

'It's so different ... you can't imagine'

Kremmling native writes about life in Middle Park almost a century ago

BY KATIE LOOBY
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Leota "Tillie" Gingery sat in a chair and reflected on her childhood in an era before TV, radio, the Internet or much of anything else connected western Grand County to the world.

In the 1920s, life was different for Tillie and her five younger brothers. "We had no radio, we had no TV, we had nothing for entertainment. We had to make our own," said the Kremmling Cliffview Assisted Living Center resident. "We played cards."

Her family also looked forward to reading the weekly newspaper.

Tillie was born in a log house near Sheephorn Creek in Kremmling on Oct. 2, 1914. In those days there was no electricity or running water. She and family members had to carry water to the house because they did not have plumbing.

"We had to carry our water in and heat it on the stove," she added. "It's so different (now), you can't imagine. A glass of water you took with you by the bed would be frozen (when you woke up)."

Tillie, 93, and her editor, Robert Peterson, published a book, "Tillie Remembers," to tell her story of what life used to be like growing up in



KATIE LOOBY/SKY-HI DAILY NEWS
Leota "Tillie" Gingery holds a copy of her book, "Tillie Remembers," which is about life growing up in Middle Park in the early 20th century.

Middle Park. The book was published in 1996 and is being reprinted today. About 600 books have gone to press over the past three printings.

"Bob Peterson said to me one day, 'You've had too many nice things happen to you. You need to write a book so more people know what life in the old time was like,'" Tillie explained. "And that's how we got started. That's how the book came about."

"I had a very interesting life," Tillie said. "I was raised on a sheep ranch with five younger brothers. I used to take 1,500 sheep to the high range on

top of Loveland Pass."

She completed this three-day journey with a brother, dog, and Leo, a sheepherder from Mexico, who helped her family every year for 20 years. "He was like one of the family. (We) walked every inch of the way," she said.

The memories of shearing time are still fresh in Tillie's mind. They had to stack 300-pounds of wool.

"I always had to pack the wool in the stack," she said, adding that it "wasn't fun," as it was covered in dirt, oil, ticks and flies. "I tramped it with my feet, until it weighed 300 pounds — never stopped. They were throwing the wool in the sack, and I was in the stack. They threw that on top of me, and I kept stomping it."

One time her whole family was ill with scarlet fever. Dr. Flemming took care of the family during that time.

"I never will forget him. He was our life savior," she said. "I was the last one to get it (scarlet fever) and I wanted it so bad because I was so tired of washing diapers and dishes."

Tillie has lived in Middle Park her whole life. She was born, went to school, married and had children in Kremmling. She got her nickname when she was working as a housekeeper for a family to pay for school and board in Kremmling. "Tillie the Toiler" was a newspaper comic about a woman who worked for a fashionable women's wear company. The comic first appeared in 1921.

Later, she moved to Hot Sulphur Springs. She also was a waitress for 30 years. "(I) was known as one of the

best waitresses in Grand County. I had many friends," she added.

Tillie moved back to Kremmling about two years ago after having a concussion and breaking several ribs in 2006. She was in and out of the Kremmling hospital for almost for a year. Now, she enjoys living in Cliffview. "I've had special care and everyone has been great," she said. "You might say I made a full circle," she said, noting that the school she attended decades ago is right next door to where she lives. "Now, here I am. It's kind of alarming when I even think about it."

She raised two sons, Allen, who married Kathy, and Allen has passed away; and Paul "Skeeter," who married Jody, and Jody passed away. Tilly's husband Edward, died of cancer about 20 years ago. Skeeter and Jody had Dane and Derek; and Allen and Kathy had Brett and Ashley. Ashley died due to complications after an ATV accident, according to "Tillie Remembers."

Tillie is proud of "Tillie Remembers." "It was interesting. I had a lot of fun with it," she said. "I never had anybody tell me they didn't like it. The only comments I ever get is 'you should write another one.'"

The book can be purchased from Tillie or at other Grand County businesses.

"It just tells about early life. It's a good story of early life. ("Tillie Remembers") is all true," she said. "It's good for anybody to read who's interested in a true story of somebody's life."