

Evelyn Furman first came to Leadville from her home in Minnesota in 1933 when, as a college student, she accepted a summer job helping take care of the family of a geologist who had an interest in California Gulch placer mining. Following that summer, she never returned to school, instead marrying a Leadville man in the spring of 1934 and settling in Colorado. Mrs. Furman has written that she became interested in the Tabors virtually from her first day in Leadville and has published several books (see bibliography page on babydoe.org) about them. Her mother, Florence Hollister, moved from Minnesota after retiring from teaching, and used practically all of her savings to purchase Leadville's Tabor Opera House in 1955, becoming its fifth owner. Mrs. Hollister, Mrs. Furman, and now her daughter, Sharon Bland, have devoted much time and energy to restoring and maintaining this priceless "monument to Tabor."

Shortly after her arrival in Leadville, Mrs. Furman visited Baby Doe Tabor at the Matchless Mine. In this interview, she talks about that visit as well as the time when Douglas Moore and John Latouche showed up at the Tabor Opera House. David Kanzeg recorded Mrs. Furman in the first-floor storefront of the Opera House in August of 1996.

E.F.: So they were curious. And I was curious. And we all went up to the Matchless Mine, quite soon after arrival, to see Baby Doe. We were told that she did not like strangers and that we probably wouldn't see her. But she just greeted us very cordially and especially was she interested in talking to the mining gentlemen because she was hoping that they would help her with her mining ventures. She was always looking for someone to help her make the Matchless come back. Is that enough?

DGK: Well, tell me about...what was your impression of her at that point?

E.F.: Well, she looked very much like the pictures. But she had shoes on. She just had the gunny sacks over the shoes. And she had violet blue eyes. She had kind of a musical voice, and dressed 'bout like what you see in those pictures that you've seen in the books.

DGK: Did you have any sense, when you met her of her fame at that point? Of who she had been and of her life?

E.F.: Well, yes. Because see everybody talked about her, you know. And that's why we went up there. We were curious.

DGK: And...um....so you chatted with her for a few minutes in front of the...

E.F.: We talked with her for quite a while about things.

DGK: Did you get into the cabin at all? Did she invite you in?

E.F.: No. She just...she just talked to us outside.

DGK: What do you think of those stories that say she, uh, always came out of the cabin with a shotgun and was very standoffish.

E.F.: Well, uh, she did have a gun. And then the story was that the sisters had made her a wooden gun that she just used just to scare people. But I don't know whether any of that's true.

DGK: Well now, you...did that...was that, uh, was that it for Leadville and you? Did you stay here ever since, or did you go back to Minnesota?

E.F.: Well, pretty much that's been..I've been here ever since. 'Cause I married, and we lived in a cabin up above her where my mining...where my husband was mining with six other leasors. And the father-in-law was up there too. And he used to save the *Denver Post* for Baby Doe. And worked down at the Rio Grande [Railroad] in Leadville. So he passed by every day, and he would leave it for her. She loved to get the news. She was very interested in what people thought of her. And so she wanted to read what they printed.

DGK: Were you here when, uh, when she froze to death?

E.F.: Yes. Uh huh.

DGK: How did you find out?

E.F.: Well, it was all over town, 'cause when we came down to get our supplies we heard about it. Yeah.

DGK: Tell me about this opera house. How did you get interested?

E.F.: It was in the paper history. I didn't know that this was going to happen to me. But the more I learned, the more I wanted to know and I haven't even stopped even to this day I'm still looking and listening.

DGK: Were you hear when Douglas Moore and John Latouche came out?

E.F.: Yes. We had just gotten the opera house. And they came one cold March morning in 1955. And wanted entrance to the opera house. And I warned them, "It's cold." They said, "We just; we want to get in...we're writing something about the Tabors." So I opened the door and they went in on the stage and looked out open...over the open...empty seats. And just stood there. One of them stood there. I've forgotten which one. And he was so quiet, for so long, that I thought something must be wrong...so long! But finally he said, "I've got it. I've got it." And he certainly did have it. But I didn't pay too much attention.

I have so many people writing so many things. And so when the, when *The Ballad of Baby Doe* did come out I thought well he truly did have it.