

**Tape # 1038: Interview with Afelda Alderson, April 7, 1978**

**Side A**

This is for the history of the city of Lafayette, for the library, and you've been here a long time and they want this – I was 2 months old when I came here. Alright, when you came to Lafayette. Let me start this out, this is Fred Stones interviewing Afelda Alderson on April the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1978. Mrs. Alderson is one of the old pioneers of the city of Lafayette, and I'm going to talk to her and get her reminisces of the way the town used to be years ago when it was first a town. Now, you were born where? In Highmera, Indiana. And when did you come to Colorado? When I was 2 months old. And I came with my mother's folks, my grandparents, grandfather and grandmother and my mother and father. And the Ward's, a brother of my father's was already here. They had come and they lived up in a little house where, right next to, east of the town hall. They lived in a little house there. That brick house was still there, I can remember that and that man that lived in the brick house, he was, headed the company store. Is that the old company store that is here now, the old Oddfellow store? That was the original company store? Yes, I think that was, it must've been. And the upstairs was all – Wasn't that all burned that block burned at one time? Yes, it burned down. And when it burned down my father was one of the men, fireman, he was a fireman, and the firemen all had regular overalls and boots to put on as soon as they found out there was a fire, why, that's what they did, and it was something they kept at the head of the bed. And when the fire bell – there'd be a bell ring at that time – and when that'd ring, Dad would jump out of bed get into his clothes, and he would go up on the roof of the company store, and I think it was the company store, yes, and he started down, he got his ears all burned from being up there, and when he started down the ladder the roof caved in, and he was so thankful that he was on the ladder. OK, now do you remember any of the other firemen who worked with your father? No, I don't remember any of the firemen. I was just a little kid, there was just Eva and Harold and me. And my dad bought the house where Barb Lindburg lived, and he built that house, it was a little shack and he kind of tore it down and then there was a woman that lived next door to her – I forget, I can't remember her name – but anyway, that woman she went out one night, she went to put coal oil in her lamp, and the lamp was lit, and it all

exploded and she got on fire, and she run into the bedroom and picked up the baby and came out with that little baby in her arms on fire and Dad saw her and he jumped, they had a high picket fence, those old fashioned high picket fence, Dad jumped over that and threw her down on the ground and there was snow on the ground and put the fire out. But she, she was saved and the baby was saved. Do you remember her name? I can't think of her name, Hodginson, Hodson or something I can't think, I wasn't very old when that happened. Let's get back to the fire now, where it burned the whole block on Simpson. It burned the whole block, on the south side and on the north side, but the big two-story building was left here on the corner. That belonged to the, let's see, the Mayfields, I believe was the name. They were two girls and a brother. Was that Mayhoffer? Mayhoffer, yes, Mayhoffer. They ran a boarding house. They run a boarding house, and they were white-haired people, all three of them were, and they had pink eyes. Have you heard about her? I've heard about that. Now that was the only building on both sides of the street that was left? And my Dad had a barber shop up there, and at the time, my grandmother and grandfather had come in from the ranch, they had homesteaded some land out by, oh, out west, where the – Out by Marshall? No, not that far out. Where is the atomic plant? Where they make the thing? What do they call it? – Rocky Flats! They homesteaded some land out at Rocky Flats, and they were in, living in the winter, with us all. Momma and my mother and my grandfather went when the fire was creeping down this way, and the wind blew something terrible.

[Dog barking; tape cuts out]

We better start where we left off. My mother and grandfather moved all Dad's stuff out of the barber shop, he was the barber here, in Lafayette, and he had – they moved his things to the vacant lot, right in back of the – it was a grocery store right on the corner there, and I can't think who run it, a man from Erie run it. The wind blew so hard that my grandmother stood out with a hose in her hand and kept our roof – the roof of our house wet – the shingles would just fly clear over – the wind blew so hard. And ever after that when the wind would blow my mother would cry. She was so afraid of wind. Well, we lived there quite a while. And we didn't – Now, let me ask you; what buildings and businesses were on that street that burnt?

Well, there was the barber shop and right on the corner was a bakery shop and a store right on the corner where the store is now. And in back of it was a little house, a little white house, and we eventually moved into that little house. That was before – I'm a little ahead of myself I think. That's alright, we'll catch up to it. Now, the store on the corner and the barber shop, then what was next? The opera house. The opera house was next to the barber shop. Yes, they used to have plays in that barber shop and once they had plays up there – companies seemed to come from Denver and they – I was just a little girl with long hair and curls, great long curls, and they, one time they had a play up there and I was supposed to have been sewin' and I was hollering, "Momma, Momma, Momma!" when they went with me across the stage. Ok, now to get to this picture, what, you was a geisha girl? Yes, a geisha girl. What was that play that you were in? It was a geisha girl play, it was a regular – A Japanese play? Japanese play. And this was – we had to go to practice – I was quite a bit older then – and we had to go and practice, and Mildred Peltier – a pretty little blue-eyed blonde, long curls – and she sang, "School Days". That is, in between the plays. In between the acts? In between the acts, yes. Now, on the west side of the opera house, what was there then? I don't remember what was there, I think it was, I just can't remember what was there next. But anyway, up above was the company store. Alright, the company store. And then what was on the corner of the company store? The bank. The bank. The bank. And the whole block burned? The whole block burnt, and all but the Mayhoffer's building. On the north side? Yeah. And then when did they rebuild those buildings? Oh, I can't remember that, they built it a little at a time. A little at time? I don't know where Dad had his shop after that, I can't remember where he had his barber shop. But my Dad had his barber shop here for a long, long time. But they carried his stuff out and put it in the back? And put it in the vacant lot back of that store. And the fellow from Erie run that store, but I can't remember his name now. Now, let me ask you, do you remember some of the old people, some of the old-timers who lived here in Lafayette? Oh – That you went to school with? Oh yes, I went to school with Anna Moore, and I don't know how many of the kids, they're all gone now. And I just can't – I remember Anna Moore, Anna Holliday was her name then. And where did you go to school? The old schoolhouse that burned down. Up on Baseline? Up on Baseline Road, yeah. That's where I went. One of my teachers was – Miss Hickenlooper was her name – she was an elderly woman,

and my dad he had started a laundry, and after the barber shop burned down. Now where was the laundry? That was up above, in between the opera house – no that was after it was all built, there was a mortuary next door. And dad started a laundry – a steam laundry. He had a man come out from Denver to teach him how to – and he did the laundry. And we lived in the house up here on Cleveland Street at that time – next to Bermont's house. Up on the 200 block on Cleveland? Way up there, yeah. Now, how long did he have that laundry there? Well, he didn't have it there very long, they eventually built the building that is way back up on the hill – north, up north, and the laundry was moved up there. Did he still operate it when it went up there? Oh yes, he built the building or had it built, I don't know just how it was, I didn't know what was going on too much, you know I was just a kid and didn't pay much attention. Did you work in the laundry? Yes, I did. Alright, what did you do in the laundry? I did everything there was to do, but wash. I knew how to run every machine in the building; I knew how to run the shirt machine, the neck bender, and the body ironer; I knew how to run them all. I had to work in the summertime, but I went to school in the winter, but if dad would get into trouble and didn't have enough help, why he'd come to the school and take me out of school and make me – come to work in the laundry. Put you to work. And I wasn't very old, either, I don't remember how old I was. But one day, Anna Moore and I decided we wanted to go out to Vann's Lake, skating, so we played hooky from school. We went out there and she had a boyfriend and I went along with them. But we got caught about it, we got caught. Dad come to school to get me in the afternoon to come help, and I wasn't there. And Anna was supposed to of got a lickin' with a rubber hose, and dad talked to me and shamed me so – he had bought me – it was just before Christmas and I wanted a bracelet for Christmas – he had bought me a bracelet. He shamed me about how good he had been to me for buying me that bracelet for Christmas. Did you finally get the bracelet? I finally got the bracelet. Anyway, he just talked to me and scolded me, he didn't give me a lickin' or anything like that. I don't ever remember my dad lickin' me only twice. Did you deserve those? Yes, I think I did. You think you did? Yes, I do, I think I deserved that one. I should've got a lickin' for that. Alright, now, let's go back a little earlier than that. Didn't you tell me one time that you stayed over with your grandparents over on Rocky Flats? Yeah. Tell us a little bit about that. Well, when they came here, they homesteaded that 80 acres of land out there, and to begin

with they built just a little shack on the west end of the 80 acres. I don't know where they got their water, but Grandma used to go to a ditch, a big irrigating ditch, a great big ditch, and carry water clear away back to the west end of that 80 acres. There was a kind of a ditch there – I mean, what is it you would call it? Anyway it was low, where they built, and dirt all around it. Well they lived there for quite a while, and then my grandfather got a job – they'd opened up a mine, a coal mine – and my grandfather got a job working there, and they eventually built, my granddad would take rocks out there where the farm was, there was lots of rock quarries, they called them, and he was a mason to cut – what was it they called them? Rock masons? Or I don't know what you'd call them. Anyways, he dug that rock out and cut it and shaped it and built another home out there. They had one great big long room, and then a living room and a bedroom, too. We used to, us kids would go out there and stay with grandma and grandpa, and grandma would go to the neighbors and give straw and something and that's what us kids slept on, we had a straw mattress to sleep on. Is that building still standing? No, that building – my grandfather finally got pneumonia, and they come into town to live with us. We lived up there right acrost from – where was that Davis, what was it? – Pinkie Davis, do you remember where Pinkie Davis lived? Well, we lived in that house acrost the street from that, and there was a big barn in the back there. Who else was your neighbors up there besides Pinkie Davis? Do you remember those? Oh, Pinkie Davis wasn't a neighbor. Oh, he wasn't then? No, there was Tom Myers who was the barber that was here in town. Let's see. Can't think of their names – neighbors – they were real good neighbors. And then, up above them there was, let's see now – Maxwells. They were Scotch people. And Johnny Irvin had married one of the girls. And Johnny Irvin was a painter, here in Lafayette. And how long he'd been a painter I just can't remember. He was a painter a long time, wasn't he? Yes, he was, you could depend on Johnny to do everything. Now let me ask you, do you remember when they sunk the Simpson mine? No, I can't remember that. No, I don't remember about it. Do you remember any of the mines being sunk? Oh, the Strathmore out here, I forget the name of the one out pretty close on Baseline. You know the Millers, Grandma Miller's husband, I think they homesteaded all this land here. I can't tell you too much about that because I don't know. Well they were the ones who platted the town. They started the town. They homesteaded all this land. When you bought a lot, it was bought from them. Now do you

remember any other buildings in town that aren't here? Well, there was a shoemaker, Joe Brown, across the street from the bank, and then there was a store, a grocery store, next door to him. And they were from Erie, but I can't remember their name. But they were there a long time. Now, do you remember who ran the bank? J.P. Miller. J.P. Miller? He was the man that put the pipeline – water pipeline – he was the mayor of the town. J.P. Miller was. When they put the water system in? Uh huh. Dad was on the town board at that time, but I don't remember too much about what went on about that. That was all over my head. Was the city hall where it is now? I don't – it might have been, but I can't remember for sure when that was built. It has added things to it. But anyway, my uncle and his family lived right next door to where, uh, what's his name now that lives next to – on the east side of – Welchman (?) Yeah, Welchman (?). There was a little house there. That's where my uncle and his family lived. And that brick house was there then? That brick house was there. And that brick house has been there as long as I can ever remember. Now, do you remember when they built the union hall? No, I don't remember when they built it, but I remember having plays in the union hall, that's where this – Is that where this play was? This wasn't in the opera house. Now it says it was in the opera house – No, it was in the union hall. Oh. Yeah, that was in the union hall. See it says, "Talent in the Lafayette opera house". In 1908, see. Yeah, that's right. After the opera house burned down, well then they would have the plays in – Well, we – How often would they have these plays? Well they had them, I would say two or three times a year, they would have plays come in. They'd come in from Denver or out of town? Out of town, somewhere. Did they have any local people put on plays there? No, I don't remember any local people, this was all done in the school. Do you remember these girls? Oh, I remember them well. Alright, do you know where any of them are? I think – Mabel Hadley? Mabel Hadley is dead. She's dead. How about Mary Schofield? Mary Schofield is dead. How about Leona Smith? Leona Smith, as far as I know, she's dead. Alright, how about Nina Voqueer? I don't know anything, after she left here, I didn't know anything about Nina. Nina Voqueer? Voqueer, uh huh. And so three of them are dead, you're about the only one left out of this whole bunch then? The only geisha girl left? I'm the only one left. I'll be darned. That's interesting because it's a good picture of you. It is a good picture. I think I have them enlarged, some pictures. Is that right? Do you have – let me ask you this question – do you have any pictures

around the house of the old buildings, or the old pictures of Lafayette? No, I don't. You don't have any? No. The reason I asked that is because they would like to get some pictures and have them copied. (Fire whistle came on and lost the conversation.)

Down on the crick, down below where Desi Monihee lives, down there. Then the railroad didn't come into town, did it? No, it didn't, then, no. But it eventually did. They, my folks told me, my mother told me, that they had a surrey or – it was pulled by horses. It brought the people from the depot into town? Up into town. Do you remember when they built the depot here in town? When they brought the railroad through town? Yes, I do remember. I remember them building that. They used to park the old stub that used to go from here to Louisville, right over here. Yes, it was right back of your house over here, wasn't it? That's right. They make a run to Louisville and then went to Louisville Junction. I used to come home from school and get out a little early on Friday night and come down here to the depot and my mother would put my clothes in a little suitcase, and I'd go to the depot and I'd get on the train and ride from here to Louisville Junction. Then I'd take out over the hills and walk across a plank – a board about that wide – carry my suitcase, and that old ditch just full of water, and I wasn't very old either. You'd go up to your grandparents? Aye, Grandma would watch for me. Then she had an old dog – Watch was his name – an old bulldog, and she'd say, "Watch, here comes Afelda, you go meet her." And he would, he'd meet me. But some of the happiest days of my life was spent out there on that old ranch, with Grandma. When she was out there, there was a lot of, maybe that could be on something else. Go ahead. There were a lot of wild horses out there. At that time? At that time. They had little colts and she did get two little colts and raised 'em and broke 'em. She broke 'em herself. My grandmother did. How long did they live out there on that farm? Oh, a long time – I don't know. Grandpa worked in the mine. But then when he got pneumonia, why, they come in to live with us. He was in bed till he eventually died. But when we were out there, in the summertime, we would – Mama and Dad would run the laundry. I was supposed to work in the laundry and just go weekends out there, and then I'd have to come to Lafayette. But Eva and I used to roam all around and gather wildflowers. And we went one day, she and I, to gather wildflowers. And we went clear to the west end of the land. Well, even beyond that,

because it's all fenced. And we were right in a big gully. And we started up this gully. And I could see something laying over on the ground, and Eva kept saying, "What is that, Afelda?" And I said, "I don't know what it is." It looked like a man's coat and hat, or coat and vest. And we walked up to him, and it was a dead man. Is that right? It scared me to death. Sure. I stood there and looked at him and oh! the odor was terrible and the maggots were in his mouth and eyes and all over. (Tape ended.)

### **Side B**

I'll never forget him. Do you know what happened to him? Well, he went to Denver and he worked at one of the mines over – back of Louisville there, somewhere. I forget the mine. And he got drunk, and spent all of his money, and I guess he must've had a heart attack or got sick or something. Anyway, he was laying there, and he had a plaid shirt on. And it looked like the man had one of these jackets, you know, that they used to wear – farmers, men that work in a mine. He had unbuttoned his collar here and threw his shirt back, and he had unbuttoned his pants here, and unlaced his – he had high top shoes, and he had unlaced them. And he had one hand up in the air just like that, laying down like this. That was terrible for you to come across him like that. Oh, terrible. It took me a long, long time, I'll tell you Fred, to get over it. I cried and cried and cried. And I begged Grandma, I said, "Oh Grandma, don't go, don't go!" And Grandpa had went down to Louisville Junction and the fellow that run that – they had men living there at Louisville Junction, in boxcars, you know, like they used to have – and they were pretty good friends, they took milk and butter from Grandma. Grandma had a couple of cows. Grandpa wasn't at home. I can't remember how we got hold of Grandpa. But anyway, I think Grandma and me and Eva went down to Louisville Junction and told them there. Then they wired for the coroner to come. And the coroner came, but believe you me I wouldn't go with them! No sir! I would never go back to the west end of that – I can understand that. When the undertaker came, why, of course they put him in a basket, and the odor they said was terrible. Harold took 'em and showed 'em about where it was. Harold and me and Eva were all out there. I think all the kids were out there. There was, let's see, Harold and Eva, I don't think Herb was born then. I'm not sure. How many years did you go to school? How many years? I went to school almost through the eighth grade. Through the eighth grade? And quit. And when



I was 17 years old, we had a strike here, you know, the 1910 strike. I was just going to ask you about strikes, if you remembered any of the strikes. Oh, I remember it – it was terrible. And I was just scared to death because there was fighting and shooting and everything. My dad carried a big thing made out of leather and – Now where were you living then? Let's see, where were we living? We were living out across – Baseline Road. On Baseline Road. Was that the time that they brought the militia in? Yeah, they had the militia here. And then finally, Eva married one of the soldiers. But during that time I couldn't find anything to do in the summer, I was trying to find work. Franz Store was on the corner – it burned down, you know, Franz Store there – where that vacant lot is. That's across from the old Davis store now, where the old Davis store used to be, across from your store, Alderson's. Yes, right, east of Alderson's. And that was Francen, you say? Franz. His wife – let's see, it seems to me like we lived – you remember that old house that burned down here? No, we didn't live across the street then. No, we lived in that house and Glen was a baby – no, Calvin was a baby, in that old house. And he had pneumonia and nearly died there. I'm getting a little ahead of my time. That's alright, we're just wandering around. That's what we want to do. We lived in that house then, let's see, oh there was a big family there – Mike O'Day married one of the girls. Now, who was the postmaster before Mike O'Day? Oh, what was the name of the fellow that you used to run around with? His father was a – you used to go with him. He went with – quite a while with Mildred Peltair. What? Dick Beckett? Beckett. Beckett was the postmaster. The store, Beckett's store – where Beckett had this building wasn't where it eventually was. He had it in two different places, and then Mike O'Day had it. My mother and Mrs. Beckett were very good friends. Now, do you remember when Henning built the mortuary down here? Henning didn't build the mortuary down here? No, that was built by – I can't remember. Allen. Allen? Dave Allen, let's see, there were three of those men. Yeah, they must've built that, I didn't – Well you wouldn't pay that much attention. (He was the boss at the Simpson mine.) When did they build the big building the new apartments there now? New apartments? Where the apartment house is. Well, I'll tell you, there was a livery store went up in there, Webber's Livery Store, and they had up above the barn, where the horses were, they had a skating rink. That's when we had the laundry, across the street. Eva and I used to go roller skating up there. And it was awful hard to get a quarter to go roller skating, believe you me, because I never had

anything, very much of anything like that, I never had no candy and stuff like kids have nowadays. Now, under the bank they had a confectionary and a bowling alley and things down there. Did you ever go down there? I never was down there, no. But there was kind of a hall like and steps where you went down there. On the outside of the bank? Uh huh, right alongside the bank. I remember that, but I never was down there. I had no occasion to go down there. And there used to be a drugstore acost the street from there and then Bermont's store. And then Bermont bought one of the colts or one of the horses that Grandma got and broke him. He was a stallion and he was a mean little dickens. If I got out of the yard at Grandma's place, why, he'd lay back his ears and just run after me and grab my bonnet and hair and all, and pull my bonnet off my head. But he never attempted to bite me or hit me with his paw or kick me or anything. I would run like everything when – Barney they called him – and George Bermont bought him from Grandma. Alright, now how long did George Bermont have that store there? Oh, long, long – my folks used to take me there to buy shoes. They had shoes and dress goods and everything like that. And Anna Jones was Mrs. Bermont's sister, and she worked in the store. I remember that very well. Mama would take me in there to buy shoes, and she'd asked me if they hurt my feet, and I'd say, "Yes, they do." She'd say, "Now, Afelda, I know very well those are big enough for you." And it made me start to cry, because she – Yeah. Now did he start the store before Charlie Scholl (?) started his? Yeah. Now this was back – You know they – he was shipped in here when they had a strike. George Bermont was? George Bermont was one. And so was one of the Peltier's (?), but which one I don't remember. But grandpa called them – they were blacklegs – that's what grandpa called them. Well now this was back in the 1880s then. Oh a long time, yes. Because Charlie started his store about the 1900s. Did he? Charlie Scholl. I remember Charlie Scholl. Yeah. So if that was before Charlie Scholl's time, that was back in the 1800s some time. Oh yes, that was long, long before Charlie ever started a store. Even I used to – the library was the church, and my dad used to sing in the choir of that church. Let's see – it wasn't a Methodist, it wasn't a Baptist. I can't think what it was now. But anyway, Lippy Jones directed the choir, and he was one of the old time men that lived here and worked in the coal mine. Do you remember anybody else that belonged to the church? No, I don't. I don't know who. I know Harold was a baby when we would go – they would go to church and take Eva, and Harold was just a little baby, even he

would go along. He had colic for nine months. Mama went – they went in the evening and took Harold, and he started to cry. And mama was trying to hush him up, and she couldn't. And the minister stopped and asked her, "Could you please take that baby out in the hall." They never went back to that community church. They never went back to that church anymore. Even I went to Sunday school there – every Sunday. Is that the church where the library is now? Yeah, that's the church. Now, right down from that is where Bill Moon had his meat market. Do you remember that? Yes, I remember that. Bill Moon. And the meat market. We used to go there. The pool hall was next to that. Yeah. I don't know too much about the pool hall, but I do remember the meat market. Now in Nip Lewis' building across the street from where Bill Moon's meat market is – what was in there? Do you remember? I don't remember what was in there. I sure don't. This was just up the street from Bermont's store. Yes, that's right. I just don't remember. I think it was a pool hall. I'm pretty sure. A barber shop was in there, too. Let's see – I was trying to think of the man that run the barber shop. Was there only one livery stable in Lafayette? That's all. And that's across the street from there. And that was Jones' livery stable. And you could rent a horse and buggy for so much. Now they finally turned that into a car agency, didn't they? A what? A car agency where they sold cars. I don't remember that. I remember the livery stable. Didn't Weber used to sell Ford cars there in the old (?) apartment – Who did? Weber. They did? I don't remember that. It seems to me like I remember something.

[Directed at another man in the room] Do you remember that?

Afelda Alderson: I don't remember that.

Unknown man: There were two livery stables. There was Dan Jones had one and Weber had one.

Afelda Alderson: Who?

Unknown man: Dan Jones had one and Weber had one.

Afelda Alderson: Well that's true – Weber's – they was the ones that built that barn. That big building. I don't know whether they ever rented out a horse and buggy though to anybody. How long did the Mayhoffer's run the, uh – Ever since I can remember, until they finally got too old to – Did you ever work for them? No, I never did. I wasn't old enough to be working. Did you ever work for anybody else in town besides your father at the – I used to – I learned the millinery trade for a woman by the name of

Mrs. Hayes. She lived in that – in a little cubby hole, up there where it's a little cubby hole now. And she finally sent me to Denver to finish the millinery trade. And I stayed with Jones'. We knew them. Lippy Jones. And I took a street car, and come down to where the wholesale house was. After we started up here, there was a lot of buildings.

Now in 1920 they had another strike here. They called it the Wobbly strike. Do you remember that? I remember that strike, yes. That was the time they robbed the bank. Now can you tell us something about that? Cliff (?) told you. Well I want you to tell me so we can get it on the tape. Okay, well, Cliff – when they started robbing the bank – I don't know how that happened. They blew up the vault. Yes, that's – when they blew it up – we heard that. Dad, or Jake, gets his rifle, and started up the street. Then they started shooting at him. And hit him. As Cliff said, we – Cliff had keys to the store – we had a store there – just a little place – just shoes for women and hosiery. That's all that had for women – everything was for men. When we found – when we got in there – why here was the rifle there, and blood all over the floor. Oh my land, I was sure Jake was killed. But he had gone into Dr. Braden's office.

18:00