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Ethel Stoneman

Karen Brewster, interviewer

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Series: Ethel Stoneman interviews

Karen Brewster asked Ethel Stoneman her maternal great-grandfather. Stoneman said her grandfather's name was William Theodore Ryman. He was born June 14, 1840 in Indiana and one of 12 children. He moved to Montrose County, Colorado in 1884 while he was in the military. After returning to Indiana he returned to Montrose to homestead. She talked about his military career. He passed away in 1924. Stoneman said her two brothers served in the Second World War. Her brother, Loire Hull served in the South Pacific and her brother, Ethiee Earl stayed at home on the farm until the war started. Her brothers returned home and worked on the farm. William Ryman had one daughter, Laura. Stoneman talked about a Christmas card from Pearl Harbor. She had a photo of her grandmother and grandfather and a wedding photo of her mother and father who were married in 1902. Stoneman showed photos of her family. Her siblings were Ethiee, Lorie, Geraldine, Leah and Geri Beth. Her parents were Brownie and Cecile Hull.

Stoneman said her mother was a nurse and talked about her graduation from nursing school after she had six children. Stoneman said they didn't go to the doctor for everything back then and just took care of problems themselves. They were twenty miles from town and only went there a few times a year.

Brewster asked Stoneman about riding horses to school. Stoneman said when she was in the first grade they had to travel through a farmer's field on their way home. There were numerous gates to open and close. While they were shutting the gate they could see a coyote dragging a trap. They ran it up and down a hill until it died of exhaustion. They picked up the coyote and put it on their saddle. When they got home they were late and they knew they were in trouble. Once their father saw the coyote they were forgiven. The trap belonged to a neighbor and he gave them five dollars for saving the trap. It was big money for them. She said they had adventures like the horse falling or the horse throwing them off. Starting at fourth grade different parents would drive them to school until they got up to high school. During harvest time the kids would stay home and help harvest. Brewster asked about snakes. Stoneman said it wasn't a big bother since the horses would spot the snakes and shy away from them. They would harvest their hay with draft animals. Sometimes snakes would be asleep in the bundles of hay. They would throw the bundles on wagon and the snakes would come sliding out and fall to the ground. You were aware of snakes, but not afraid. There were different types of snakes, not just rattle snakes. They had piles (shocks) of hay not bales. They were raked up and let dry.

Brewster asked about her teaching certificate and getting married. Stoneman said she got her certificate right after graduation. All the farmers were off to war. There were kids and elders left in the area. She went to teach in Uncompahgre. Her father had his original homestead there. Her grandmother had attended the same school where she taught. When the school was finished she went back to Gunnison for more teacher's training. She said at that point she made the mistake of getting married. She said she had a beautiful son out of that marriage. She was twenty-two at the time. She met him in the local farm area. The marriage didn't last. She went back to work as a teacher for a short while although she could make more money waiting tables. She met her second husband, Glenn. He grew up on an isolated homestead. He did not serve in the military because of health problems. He had a government job driving for a hospital in Denver, Fitzwilliam Hospital. Her husband's family lived on deer and rabbits. He didn't finish high school, but he was self educated. Glenn had a son who was a year older than her son. Their children's names were Frank and Darwon. She and Glenn were married on September 18, 1951. Glenn was working for Rocky Mountain Bell in Colorado. They were in Rifle, Colorado. They moved 38 times in the next eight years.

Stoneman said there were a lot of things about the Depression that a lot of people don't know how bad it was. Her family didn't have it so bad. She doesn't think a lot of the younger people realize what being hard up is. Her dad didn't have money to hire people. People and their family needed food. Some young people in the community and other places joined the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Her dad saw that they had food and her mom did their laundry. Many years later some of the CCC people would return and remember having food because of her father. One summer at haying time her father was ill and the young CCC people came to help them out. Brewster asked her about her involvement in organizations. Stoneman said she did become involved in organizations, but she said the Lord puts you on this world to leave it a better place.