

Oral History Project: Summer 2015

Interview Questions

Record a lead to start the interview: your name, narrator's name, date, and location

1. Please state your full name, your date of birth, where you were born and where you grew up.

Vickie Ranta Eidsmo

Born in Telluride, CO June 15, 1949 at the hospital. My parents were also born in Telluride. I have lived here all my life.

2. Tell us about when you moved to Telluride. Why did your family move here and when?

On my mother's side: my grandfather emigrated to Telluride from Italy in 1912 with his wife. He came here first and then she came when the war was over. They lived here until they passed away. My grandfather was a miner. On my father's side: they immigrated from Finland, I think the records say it was 1900 he came, originally he went to Michigan and then through the Finnish community there he found out there was mining here. He didn't actually work for the mines, he was a carpenter but he was in the mines doing work. He built a lot of the structures you see around here. My mom and dad were both born here, my dad had one surviving sibling and my mom and two surviving siblings. They didn't really know each other which seems strange for a small town, but my mom lived in the Italian section and my dad lived in the Finnish section. They probably knew each other in High School but it was after that when my dad was working that they got married. My brother lives here as well and he was born in the museum (hospital at that time).

3. What was it like when you moved here? Was the ski area opened at that time?

Before the ski area opened it was a strong community that is what I remember. Everyone knew everyone else and knew what was going on. That is a big memory, how close the community was. There was no TV, we had a movie theatre that maybe showed one movie a week, there was a drug store and maybe 2 restaurants. A lot of what we did was generated by us, we did ice skating and sledding, going over to Trout Lake to ski. My dad took us out a lot to do those things. We skied at the Kids Hill, but

at first it started out at the park. In the summer there was a lot of jeeping and hiking, in general just being outside. Let's fast forward a little when I was a senior in college I came home and there were strangers here, lots of people I didn't know anymore. I was 21. What made a big impression and that I remember is that the Sheridan was being operated by people from San Francisco and employed people I didn't know. You didn't know every single person in town and that was a big change. Before that there was skiing on the mountain with Senior Mahoney, if there were empty spots he would call us and ask if we wanted to go.

Dad was a plumber and because the economy was depressed in the late 1960's he started giving Driver's License tests.

4. Did you or your family own and operate a business here? If so, can you tell us about it?
When my dad got out of the army and came back here, there was a man who wanted to sell his business, my dad had learned plumbing in the army so that is how he ended up being a plumber.
5. Tell us about your reaction to the ski area's opening and the change in the community.
When the new people that were coming in were considered "hippies". Telluride at that point was very conservative. There were still miners and miner children and it was different. The locals were put off by the new people. I varied a little from my family I guess because Telluride was dying, it was a good thing. The values were different from the people that lived here, people had long hair and the women didn't wear bras. Drugs were an aspect. I think another perspective that doesn't get talked about is that not everyone was a "hippie". The men had long hair and the women did not wear bras, so that was a change. There were a lot of people who loved the outdoors and who came here and were or became Doctors, nurses, attorneys, teachers, all kinds of professions. I never felt that it was "Us versus Them". I saw it but didn't feel that way. I saw it a lot in politics. I was the Democratic Chairperson and I definitely saw that there was a movement to change the way things worked. There were a lot of bright people that had good ideas. There was certainly conflict.

What were some positive aspects of the ski area opening and what were some negative aspects?

It was a good thing, Telluride was growing because it was dying. I think there was conflict because the old timers felt intimidated by the new comers. That was the negative. It depends on how far down the road you want to go, if that had not of happened, we wouldn't be here.

The ski area provided jobs and filled up the empty houses in town. We could be sitting here looking at empty, run down houses. It provided a reason for people to come and visit. It provided an opportunity for young people to come back here and live. It opened up new jobs that had never existed before, more restaurants. It also brought in people that had more worldly views.

The negative would be the conflict between the old timers and the newcomers. It depends on how far down the line you look, if the change had not have happened, where would we be? But on the other hand, now it is making it harder and harder for people to stay here.

6. Tell us about some major changes that occurred in the community after the ski area opened.

It was a growing community, but it happened in increments. Restaurants started opening. Then the next stage was people with money starting coming, and then more people coming in with even more money. It started getting to be more houses, more amenities, and more restaurants.

7. What were some challenges that the community faced in the 1970s or 1980s. (Jobs? Housing? Prices? Homelessness? Poverty? Crime?)

Housing was a problem same as today, but on a much smaller level. There didn't seem to be a lot of homelessness or crime. There were a lot of people that didn't have a lot. Some people choose to live like they didn't have as much. I would say in the last 10 year there has been an increase in, I wouldn't call it poverty, just people needing more support. There is more crime, but there has always been crime, look back to the 1900's.

8. What were some benefits to living in Telluride during the 1970s/1980s? (Besides the obvious beautiful scenery).

I think the people that I met, a lot of really cool, cool people moved here and assimilated into the community. There was the ability to always be outdoors. When the festivals starting happening, everyone volunteered for them, because there were not a lot of people here at the time. There is a lot of stuff that comes here and people take advantage of it, even in the 70's and 80's. It is a very desirable place.

9. Can you tell us about the first summer festival that you remember? Which festival was it and what year was it?

Probably Bluegrass. I went over there, and I was probably the only straight person there. I wasn't high, I wasn't anything, and I was actually volunteering, checking tickets. The other impression was how "free" everyone seemed, they were dancing, happy, and some clothes off.

Describe some of the reactions from the local crowd when the summer festivals started?

The local people didn't like the festivals, even my parents who were pretty tolerant. People were using the bathroom outside and we weren't used to it. I remember my parents saying "What's this town coming to?" We were used to the 4th of July which was a huge, huge celebration so we were used to people coming and seeing behavior that we were not used to, but this was a new experience. The 4th of July drew a different crowd than the summer festivals. The Film Festival drew a different crowd. That was one that people kind of looked at with awe. Everyone wore black, it was different. There was no comprehension of how big the festivals would get, certainly not as big as they are now. It was kind of fun to have 2 or 3 because it would bring in different people and it was something we would look forward to every summer.

10. How did the community react to the opening of Mt. Village? Was it accepted positively or negatively by the Telluride community?

There were lots of opinions. Like anything in Telluride, it was political. Some people were worried, business owners were worried about the competition with Telluride. That there would be another "city" so close to town. There was disbelief that the

town could be pulled off. There were town council meetings where people were “at each other” over the issue and because people were not happy with what was going on up there. There were other people who thought there were opportunities there. To me it seemed like a natural progression. Other ski areas had kind of the same thing.

What major changes did this bring about? (Economically or culturally).

It has made a big change. There are a lot of more wealthy people around which is good to help businesses and to get people involved in organizations and donating money that was not there before. For a long time, everybody was up there, but now it seems to be both. It has been a challenge for Mountain Village to become viable. There are a lot of homes up there for people to stay but can still use the amenities in town.

I think it is hard for people now to understand the mining community and the hardships that were there.