

Ralph Milanovich

Ralph Milanovich has been a resident of Amador County for nearly all of his life. Ralph was born on June 16, 1924 and spent his childhood working in a boarding house that his mother owned during the mining era of Amador County.

On August 12, 1949 Ralph married Elinor, a local from Sutter Creek. Elinor was born in Sutter Creek on September 5, 1917, and died on December 31, 1996.

Mary Danilovich Milanovich, Ralph's mother, was born in Yugoslavia in 1885 and moved to America when she was fifteen; here she married Gulub Danilovich. Together, they ran a boarding house until his tragic death. Mary then married Mile (mee lay) Milanovich, a local rancher, and together they had Ralph.

After finishing high school Ralph served as an army airforce cadet for three years. Upon finishing his time in the service, he went to the University of California Davis and got a veterinary degree. Ralph has been a local veterinarian for nearly fifty years.

It was a great honor to interview Ralph, he was full of wonderful memories. His enthusiasm shall prove a tremendous help in putting together the pieces of the Kennedy Mine history.

Ralph Milanovich

Kelly: "When were you born?"

Ralph: "June the sixteenth, nineteen twenty-four. I don't remember!"

Kelly : "Um. Were you ever married?"

Ralph: "Yes."

Kelly: "O.K. What was your wife's name?"

Ralph: "Elinor."

Kelly: "Elinor!"

Ralph: "E-L-I-N-O-R, people spell that in different ways, but that's the way."

Kelly: "It's E-L-I-N-O-R?"

Ralph: "Yes."

Kelly: "O.K. and when was she born?"

Ralph: "In Sutter Creek."

Kelly; "Oh that's right, and where were you born?"

Ralph: "Jackson."

Kelly: "Jackson. O.K. and she was born in Sutter Creek."

Ralph: "Uh huh."

Kelly: "Oh O.K. and do you remember what day she was born?"

Ralph: "September fifth, nineteen-seventeen."

Kelly: "Wow, Jeez, O.K. Um, Do you Know when your mom was born?
Because both Doloras and Larry don't remember."

Ralph: "Well, Oh she was, Oh I don't remember, it was eighteen
hundred and eighty something, I don't know, what the question was
or whatever."

Kelly: "O.K. so the eighteen hundreds and something."

Amber: "Eighteen-eighty."

Ralph: "Sixty-five maybe."

Kelly: "Sixty something. O.K."

Ralph: "Wait a minute, eighty-five that would be fifteen years and another. Probably around there. Her brother was, her sister was born in nineteen hundred. Jee, she was fifteen years old? She must have been because she came to this country about nineteen hundred and six."

Kelly: "O.K. Your dad, what was your dad's first name?"

Ralph: "Uh, oh see it was actually Mile, M-I-L-E, but now that's pronounced Mile, but it's Meelea. See our English alphabet is not phonetical."

Kelly: "Yeah."

Ralph: "But our Serbbation alphabet is phonetical. Say a word in Serbal-Croatian and you can spell it because it's phonetical."

Amber: "Wow."

Kelly: "Um, where was your dad born?"

Ralph: "Born in Croatia, Yugoslavia, Austria, oh God."

Kelly: "Some where down there, right?"

Ralph: "About now that's all changed. Originally it wasn't Austria, it wasn't Austria till nineteen 'o' eight."

Kelly: "O.K. So it was Croatia when he was? No there was a section there and it all got separated, right in there."

Ralph: "Well, I'd like to say it was Croatia, but it wasn't."

Kelly: "O.K."

Ralph: "I'd like to call it Serbia, but it wasn't serbia."

Kelly: "Yeah, I knew that. When was your dad born? Do you know?"

Ralph: "Well, probably he was, maybe... maybe eighteen eighty-five."

Kelly: "So they were about the same age?"

Ralph: "Yeah."

Kelly: "And we have all your brothers and sisters and birthdays, so I'm not even going to ask you about that. Um, what about your job, ur.."

Amber: "It was school, was it?"

Kelly: "O.K. Um what did you do, what was your career?"

Ralph: "Veterinarian."

Kelly: "I didn't know that, really?"

Ralph: "V-E-T-E-R-I-N, jee that's.."

Kelly: "O.K. where did you, did you go to Jackson high?"

Ralph: "Yeah."

Kelly: "O.K. so it's Jackson high. O.K. and what did you go to for veterinary school?"

Ralph: "I went from Jackson high school, and I became an army cadet."

Kelly: "So you were in the army?"

Ralph: "Army, airforce cadet."

Kelly: "O.K."

Amber: "Did you get your veterinary license through the army?"

Ralph: "No."

Amber: "No."

Kelly: "And how far, how long were you in the army?"

Ralph: "Oh, I was in the army for three years."

Kelly: "O.K. and then you got out of the army and where did you go to get you veterinary degree?"

Ralph: "University of California, Davis."

Kelly: "O.K. so you..."

Ralph: "Well, well it's University of California, just write University of California. Because it's University California."

Kelly: "O.K. and what degree did you get, in veterinary?"

Ralph: "B.S. and uh...bachelor of science, and then a D.D.S."

Kelly: "Wow, O.K. what were the other ones?"

Amber: "When were you married? What day were you married?"

Kelly: "Oh."

Ralph: "August thirteenth, nineteen forty-nine."

Amber: "Did you wife die?"

Ralph: "Yeah."

Amber: "Do you know what day she died?"

Ralph: "December. Are there thirty-one days in December?"

Amber: "Yeah."

Ralph: "Thirty-first, the last day in December, nineteen ninety-six. Just, just so months ago."

Amber: "Oh how sad."

Kelly: "Sorry about that. My grandpa, Jim just died. Um O.K. what day were you guys married?"

Ralph: "Mr. Mike is still alive huh?"

Kelly: "Yeah, yeah Mike is still kickin' it. He didn't show up for that thing the other night though."

Ralph: "Uh."

Kelly: "He didn't show up at the thing the other night."

Ralph: "Oh."

Kelly: "Um, you were married August third nineteen what?"

Amber: "Forty-nine."

Ralph: "What did I say?"

Kelly: "Forty-nine."

Amber: "August third I think, or nineteenth."

Kelly: "Nineteenth or maybe."

Ralph: "It was August nineteenth. I might have said to you the twelfth. We wouldn't of got married on the thirteenth! Yes, it, I guess it was the twelfth, August twelfth, nineteen ninety Oh blahh...nineteen forty-nine."

Kelly: "O.K. that sounds more like it. O.K. Um, oh have you ever been active in the community?"

Ralph: "Oh, almost, I was on the grand jury one time. So."

Kelly: "Oh really?"

Ralph: "I don't know what else I did, I don't know, probably complained a lot! I don't remember even coming..."

Kelly: "My mother is on the grand jury."

Ralph: "Yeah."

Amber: "Did you do like a lot of community service, um active...clubs?"

Ralph: "Veterinary practice is a twenty-four hour job."

Amber: "Yeah."

Kelly: "I'll put it down here O.K.?"

Ralph: "That's active."

Kelly: "Yeah, that's very active! O.K."

Amber: "I can't remember some of the other questions."

Kelly: "I think that's...Oh, did your spouse have a job?"

Ralph: "She was a school teacher. Um, until she retired."

Kelly: "O.K."

Amber: "Where did she teach? Did she teach locally?"

Ralph: "She taught one time at the...at the school house, one room school house."

Amber: "Oh."

Kelly: "Where?"

Ralph: "You knew about that?"

Amber: "Yeah, yeah, I think I did."

Ralph: "The Bero's lived right there. The Thomas's and the Bero's, that's called Scotchville."

Amber: "Um, I think so."

Ralph: "On the other side of Jackson, she taught, she taught there for a couple of years. And she taught in Woodland, Woodland California."

Amber: "Woodland, O.K. I know where that is."

Kelly: "That's over there on fifty."

Ralph: "Yeah."

Kelly: "Oh wow. O.K. can I ask you questions about the Kennedy mine now?"

Ralph: "Well I, well you told me after you told me about that I started putting down notes."

Kelly: "Oh wow."

Ralph: "Then I said, then I said, well maybe I'll write about it."

Kelly: "Jeez."

Ralph: "If, well if you haven't got it you should go buy that book by Gold Mines of California by Wagner."

Kelly: "I think we have it."

Amber: "Yeah."

Kelly: "We have all the books. Did you enjoy our presentation?"

Ralph: "Oh yeah."

Kelly: "That's good."

Ralph: "I, uh, I'm not , I'm not a good writer, so I don't write very well, but these, these can be written into, oh God, oh my gosh, how much did I write?"

Kelly: "Jeez, and how long did you write this?"

Ralph: "Oh, just sitting here everyday, just write a little bit, and then write some more, and then..."

Kelly: "You could get a book published."

Ralph: "You probably should, if you want to do this, you probably should write the best, best, write a book because be recognized because we've got the greatest gold mine, and we've got the greatest, the greatest uh, oh."

Kelly: "Wow, does this cover things like the boarding house and everything else?"

Ralph: "Well it does mention a little bit about the boarding house. I well, yeah, they used to have a boarding house at the Kennedy mine, and it was a big outfit. It was big."

Kelly: "Jesus."

Ralph: "I might not be able to tear it out."

Ralph: "I glued it, oh man, I won't be able to cut that out. Jee, and I got some other things in here that I want to keep. But I thought I would be able to just tear that out."

Amber: "Maybe if you just separate the pages a little and do one section at a time."

Ralph: "O.K...O.K. come on, there it is."

Amber: "Oh my gosh."

Kelly: "Wow."

Amber: "That is just a little of writing."

Kelly: "Oh my gosh, thank you so much."

Amber: "Oh, that's great."

Ralph: "I didn't, I didn't write about everything about the boarding house. I was going to write about Jackson and everything else. I didn't, maybe I did put somethings in there about Jackson."

Kelly: "O.K. what we'll do is basically go over the questions that are here and if they are in here, then you can just say. well there in there. You know, and we might even write this out, if you want us to."

Ralph: "Yes, you'll have to watch, correct the English, and uh correct the spelling."

Kelly: "Oh yeah, I am a terrible speller and stuff, so, don't worry about that."

Amber: "Umm, O.K. lets start with these, O.K. did you know anybody that worked at the mine?"

Ralph: "Oh, I know practically everyone that worked at the mine."

Amber: "Were there any specific people that you really remember that you had a lot of memories about?"

Ralph: "Johny de Greek."

Kelly: "Johnny the Greek, or Johnny de Greek?"

Ralph: "Johnny de Greek, Crysto polls. Course I remember the Rose brothers. Francis, Enos, you can put their names in there."

Amber: "O.K."

Ralph: "Forest, Francis, Enos and Forest, were brothers, and I remember Harold Smith, Web Smith, Bill Sinclair, Jago Koracevich."

Kelly: "Wow."

Ralph: "Oh, I remember all of them."

Kelly: "Are they in here?"

Ralph: "Some of them, yes most of their names are in there."

Kelly: "Wow, O.K."

Amber: "Um were there um, any specific jobs, I heard you mention Web Smith, and he had.."

Ralph: "Yeah, he was superintendent of the mine."

Amber: "He was superintendent of the mine, and were there and other people who had, um.."

Ralph: "Bill Sinclair was the Foreman."

Amber: "And what about the Rose brothers you said..."

Ralph: "Yeah, they ran the saw mill."

Amber: "They ran the saw mill?"

Ralph: "Uh huh."

Amber: "Oh, O.K. Do you know how many hours a day they worked?"

Ralph: "They worked eight hours a day, is what I remember, but they might of..maybe, I don't know why they changed that. They used to work ten hours a day."

Amber: "Uh huh."

Ralph: "Or, yeah, it's eight hours."

Amber: "How many days a week did they work?"

Ralph: "They must have worked six days a week, I don't think it was five."

Amber: "Uh huh, did they not work on Sundays?"

Ralph: "Probably not because that was quite a thing, Sundays. We, we honored Sundays in the old days. In fact they would close all the stores and everything."

Amber: "Yeah, O.K."

Ralph: "I guess you were supposed to go to church on Sundays."

Amber: "Yeah, O.K. what were the working conditions like in the mines, and other mines other than the Kennedy mine?"

Ralph: "Well, I guess there were goods, well that was one of the reasons they went on tractor, better working conditions, but I, I don't know how bad the working conditions were before. They dug a hole. Uh, I guess, well, uh it is very difficult to work in the mines because it isn't very healthful."

Amber: "Uh huh, right. Did you ever work in the mine?"

Ralph: "No."

Amber: "No."

Kelly: "Um, do you remember when Larry worked in the mine? He said he worked in there for about six months."

Ralph: "No. But I remember when my brother Jack did. But I don't remember when Larry did. My brother Jack worked in the mine too. Jack and Larry."

Kelly: "Kay."

Amber: "Um, what was it like to live in a mining town?"

Ralph: "Larry said it was the greatest place in the world. He said there isn't anything like Jackson, maybe we just don't know any better. But after I went around the rest of the world, I still think Jackson is the best place."

Amber: "Yeah, was it um, was there real community unity?"

Ralph: "Oh yeah, that's what they used to do here, is go uh, to work, and everyday, every neighbor go to visit every other neighbor, or

when ever we had the time. Sometimes we would walk miles to go visit somebody, we were always visiting somebody."

Amber: "Um, could you describe what a typical day would be like for a child or a teenager or even an adult during the work week when the mine was still running?"

Ralph: "Well, uh we went to school and that was our whole thing. After we were six years old we went to school. And we went to school for what, nine months out of the year."

Amber: "Yeah."

Ralph. And we had summer vacation."

Amber: "What would you do during the summer?"

Ralph: "Sit in the shade! We used to go down to the Mokelumne river and go swimming."

Amber: "Yeah."

Ralph: "And there was another swimming pool up a couple of miles up Highway 88 from Jackson. It was called Towlzley's. Towlzley had

a swimming pool up there, we used to go there. Towlzley and Bonnefoy."

Amber: "Oh, O.K."

Ralph: "They had a creek, very nice, large swimming pool. It was a dam on the creek actually."

Amber: "Oh, really? Yeah, a lot of people still go swimming at the Mokelumne river, a lot of people will go down there on the weekends and stuff, and will go swimming together with friends and stuff."

Ralph: "I remember a friend of mine that drowned there."

Amber: "Oh, really."

Ralph: "But, I forgot his name."

Amber: "Yeah last summer my brother and I went backpacking down the Mokelumne river, and we got stuck down the river."

Ralph: "Did you see any rattlesnakes?"

Amber: "Yeah we did. Came about three feet of one, and it scared me a lot. But I have never really been that close to one."

Ralph: "That's a funny thing, rattlesnakes will never attack anyone. They must strike at something of a different temperature, otherwise how do they determine what to strike at. But one day we were down at box beach, and we used to walk up, up the river, and then float down the rapids. And uh, there were about four or five boys ahead of me, when I came by, they all stepped over this huge rattlesnake, he was under a rock."

Amber: "Oh my gosh."

Ralph: "And he never bothered anybody."

Amber: "Oh my."

Ralph: "I've done that several times, stepped over rattlesnakes."

Amber: "I think the biggest reason this one was still, was because there were about seventeen of us walking right past it and he really hadn't been used to seeing that many people yet, cause we went right in the beginning of summer. All right um, what was it like to travel from one town to the next, like Jackson to..."

Ralph: "It was always interesting, I always liked to see a different town, and they were very busy years ago. Um, Sutter Creek, Amador City, Drytown, Plymouth."

Amber: "How long would it take to get places like..."

Ralph: "We got there fairly rapidly, years ago they used to have a bus service between the towns."

Amber: "Oh, really?"

Ralph: "Yeah."

Amber: "O.K."

Ralph: "I remember a man by the name of Charley Burman, he told me that he used to drive a bus."

Amber:: "Oh, O.K. Um...Did you ever go to Sacramento or Stockton?"

Ralph: "Oh yeah, we used to go to Sacramento all the time because the prices of everything were cheaper there."

Amber: "Yeah."

Ralph: "There was one big trip that Chicazola, he was big...What Chicazola used to do years ago, probably knowbody told you this, but what he used to do was go down in the summertime, and buy all this merchandice, and then he'd have the people who had to buy from because in the winter they couldn't get out of here because of the rainy weather, the roads were muddy. So they couldn't go down to Sacramento or Stockton, but we used to ho...We used to buy, like my mother would go down there right before school time and buy enough clothes for the whole year. For six or seven dollars."

Amber: "Oh my."

Ralph: "For your pants, your socks, your shirts, pair of shoes, tennis shoes cost about a dollar and a half and uh. But they didn't get very much wages."

Amber: "Yeah, inflation has changed a lot of things. O.K. What kind of entertainment was there in Amador County?"

Ralph: "Well we had, the big thing, it was quite a thing, the theaters, the movie theaters, and uh..."

Amber: "When did those come about?"

Ralph: "Well, uh, we had our first talking picture. Uh, it was in the thirties. They even had silents there, before silents there was a guy by the name of Jonny, Jonny Benoratto had the theater, then taps was here, then dances. We always had dances Sunday nights, and uh..Oh then we had baseball games, tugowar, picnic, Italian picnic, that was a big thing."

Amber: "Yeah that's coming up this weekend right?"

Ralph: "I don't know. It will probably rain."

Amber: "I hope not. Um.."

Ralph: "It probably does. That was always my biggest thing, to decide weighter to go fishing or go to the Italian picnic."

Amber: "O.K. Um, what other main industries other then mining, um, were in the county?"

Ralph: "There weren't any, oh, oh lumber. Lumber mills, but they weren't connected with the mines. You see that's where they sold all their wood, to the mines. They were privately owned, but uh, they sold most of their lumber, oh were they industries? I don't know

that. Not large industries anyway. One time we had a guy used to roll, his name was Sola, and he used to roll cigars. Yeah."

Amber: "Would he sell those?"

Ralph: "Yeah, he had a place in Jackson and oh people used to go there and buy cigars. Handmade cigars. That's a one man industry."

Kelly: "Did you guys ever go and watch him roll the cigars?"

Ralph: "No, I never did. I don't care for them. I didn't care for tobacco until I got older, and then they trained me how to smoke, when I got into the army, amongst other things."

Amber: "Were there many different ethnic groups in Amador County?"

Ralph: "Yeah."

Amber: "Can you name some?"

Ralph: "They are all in there, there were Welshmen, Italian, Richmond, Polishmen, Germans, Slavians they call them Slavians, Italians, couple of Greeks."

Kelly: "Slabs."

Ralph: "Couple of Jews, Jewish people. I don't know what the Jewish people are called, that's generally a religion, but I guess that's probably considered to be an ethnic group."

Kelly: "It was a religion."

Ralph: "They were in business, they had the statesman shoe store, and it was alright. And they had a little variety store."

Amber: "Um, were there many Asian people around then?"

Ralph: "Chinese restaurants, that's what they did they had restaurants."

Amber: "Um."

Ralph: "What do they call...Sammy, they been here, I think their family has been here forever, I think."

Kelly: "I remember that place walking down the street when I was a little girl, its been there forever."

Ralph: "There were no Japanese."

Amber: "None?"

Ralph: "I remember the first time I saw a bunch of Japanese boys down in Oakland, and, uh they were all dressed up and going to school, and they looked so different because I had never seen any on... Here is an interesting thing. The first black man I saw, that was about in nineteen thirty. That was Sydney Tice and he came into the house and I said 'Why didn't you wash this morning?' cause he was just dirty. I didn't know he was black, and he said 'I can't wash this off.' he said 'I'm black.' That was the first black man I saw."

Kelly: "Was he nice?"

Ralph: "Oh yeah, Sydney got to be we thought he was white, and he thought he was white too. Sydney, Sydney went to West Point. And then there was a black shoe, and he used to shine shoes in town. Shoeshine man was a black man."

Amber: "Did the different ethnic groups live in certain places, or did they just all mix together?"

Ralph: "Yeah, all over Jackson gate, we mostly had slavians and Italians, and some Spanish. There were about twenty families on Jackson Gate anyway."

Amber: "Alright, do you remember the gambling halls and other businesses in Jackson before nineteen twenty-three?"

Ralph: "Yeah, when I went over, when I used to work at the sawmill, I used to go down town, and we had the Louver, the Rex, and the national hotel. Oh there were many many, many of them. Oh maybe eight or nine different places. Um, they even had the slot machines, and uh, roll the wheel, and dice tables and card games."

Amber: "Yeah."

Ralph: "When I think about a card game, especially at Louver. Person would go there to play poker, and it wasn't very much, so for the money, but forth, the person that owned the poker hall, because when they bet they put their money into a pot, and they called it a pot, and they put it on the table. And um, I used to watch the, and I thought it was strange, the guy running the game always put his hand out there and pulled out some money. And they claim that is what generally happened in a poker game, he wound up with all the money."

Amber: "Oh."

Ralph: "Yeah, the person would play poker, but I guess they were playing for pass time anyway. And they enjoyed it. That, those pass times, that was one of their entertainments, was playing cards."

Kelly: "All right."

Amber: "Um, did any of that change? Did it change when the mines closed down?"

Ralph: "The mines didn't close down until nineteen forty-two. Did it change?"

Amber: "Uh huh."

Ralph: "Well, during the war years there probably wasn't anybody in Jackson. They all took off and went down to the, and worked in the industries, Ship yards, air factories whatever. And, uh, the town of Jackson was abandoned during the war years."

Amber: "Yeah."

Ralph: "But part of it was very busy, the youngman halls, and a town was very busy because persons used to come to Jackson from all over. They used to like to and they still do. They like to come up here and go to our restaurants especially. Some foreigners used to come up once a week."

Amber: "Where were the gambling halls located and what were there names?"

Ralph: "I just mentioned it, the working mans club, the Rex, the National Hotel."

Kelly: "Was the Wells Fargo a gambling hall?"

Ralph: "They didn't even call it Wells Fargo at that time, but there was a gambling hall there in that building. I don't remember what they called it. Oh, there was a place called Coldstope, and that belonged to a fella by the name of Mercer, Frank Mercer. And actually Frank Mercer became one of the big gamblers in a place in Nevada. He moved up there an he uh...owned the Cal-naua hotel. And he owned the Cal-naua in Reno Nevada, and then he went into horse racing and lost it all. That's why a gambler, a gambler always, if a gambler lived long enough he'd lose. There is a difference between a gambler and a proprietor. Some people who owns those

gambling halls, they never gamble. But to gamble- they know better. Like William Hara, uh Wayne John gambled, but he learned his lesson and never gambled again."

Amber: "Alright, um, did you know anybody that worked in the gambling halls?"

Ralph: "I knew them all."

Amber: "Yeah, alright."

Ralph: "Charley High-grade, that's a good name, there's a guy down there by the name of Charley High-grade. And there was George Thomas. Those were the two big one, oh, and Frank Mercer, I just mentioned him. But there were Guy Toffanelli, and this lady who had a shop, that had a little part down town, I think her name was Soapy or some darn thing, yeah."

Kelly: "Was she running a little house over there or what?"

Ralph: "no, not so, oh we used ta', that's what we'd do, we'd hang around the drug store and they used to come to the drug store, those girls at the house, and we'd, were always hanging around there because uh, they would always give us whatever they ordered to be

delivered, and they were always very generous with their tips. For some reason, I don't think they allowed those girls in town."

Amber: "I wonder why. All right, where did you buy your groceries at?"

Ralph: "Oh, lots of places, but we generally didn't go to the grocery store, the grocery store came to us. Came around in the morning and took the order, and then they delivered in the afternoon. Almost everything, Chickizolas, Dalo, Vicers, Cassinelli. Did I forget anybody? George Thomas had a meat market, if you wanted some meat, all you had to do is call him up, and he would deliver it. And there used to be other people, peddlers that used to come around, uh, selling vegetables, there was very many of them."

Kelly: "Were there a lot of Italians that would do the peddling?"

Ralph: "Uh, the two that I knew were actually Slovenians."

Kelly: "Oh, really."

Ralph: "One guy by the name of Scavich and another guy was uh, Jacksich. And they used to go down to Stockton and back with vegetables and fruits in their trucks and they'd come around, and uh,

deliver and they used to bargain for quite a bit. You'd hear the old ladies go down to the truck and you'd go up for an apple and they'd tell you could get it for four cents or something, what do you call that? Haggling? Or bargaining? Or, yeah they used to haggle, that's what they were."

Amber: "Um, where did you buy you gasoline, or did you buy gasoline?"

Ralph: "Uh, I don't think I ever, But I don't think I ever bought gasoline. Oh yeah, Maimi Gurrero had a service station where that, where that uh, where they sell kitchen stuff in Jackson. That used to be a service station."

Amber: "Oh, O.K."

Ralph: "And there used to be a nice standard station on the other end of town. There were probably five or six service stations in Jackson. Edward Salva was in business, he had a garage business there for years. George Sullivan had it, and uh, garage, yeah I guess that's what you'd call it. but, and he sold cars, and I remember a mechanic there, but he didn't sell gasoline. Oh, and then there was another place, and it was a Ford garage...that's it."

Amber: "O.K. um, who was your doctor, do you remember who your doctor was?"

Ralph: "Well, there was doctor Kern, Doctor Low."

Amber: "Was there one that you usually went to?"

Ralph: "Doctor Low."

Amber: "Doctor Low."

Ralph: "Doctor Kerns was a doctor too. Oh, that, there is a street named after that Doctor, but I'd have to look where it is anymore. Doctor Andycauff or something like that. I remember we didn't have a hospital in Jackson, we used to go down to Preston school."

Amber: "Yeah, to Preston Doctors."

Ralph: "Not to Doctors, we used to go down to the hospital in Preston school. I never did go, but my brother did once, I remember."

Kelly: "For what?"

Ralph: "He had his tonsils taken out."

Kelly: "What happened?"

Ralph and Amber: "He had his tonsils taken out."

Kelly: "Oh, what year was that?"

Ralph: "Nineteen thirty."

Kelly: "And that was Larry?"

Ralph: "Yeah, he got his tonsils taken out at Preston school. Things were different down at Preston school in those days."

Kelly: "So you were the only child that was born from Milanovich?"

Ralph: "Yes."

Kelly: "O.K."

Amber: "Where did you buy your clothes?"

Ralph: "Tames."

Amber: "O.K."

Ralph: "It was a working mans store too. Down on the other end of town. But, oh, there was also another fella by the name of Radovich, he had a store where he sold clothes. Radovich's clothing store."

Amber: "O.K. um, how much did the boarding house charge?"

Ralph: "Well, uh, that was kinda interesting, many years ago propably very early nineteen hundreds, they used to charge twenty dollars a month. That included board and room and also laundry."

Amber: "Oh, really?"

Ralph: "Yeah, they used to."

Amber: "Their laundry?"

Ralph: "But later it was thirty dollars a month, from what I remember. But it didn't include laundry."

Amber: "Oh, but it didn't include laundry. Alright um, about how many people were there usually staying in the boarding house?"

Ralph: "Sometimes there were as many as thirty, maybe ten to ~~thirty~~."

Amber: "All right, how many boarding houses were there?"

Ralph: "Oh, I can remember maybe six."

Amber: "O.K. they were all in Jackson?"

Ralph: "Jackson Gate., there were four on Jackson Gate, three or four on Jackson Gate, well almost Jackson Gate. We used to call that, where Bonanza's restaurant is now."

Amber: "Uh huh."

Ralph: "That was called Newmanville."

Amber: "O.K. why?"

Ralph: "Did you know that? I don't know why."

Amber: "Just because?"

Ralph: "A new man team, or something like that. But there's a man by the name of Gamba, then there was uh, Politti, and they had a boarding house. A boarding house there."

Amber: "All right, um, when did everybody eat at the boarding house?"

Ralph: "Well, that was something. They always had breakfast lunch and supper. Lunch was at twelve o'clock, supper was at five o'clock breakfast was early in the morning, six o'clock."

Amber: "O.K. did everybody eat together?"

Ralph: "Yes, they didn't used to snack much."

Amber: "O.K. did most of the boarders work in the mine?"

Ralph: "No, they, almost all of them."

Amber: "Um, did most families have a car or not?"

Ralph: "After, of course after, I can remember when there were more horses and buggies on the road, when the road was a dirt road. They used to have horse and buggy and that was before nineteen thirty. Then all of a sudden within a year or two, there was mostly cars, and uh, yeah motorized vehicle. One car, better then a car in every garage, and a chicken in every pot, that was what Hoover promised us when he was running for election."

Amber: "All right, was ranching and farming big in Amador County?"

Ralph: "Well I, I that was probably an industry. Well, you see before they had the cars, they had to have feed, and a lot of these persons used to raise oat hay, and uh, there were quite a few farmers. And they were all small. Oh, there were larger ones down in the valley, like Baymar, he was probably the largest one, Koverts, we thought they were large, they had a couple hundred acres or something like that. We thought they were big time. Now days some of those persons have as much as fifty thousand head of cattle."

Amber: "Yeah um."

Ralph: "But my father had a ranch south of Jackson."

Kelly: "Your father had a ranch south of Jackson?"

Ralph: "Uh huh, that's what he did, he wasn't;t a miner."

Amber: "He was a rancher."

Ralph: "I don't think he ever worked for these mines here."

Amber: "O.K. so the timber industry large in Amador county?"

Ralph: "No there wasn't an industry, but there was a lumber company. Somebody by the name of Winton started the , what do they call it, the Winton lumber company and uh up in the mountains there were the Berrys, the Berry's had a sawmill. I don't know if you would call it largely or not, but they used to cut it by the hundred thousand lumber a day. I don't know if it was much larger, but he'd go up to Washington, Oregon those, he'd cut millions of tree lumber a day. I don't know how many saw mills there were, Winton and Berry's and I guess they, I guess they used a lot of that Walter lumber here, except for a guy by the name of John Steele and he used to have the Jackson lumber company. And for some reason or another, he used to buy all of his lumber from all the way to the railroads. I used to work for him, we had to beat those box cars. I don't know if he ever bought local lumber, most of his lumber was shipped to him. I mean hauled in by train. If it wasn't for him Amador Central would have closed down years ago, because he was the only customer they had."

Amber: "Yeah, alright, um so the, you just mentioned the main loggers and they logged up country mainly?"

Ralph: "Yeah, of course long before I can remember they used to haul their lumber in and out of wagons. Sometimes even out of oxen

teams, which amazed me quite a bit because I didn't realize that. Many had mule teams, and then horse teams."

Amber: "Oh, O.K."

Ralph: "That's before the thirties I guess. See I can't remember, oh, I didn't know anything before then."

Amber: "Do you remember the Argonaut mine fire?"

Ralph: "Oh no, no I was born in nineteen twenty-four."

Amber: "O.K."

Ralph: "I guess it was known all over the world."

Amber: "Right, um."

Ralph: "I guess it was one of the worst mine disasters that ever occurred."

Amber: "Yeah."

Kelly: "It was pretty bad."

Ralph: "I forgot how many there were, some think forty, some think four-eight maybe that died."

Amber: "Um, do you remember much about the labor strikes, any specific events you remember about."

Ralph: "Oh, I remember the picket line we used to have in front of, then they brought the scabs in on us, they got scabs in there. And also they had the organization called the vengal antes. Most of the business men in town supported the mine and wanted the miners to go back to work. They used to go up there and the Vegal antes carried clubs and rifles and all sorts of things. In fact they used to, and they used to arrest the miners and all sorts of things."

Amber: "Oh my, all right, um were there organized labored laws involved in the strikes."

Ralph: "Well yes, and that was a funny thing too, which amazed me at one time, because there was a fella that organized these things."

Amber: "Um."

Ralph: "And most of the people that worked in the mines used to make between three and five dollars a day. And this guy was out

there leading the strike, you know he was the organizer. And they finally found he was getting paid twenty-five dollars a day."

Amber: "Oh my gosh."

Ralph: "I thought he was, I thought he was just doing this out of the goodness of his heart, and that he was donating these services, and he wanted to help out, and this is generally true in all organizations."

Amber: "Right."

Ralph: "Those people that run these organizations are there to make money out of it."

Amber: "Right."

Ralph: "Every time a disaster happens, about four or five organizations start up, start some, start something too...and that's, that's maybe that's why union started because."

Amber: "Um."

Ralph: "Yeah, I could probably say more about the union, but I'm not going to. I was always a union member, but I was always fortunate,

and as a general rule of the democratic party, when there was a party in the union, there was a guy there and his name was ross. I forget his first name but he was the superintendent of the Argonaut mine. And he told his men one time, he said if poor doesn't win tomorrow don't you bother to show up for work. But of course that is the reason we have secret ballot."

Amber: "Um."

Ralph: "If it wasn't for that secret ballot, people could control the way people voted."

Amber: "Right."

Ralph: "So he did, in fact he said if you guys vote for, oh for..for Roosevelt, don't bother to show up for work tomorrow. They mad democrat out of everybody."

Kelly: "Well how did they know if you voted for him or not?"

Ralph: "Well he didn't but he told them that anyway!"

Amber: "Alright, um do you have any more memories or any more specific events stand out in your mind about the Kennedy mine or living in Amador County, in Jackson?"

Ralph: "Well, I think its all written in there."

Amber: "Um, O.K."

Ralph: "It's all written in there, but there is one story I'd like to, there's a couple of stories I'd like to get straight about the old baseball teams that was used to have, and a, because the miners used to support the baseball teams. They used to give the baseball players jobs to get them to play for the teams. And then we had the tug-o-war team, and there is a lot to that. That was a big event. Oh, and if you could find out all the names of the persons that were on the team, like Ned Vacavich. In fact he has pictures and things."

Amber: "Ned Vacavich he just bought...."

Ralph: "Have you talked to Ned Vacavich?"

Amber: "I met him this weekend actually."

Ralph: "And then a John Aime, a guy by the name John Vacavich."

Kelly: "John Aime works down at Spinco."

Ralph: "Oh yeah, he knows about the baseball team."

Amber: "Is he cousins with Ned?"

Ralph: "No."

Amber: "O.K. alright do you have anything else you would like to say about it?"

Ralph: "That's why I wrote those papers."

Amber: "Yeah that's great cause this shortens up your interview a lot."

Kelly: "Do you want these back?"

Ralph: "No."

Amber: "If you like we'll type this up and we well make it out."

Interviewed on

June 18, 1997

By Amber Holland and Kelly Smith