

John Martin Interview

David Kanzeg talked with John Martin, former life-long resident of Leadville, Colorado. Mr. Martin, whose family operated a coal hauling business, remembered his mother and Baby Doe Tabor reading tea leaves in their family kitchen when he was a young man. Here he talks of Baby Doe's death, and of his memories of seeing her around town. Mr. Martin was interviewed in his daughter's home in Columbia, Missouri in May of 1994.

Dave Kanzeg: You were in town when they discovered she had died, right?

John Martin: Oh, yes. Very definitely. I was very close friends of the people who run the undertaking parlor.

DK: I'm trying to remember his name.

JM: Corbett.

DK: Jim Corbett:

JM: Jim Corbett was mortician and Andy Cassidy was just an employee and a young fella there. But uh... he was the one who was with Corbett when they picked her up.

DK: What was that like in town when they discovered her body? Was the news all over real quickly?

JM: No it wasn't over real quickly. It uh...oh, it got out, you know, around the Avenue, but...course we had a daily paper at that time. And it was out in the paper the following morning. And that was the most of the extent of [it] at that time.

DK: Do you have any memory of how long before she died you would've...would've have been the last time you saw her?

JM: Oh, no. I don't have that kind of a memory. But, it was probably...it could've been a month. Right in that neighborhood. 'Cause she used to come to the store.

DK: Zaitz's?

JM: Twice..twice..twice a month. And she went to the Zaitz Mercantile Company store on Harrison Avenue, instead of the one they owned down on Chestnut Street. And she got the groceries there. And...

DK: She walked, didn't she?

JM: She walked. And uh...lot of the times; most of the times my...uh...the boy that delivered the groceries would drive her home with the groceries. That was a standing order.

DK: Was she coherent when she was around downtown? Did she...?

JM: No, uh...she, uh...

DK: I guess what....

JM: She just walked around the town just like anybody that was in town. After seeing her the only thing you noticed in the winter months was that she had her feet wrapped in gunnysacks and tied. And uh...to say "gunnysacks" that sounds unneat. But she had them tied and they were comfortable and uh...'so what?!' She didn't have the money to buy anything else. So, she shouldn't be criticized for something like that. No way.

DK: There's an impression, though, that she was...uh...how to put this delicately?...she was...uh...a bit crazy by the end.

JM: Hell no! Hell no! I should say not. No she wasn't. That's one of the things that the people...public... said about her and uh...that's untrue, you know. They shouldn't put out...uh...why should I call you "crazy" if I see you walking up the street and uh...my not knowing you and uh...you were wrapped up like she was wrapped up? Would I have any reason to call you "crazy?"

DK: Uh uhm.

JM: And that's the part...oh that...that used to grab my soul. That uh...you know, when anybody said that she was crazy. She was intelligent. The woman. When she'd sit there and uh...reading the tea leaves. And the things that they would...she would come up with...in the fortune...and she'd be reading mother's tea leaves. And then she'd read the leaves in her cup and tell mother what was going on with her and her life...and things. I wish that I'd had a tape recorder like that...that'd be worth fortune to me.

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