



*“That was
great, good
fun!”*

*Carol
Finnoff*

by

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and
Alice Peters*

When we interviewed Carol Finoff for Three Wire Winter she told us how she and her husband came here because Bill wanted to ranch, and her sister also lived here. As we talked with her about her life we knew that she was an independent, adventurous lady who also made a very nice-looking grandmother. We liked her openness and her easy outgoing personality. We were proud that she was one of our community members, and her story helped relate much of Steamboat's charisma. She began with her beginning.

“My mother was a great gardener. I think of her often in the garden arguing with the gardener. They used to have terrible spats, as gardeners tend to be very stubborn. My mother would say, ‘I think this needs to be cut back,’ a bush or something, and he would say, ‘No, no.’ One time mother thought something should be left the way it was, and she went off to a party, and he cut the bush. She just didn’t know what to say. I don’t know how they ever got along.

“My mother lived in Minnesota, and her father was a banker. She came here when she was ten; there were twelve in her family. My father put a lot of money in mines out here and finally quit the bank to come out here to see why the money was always going in and nothing coming out. My grandfather was an Englishman, and my grandmother was French. I remember mother telling about coming here on the train. There was a man standing at the back of the train eyeing my family. He thought the family was piled on top of one another, and he finally said, ‘My god, I’ve run out of fingers to count.’

“As kids we did all kinds of things. We lived about three miles east of Denver. We lived in a house built by Count Von Richthofen’s cousin, and the Baron had come to Denver in 1880. It was an old house, the same as where my mother grew up. We had a great big carriage house out behind

with six box stalls. It was a marvelous place to play. People around us also had horses, and we used to ride a lot. I was kicked in the face when I was six, and I lost a lot of teeth, but luckily they were my first teeth. It was a pretty bloody mess when I came into the house, and my poor mother couldn't believe it. It was fortunate that the horse wasn't shot. I walked behind the horse, and I shouldn't have. I should have known better.

“Mother’s family was wild.”

“We rode our bicycles to school and we had roller skates. We played house and had plays behind the curtains in the bay windows. It was a small stage, but we weren't very large ourselves, so that was good fun. We always played with the boys, and mother's family was as wild as March hares, and they did things we would never do. The boys would climb up and down the house as if it were a mountain. My sister and I didn't do that, but we did play tennis and ski. We were members of the Junior Mountain Club, and there was only one ski area near Denver. We skied off a lot of rope tows and trails.

“We mostly were with people who are outdoor oriented. We used to do a lot of square dancing, and we went on hayrides. I heard an advertisement the other day for the Glacier Barn hayrides. I thought, for heaven's sake, we grew up with the Glaciers and they made a profession out of hayrides. They had a dairy farm, and we used to go to hayrides there and then to square dances afterwards. It was lots of fun. That seemed like the 'outback' in the forties.

“We listened to crystal set radios a lot.”

“We listened to radios a lot. I remember the first one I ever heard was a crystal set. One could make one herself, a lot of people did. On a crystal set there are wires wound around a tube which attaches the electricity. A little cat's whisker could be moved up and down the bumpy tube until a station could be found. We also had earphones. When I was five I used to go stay with a dear friend of my mother's, Aunt Robinson. She had a crystal set and at night we could hear all kinds of things. It was wonderful to put those earphones on and listen to voices that were coming from somewhere else. Of course, the radio has developed so rapidly that there are a number of programs now.

“I was a good student in school. I liked to study. I even liked tests, because it was fun to see how much I learned; that's always interesting. When I was little I wanted to be an archeologist, because I thought it would be interesting. Then when I got to school I don't know what I thought about; I just had a good time.

“Every Monday and Tuesday I'd reski the weekend...”

“Every Monday and Tuesday I'd reski the weekend. I was on the newspaper staff, and I was on the magazine staff, and that was kind of fun. I went to East High School, and they had experimental classes that they set up according to a plan made at Columbia. We didn't have grades, and we didn't have to take exams to go to college. It was all based on what our teachers said.



“I met my husband in Colorado Springs. I was going to college, and he was going to medical school. Many in his family were doctors, and they all thought he should be. He didn't think much of the idea, so he left to work in Denver at an importing, exporting business, among other things. He was a native Coloradan, and we met through friends. They were looking for dates for him and I'd come up from a ski race. My friends invited me to go out, and I met Bill.

“Bill was interested in bicycles before half the world even rode bicycles.”

“Bill was interested in bicycles before half the world even rode bicycles. He thought the European bicycles should be brought here, because at that point there weren’t really any ten speeds here. He designed a lot of the gears for the bicycle manufacturers over there. He thought that Americans didn’t really have the muscles to use the high gears, so they needed lower gears. Just about everyone here had the kind where you pushed down on the pedal to brake.

“Among a multitude of other things, Bill also wanted to be a rancher.”

“Among a multitude of other things Bill also wanted to be a rancher. When he was a youngster he used to spend his summers up on a tremendous ranch in Wyoming. Since his father was a doctor one of his patients lived there and loved it. Eventually he sold his business and bought a small ranch near the Wyoming border. It snowed hard every winter and one summer we were going to build a house, but it’s about fifty miles to get there and fifteen to ski in.”

Carol Finnoff talked about her other interests and hobbies. Not only has she held many jobs, but she has also traveled extensively.

“I worked for a travel agency for a while. I wrote scripts for airport qualification films. I spent a lot of time taking care of people who were here visiting our state department. **That was great-good fun.** I met some extraordinary people that way, and it was very special.

“Bill and I lived in Spain and France for a while, but mostly we lived in England and Spain. Bill had business there, so we took the children and went to a small fishing village in Gathia, a small province in the northwest part. Bill was working with some engineers in Bordeaux, France. He wanted to work beside the sea, so we lived in a place in Spain similar to Norway.

“We had lots of nice beaches and the water was very cold. We liked to swim, and we’d go

from one beach to another. The children weren’t very old, but the fishermen had lots of children. They’d come by and pick up the children to take their sheep and goats up to the hills. They would play all day and then come back at ten o’clock. More often than not they had dinner with the family.

“We lived in a little Villa, and the mountains came straight down into the sea.”

“We lived in a little villa, and the mountains came straight down into the sea. People walked up and down the hills all the time or they could take their oxen up. Sometimes the boys would come or one of them would send his dog and then he’d come up. He’d send his dog through the gate ‘cause he had to stay with the sheep. The dog would come up the stairs to the second floor where we were living and hunt until he found Peter, my son. Then the dog would take his shorts in his teeth and give him a tug like, ‘Come on, Peter, it’s time to go!’ He was a wonderful dog named Leon.

“Well, we kept going back and forth to Spain and France.”

“Well, we kept going back and forth to Spain and France ‘cause Bill worked with bicycle manufacturers. He also made champagne and it was an interesting operation. It was with Count Conanov and we’d be there for a while then come back. It was fun, we had a good time.”

Carol talked more about the customs in Spain, “Most of the children went to school till they were twelve and then went off on the fishing boats with their fathers. Their reading books were all about how to sail, about navigation, wind, water currents, and how the ocean func-

tions. It was neat, because they were learning the things they needed to know and getting the tools they needed later in life:

“The fishermen would go out at seven o’clock in the evening and fish most of the night.”

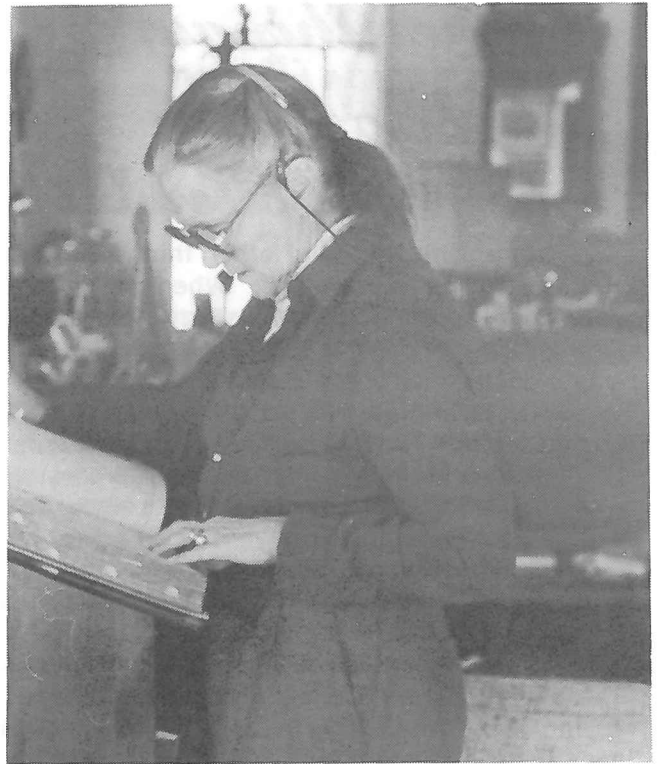
“The fishermen would go out at seven o’clock in the evening and fish most of the night. They brought the fish into town, and the women would buy it for their families. They carried big baskets on their heads; it was fantastic to watch. The captain of the boat would start the bidding with a very fair amount and if nobody said anything he’d come down a little bit. The first one who shouted, ‘Done!’ would get the bid. You see, we always come from the bottom up and have the bidders do the bidding, and this way the captain-of the boat would give the price and the first woman who said, ‘I’ll take it,’ got it. You know, if they got too low, why the captain would get angry and go to the next village and try again. That was fun to watch.”

“There were a tremendous amount of British momentos still there. It made me remember one summer I spent in England in a house that belonged to Brian Montgomery, a brother of Viscount Montgomery. He was so funny, he sounded very British, like Colonel Blimp (Carol does an impersonation). He’d been in the Indian army in World War II, quite an adversary of General Patton. They were always trying to out do each other.

“I traveled to India, Nepal, way up in the mountains where the British used to go in the summers when it was so hot.”

Carol further talked about her other interests and hobbies. Not only has she held many jobs, but she has also traveled extensively. “I traveled to India, to Nepal, way up in the mountains where the British used to go in the summers when it was so hot. The British went to the hill towns when they couldn’t stand it on the plains. There were all kinds of remains of the British Raj up there. There was also an enchanting tiny, tiny little church in ruins. It was a little Anglican church with the fifth Elgin’s tomb. Everything was overgrown and dripping wet. It was the loveliest looking place I think I ever saw. A great many of the Gurkhas would retire from the Indian army there, because they felt at home. Apparently they didn’t want to go back to Nepal, and they were very valuable to the army. The British government no longer controls India, but there are still lots of memories.

“Let’s see, how do you spell Dalai-Llama?”



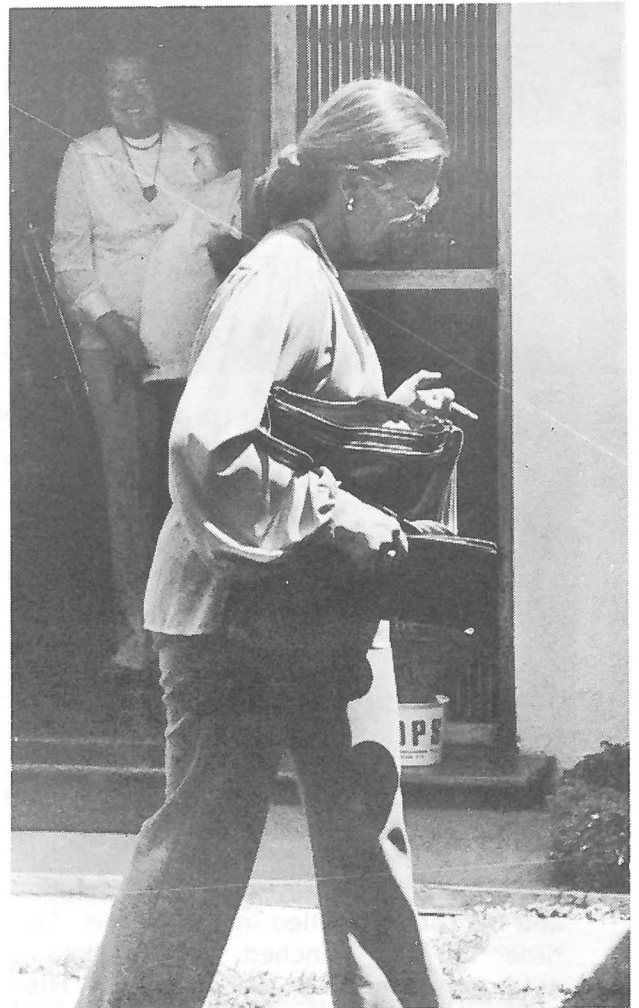
“I also was remembering about when the Dalai-Llama was driven out of Tibet. The Indian government gave him sanctuary in the school, and with him there was a young monk and an old monk. The old monk was chanting the strangest thing, because his voice came from his throat and chest. He was chanting from down in here somewhere (pointing to abdomen). It wasn’t like any voice I’d ever heard before, and I don’t know how he did it. The other young Dalai-Llama, or monk, was translating into a dialect we could understand.



"There also were a couple of other Americans there and a strange looking girl who we talked to for quite awhile. She looked so strange. She was a Buddhist nun, and her head was shaved, and she had bare feet. It was so cold, I don't know how she could stand it. She said her family didn't understand her. She was part of the religious order."

We concluded the interview by asking Carol how she spends her spare time today. "I still have my job selling tickets at the ski mountain. I am taking classes at the college, and I love classical music, Mozart is my favorite composer. I still swim every morning at 5:30 at the pool in town. I now have seven grandchildren; four in Boulder, three in Scotland, and they really lead diversified lives today. I guess my only fame to claim is that I'm proud to be a native Coloradan."

"I now have seven grandchildren, 4 in Boulder and three in Scotland."



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