

By Coincidence An Introduction:

In 1982 Eudora Welty was 80 years old. I, along with a colleague from the General Society of Mechanics and Tradesmen Library in mid-town Manhattan, drove 2 hours north to Katonah to hear Ms. Welty speak. Unbeknownst to me, I was about to have an experience that would change the course of my life. In my early 20's and in graduate school, I was wrestling with the idea of creating art full time. It was an unstable economic and political period and the thought of a life in art raised uncertainty.

When we arrived I was struck by the sound of Ms. Welty's distinctive southern accent. We may have noticed the photographs on display, had we not gotten lost en route and attempted to find seats without distracting the crowd. As I relaxed and began to listen, I felt free to allow my eyes to observe what she was describing. I was struck by images of people from a long ago era, who by their expressions and details seemed agreeable to being photographed. Her subject matter consisted of mostly African-Americans in what seemed like dire conditions. This led me to wonder why a writer of such notoriety had been privy to this time and this place? As Ms. Welty began to explain, it was a set of circumstances that afforded her the opportunity to get these shots. The power and mystery in those photos led to the planning of this exhibition. Ms. Welty's creative journey captured a sense of home and celebration of the human spirit. This pursuit also revealed her resilience to transcend disappointment and rejection. Her story is much like many of the artists in the Museum of Friends. Life presents challenges and opportunities while art remains constant.

Portraits from the Heart – Images of the 1930's by Eudora Welty

Ms. Welty did not think of the people in her photographs as subjects in a social documentary but instead as pieces of a family album. Born and raised in Mississippi, she was hired by the WPA (Works Progress Administration) as a press writer for the state. The WPA was a program established in 1935 by Franklin D. Roosevelt to put unemployed artists, musicians, writers, actors and photographers to work after the stock market crash of 1929. Welty tried to get hired as a photographer for the Federal program, but was unsuccessful. She also applied to the New School of Social Research in NYC to study with Berenice Abbott and again was rejected. As luck would have it, (for us) we get to see the photographs she took while publicity agent, junior grade, for the State office of the WPA. She was sent to over 80 counties in Mississippi – and – on "their time" snapped pictures of interest to her along the way. The building of new roads, schools and airfields, county fairs, displaced migrant workers, and children became newsworthy subjects for her role as press agent. Taking photographs with a Kodak model somewhat like a Brownie (the first low-cost popular camera that helped launch the "snap shot") enabled Ms. Welty to record people and scenes without intruding into their lives. Much of what she saw and learned was later integrated into her writing.

"In snapping these pictures I was acting completely on my own, though I'm afraid it was on their time; they have nothing to do with the WPA, but the WPA gave me the chance to travel, to see widely and at close hand and really for the first time the nature of the place I'd been born into. And it gave me the blessing of showing me the real State of Mississippi, not the abstract state of the Depression."

Had she been hired, to document the American scene for the WPA, her work would stand with Walker Evans, Dorothea Lange, Ben Shahn and ironically would have been the only true southerner in the group.

Over and again in her biographical writing and during that talk in Katonah, Ms. Welty's modesty and humility as a photographer was expressed. In the photography book "One Time, One Place, A Mississippi Album," where many of the works in this exhibition originate she explains:

"The book is offered... not as a social document but as a family album – which is something both less and more, but unadorned."

Welty also speaks of her photographs' importance to her as a writer in "framing" pictures getting distance on her subjects, using them for what they tell her of people she meets. In keeping her distance, Ms. Welty acknowledged that the camera became an instrument in her shyness to capture and observe every day life in a way that she would normally not be privy to. The subjects of the images on view detail: encounters between people; mothers and children; celebrations; musical performance; political situations; people speaking; making a date; religious ceremonies; working; playing; in her writing corresponds to her examination of human relationships. She is known as a "compassionate observer of everyday life and a passionate image maker." Snapshots left her with a store of indelible memories to call upon when needed. Welty used the camera like she used language to document the economic hardships brought about by the Great Depression. She also photographed people who were mostly invisible to the greater society. In the 1930's almost 30 years before the Civil Rights movement many of the people in her photographs were not seen. They didn't go to a photographic studio to pay for a sitting. The wealth of images we have due to her persistence illustrates the resilient American spirit. In 1936, two of Welty's short stories were published in a small magazine called *Manuscript*. After that time she devoted her life's work to writing, while using the camera less frequently. Friends encouraged her to start again, however her reply was

"I've done what I have to do. I've said what I had to say"

In her memoir, "One Writer's Beginning," published in 1984, Welty acknowledged the role photography played in her creative life: "I learned in the doing how ready I had to be. Life doesn't hold still. A good snapshot stopped a moment from running away. Photography taught me that to be able to capture transience, by being ready to click the shutter at the crucial moment, was the greatest need I had. Making pictures of people in all sorts of situations, I learned that every feeling waits upon its gesture, and I had to be prepared to recognize this moment when I saw it."

She added: "These were things a story writer needed to know. And I felt the need to hold transient life in words – there's so much of life that only words can convey – strongly enough to last me as long as I lived."

Ms. Welty lived until 92. Born on April 13, 1909, in Jackson Mississippi, she died there in 2001. For the writer's centennial celebration, in 2009, her photographs were shown at the Museum of the City of New York and then traveled to Jackson, Mississippi. She is recognized as one of the greatest writers of American letters- winner of the Pulitzer Prize, for her novel *The Optimist's Daughter*, the National Book Critics Circle Award, many O. Henry Awards, and the Medal of Freedom.

To learn more please visit the reading section in this gallery for the related books used to prepare this exhibition: *One Writer's Beginnings* by Eudora Welty, Harvard University Press, 1984, *Eudora Welty, A Biography*, by Suzanne Marrs, Harcourt Inc., 2005, *Eudora Welty as Photographer* by Pearl Amelia McHaney (editor) University Press of Mississippi, 2009, *One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression: A Snapshot Album* by Eudora Welty, Random House, 1971, *Eudora Welty Photographs* by Reynolds Price (forward) University Press of Mississippi, 1989, *Documenting America, 1935-1943*, Carl Fleischauer (editor) University of California Press, 1988 and *The History of Photography* by Beaumont Newhall, The Museum of Modern Art, 1982.

This exhibition has been made possible by generous donations from the Colorado Creative Industries, Shell Exploration & Production Company, The City of Walsenburg, The Spanish Peaks Regional Health Center, San Isabel Electric Company. The photographs in this exhibition have been reproduced with permission from the Eudora Welty LLC, with the help of Ms. Forrest Galey, of the Mississippi Department of Archives and printed by James Patterson, Jackson, Mississippi.

By a Second Coincidence An introduction:

In 2008, Grant Pound of the Colorado Art Ranch contacted MOF to brainstorm on the planning of their program, "Art Posium," in Trinidad. Brendt and I were asked to select the artists who would be invited to be part of their artist-in-residency for that year. With certainty, we both choose Zoe Childerley after viewing her photographs from "In a Different Light." This project was laden with mythological, literary and sociological reference. Taxidermy with dramatic light set the strange scene for her photographic skill used to tell a story. Zoe's work was powerful, suggestive and made us want to know more about her. Many months later, we met her along with the other artists in that years' selection. In the few days of interaction, Maria put forth the possibility of Zoë being the artist for a project for MOF that was in the developing stages called "Where's Walsenburg?" The project in its early form was largely a social engagement with community that would explore each person's desires and goals through self-reflection and photography. Four years later, after much planning, Zoë arrived to live in Walsenburg for two months. Zoë was able to extend the Museum's mission by being who she is – a foreigner, exotic, and non-threatening. People let down their guard, invited her into their homes, businesses, and private nature retreats, while she continued to explore the dynamics that would fuel her work as an artist. Unbelievably energetic, open minded, intelligent and willing to take a risk, Zoë facilitated the greater community of Huerfano County to tell us about their lives.

Zoe reveals her process and interest in Walsenburg:

"I have been working as an artist, using lens-based media for 10 years. I have many years experience working in community arts and education where my specialty has been photography and lens-based media. I have worked with every age group from primary-school children to pensioners and have found that collaboration has opened up new ways of expressing ideas, encouraging people to create and communicate their story. Giving people a voice through creativity is invaluable and enables the audience to look at their world anew.

I also work as a Senior Photography Lecturer within the Art and Design faculty at De Montfort University in the UK and have my own nationally and internationally exhibited practice. However, I particularly relish the opportunity to work with new communities, which you can see from my numerous projects, commissions and residencies. I believe that the example projects described below demonstrate my use of innovation, creativity and inspiration and show relevant skills and experience."

Please refer to the "Where's Walsenburg?" blog to see examples of her work and how the project developed: www.zoechilderley.wordpress.com and to see examples of other residencies www.zoechilderley.moonfruit.com/

The portrait studio and on-site sessions:

Zoe Childerley's photographs present a view of the world that is subjective. She is a post-modernist artist working in a developing global society. Photography is a powerful tool for Childerley, who uses it to express how she sees the world. During the residency at MOF, she presented three workshops/artists lectures on subjects that interest her. She reveres Robert Frank and Alec Soth, both of whom document Americans in various places while using the lens to express their view. Alec Soth, born in Minnesota, is noted for "large-scale American projects" featuring the midwestern United States, where he is currently living. The people in his photographs suggest that there is a story behind the image. His prints are quite remarkably detailed, perhaps by the large format, and there is an uncanny connection between the subject and the photographer expressed. Robert Frank was born in Zurich but is most known for the photo documentary book, "The Americans," from 1958. His work is largely influenced by Walker Evans, a prominent photographer for the Farm Security Administration who is widely credited with forming the documentary style for government projects – "the new aesthetic of straight photography." Similarly, Frank traveled across the United States and took over 28,000 shots, in many locations, only selecting 83 for the final project.

The power of the photograph:

The photo documentary has a long history and is instrumental in eliciting social change depending on the interests of the photographer. In the late 1800s, Jacob Riis infiltrated slum areas where no one had gone before to take photographs due to the use of electrical lighting. He revealed how immigrants and the poor were living in his poignant photographs. Later in the early 1900s Lewis Hines helped to change child labor practices by showing the public what really happened in sweatshops. Originally trained as a sociologist, he studied photography in the hopes that it would be a vehicle for social change. Hine worked for the National Child Labor Committee in New York in 1908 and over the next eight years helped to bring about labor laws that forced more humane conditions and exposed the exploitation of children in the work place under 14 years of age throughout the United States.



Since those early years of photography there has been a revolution in technique, taste, style and points of view. The "Where's Walsenburg" project was influenced by the history of photography and in particular the work of African-American photographer James Van der Zee. In the 1930s he set up a photographic studio in Harlem, New York. His portraits became a testament to the social movement and ambitions of a burgeoning middle class who eventually influenced the popularity of the arts - creating the Harlem Renaissance. His techniques of retouching gave the sitter an aura of perfection that produced remarkable results, and impacted positive self-image.

Moving on to 1963, one photo is credited for bringing the civil rights movement in America to a head. Charles Moore inspired international support for high school demonstrators who were being hit by a high-pressure water jet from a fire-hose during a protest in Birmingham, Alabama. President John F. Kennedy received outraged telephone messages from abroad about the racial injustice in America.



How does this history impact where we are today in Walsenburg?

The most illuminating issue is the conflict between what is considered art and what is considered documentary photography. During the "Where's Walsenburg" project, there were places and people whose inclusion may have added much to the understanding of this place in a documentary style of photography. However, Zoe Childerley's vision determined how this project fit into her aesthetic. Two quotes that may shed light on the question of approach: documentary versus aesthetic:

In the British Journal of Photography in 1889 an unidentified editor urged the formation of a vast archive of photographs that "will be most valuable documents a century from hence." On the opposite point of view stands the quote by Henri Matisse (well known painter of the 19th century) in the Journal Camera Works in 1908 "Photography can provide the most precious documents existing, and no one can contest its value from that point of view. If it is practiced by a man of taste, the photographs will have the appearance of art..."

Well there we have it. "Where's Walsenburg?" -- art or document? You decide.

The following is excerpted from an interview with Zoe Childerley during her last public program "Artists Talk on Art" series on July 28th.

This interview focused on Zoe's observations of the community and what people expressed about living here and and, more importantly, what they envision for the future. Many people who live here now came from other places because of what Walsenburg offers.

Maria: "When you are on your trip after leaving here and see urban areas, in California, Las Vegas, they may ask you why did you go to Walsenburg of all places, why?"

Zoe: "When we met 4 years ago and we spoke about your project, I try to go to new places in the summer, what appealed to me about here is typical small town America. Perhaps there are places in the west that have that, too, but Walsenburg has its idiosyncrasies."

Maria: "When we met, you were in Trinidad with the Art Ranch for a month and this residency was two months. Did that make a difference for you?"

Zoe: "Yes. The time is very important, I know that there will be some people who are disappointed because I couldn't get to everyone. I would have never touched what I did in a month."

Maria: "This is a selfish question because many people ask us why don't we take this to La Veta, where there is support for the arts. Now, that you experienced both places, do you have any thoughts on why this is important for Walsenburg?"

Zoe: "I think it's more important to provide opportunity where there is none."

Maria: "From the narratives and surveys that we have taken while trying to show an overview of life here, are there any interviews that stick out as being more poignant than others? Can you explain why it was important to conduct the interviews, and what role did they play in the 'Where's Walsenburg?' project?"

Zoe: "The first part, yes. I met a woman from Texas who is now retired and lives in La Veta, who helps people with dementia, through her bible study and volunteer work at the Veterans Home. I asked her about her life, by using the survey, and she answered that she had a lot of negative stereotypes when she first got here, but then after living in Gardner she realized that stereotypes about hippies were just that, and some of her best friends were met during that time..."

"The second part of the question is that we tried to target different people from different walks of life, so we got conflicting opinions of what life is like here. So that when people come to the exhibit they will see people in the photographs that they know from Gardner, La Veta, Walsenburg. My hopes is that there will be a better understanding of how different people live, and the possibility of starting a conversation with people you would normally not get to know."

Maria: "Anything to add?"

Zoe: "I thought it would be much harder than it's been. Yes, it's been hard work, but people have been really great and willing to work on this. And despite differences, people are open to new experiences and they want to get involved with new things. The fact that they are embracing the project is a really good sign, that people want to grow and learn new things."

The Museum of Friends would like to thank Zoe Childerley for being the first resident artist and for the incredible work she produced.

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Maria Cocchiarelli-Berger, Walsenburg, 2012

In 20 years I hope I am still healthy and have a job so I won't go on welfare. I like to read about past times to learn about a lot and keep your mind active. I like living here because it's peaceful and safe for the most part. If I could change something I would stop small town gossiping and help people to educate them more. On the planet I would stop man's wars – there stupid.

I don't like the drugs and drama down here. I would try to change it by reaching out to people and hang out with them to get them away and them away from the troubled things they do. I like sketching and baking, and playing sports. I love creating new things and showing it off. I like all the nice people here and since its small I can go for walks and observe the different surroundings. If I could change Walsenburg I would make it more colorful with my art and I could stop all the violence. I just haven't found out how I will do that yet. But I do believe no where you come from, you can always make that little difference and it might reach out to people and change the world in rare ways.

I like Walsenburg because of the small town atmosphere, near lots of open spaces, and Lathrup Park, mostly lack of acres of house roofs like you see in Colorado Springs and areas north of here. What I don't like is lack of progress in government, and not wishing to change attitude on part of the old time residents. Some way this county must join the 21st century and then we could really build a sense of direction and community.

I love Walsenburg because it's peaceful and mostly has nice weather.

Quiet, friendly, accessible easy to get around – lots of friends.

It's a great place to grow up. Mountains, prairies have them in my backyard. Walsenburg is a great place to raise kids and I think it's a quiet town when it wants to be. I don't like that the young Johnny law cops hire older local men not boys who could clean up the drugs and make a difference. If I could change something I would make more jobs, and help the needy.

You can't change the world until you change yourself.

La Veta small quiet untouched, nice views, if I could change it – more diverse ethnically, and in the world more green energy and more open minded people.

I like Walsenburg because it's sincere, there are no bones about it. I don't like that people have a fear of change. As far as the rest of the world the American dream has become A. Greed. I like the slow pace here – cowboy movie, still. I don't like that people are rooted in the past – not interested in new fashions and changing pace of technology. They are committed to sports team – loyalty.

Walsenburg is fantastic.

I love to draw and read – it relieves my stress. I like Walsenburg, born in Oklahoma City, because it is beautiful view and really friendly town.

I live in Gardner, I love gardening, being outside in the yard, calming, relaxing, like to watch things grow. I like Walsenburg because its small, people know you by name, you always feel at home wherever you go in the burg. I don't like the trains, seems like there is one every five minutes. Not sure how to change it.

I like to write because it brings peace within myself. I like Walsenburg, because of its isolation and slow pace. I don't like the anger, racial bitterness, drugs, and alcohol. I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony.

What I don't like about Walsenburg is a lingering economic malaise that constrains residents from desiring growth and change. The resistance is strong and more influenced by ignorance rather than actual opportunity and growth. If, I could change things I would find a way to teach and educate improved personal interactions that could develop a deeper compassion over a broader number of people. With an understanding for the value of supporting others, the pursuit of individualism might achieve far superior results.

I am Mexican and proud, what I don't like about Walsenburg is there are too many bars, too many crack heads. I would bring in smoothie bars, cafes, juice bars, places for family activities.

I like bird watching and studying, I like Walsenburg for its positive encouraging attitude. I don't like that there is no regular work.

I like Community Theater, I like to entertain, and I like the people and scenery here. In other communities people don't get as involved in the community as they do here. I don't like the issues facing our youth, drugs, crime, abuse, neglect. I am a mentor; I would bring in more laughter.

I like to draw because it helps to create things with your mind; I like Walsenburg, because of having friends. If I could change things I would make no racism.

I like to read books, so I can escape into another world and into other people's lives. Here the people are nice and friendly and always want to talk. I don't like the city council; I would change things for more jobs and opportunities, more resources and facilities. It seems as if the authorities and school workers don't want to see change. Police system is messed up – not enough time spent trying to stop serious crimes.

I am mixed, white, Cherokee and Ute. I want to be a doctor; if I graduate college I will be the first one. I like playing with my dogs, and playing house. I like when the fair comes to Walsenburg. If I were the mayor food would be free. I would get rid of all the liquor stores and all the bars.

The thing I don't like about Walsenburg is that it is a town that will not change at all. If I could I would bring jobs to help keep families here and stay together.

I came from Fort Collins I like to draw and play music, I like it here, because it nice and quiet but there's not a lot to do.

I like living in Walsenburg for the comfort of having a close community of friends. I don't like that there is a lack of forward thinking, and a considerable lack of work ethic.

What I don't like about Walsenburg is there is too much poverty.

I like the cost of living in Walsenburg, so I can save money easily and pay off student loans. I don't like that there are not enough pro-social activities to do. I have to travel to interact with my peer group.

About living in this part of Colorado, I think its just gorgeous and I am getting along fine really there's nothing to talk about. Its quiet, I really don't miss New York, because I am with the two people I love and that counts. When I came here last year for a month – I went on many trips, and I liked it then. I like the museum and mostly like art in general. I like it there in La Veta, very much, and really don't think about my old life. I miss my son. I am older now and cannot live on my own, wouldn't change anything because the climate is good and the people are very good, so what else do you want? You can't change the world.

I love the scenery, the air, I came to Walsenburg because I like the people here, very basic not a lot of airs, easy to talk to. A nice size building that was available and that was important. What I would change is I would connect people more – that's a western thing, people aren't used to living with one another like in big populated areas. In larger cities there is more camaraderie. The project with Zoe is just fantastic. I had really no idea how important to the museum this project is what this was going to be like. Really only Zoe could have done it she is unbelievable – gets around, meets the people, gains the people's confidence and what I expect out of this is the answer to Where's Walsenburg? On her blog she has brought Walsenburg and MOF to the world. Its unbelievable how much Zoe has brought to this project. As far as how I see Walsenburg 20 years from now, as a crossroads mainly to the west, and north and south – seeing it as playing a pivotal role in Colorado, with the Museum of Friends being located here is perfect location as difficult as it is – that is the future.

If I could change the world I would get rid of all the bad diseases, poverty, and violence. I would never change the salt and vinegar chips! I would also make people more open-minded!

I love the hopefulness of the people here, and I am very hopeful and persistent, too. I think it is only a matter of time, for people to discover how beautiful the mountains are here, Lathrop State Park, the quiet, and the care that people have for one another. If there were anything I could change it would be to create jobs and training in the arts to help the economy and the prospects for the wonderful workers who have helped us here at MOF so they would have a better future.

Walsenburg has sincere people – I don't find pretense, I find people are genuine, some are not well educated but it doesn't diminish their participation in improving Walsenburg because everyone has something they can contribute, an idea. If we want to be a healthier community and health begins with physically but we also have to look emotionally, many have lost jobs and because they are poorly educated that they have a future, so they are reluctantly accepting social welfare but they are proud people. So we at the hospital have created an exposure program called "mash camp" where we invite 6th, 7th and 8th graders to spend 2 days here we give them scrubs so they look the part and they spend time in every department they looking for a connection looking for a fit they can look for a fit. The first year we had a student who said, "I want to be an artist this has nothing to do with me". We reminded him that Charles Schultz got his start as a painter and that Snoopy paid for his painting way and that in the medical community we need illustrators, and now the student is in high school and pursuing an art career while looking into the idea of being a medical illustrator to support him. This would give him support him in the long term but give him freedom to create the art he loves. By tapping into our future as what MOF does to expose children and the community to the arts it expands their thinking and an alternate to drugs and having babies young they can grow, knowing there is a support system to help them know about alternates. But if you continue to do the things you always have done you will get what you've always got.

Also in Walsenburg there is recognition of the need for change, but there is a fear -what if it's bad? Change of any kind can lead to good, but it must be monitored because change for anyone isn't easy, but you have to find your way to feel grounded. Walsenburg requires change, change of thinking, change in the mode of operation and change of inclusion, how we look at each other. If you look at me as less or more then there is no change, but if we can value one another and the input we have – its taking the pioneering spirit that built Walsenburg and taking it to the next level.

I like Huerfano County because its small, we are close enough to get to a city if you want to, a great place to raise kids. I grew up and went to school in Gardner is a hippy Hispanic community, Walsenburg is working class and La Veta is more upscale. When I graduated from John Mall, it was hard to participate because we were so far away –

I have seen a decline in the pregnancy rate in young girls because of the efforts we make and others to bring it down with Sangre de Cristo Youth Services.

I would like to see more people get involved in their community and have a voice. Since I moved back I have seen a lot of change, the attendance rate for school has dropped, and I think it is about lack of jobs. once the nursing home and the prison closed things started to go down hill. I think the wind farm will help to employ and Shell is coming in we hope they will hire local people and also for restaurants and businesses to boost what is happening here. I am committed to helping the kids here my job is mostly volunteer but I don't mind because I am committed.

My family settled in Cuchara originally from New Mexico around WW2, and then eventually we all moved to Walsenburg, I went to college in Pueblo and then didn't feel like I fitted in and then went to hair dressing School/trade School. Now I do hair styling, here in Walsenburg. Business has declined due to the economy; I have lost my older clientele to nursing homes, families and passing away.

I got into painting through Tai Chi, with the instructor Peggy Zehring, who encouraged me to get involved in painting. I get a lot out of it, because of the process that makes me think and creates a calming effect, since its not what I do on a daily basis – eating, working, shopping etc., One of my happiness is doing the Tai Chi, the movements massage different parts of my body, and the energy moves through, while it brings me calmness. I look forward to seeing more unique things in Walsenburg, so that we can continue to make it better.

The culture and people are extremely open and invited me to be a part of their community. No mountains in Denmark and never get tired of the big view, no crowds, open wide drive to work. Mountains/desert extreme contrast. Very special mixed culture. Nice to keep slow pace. Simple life.

I like it just because of the location Walsenburg the mountains and open plains, most of the people are very communicative and I like them. If I could change something I would like more jobs available, I would like to see art as being a greater part of our lives. I would like to see the government helping with programs for people's lives.

I am a writer, mostly to tell family stories. Initially I wrote for carthesis and then I began to write other things. This is been going on for 60 years. Writing makes me feel solid. My experience of living here in Walsenburg allows me to be slow. I like the beauty of the mountains and Lathrop state Park. I like the people, people seem to be very family oriented and especially the Hispanic people, and all the people seem to be faith oriented. People show their loving side here, more than the hateful. Usually we don't see it easily, but if we look deep we will find it. I think I will stay here for the rest of my life. I have moved from the east and looked in many places but I like to be here close to my son and their family.

I am born and raised in Walsenburg, moved out in the 70's and moved back in 2002. I was working in Denver – it was fantastic, but too many cars, too many people. Every job I got in Denver eventually got laid off. When I got back I saw the drastic change. Walsenburg was a beautiful community, when we left in 79 it was a booming community, coal mining, railroad, steel miles, the army people, 1980's were the Reganomics, my wife lost her job, so we moved to Denver. At that time the homes were beautiful the yards, gorgeous, maybe people just gave up. What we like is that it is a quiet little community, and we have hope that it will rebound, bounce back. The kids leave because they just can't find jobs.

After a while I started to work at the prison here in Walsenburg, but then was laid off, and luckily I have a class A license so I am working as a school bus driver that is great. I would love to see business come here and thrive; I notice the city and county commissioners run businesses off, because they don't want change. An example there was suppose to be a big mobile trucking company 24 hours service, they didn't want that, now the wind towers, don't know how that happened but they let them in, now Shell oil wants to come in and they are fighting it, with the fracking, but Shell has researched how not to hurt the environment if they let Shell in we would have better schools, jobs, opportunity, a better community, now people seem not involved in community which is a shame. I think its because they are frustrated because in Huerfano county people don't see a future, it takes more than one person, to bring change.

My family originated from Lebanon, my grandmother was educated and spoke 4 languages she came through Ellis Island at the age of 12. She came through to Farisita. where they started a trading post, my grandparents ran the post office, so they decided to name the town after their daughter (Jeannette) because they were so giving to the community, benevolent. Farisita means little Faris girl in Spanish. My dad had so many wonderful stories, I regret not recording them the way you are doing that now. I am the baby of 7 children. We are working on a project to change Huerfano and the world called the "race to save the planet" My father's dad died when he was 2 years old, and his mother had epilepsy, but the family was very successful. They brought my mom here because she was the translator. At one time they had 6000 head of sheep because of the trading post Partito, meaning sharing, to get the commodities to care for the sheep a lot of trading. That's how they made their wealth.

Now, I am a homebody, I don't like to travel, I like the outdoors, working with my hand. Even though I have traveled, I had a football scholarship to the University of Wyoming, but I decided that college wasn't for me, and I needed to be on the ranch. The reason I started the "race to save the planet" is because I sold so much land that we cut up into parcels, and I thought we need to be better Stuarts of the planet.

My hopes for Walsenburg include this environmental research institute - I like the title "race to save the planet" because I love nature and we need to protect it, and I think Walsenburg is a prime location because we have wind power, beauty and history. I would like to start a community green house, build some homes for wounded veterans. take over the transfer station and turn it into "trash into cash" we need to start with little things, like a community green house.

I lived here in Huerfano County for 20 years; my uncles worked in the sawmill outside of Gardner. I came from the Colorado Springs. Living here you can leave your car door open, but there you cannot. I've been at the Dakota for 12 years, people come and go, cause the younger generation don't like this town because it's small and not much to do, and not many jobs. If, I could change things, more stores, activities, sports. I crochet – I have a garden and I work beads, necklaces, earrings, I have a lot of good friends at the campground. They are friendly, its comfortable to be around then, they help you and you help them. It's a friendly place. I have lived in this trailer for 12 years, but I like it much better than an apartment, here is more space, and we are much closer here. We garden together, go places, and support each other.

I live in La Veta, since 1988 and I do a lot of volunteer work. We came from Fort Worth Texas. Texas is humid, and we always wanted to move up here where it's cold and hot and change of seasons. I like the summer better but the winter is ok. I like the people here because it's a lot slower, in a nice way. Someone asked if we were accepted here and yes the people were very gracious, my daughter was in high school and we got involved in all the activities it was a win win for all of us. I started to volunteer after my husband died. I do work with the missionaries of Southern Baptist – Mission Service Corps. I am so rewarded by working with the Veterans at the home. I work with the chaplain and help with some of the Veterans who come from other parts of the country because they are lonely. I try to help with their memory by going down memory lane. When we loose some its very hard. I hurt when they hurt. I am always making new friends. New ones come all the time. The VA has been so good to help the volunteers help the Veterans. they bend over backwards so we can get in when we are needed. I think this VA home is one of the best nursing home because some Vets come from other places, and they seem to really appreciate this one. The staff is so caring, I have had relatives who have been in nursing homes in Texas, and the facility here is so much better, clean, and the staff takes such good care of them. I am not saying the rest of the VA homes are not that way, but the quality here and staff, and medical staff too are exceptional. Because I am getting older, I notice we are a community of older people. The younger people may resent this, but so many retirees are moving here, like Col. John Francisco said this is paradise.

We moved here in 1994 and I really love this area and I think one of the biggest things that lead me to this passion for this community was working home health, in home health what you do is the patient has a condition or needs some sort of treatment and you go in their homes and provide the treatment or care. You really get to know the community and not just the layout and physically where things are but the people and how it ticks. It's a truly beautiful community, really beautiful people. What I could really tell when I'm talking to the patients they really took a hit financially when the mines closed and that really affected this community for a number of generations so I think it's about rebuilding and finding our place now.

You can't change the world.

The Tupac session is basically to teach the kids here that the reality is what nobody else will speak about and what they think its normal and is not an example is the teen pregnancy and the drugs and settling for being where you're at - living in the projects. It's to teach them you don't have to be that - and there is a story that someone who was there and rose from that, changed. You don't have to be that and point out the bad things forever. You could do something with passion and maybe you could change someone like Tupac - maybe he - changed me. I think he did there is a reason why I cling to him, there are a lot of art forms he is just one of them.

I love Walsenburg because it's peaceful and mostly has nice weather.

What I don't like about Walsenburg is there is too much poverty.

Walsenburg is fantastic.