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## SUMMARY KEYWORDS

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00:01

We are recording. Thank you so much, Lester for being here today. Really appreciate it. I'd love to get us started. We're doing an oral history with the Friends of Broomfield history and the Depot Museum and I'd love for you to just start by sharing your name. And we'll go from there.

00:18

My name is Lester Brunner and I've lived in Broomfield almost all my life. I was born in 1941. And my family has resided in, in Broomfield or well since 1914 I think it is. I moved here from Kansas. I have three brothers which have passed, okay. As well as my parents are in the last of the burner, so to speak.

00:57

Do you know why your family ended up moving from Kansas?

01:01

Well, my granddad and his wife moved from Kansas because she didn't like three is back here. And there were a lot of tornadoes. Some of their relatives were killed in carnies back there. Wow. Wow. She was a Burgess. My grandfather's wife and some of the burkas family had been killed in 20 years.

01:28

Oh my. Wow. So coming to Colorado then was a way to kind of escape the weather and the dangerous tornadoes, that sort of thing. And then why was Geno why they chose Broomfield in this area?

01:43

Well, I'm region purchases on the farm at 120. And Sheridan Boulevard here in Broomfield and the owner of that farm, Fred Berkus, his wife passed away. So my grandfather, and his wife bought that property, which I like I said, was 120,000 Sharon, and the house was already built. And it was built approximate around 1908. And I think a granddad and his family moved out here from making 14 I think,

02:32

okay. And so when they when they moved here, did they have a sense of what kind of crops they were going to farm and what they were going to be doing here? Or did they kind of say, well, we'll have to

change since we're coming from Kansas to Colorado different, you know, kind of climate or do you know about their background with farming?

02:52

I don't know what exactly my granddad did back in Kansas, even the farmer with property here in Broomfield was a dairy farm. It consisted of the 100 acres 80 acres of that was agricultural. And 20 acres was a lake, okay, that they use for irrigation. And like I said, the house was already built, the barn was built. And I granted at cattle and my father, he did all the milking that sort of thing for my granddad. Yeah. As he got older. He did all the farming for him too. Okay. In later years, when my grand dad retired, I think that was about 1946. My granddad retired and moved to Lewisville. Okay, you're in Colorado. And my grant or my father moved from his crappy, which was on all Wadsworth. Buck, a mile and a half south of 20th Avenue Wadsworth. He moved down to the present perimeter

04:11

to that does that site. Okay, good. And so with the kind of dairy operation, was that something that you and your brothers had a chance to kind of help with some of the milking chores, that sort of thing as you went along?

04:25

Oh, yeah. Everybody had chores. My two brothers. I two once was brothers that had gone into the service in the Second World War. So they came back on, I think around 1946 I was only five years old. So my youngest brother next to me, which was Dale was 12 years older than I stayed at home and farmed with my dad, milk cows and did chores is It was I was old enough. I was seven or eight years old. I was out on the tractor plowing fields.

05:06

Wow. Wow.

05:09

I was young. When I had to push the clutch in on the tractor to change gears. I had to stand up. push the clutch in. Oh, my goodness wasn't too big.

05:20

Yeah, yeah, you'd have to you have to get the leverage to be able to get the pedals there. Yeah. And then as far as the crops, you know, when you're using the tractor out there was that like timothy hay or what sort of where you have we as well that sort of thing to

05:40

some reach. We also prove alfalfa and corn for silage, right. And we had hogs. We had dairy cattle, mostly Holsteins, at that time. And we had hundreds of chickens that we would get every spring is chickens. And then they would grow up in the hands we would be used for laying hands. Yeah. And all the roosters were butchered out for meat.

06:17

Yeah, yeah. And then we're, I'd imagine, I guess, maybe I'll just ask the question. So none of those activities as far as like processing the milk, or, you know, slaughtering the chicken happened in Broomfield, you'd have to, you know, send those things elsewhere. Is that true? Or was there stuff in Broomfield for that sort of thing? Well,

06:39

as far as I remember, the Denver Milk Producers picked up all the milk and shipped it to Denver where it was pasteurized, three bottles sold. The chickens. We did all that ourselves. Okay. And we had a big freezer. Wow. Well, we didn't actually have a big freezer. There was a freezer company in our van and they were really short all the meat and chickens. Yeah. At that time.

07:13

Okay. Okay. Good. And then as far as like, you know, talking, you're talking about some of your chores, that sort of thing. Tell me a little bit more about the school you went to and what that was like? Well,

07:28

the school I went to was at Jensen main. It was a two room brick schoolhouse. There was probably no, maybe 40-40 kids went to that school, there was two teachers. One room we called the living room, it took care of the first through the fourth grade. And the second room we called Big Room, which took care of the fifth through the eighth grade. We did all the work around the school as far as keeping it clean. They did have bottled water for drinking. But any water that we needed for washing or anything else came from farmers around Okay, and a couple of those boys, it would take a five gallon milk can go collect some water from the neighbor and bring him back to school use for a while and then they had a Stoker first with coal and the boys. Older boys, we would fill a Stoker in winter and take out what they call clickers out of the furnace every morning. In sometimes we would open up that door a little too fast. That would be both blowback from the first and we wind up getting our shins moved here. It wasn't a big deal. It was just what we had

09:05

to do. Yeah. Now the clinkers was that cold that had been like super heated too long or something. And so it was it was just

09:13

the residue from the cool.

09:14

Yeah, yeah. Okay. And then this sounds like the boys all had kind of certain chores and tasks. What were they? Do you remember what the girls were doing at the school?

09:31

Don't remember exactly except for or for the boys. So they didn't choose him?

09:41

Yeah, I suppose I suppose that's that's a job right there. I think Haven't we heard Elizabeth from somebody else that there weren't many girls at one point at the school. Is that true?

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This is heard

10:00

Maybe Maybe it was one of those things that Andy was working on those old one of those other earlier maybe might have been in the 19th century year. Yeah. Anyway, that's interesting. So I'm thinking about some of the other families in the area. Do you remember any of the other families during that time?

10:20

It was the cozy ex family that she Achlys the George Smith Lucky's reading the keys. In John Anderson's. He had the film Conoco station in Broomfield it was the Lakers, he had Lakers restaurant. It was the the Oasis beer saloon, so to speak.

10:54

Yes, yes.

10:56

It's going now. When did that close? Oh, when they built that new bypass through there. I don't remember exactly when that was. It was Arnold Brown. He had a garage. There on the 20th Broomfield wasn't very big. When I was a kid. It was just a wide spot in road. It was, you know, little restaurant of couple of gas stations and mechanic. An uncle of mine owned a repair shop where the Colorado State Patrol is now known as a red and white grocery store on the corner, the Huntington twice. And all whatsoever Earth Okay, yeah. The only other things that I can think about were a big train wreck that happened right there. 220 Phil Wadsworth. Two steam engines collided there. And that's when I was going to high school. Remember what year it was, but it was a terrible wreck in our bus. It just got off the tracks and stopped pick up some other kids when those two trains collided. And you can hear the whistles on both. Both trains is screaming yet. We didn't go to school that day. We just stayed and watched.

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What kind of sound was the hit was Did you hear that? Like, girl just crashed sound

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whistles, just screaming.

12:48

Oh, well, that'd be scary.

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There was another train wreck. It was later been in the 60s, late 60s, maybe early 70s on a was Earth and 12th Avenue. And that was to diesel training each other?

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Yeah. Anyway, that's most excitement. We had a random room fill except for maybe the dances at the Grange Hall. Okay, and it's Royce from the goat you

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wear those? Like once a month kind of thing? Or was it every weekend? They did it or?

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No? Wasn't that often? Okay? Maybe once or twice a year? Yeah. Lions Club used to have a dance up there. It wasn't a big deal we had I think it was amongst the Pines want to have a I think a clarinet and when I played the piano and that was their orchestra. Okay. You know all the farmers and their wives you know the buddy that was in town would come to those dances

14:15

nice now have food at those kinds of things to do that food there as well.

14:21

Yeah, they haven't ladies eaten the chili prepared food down in the basement of the Grange Hall is had a steam table in place for you can eat Yeah, yeah, like pies and, and sort of nice.

14:41

Tell me a little bit more about you know, you're mentioning some of the the chores that you helped your father with that sort of thing. What was your mother do and what was her role there on the farm?

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Well, she was a housekeeper. And back then we did a lot of physical work. So we eat Three big meals a day. It was called breakfast. dinner and supper bag. Yeah. And we ate three big meals a day it was I cam and eggs for breakfast, along with juice and a big meal at dinnertime, which consists of like a roast or chicken, something like that. And again at night afterward or through milking, yeah. And then we were up by my dad was probably up at 430 in the morning Milken. When I was growing up in high school, I was up at 530 out doing chores. My brother had taken farming in the dairy part of the farm is because my dad had passed in 1955. My dad used to milk about 10 cows. When my brother took over he increased herd at one time he had a herd of three holes there. Wow. So he Yeah, the big book tanks for the milk and that sort of thing. milking machines? Oh, yeah. We always said milking machines in the milking machines. Isn't my dad had those? Yeah. Yeah. I mean, in the early times, he probably stripped because

16:34

by that time, they had the machines. Yeah. That's, that's interesting. I was thinking about the, you know, harvest time. Did you ever have to hire extra hands like farmhands to help get the harvest in anything like that?

16:51

Well, back at harvest time, like I said, we had wheat. We had corn for silage, in small grains and alfalfa. There was myself and my three brothers. So at hay in time, why we took care of that they use horses to start with. We had two big draft horses and a stacker and a buck rake, which the buck array was an old converted truck that ran backwards with a buck on the front of the pickup the hay and set it on the stacker. And then the one of the draft horses would pull the cable and lift the stacker to jump the hay stack. Yeah. And as far as is the green. They would. Why in the green using the binder, put it in little shocks like that bound with put twine and then my brothers would go out and they would shock the grain. And it would be cut a little green so that it would dry out in the shocks. Yeah. And it's harvest time. My dad owned a thrash machine. It was the only one around in Broomfield. Oh, yeah. So he would go to different farmers and thrash third grade. And if he got paid for it, I don't remember. Yeah. But anyway, when it was time to do our threshing those boys from other families would come in help

18:45

us community pitches in right.

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It was nobody having enough help by themselves. Everybody had to pitch in.

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Right, right. Yeah, that's, that's really interesting. And

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in the same when it came to cutting the corn and for silage and that sort of thing. There was a number of people or sons or brothers and their friends, they would come and help us. Chop the silage. Yeah. Put it up in English.

19:23

Get it up in the silent. Yeah. Now, you mentioned draft horses. Do you remember the specific breeds of that was that by pircher on or Belgian? Anything like that? You remember?

19:35

I think there were bills. I can't remember. I was just a kid. Yeah, my brothers would let me take him in sometimes. When he stuck the horse's head he needed to Yeah, so let me have the reins in the horses knew where they're going. So I was just kind of running the worst.

19:59

Yeah. Just let them do their thing. Yeah. Pretty well trained. Elizabeth, I was wondering, I might pop and grab a glass of water for him. And if you want to, I've been you know me, I love farming that's all been talking about. So if you want to ask some other questions, I'm gonna get you some water sure that you're

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trying to think of some questions. Yeah. Well, I was just gonna tell you what a nice job you did on those pictures. Thank you really good job. In all the descriptions and all that was really well done. Thanks.

20:46

How about what are your memories of celebrating holidays? As a kid? Well,

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holidays were always a big thing because all the whole family came together and always came together down at the burner farming and thanksgiving. All my brothers, their families, my aunts and uncles. They all came out we had a huge nine foot Christmas tree because the farmhouse had nine foot ceilings we didn't get a lot of prisons. We got Lucent we could use like, maybe we needed a new device. Something like that. But it was great time with a buddy came together a lot. Like it wasn't just then Christmas and you like Easter is same thing. So what kind of food was there? Well in the holidays like Christmas, it was always Turkey. And you know sweet potatoes mashed potatoes gravy. I dream it was plenty of food. When we didn't have much money, but we always had plenty of food. Can I get a drink of water?

22:26

Yeah. Do you want to switch back David?

22:31

Yes about food. Holidays holidays. Oh good.

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Yeah, I really didn't need to water. My you get older your vocal cords kind of shrink? Yeah, yeah. And mine is shrunk.

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I needed the water too. So I figured you know maybe we just take a little spell and get both get a little bit of water. So. So you were you were talking about how small Broomfield was. Do you remember going into any other towns? That sort of thing. Occasionally. It sounds like somebody ended up in Lewisville at some point but anywhere else he ended up going

23:15

to Arvada and a big Safeway. Not a big one like what we have today, but it was bigger than our country store here. And maybe once a month, I think my mother would go to our vat and it gets items. Yeah. And they used to have a movie theater analyst Phil. I think they had one in Lafayette too. And on occasion, we would go there we watch a movie. It was like Roy Rogers or Gene Autry. Way back then. You know, it's fun and you cost a nickel or a dime to get in smoking nickel.

24:02

Love it. Yeah, that's great. Yeah, sounds like so the you got the kind of dances at the Grange go into the movie theater, occasionally, that sort of thing. Anything else? You'd kind of, like make fun on the farms? Are there things you do with your friends around, you know, the different other other children that sort of thing? Oh,

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every once in a while, it's like, I'm still in grade school. I would ride my bike, maybe over to a friend's house like a mile and a half or so away two miles and spend a couple hours over there playing with him when I was younger, and didn't ride my back. Like back home make sure have some early enough to do chores. And that was about it. On Sunday. Back then. My dad didn't work on Sunday that was each day rest unless we're doing hay, and you had to do a with sunshine,

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making hay while the sun shines, but a

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lot of my relatives on Sunday they'd come out like my mother's sisters. My uncles, they come up, and we'd always have a couple of fried chickens on would do in service. Great to see them.

25:27

Yeah, yeah, kind of family time. Yeah, that's good. It's good. Anything. You remember about how Broomfield started changing and, you know, became a suburb and Brookfield heights and those sorts of things. Anything you remember from that timeframe? Well, I

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remember, if you're going to Denver, it took an hour to get to Denver, because we have friends. And my parents had friends in Denver, in it was anther taking federal or Washington to Denver. Yeah. And it would take right about an hour to get the Denver. Yeah, but you could. In later years, you could see Denver, the lights of Denver, moving towards Broomfield

26:13

and Jurassic. And

26:19

so as far as Broomfield it really didn't do anything until after the Second World War, I think starting around in 1955 I think it was Bill that his name was Mr. Biddle it own zaines old ranch. Casey answer came in and I think he's the one that bought that. He started the first filing here in Broomfield Yeah, yeah. And so then all the veterans coming back from the Second World War. They were buying up these houses. A nice house like an aggateway or midway to unbind brothers. Each had a house one on aggateway costs 12,000. Back then, in one midway, I think was 13,000. Wow. Wow. So big change from what is the I tell you at the same houses today? Sell for six 700,000? I guess.

27:33

Yeah, that's, that's quite a change for sure. I wonder, you know, do you recall where people that were moving into Broomfield heights, kind of more connected to Denver or boulder? Or was it a mixture? You know, meaning like, would they work down in Denver or boulder? Closer than that? Sometimes? I don't know if you recall, but

28:00



Well, I don't go. there ever was about the only place to go. You know, unless, like one of my brothers get enough work for 18 T. So we were pretty close. I suppose a lot of them work in Boulder. And then a lot of them worked out with a tight plant. Which is this what we call the new way the atomic plant.

28:32

Yeah. A lot of Rocky Flats here, Rocky

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Flats. But a lot of those guys went up there. They died at an early age. A lot of them contracted cancer. Some of the kids I went to grade school went to work up there. And they died at an early age. That's about all I can tell you about where people were.

29:01

Yeah, yeah. Well, and How about how about Tell me about your story kind of after high school. Take a minute to if you want. But yeah, kind of what what you ended up doing after high school and how you ended up back in Brookfield? Well,

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after high school, I joined the Marine Corps and first went to boot camp out in San Diego. And I just did high enough on my score. When they give you an aptitude test. I was selected out to become an aircraft electrician snow bootcamp I went down to Jacksonville for a year to go to school. And then I spent three years at El Toro Marine Corps Air Station in California and San Mateo during the rest of them I time in the service. I got out shortly before Vietnam started. We knew that was going to start up. We had people coming back that were advisors over there. And they were telling us it was going to start.

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So when you came back, what was your kind of focus? Or what were you hoping to do after you've made it back from the Marines there?

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Well, I didn't know exactly what I was going to do. I went to work for an outfit that hold the paper, big rolls of paper to the Denver Post warehouse. It was they bring me the rail cars, we put them in warehouse and then as they needed them, we would haul them up the warehouse. After that, one of the guys that came in and helped haul a paper out there, he worked for United Airlines. And he saw that there was an apprenticeship out in San Francisco for an aircraft electrician. And so he put me on to it, I applied for that job and got it moved to San Francisco and went to work at Bell The San Francisco Airport, United Airlines maintenance piece. And I live down in San Jose and I was out there about six seven years and it just got too much for me all the traffic in all so many people I moved back to Denver and before I did that before I moved back

32:09

United Airlines that they were pretty good at letting people go back to school specially that's so they let me go back to school during the school year and then come back and work as an aircraft electrician in

the summer. So I was able to finish out my college degree great. And then after that I did move back to Denver and I didn't I didn't pursue that career in aircraft as an aircraft electrician I went to work at other jobs I managed tire recapping firm for a while. And then I worked for Union Pacific career route for a while. And after that I went to work for Metro wastewater reclamation district which handles all the wastewater for entire Metropolitan District and surrounding suburbs. In their work, they're finished out my career 77 years old after I worked there for 27 years, wow, wow,

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that's a good long time. That's a that's would be pretty interesting work. I'd think getting water here from you know, in this area and all the water rights and all those pieces now but your your job was more engineering side of things. Well, I

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was what they call the plant operator and we ran the plan. We had to know rather than plant the other, okay, and all the processes that went along with it. And in the clean up the water that came in, and then we we chlorinated it, and then after we chlorinated we've dumped it into the South Platte. Okay, yeah, so we were pretty much the South Platte. At the time I was there. We put about 186 million gallons a day into the south.

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Wow. Did you ever end up up at the water treatment plant that was by the Great Western reservoir here in Broomfield Do you ever visit that one? Yeah

34:46

I actually did my apprenticeship at the term field a wastewater treatment plant

34:56

okay yeah,

34:57

yeah, for I went to work for rue de vivre is

35:04

okay. Okay. Interesting. So do you recall any of the you had mentioned the Rocky Flats and some of the problems with that? Do you remember when the the reservoir was shut down because of the Rocky Flats? Oh,

35:23

great West. Yeah.

35:24

Great Western. Yeah,

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I remember that. Yeah, we used to go up there boating on the Great Western for a short period of time when Rufio first got started. And then they found I can't remember what they found in that drinking water.

35:43

Tritium. I think

35:45

that's what it was. Yeah. And then then they started getting all their water from the big Thomson or someplace. Yeah,

35:56

yeah. They had to find a couple of different I think they use some Denver Water as well. Denver Water? Yeah.

36:07

I think they still get water from Denver certain times of the year.

36:12

Yeah, I think that's right. Especially if it's been a tough summer, you know, a dry summer, they'll need to buy a little bit extra they I think their contract gives them a pretty wide range of what they can take. But yeah, there Yeah, they've, they've got all sorts of new. We just did a project with the water treatment guys. And they've they've got a lot of interesting new kind of projects. They're working on reservoir near the anthem area, for example. They've got some other things happening. So

36:42

I'm sure they do. Well, a lot of the stuff. You know, I'm just not into anymore.

36:48

Sure. Sure. Oh, good. Is there anything else that we didn't get a chance to talk about before we finish up and I'll give Elizabeth a chance to ask any other questions, but

37:00

I can't think of anything. No. Okay.

37:04

Yeah, no, I really appreciate your your time today. Elizabeth, did you think of anything else? Well, thank you again. And truly, it's a pleasure to chat with you and I, in my mind's eye as you're talking, I could conjure up being out there on the farm and what that would feel like and it's just really, you're a good storyteller and appreciate you. Thanks for having me. Absolutely. Thank you.