that illustrates the strictness of Principal Jessie Fitzpatrick. She also tells about Christmas parties at school, a field trip students took to Macky Auditorium to see Swan Lake, and buying Victory Stamps during World War II. By Fernando Hern. Filmed by Allienna Gonzalez.

**OH 1717V. Doug Young**, longtime resident of Sunshine Canyon and retired Fire Chief of the

Sunshine Fire Protection District, talks about the events of the Fourmile Fire of September 2010. He discusses topics of community preparedness and communication (for example, how he used social media such as email groups and Facebook), as well as ways to prepare a residence in the event of a wildfire. His role in facilitating communication between the authorities and the public is covered, as well as the character of the fire, family members' response to being evacuated, the larger Boulder community's response to assisting evacuees, and the changing landscape of the Sunshine community. There is also the event of eating a peanut butter and jelly sandwich: a moment of calm amidst the raging fire and the falling ash. By Martha Dick. Filmed by Don Dick. Transcribed by Janna Plant.

**No August meeting.**  
**Next volunteer meetings:**  
**September 10, October 8**  
**8:00 a.m.**  
**Carnegie Branch Library**

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

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**ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM NEWS:**  
**Blog:** [boulderoralhistory.wordpress.com](http://boulderoralhistory.wordpress.com)  
**Facebook:** [tinyurl.com/MROHP-FB](http://tinyurl.com/MROHP-FB)

**General Program Information:**  
[www.boulderlibrary.org/carnegie/collections/mroh.html](http://www.boulderlibrary.org/carnegie/collections/mroh.html)