

Tape 1028

Tape on Elmo Lewis' childhood, April 30, 1975, by Judy Reich.

EL: This is Elmo Lewis and I'd like to correct a part of my other tape that I made that stated the cost of food. There was a misunderstanding as to the time involved. The time was when Lafayette started not during the first part of the 20th century. The food was not that high during that time. While I'm bringing up the cost of the groceries, I'd like to go back to the depression. I remember I sold hamburger back during the depression during special sales for 3 pounds for a quarter. Bread was 5¢ a loaf. Steaks at different times sold for 2 pounds for a quarter, lard 5¢ a pound, butter 25¢ a pound, flour sold for \$1.50 a hundred, peanut butter, 2 pounds for 15¢, corn flakes and other types of packaged foods sold for 10¢ a pack, eggs at 10¢ a dozen, pink salmon, 2 cans for 15¢. We bought beef at 6-7¢ a pound. During that time my salary was \$10 a week. My hours were from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. On Saturday we worked until 9:00 p.m. and came back Sunday morning at 8:00 a.m. and worked until noon. Times have changed.

At this time I'd like to bring up activities that was in Lafayette at different seasons. In the fall of the year we played softball and basketball. Basket ball in my era was played on an empty lot just south of the City Hall or just across the street from where we lived at 108 East Simpson St. We would choose up sides and play for hours. Softball was played up at the school on empty lots. There was never any supervision. We would make our own rules. Once in a while there would be a fight, but it was more of a buddy-fight. We played in other empty lots around the community. One of the outstanding ones was the one in back of the library. There were a lot of outstanding marble games, softball, and talk games played back of the library. In the wintertime we had ice games. The main pond was down at the Simpson Mine. We called it the Simpson Pond. It was close to town and easy to get to. Also we had plenty of coal to keep the fires going when it was cold. The fire was lit at the start of the

skating season and there was fire there night and day until the skating season was over. The skates we used were clamp skates, that is, they clamped onto our shoes. The machine shop at the Simpson Mine kept our skates sharp at all times. If we needed a sharpening, we'd leave them there in the evening after we got through skating and the next day when we came back they would be ready for us. Harry Noble was the master mechanic down there and, of course, he would have his workers sharpen our skates so our skates were always sharp. We also would walk out to the Prince and the Vann Lakes and also skated at the Marvell. These lakes were mainly used for private groups. I remember skating the old year out and the new year in on the Marvell and different lakes. We'd have hot dog and marshmallow roasts and just have a real good time. Also we would have Sunday School parties and other group parties. We'd play all types of games at these parties but the most popular one was Post Office. where you'd either get a kiss or a stamp on the toe by the opposite sex. Just before the party was over we would have refreshments. All the mothers would try to out-do each other so we really had some outstanding refreshments. I remember on one party that the girl I took lived down on the old Miller ranch south of Lafayette. I walked down and got her and took her to the party and after the party I took her home on a path that took a short cut through a corn field. Going through the corn field taking her home didn't bother me at all, but when I started to go back through the corn field by myself it became different. It was a very dark night and my imagination started to work. I could see all kinds of goblins and everything else. I started out walking, then I walked faster, and then into a dead run. It didn't take me very long to get home. In the spring of the year we played baseball, marbles, and tops. Playing tops we would make a round circle and each player would put in a top. Then you used lots to see who would be first, second, etc. The purpose of the game was that the player could use his top to see if he could knock the other tops out of the ring. If you did, you got the top. If your top came out of the ring you got another chance, but if your top stayed in the ring you lost your top and your turn.

Marbles were played like they are played today. But we would play all day long. Sometimes we would stop long enough only to go home and get something to eat. Baseball was played locally by choosing up sides. We'd play different classes in the school. I had my leg broke playing 3rd base when I was about 12 years old and, of course, I'd like to repeat that all this activity was done without any supervision. We made our own rules and lived up to them and we had a lot of fun. I recall having a game with Erie. It was at 2:00 p.m. of a specific day. We walked over there to play the game. We left at 9:00 a.m. and got over there about noon, starved to death. We had to go around and do a little mooching for food. We played the game and walked most of the way home. We were really ready for bed when we got home. Of course, that was the enjoyment we had. Kids didn't mind walking distances in order to have fun.

We had a real good swimming pool which was the Plant Lake, now the Waneka Lake. There was a power plant that discharged hot water into the lake. That left it warm. We would walk out to the lake, then walk back. If we ran into another group going out to swim, some would go back and swim some more. There were a few that tried to swim across there or out to the middle and quite a few of them got cramps and drowned in the lake. There was a lot of excitement in our community when they'd go out to try to find their bodies.

My brother and I had a donkey and a cart that we emptied ash pits with. My sister and other girls would clean up the cart and would take rides out in the country. I remember one time when they got out into the country the donkey decided it wouldn't pull the cart so one of the girls would have to get a bunch of alfalfa from the field and put it in front of the donkey's nose to make the donkey pull the cart back into town. After this trip the girls were pretty much discouraged and I don't think they ever went back into the country.

In the evening we would meet on the corner of Cleveland and Gough and we would play for hours in the evening on the corner. We would play such games as

dare base, where we would choose up sides, and then we would have Run, Sheepie, Run, where we would hide about town, and one group would try to find the other, and when the leader thought it was time for his group to beat the other group back to the corner, he'd yell "run, sheepie, run" and we'd all try to beat each other back to the corner. We had other games that we would play until the curfew bell rang and then, of course, when it rang we were supposed to go home. Sometimes we'd have a real race with the town marchall when he was chasing us home.

Last week in the newspaper it showed the picture of the Union Hall. That was a really outstanding place for the activities of the town. That was used for basket ball, dancing, plays, local and out-of-town, boxing,, and moving pictures were shown in the Hall. Outstanding boxing matches met in town and I would say that one of our local young people of that time if he'd had the right kind of training could have really gone up to national recognition and that was Joe Mathias. He was a real boxer and a fighter. And there were many others. Many of us younger kids got a lot of practice by boxing in the preliminaries of the fights. The even had State Champion Boxing Matches in the Union Hall. On the back of the Hall was a real stage where they held plays. They had special dressing rooms and it was all really fixed up and they had outstanding plays for the community there. And, of course, dancing was held there on Saturday nights.. It was a place where the local people gathered together for their Saturday night entertainment. It was really good entertainment. They had good bands coming out to play, but, of course, there were always some who ruined the good times by having too much to drink and fights. There were quite a few fights where some of the young fellows would get jealous or some other fellow and challenge him outside.

That covers briefly the activities we had in Lafayette. In closing, I would like to add about a special event in our community that is still going on and that is the Scholarship Fund that was set up. Many years ago when my wife,

Frances Lewis was the mother of the fund. She started out with the Parents-Teachers as chairman and served on the committee for a good many years. And now this has run over into the scholarship fund down in the new high school, Centaurus, which is an outstanding activity to send out boys and girls to college. It is a great help.

I think this takes care of the tape at this time.

JR: Could you tell us when the curfew bell went off? EL: The curfew rang at 8:00 at night and then it was time for all the young boys and girls to get off the street and if the marshall would go around town and was able to catch anyone he would have put us in jail for a short period of time, or take us home. But we would kind of out-run him and get home before he could catch us.

JR: Also about the scholarship fund, how is the money raised for this? EL; It all began by donations. Different organizations and people would donate money and it was built up in this way.