

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

Joshua Greeley-Experiences of WWI

By Joshua Greeley

March 31, 1974

Box 1 Folder 44

Oral Interview conducted by Larry Egely

Transcribed by Heather Mattson December 2004

Brigham Young University- Idaho

This is an oral history. I am Larry Egley. Today, March 31, 1974, I am going to interview Joshua Greeley. The general topic will be World War I.

LE: Mr. Greeley where were you born?

JG: I was born in Buffalo Creek, Colorado, on March 1, 1898.

LE: How long did you live there?

JG: I lived at Buffalo Creek, and Buffalo Creek is just about 40 miles outside of Colorado Springs; I lived there about 27 years, then I moved to Springville, Utah.

LE: Where were your parents born?

JG: My father was born in Northern Ireland. He came to the United States when the potato famine became very bad over there, and he lived in Colorado and my mother was born in Arizona and they met in Colorado.

LE: What has been your occupation most of your life, Mr. Greeley?

JG: I've been a rancher and a cattleman all of my life, and I'm now retired, but I still like to get out on the ranch occasionally.

LE: I understand that you were a soldier in World War I. I'd like you to tell us a little bit about that today. Could you tell me when you were drafted or did you just join the Army?

JG: Yes son, I joined the army, the United States Army in 1916. The United States was not yet officially in the war. But, I was a young man searching for adventure. So I decided to enlist. After a while things got very hostile in Europe, and I was sent over there as a member of the fifth infantry, I was in the ninth regiment. We were known as Dough Boys as the World War I soldiers were known. And, we stayed in until the war was over. I was in approximately two years in the army. I spent about a year and two months in parts of France and Germany.

LE: Mr. Greeley, did you do any front line fighting, or had to hand combat while you were in the war?

JG: Well son, the first part of the War was very bad. You see the Germans had control of most of Europe. They had Australia and France and man of the countries right in the area mainly in their power so, it took a lot of gut-fighting. We packed a rifle, a 300 Craig semi-automatic, very different from the semi-automatic deer rifles of today. They held six shells, they shoe each one individually. This was quite a remarkable fun in those day s. It done much in our fight in the war, as far as hand to hand combat goes the first part of the warm yes, we did end up in some of this. Although it's not what it's painted up to be. Occasionally you might get up against one or maybe two guys where you had to fight

for your life. But, as far as the whole regiment up there fighting with their knives, hand to hand with somebody else, this wasn't so.

LE: Did you receive any injuries when you were in the war?

JG: Well, outside of a few minor shrapnel wounds, a few explosive wounds and one burn across my face from a misfired cartridge, nothing serious. I had a few problems with my back and my shoulders. You see, before I enlisted in the army a horse rolled on me, and I had a few problems with this in the army, but no, I was captured though.

LE: You were captured?

JG: Yes, it was near the end of the war, the Germans were pretty well over run. Myself and five other men were out holding a church service which is something that we didn't do much in those days. In the war you know, you just didn't do it. We figured we was safe where we were at so myself and five other LDS boys went out in a clearing by ourselves and a retreating German Platoon captured us and hauled us to a prison camp near the boarder between France and Austria,- excuse me, France and Germany. And we were captives there for five days and then the Americans overrun this camp and we were freed. Although it was a very trying experience, we had barbed wire all around us and now way to escape. They fed us exceptionally, though, the same food that they were eating, and were fairly kind to us.

LE: Can you tell me some of your feelings you had when the war was over?

JG: Well, it's a great feeling. I'm sure you must know that. It's kind of a very wonderful feeling inside your body to know that you have taken part in saving your country from being overrun by Nazi's or Communism or what ever, this is nice to know. And it's nice to get home to your loved ones, and to the country you're used to.

LE: What did you do after the war?

JG: Well, I went back to Buffalo Creek. Buffalo Creek is an old mining town. During the war, during my time away, it had been vacated. There was not too many people living there. I took in ranching with my older bother. We got us quite a spread. We had about 600 acres between us of fine cattle land. And I met my wife in Colorado Springs, and we were later married. Then I took her to my home in Buffalo Creek and stayed there for the remaining seven years; and then I moved to Springfield, Utah, where opportunities of business seemed to prevail, but there I also took up ranching.

LE: That's a very interesting life story you have there Mr. Greeley. It's been nice talking to you today.

JG: Well, thank you Larry, it's been my pleasure.

LE: Thank you very much. This tape will be placed in the library at Ricks College for use by future researchers.