

Anne Crouse 0:04

My name is Anne Crouse. I am the interviewer. I'm about to interview Norman Smith and his home 845 West Sixth Avenue in Broomfield on March 15, 1996. This is an oral history project for Carnegie branch library for local history in Boulder. Normally, I'd like to have you start by giving me your name and your birth date and your birth place.

Norman Smith 0:34

My name is Norman Smith. My middle initial is A for Arthur. I was born August the 19th 1913. In Mercy Hospital in Lewistown. Montana.

Anne Crouse 0:55

And when did you come to Broomfield or to the Broomfield area?

Norman Smith 0:59

I came to the Broomfield area in 1952 operated a dairy over on 108th between Wadsworth and Wadsworth bypass. And in the fall of 1953, I went to work for school district 12 Adams County, teaching at old Westlake School on Lowell avenue for three years before that. School was temporarily closed and moved to. I moved to teach at Merritt Hutton Junior Senior High School in Thornton.

Anne Crouse 1:41

I want to back up a little bit. Can you tell me a little bit about your parents.

Norman Smith 1:47

My father was Albert Arthur Smith. My mother was Erma Lucille Walker Smith. They were raised in Pembina. County, North Dakota. They were married in 19, June of 1910. And from 1910 to 19, early 1916. My father, part of the time managed farms ranches, in the new Lewistown area. And part of the time did union construction work in that same area.

Anne Crouse 2:35

Did you have brothers and sisters?

Norman Smith 2:36

I have. I had an older brother, who was born in 1911. Stanley Ralph Smith, and a younger brother who was born February the 29th 1916. His name I guess I already said that, Leonard Cameron Smith.

Anne Crouse 3:00

That's fine. Thank you. Let's talk a little bit about your personal life at that particular point in time. Did you, were you basically a healthy person? Did you suffer any illnesses or were you paying close attention when certain epidemics were coming across the country at that point in time, the flu epidemic and that sort of stuff.

Norman Smith 3:32

One thing of note there is the fact that my father, my father's mother was originally from Scotland, from a family of people who were, where the men were lawyers and ministers and people of that category and had a good education. And whereas he was raised on a homestead in northeastern North Dakota. He was sent to Louis, he was sent to Chicago area where he received his prep school education, their high school equivalent and enrolled and graduated from University of Chicago with a major in education, with a degree in education and a major in history. So he came with a different awareness in a different point of view than many people who had less opportunity for education at that time.

Anne Crouse 4:36

That was fairly unusual, I assume.

Norman Smith 4:39

Yes.

Anne Crouse 4:39

At that point in time.

Norman Smith 4:40

Yes.

Anne Crouse 4:41

What took him into farming ranching rather than teaching or?

Norman Smith 4:47

Well, I think a large part of it was the fact that he had three sons and likely considered that was a better space, better place to raise them. And I always had an idea that that If he had lived longer, he died February the seventh 1926. At the time, he was just past 40 years of age and died of a hospital infection obtained while having a rather routine and minor sinus surgery, I always felt that had he lived longer. And as we've matured, we'd like to have moved away from the farm and into construction work. Because he did a lot of that, even as, as a farmer, build our house, built our barn and built several other buildings or worked with farmer neighbors who did building.

Anne Crouse 6:05

That's interesting. Do you know why he chose to go to Montana rather than to stay in the in the Midwest?

Norman Smith 6:13

Well, Montana at the time in that area, he took a homestead and not far from where we later lived, in Judith Basin area of Montana. And Montana was the area that was you know, open for homesteading at that 1908, 1910 time his father had homesteaded in eastern North Dakota, and he homesteaded in central there, and then gave it up. Because partially because of the fact that he knew the hardships that came because of the distances and the lack of transportation and

things of that sort in a new area. He had, he came from a family where the three of five births had died at birth or early childhood. And he felt that he didn't want to have a recurrence of that with his own family. So I think that's the reason he he sold his preemption rights on his homestead and moved to the Lewistown area and participated in other things until in 1916 he moved to the location where I was raised and went to school. Because transportation had improved, and the farm we moved on was owned by a company of investors in Wisconsin. And so he operated as a manager rather than tended on shares or things of that sort.

Anne Crouse 8:10

What was your home life like as a child like what do you remember? What were your holidays like you do for entertainment? And where did you go to church if you went to church and that sort of thing.

Norman Smith 8:26

The house in which we lived which our dad had built was a two bedroom house for the large dining room and large living room. Kitchen. And at that time, we had no running water, no electricity. But we did have Coleman gasoline lamps. And my dad who did a lot of reading. He subscribed to a number of magazines, the National Geographic, Worlds Review, and Worlds Work I believe were the names of three of the magazines he regularly received and read. We had our usual chores to do. Milking a couple of cows, feeding few pigs, and gathering eggs, and feeding chickens divided amongst the three of us at various times. We used to spend a goodly amount of time in practically every evening. We will every evening we ate supper together. And we're in the spent the evening in the dining room area. And quite often my father would read to us or we would each read individually. We had a number of books and and obtained some other reading material

Anne Crouse 10:01

where'd you go to school?

Norman Smith 10:02

I went to school from the very beginning at a neighboring community, which was named Arrow Creek, which had had at which had been a, quote unquote "boom town" in the early 1900s. At one time, it had a hotel. It had a post office, it had two elevators, a depot, section, foreman, hardware store and the general store. And in my earliest remembrance of it, likely in 1918, or 1920. Practically all of those businesses except the depot and the elevators were gone. Some of the buildings burned, the grocery store, like they closed up about 1917. We had roll top desk and a swivel chair that my father bought from that store at the time it discontinued. And I have a niece, who still has it in Dakota. The practically all of the buildings were gone, there was a at that time, a two room elementary school that had eight grades in it. And at the time, while my father was still living, he was on the school board. And during that time, they moved to enlarge the school added to classrooms, and gradually built the high school up to where it had the four years. And I graduated from that school in 1930. Sam says the building is, the building is still there the last time I was there. But in very dilapidated condition. The school hasn't operated since about 1935.

And children who live there who are less numerous than they were at that time because of the consolidation of agriculture unit. Go to neighboring towns of either Denton to the east or Stanford, which is the county seat of that area, about 15 miles to the south west. First, I remember anything related to church was going to Sunday school in the school house. And we started out and and continued to be active in it. My father much of the time from then on until he died was the teacher of the adult class in Sunday school. And I still have a pin with the wreath and bars for seven years of attending Sunday school without absenteeism. As the same is true of my two brothers.

Anne Crouse 13:58

What were your holidays like? You didn't have, I assume you did not have large family in the area.

Norman Smith 14:05

We did not have family in the area. There were a lot of the people who lived in the community were intermarried and interrelated having many of them some of them moved from Kansas and Oklahoma. And they were families where there were three or four adults in the same family who were married to other, why their spouses were members of three or four member families and so forth. And we ourselves were not related to any of the people there and never were. And there were two or three other families the same way but without the community was a quote unquote "traditional" rural community where everybody associated. The school always had a, a Christmas function with songs and so forth and gift exchanges at the school and in evening and had a Santa Claus who, as I remember, all the years I can remember, I remember a neighbor by the name of Harry Wilson, who was always the Santa Claus. And outside of that, why Thanksgiving was a vacation for that Thursday and Friday. Either not there were no school holidays. You started in early September after Labor Day and you ended in in late May, before Memorial Day, and there was no spring break, no Easter vacation. And that was about it as far as holidays are concerned. I've often thought that it was about typical, I believe of our family in say six weekends, six Sundays, particularly in a season of the year outside of harvest or something of that sort, or outside of constraints due to impassable roads. Why out of five weekends. We would like to be someplace with other families for dinner and a visit on Sunday afternoon, once and somebody would be at our place once or twice. And then a couple of times, we'd be home alone on Sunday for our dinner after Sunday school and church. In about 1922 likely, the neighborhood went together and bought a small church building from a community about 80 miles to the north east, where a group of Dutch people had formed a community through homesteading and then had rather become disintegrated and no longer wished to continue their church as other churches in little distant areas, gave them a wider choice. And the community bought that building and moved it in wintertime on sleds, and horses. They had built and my dad worked on it along with others. They had built a foundation, a basement and put that building on it. And that became our Sunday School and later we used to have our Sunday schools by as used to be furnished by the Presbyterian missionary branch of that church. And for many years, we had student ministers who came in during the summer months did preach at first at that town and then at a similar church to the east about six miles at a neighborhood that

was called Coffee Creek, and which really was our, our trading post. I grew up why it had Hotel and Restaurant, a drugstore, three grocery stores, a blacksmith shop, a garage, pool hall in a former Bank building, four grain elevators, and a depot. I was back there this last summer. And there's one little kind of convenience store and the elevators are gone. The railroad was supposed to have been removed, but it was kept. And so there is occasional traffic on it particularly in harvest time as it runs from Lewistown up to the town of Geraldine, which is north of the area where I grew up. And it just has minimal traffic, hauling primarily grain, some livestock out in the fall months.

Anne Crouse 20:38

When, when and where did you meet your wife?

Norman Smith 20:43

I met my wife in Denver, in 1936, I came to Denver after graduating from Montana State College, now Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. I worked to, in Denver for the Farm Security Administration, a branch of the United States Department of Agriculture. And she was employed there as a secretary. And I worked there for, from August of 36, to August of 37. And then we I left there and went to work for the same agency back up in Montana, at Polson on Lake County, in northwestern Montana, and we kept in touch. And we're married in October of 39.

Anne Crouse 21:41

In what was her name?

Norman Smith 21:43

Elsie Catherine Ament, A M E N T.

Anne Crouse 21:49

And then, when did you finally purchase a house in the Broomfield area?

Norman Smith 21:57

We had this house built in 1959 and moved in February the seventh 1960. And I've lived in it ever since.

Anne Crouse 22:10

Let's talk a little bit about the city of Broomfield in your experience with it. When did you first decide that you thought serving on the city council might be something that you would enjoy doing?

Norman Smith 22:25

Well, first of all, let me say that prior to coming to this area, in 1952, I'd lived in a little town beyond Sterling, of Iliff. And taught there four years and moved a house in then modernized it and so forth. And was on the city council there for two years, which gave me a little start on it.

And so when there was a vacancy due to a former representative of this ward. Having resigned and leaving town, I applied for it. The vacancy.

Anne Crouse 23:18

Who was that, that left? Do you remember?

Norman Smith 23:21

I'm not sure about the name i i Can I have some stuff? I can I can find it. In some records I have. At that time, why, Dr Clyde Brunner was mayor. And I contacted him and he said to come by and so we're talking to council and they said, Okay, you're the man. And so I was in. It was much easier to get in then than it is now.

Anne Crouse 23:53

What do you think the population of the community was at that time?

Norman Smith 23:59

I would imagine it was about 5000. If you're talking about the time, it may be a little more than in when I would when I became city council member in 68. It may have been more than that. But having moved here in 60 I think it was like the in the 5000 range and maybe even less.

Anne Crouse 24:27

And what were the biggest problems that you dealt with in those first few years?

Norman Smith 24:35

Well, we had our periods of growth and we had our periods of no growth. Actually, my house was built, as I say in 59 and completed in 60. And actually we had, following that a a pretty slack period in town and of course, these lots were all a part of filing two. And the streets were in. And there were a number of vacant lots on Sixth Avenue at that time between Daphne and and Kohl. Later on the, the what is it they have the Parade of Homes houses were built on Sixth Avenue and I think Coral street at later years than when I moved here. So there was certainly a good deal of vacancy there. And there was in the very beginning, there was very little of any activity related to approving subdivisions and so forth, because there was plenty of land already with streets in and available to builders who wish to build. As far as city council is concerned, it was interesting that we had our periods of no growth when some of the people who moved here from New Jersey and Michigan and St. Louis, were on city council and thought that this should be a bedroom community. And later came to realize that it's hard to support a town and its amenities with the tax base of only residences. And then we had an interest in seeing growth develop. Certainly Atlas Park, west of 287. And midway has grown. But in the very early part, it was very slow. And now there's relatively little there and has been extended. So we've grown from that to where we have Interlocken. And we have various shopping centers scattered around. And perhaps more to come.

Anne Crouse 27:31

Do you, tell me about some, Do you remember some of the people who were instrumental in getting Atlas Park, for instance, developed and what were some of the basic businesses that provided a tax base in those days?

Norman Smith 27:51

Well, Atlas part to my understanding has always been under the ownership or control of Fred's Malone. And I don't think until we got an Economic Development Council and a chamber of commerce that was active in that direction, that the city or anyone other than the ownership of that did anything to foster its growth and development. So that that's all I can say about that. I think at times when early proposals for industrial or commercial development came along, particularly industrial, there was a hesitancy to to approve it. Knowing that there was industrially zoned land still available in ample supply in Atlas Park.

Anne Crouse 29:04

What about Old Broomfield did that have that area have much influence on the development of Broomfield, what was then Broomfield Heights?

Norman Smith 29:21

No I think Old Broomfield never had any impact on the development of so called Broomfield heights which is now Broomfield itself. That organization that area there had wells and a water distribution system of their own. And I don't know whether they all had just septic tanks for disposal of waste. Or would they, that, I don't think there was any sewer treatment plant of any sort. At a later time, those people asked for inclusion in the water supply because of the difficulty of keeping water pressure and water supply available from wells, of which there were, I believe, three at the time. And perhaps, because of the deterioration of the water lines and so forth, which have been improved and enhanced by the city.

Anne Crouse 30:42

What events stand out in your memory? Beginning Well, first of all, in your childhood, and then later after you came to this area? Or do you have any anecdotes that you might share?

Norman Smith 31:13

Anecdotes are difficult to pick and relate without potentially offending or embarrassing somebody or some group of people or some point of view. So I wouldn't relate any of that related to my experience here and in the city. I think you have things that you remember as a boy, or as a youngster growing up, and how the last day of school picnic was a social event for the community. And in which everybody where they had children in school participated, you had potluck with all the best food you could imagine. And including homemade ice cream. And then usually a large segment of the community would participate in a summer picnic up in the nearby mountains where they enjoyed the running water which we didn't have in our area. And also the timber and trees which very few of us had around our homes. Those were some of the highlights. The I've often thought that of all the teachers I had through grade school and high school, which likely would have been a total of 10 or 12. There was never a teacher whose classes I attended, who didn't have at least one meal in our home during the course of the year

when, or years when I was a member of their class. And I think that's what provides a good education because of the interaction and the ability to understand and communicate between individuals who are doing the teaching, and the parents or the students who are being taught. My father was on the school board for several years including the time of his death, I believe. And later my mother remarried and my stepfather was also a member of the school board for some of the years that I was still in school there.

Anne Crouse 34:30

Education has always played an important part in your life. Both before you were a part of the faculty and at the schools where you worked in Colorado and after. What changes do you see in the educational system either positive or negative that make a difference today?

Norman Smith 34:56

Well as communities have gotten larger more populous. School is more commercialized. And there's not the same feeling between the staff of the schools and the community. And as a result, there can be misunderstandings. My feeling is that the schools have taken on many things to do, because a great bulk of families no longer supply the same kind of support that they did in years past in some small communities and in rural communities. And I can remember as a student in school we used to carry our sandwiches, our hard boiled egg, and maybe an occasional salad or an apple [pasady] to school for lunch. And so we ate what our parents supplied. Once in a long time, during the extreme cold winters, weathers why a family who lived near the school used to prepare a big kettle of stew and bring it over and provide it for all members of the students. It was a pure donation by them, and certainly would be frowned upon by the Health Department this time. But it was it was good food, and we enjoyed it, and we appreciated their generosity and providing it under those extreme conditions. And as, as the homes have, in many cases failed to fully care for the sustenance of their family. Then, unfortunately, as a health matter, and as a educational factor, the schools have taken many things over. Whenever something isn't done properly, it creates a vacuum. And it seems like schools have had to move in or have moved in to fill the vacuum where students come to school without a an adequate breakfast. And they serve lunches because it seemed to be the effective way of doing it.

In addition to that, we have counselors now who not only counsel the students with regard to their schoolwork, but also with regard to their attitudes and their morality. Whenever there's a disaster whether it be large scale or individual, why then we expect the school to provide counseling and guidance which formerly either the home directly family or extended family or the church provided to the community members are the individuals involved. And so now we have broadened our our scope of activity and work greatly. It also used to be that when you had a small school and people lived in small communities or on farms, why the sports were distinct sideline and physical education as such, was taken care of by the activities that people worked at. We all had chores to do. And in the summertime, beginning early, why we had work to do. My older brother and I shot many many acres of grain behind the binder for years and years. When present laws and so forth, wouldn't permit us to do it nowadays, because we were too young to have been permitted to do that sort of thing outside of in our own families.



There were safety hazards that people took as a matter of course. And youngsters learned early that if you stand in the way of a swing and it hits you in the head, it's gonna hurt. And so they learned early that you didn't do that. Now we have to have everything so safe. And I think it's really a disservice to people not to learn to look after their own safety at an early time, the problem could be less than it is. Now, where we don't develop as individually as individuals, the responsibility that each has to take in order to be safe, playground equipment has to be engineered in such a way that is complex. And yet, we eliminate all the risk factors and so as a result, I think people grow up not being responsible to act in relation to the risk factors of ordinary life.

Anne Crouse 41:49

I guess, I gather you think this is not an improvement over the years,

Norman Smith 41:54

I don't see where it is. I often think and, and with my daughter raising horses in one thing another which really are pets and all in a way, we used to farm with about 24 head of horses. And when I was 10 years old and likely weighed 75 or 80 pounds, I drove six head of horses with on summer fallow weed control work 10 hours a day. And I did hitch them up by myself and usually had some help to harness some because of my limited size. But I could do those things. And certainly after 10 hours of that and doing a few chores before and a few chores afterwards. I really didn't need a recreation program to give me exercise and provide some of the benefits that we're doing. I often think that it's a little bit ironic that at this time we hire people to mow our lawns or else father come home, comes home and mows the lawn and mother loads the junior high and high school kids up into a car and takes them to play softball or soccer or football. Which is organized and supervised and so forth by paid city staffs.

Anne Crouse 43:49

Speaking of cars, do you remember your first car

Norman Smith 43:53

I remember our first car because our first car I think was, it was 1914 or earlier. And it was cranked by hand, it was a Model T Ford and a touring car which had a folding roof and had side curtains on it. In the wintertime you took and drained the radiator because antifreeze didn't exist. And you left, you jacked it up, put it on blocks and counted on when the weather got mild and the roads got dry in spring. You started operating her again.

Anne Crouse 44:44

How about you personally when was, how old were you when you got your first car?

Norman Smith 44:51

I didn't get a car until I was 24 years old I bought a car, the only new car I ever bought in 1937, after I was out of college for a year, and it cost me \$720.

Anne Crouse 45:11

What kind was it?

Norman Smith 45:12

a Plymouth Coupe?

Anne Crouse 45:15

And how long did you keep it?

Norman Smith 45:17

I kept it until 1942 When I went into service, World War Two. And I would likely have had it another few years after that time.

Anne Crouse 45:30

You say you were in the service in? This was in the Second World War?

Norman Smith 45:35

Yes.

Anne Crouse 45:35

Yeah. Where did you serve?

Norman Smith 45:38

I was never overseas. I was in training at Salt Lake City, and then at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. And I was discharged for a long time physical defect that they decided I should no longer stay in service. I used to have a heart murmur. And whereas they passed me to begin with as a volunteer officer candidate, when I was actually scheduled to go to Officer Candidate School why, they said, We don't have a place for you in the army

Anne Crouse 46:26

So you were then discharged at that point in time?

Norman Smith 46:28

Yes.

Anne Crouse 46:30

Were you married then?

Norman Smith 46:31

Oh, yeah. Because with service in 42, and I was married and 39.

Anne Crouse 46:39

Was your father ever in the services?

Norman Smith 46:40

No, no.

Anne Crouse 46:42

Must have just missed it.

Norman Smith 46:44

Yeah, he was. He was likely well along in the draft age limit, and had first of all, he was a farmer and secondly, he had a wife and three children. So he didn't serve. I know it was the possibility of it.

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