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Ethel Stoneman

Karen Brewster, interviewer

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Renee Byrd, present

Karen Callahan, videographer

Ethel Stoneman said she was 88 years old. She was born on January 22, 1927 in Montrose, Colorado. It was an area of cattle or sheep ranching or fruit farms. She grew up on a homestead. It was homesteaded in the 1880s. They had hay crops and later grew beans and tomatoes. They were sheep farmers. The sheep were in the mountains in the summer and they were on the farm in the winter. They had sheep herders. Her great-grandfather was an officer in the Union Army in the Civil War. He was wounded three times. He was sent to Colorado to put down the Ute Indians. He was originally from back east. His name was William. After he got out of the service in Colorado he homesteaded where the Indians had been removed. She wasn't sure how her great-grandmother got into the scene. Stoneman said her grandmother had the first white child born in Montrose County. Her grandmother married and stayed on the homestead with her husband. Her father was raised in Iona, Kansas. He was from a family of nine children. The four oldest came out to Colorado in 1888 in the Colona area. Three of them homesteaded in that area and the fourth one went down to the Grand Junction area. The rest of her dad's family moved out in 1900 and settled in this area. During the depression they lost their business. They were the Hull Brother's, Inc. They had bought a farm in the Eckert area to winter their sheep. The sheep were in the high mountains in the summer. Her father pulled out of the corporation and they kept their farm in the Eckert area. Stoneman talked about sheep shearing. All of them were sheared by one company. There were 16,555 sheep and they paid 322 dollars to shear them. She said her brother would shear sheep for a living. Stoneman would run the sheep into the pen.

Stoneman said it was seven miles cross country to get to school and ten miles by road. Her older brother rode horseback for three years and then she joined him. They attended a two room school house. Four other families rode horseback to school. In the morning they had cows to milk and other chores before they went to school. They also had to get their horses ready. She wore bib overalls over her school clothing while riding to school. There were three students who started first grade together. They traveled by horse back even in the winter. Some winters they had quite a bit of snow. She remembers getting to school and she was so cold she couldn't get off the horse and the teacher would have to take her off.

Stoneman said there were six children in the family. She talked about the birth order in her family: Loiree (brother), herself, Ethiee Earl (brother), Geraldine (sister), Leigh (sister), and Cary Beth (sister). Stoneman said all of them worked. There was always something to do. They were a long ways from close neighbors. They entertained themselves. They would jump rope. Stoneman talked about photos of her family. One of their neighbors had a pet deer that would come and visit them. She said they would have fifteen minutes once they got home to change their clothes. They listened to the radio while they changed their clothes. Then they would continue with their chores. Her dad never split up the chores into boy's work or girl's work – he gave them all the same kind of work. Her father was a disciplinarian, but he didn't demand perfectionism. Her mother would yell at them. Stoneman said she was better to her patients. She worked as a nurse after her children were older. When Stoneman was in fourth grade there were enough children to start another school for them. The parents took turns driving them to school. WWII came around when she was a teenager. The men were gone and the women did the farm work. When she was sixteen she got a chauffer's license. She drove the school bus until she graduated.

Brewster asked her about her memories of the Depression and how it affected her area. Stoneman said they were in poverty. They went into town to get supplies four or five times a year. They went to town before school to get new shoes. They would go to town at Christmas time, too. One neighbor didn't have any children and would take her family and another family to the movies at Christmas time. They had a thirty-two volt light plant at their place so they had lights in the evening. They would listen to the radio on Saturday nights. They usually used kerosene lights. She described their adobe house they used to keep things cool. They would butcher their own pigs in the winter and had chicken in the summer. They sold their cream to the creamery and eggs to the store. Their wool was sold and lambs were sold in August. She talked about what was found in Eckert. It is still a small community. A lot of retirees live there. Stoneman said it was a good place to grow up. They attended the church on Sundays. They rode horses to church. Gasoline was cheap but they didn't have the money to buy it. They would get one or two pairs of shoes a year and her mother would sew their clothing. They ordered their overalls through the catalog. She talked about her grandmother wearing black coats and her mother would take the material from the coats and make coats for her children. They didn't have the money for extra things. They didn't throw anything away. They had a 1928 Dodge that they drove until 1948.

Stoneman said the school house was entertainment. Everyone was involved. Once a month there was a program at the school. They would have plays, dances and parties. All the kids learned to dance. She talked about the different instruments. When they got into high school they went out and picked fruit during the summer. Everyone would can their fruits and vegetables. They had a two acre vegetable garden. During deer season they would can the meat. Everyone ate what they were given. They had a cannery in Delta which canned tomatoes and beans. There were fruit storage areas. She packed the fresh peaches for shipping. All the peaches were individually wrapped in paper. She remembers being paid a penny a pound for picking cherries.

Stoneman talked about the WWII years in their area. She graduated high school in 1945. Her high school graduating class will be having their 70th reunion in the summer. She talked about different people in her graduating class, her class annual, and graduation and prom photos. She said kids didn't get into trouble. She always carried a pocket knife with her. Her brother carried a gun on the horse on their way

to school for various reasons. People would sort out their problems. All of the boys went off to war. The ones left at home were because of hard cases. They needed to have some people left on the farm to provide food. Six of her classmates went into the Army. They were all pilots who successfully flew in the Pacific and returned to become commercial pilots. Her oldest brother was a merchant marine. Her younger brother was in the Pacific at the end of the war. They knew families who lost sons. When the soldiers returned some of them were affected, but they were accepted into the community. She said the world should have learned something from that war, but they didn't.

Brewster asked her about the hired hands. Stoneman said they were usually Mexican sheep herders. They were short on help during the war. The sheep herders would come every year. The farmers would all help each other with the harvest. They cooked for the crew. She talked about breaking eleven plates at one time. During the war they had teacher's who didn't have full certificates for teaching. She went to Western State in Gunnison immediately after graduation for college. She studied to be a teacher during that summer. She taught on a war emergency certificate. She taught for two years at Uncompahgre. There were three teachers at the school. She taught 1-3 grades and enjoyed it. She was paid 90 dollars a month for 9 months. She walked two miles from her place to the school. She had to provide her own housing. She was about sixty miles from Eckert so she could go home on the weekends to work on the farm.