

20th CENTURY COLORADO – COMMUNITY LIFE

Holidays and Festivals

What do these photos tell you about the different holidays and festivals 20th century Coloradans celebrated?

Independence Day, 1919

This is a photo of the Independence Day parade in Denver on July 4, 1919. The words above the photo say: “The Birthday of the Flag That Has Never Known Defeat”.



Independence Day parade in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The photo of this July 4th celebration was taken a few months after the United States and its allies defeated Germany and Austria in World War I.

Their Own Words

"A week or so before the Fourth, Dad would take Margaret and me [to]...Eddie Weiss's "Noah's Ark." There he would oversee our purchases of fireworks and pick up the tab.... As the Fourth dawned we made sure that no neighbor was left unaware that our nation's birth day was no time to sleep. Our supplies of firecrackers were rapidly depleted....

"By the time Mother called us three kids (including Dad) in to breakfast, all but our nighttime fireworks had gone up in smoke. After breakfast we would walk downtown to see the parade. Often we would take a picnic lunch to eat in the park."

Source: Robert Esterday, A Kid's-Eye View of Early Greeley (Greeley, CO: The Author, 1993): 45.

Memorial Day (1940's)

This is a Memorial Day ceremony. The photo probably was taken during the 1940s.



Memorial Day ceremony

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Each November, people in Colorado and elsewhere in the United States celebrated Memorial Day. It is celebrated on November 11th. This holiday was created to remember the American soldiers killed in World War I. Today we call it Veterans Day. It is a day for honoring all American soldiers who died serving their country.

A Christmas Tree

The boy in this photo is pointing at one of the lights on his family's Christmas tree. The photo probably was taken during the 1920s.



Christmas tree

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The major religious holiday in Colorado of the 1920s was Christmas. The Christmas presents the boy in this photo received include a pedal-powered car, a wind-up train on a track, and a sled.

Their Own Words

"I recall that I had seen a toy steam-engine in Daniel's and Fisher's Christmas display would have liked it more than anything; but I realized it was beyond our means, so I asked Santa Claus only for a bag of marbles. When I arose in Christmas morning, I found on my dresser a set of toy soldiers and a bag of marbles.

"After breakfast I was playing with the soldiers and Mother asked me if I was sure that I found all of my gifts, so I went into the bedroom and by the head of my bed saw a box which I opened and my heart almost stopped-there was my steam-engine!"

Source: Francis Fingado memoir in Ruthanna Jacobs, Ed., Kiowa County Colorado Centennial History, 1989 (Dallas, TX: Curtis Media Corp., 1989): 109.

Mexican Independence Day (1925)

The young Hispanic Americans in this photo are celebrating Mexican Independence Day. The photo was taken during the 1920s.



Mexican Independence Day

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The people of Colorado belong to different ethnic groups. Many of these groups have their own special days. Mexican Independence Day is a special occasion for Mexican Americans. It is celebrated on September 16, the day in 1810 that Mexico gained its independence from Spain.

Their Own Words

“On Sept. 15th and 16th the Spanish speaking people hold a celebration commemorating the initiation of the Independence from Spain, and on May 5th the defeat of the French army in 1862 in Mexico. During these celebrations they select from a group of girls their most beautiful and most popular señoritas as Queen to preside over the festivities, while the other girls serve as maids of honor or condesas. The festival is celebrated with dancing and singing. Speeches are made relative to the event and in honor of the heroes of the date. In the singing and dancing the children take a large part.”

Source: Excerpt from Pueblo City Guide in “Racial Groups,” Writers’ Program of Colorado, Colorado Historical Society Library, [1941?].

Children In A Parade (1925)

These young Hispanic Americans celebrated Mexican Independence day by riding in a parade.



Hispanic American children in the Mexican Independence parade

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The photo was taken in Sedgwick, Colorado about the year 1925. The town of Sedgwick is in the far northeastern corner of Colorado.

St. Patrick's Day

These people are dressed in costumes for Saint Patrick's Day.



St. Patrick's Day

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Many people whose ancestors came from Ireland lived in Colorado. Saint Patrick's Day was a special day for Irish-Americans. It is celebrated on March 17.

Churches and Religion

What do these photos tell you about how their churches looked like?

A Hispanic American Church

These people are standing in front of a Catholic church in southern Colorado. They are preparing for a religious procession or parade.



Hispanic American church

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The people who settled in Colorado brought many different religions with them. By the 1900s, the largest number were Protestant and Catholic Christians. Most of the people in southern Colorado were Spanish-speaking Catholics, like the people gathered in front of the church in this photo.

A Tent Service (1920's)

This is a tent service held by the Seventh Day Adventist Church at Sloan's Lake in Denver.



Tent service in Denver, Colorado

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Some Protestant groups help revivals or special services that were too large to be held in a church. They often held these meetings outside in a tent during the summer.

Inside The Tent Service (1920's)

This is the inside of the Seventh Day Adventists's tent at Sloan's Lake.



Inside the tent service

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Religious tent meetings were important events. They were well attended and people dressed up for the occasion.

An African American Church (1920's)

This is a photo of Handy Chapel, an African-American church in Grand Junction. The photo was taken about 1920.



Handy Chapel in Grand Junction

Photo: Denver Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

In the early 1900s, Protestant churches were racially segregated. Only African Americans attended the Handy Chapel.

A Westminster Church (1960)

The church in this photo is Saint Martha's Episcopal Church in Westminster. The photo was taken about 1960.



Saint Martha's Episcopal Church in Westminster

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

In the mid-1900s, many new churches, like many new schools, were built in the suburbs. The church in this photo is located in the growing suburban community of Westminster.

An Aspen Church

This is Christ Episcopal Church in Aspen, Colorado.



Christ Episcopal Church in Aspen, Colorado

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Many churches built in the 20th century, like many other buildings, had modern architectural designs.

Entertainment

What do these photos tell you about what they did for entertainment?

Civic Center's Greek Theater

The band in this photo was playing at the Greek Theater in Denver's Civic Center. The photo was taken during the 1920s.



Greek Theater in Denver's Civic Center

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Most people in the 1920s went to local dance halls, theaters, and during the summer to bandstands, to hear music. The band in this photo used the outdoor Greek Theater as its bandstand.

Their Own Words

“Denver owns her own Auditorium, where free concerts are given by the city. . . . Furthermore, Denver has been one of the first American cities to begin work on a ‘civic center.’ Several blocks before [in front of] the State Capitol have been cleared of buildings, and a plaza is being laid out there which will presently be a Tuileries [Paris-like] Garden in miniature, surrounded by fine public buildings, forming a suitable central feature for the admirable system of parks and boulevards which already exists.”

Source: Julian Street, “Hitting a High Spot: Denver,” Colliers (November 7, 1914): 16.

Central City Opera House (1956)

The actors in this play were performing at the Central City Opera House in 1956.



Central City Opera House

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

During the 1950s, the old Opera House at Central City was restored as a theater and playhouse. In this photo the stage was decorated to look like a hotel lobby during the 1890s. The play being performed was called *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. It was about Baby Doe Tabor, one of Colorado's most famous women.

Their Own Words

"Cultural attractions have been crowned with some success [for keeping tourists in and around Denver]. A festival, sporting big names from Broadway and the Metropolitan [referring to New York City theatre and opera companies], is held annually in the old opera house in Central City."

Source: Charles A. Graham and Robert Perkin, "Denver: Reluctant Capital," in Ray B. West, ed., Rocky Mountain Cities, (New York: Norton, 1949): 302.

Listening To The Radio (1924)

The woman in this photo is listening to an early radio. The photo was taken about 1924.



A woman listening to the radio

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

The early radios made during the 1920s did not have speakers. The listeners used headsets instead.

Their Own Words

[The Solitaire Cowboys was formed in 1928 to promote Solitaire Coffee sales via radio advertising.] “This was one of the very first of the ‘Westerns’ or cowboy shows. It was purely a local show, but with a huge audience in the West, since KOA [one of Denver’s first radio stations] in those days reached from Canada to the Gulf [of Mexico]. It was the most popular program on KOA with the single exception of Amos and Andy, according to the crude audience checks of that time. Because of this popularity, NBC put the Solitaire Cowboys on its coast-to-coast [radio] network as an unsponsored show. So it evidently was one of the first Western cowboy shows on the networks. ‘Death Valley Days’ came in about the same time.”

Source: William L. Myatt, "The Morey Mercantile Company," Colorado Magazine, 38 (October 1961): 257.

Denver's First Radio Station

This was the radio station orchestra that played for KLZ, Denver's first radio station. In the early days of radio, each station had its own orchestra. They broadcast live music into listeners' homes.



Denver's first radio station

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The first radio broadcasting station in Colorado began in Colorado Springs in 1920. It moved to Denver the next year and became station KLZ. Station KOA, which still exists, began broadcasting from Denver in 1924.

Denver's Theater Row (1920's)

This photo was taken on Denver's Curtis Street after sundown. It shows the marquees of movie theaters.



Denver's theatre row

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

During the first half of the 20th century, most of Denver's big movie theaters were located on Curtis Street. The blocks of this street on which they were located was called "Theater Row." The marquees were decorated with tall signs and bright lights. The names of the theaters shown in this photo include the State, Victory, Empress, Colonial, America, Rialto, and Colorado.

Their Own Words

"In 1915, when on a visit to Denver, Thomas Edison reportedly said that Curtis was "the best-lighted street in the world," between 15th and 18th. At night it was almost as bright as day--so bright in fact, that no city street lights were ever used.

"Every theater lobby was a dazzling place, jammed with waiting patrons. Marquees were ablaze with traveling electric words and signs. Blinking and intermittent spot and floodlights were on every business establishment and surplus World War I carbon arc anti-aircraft searchlights roamed the sky."

Source: Forest Hall Johnson quoted in Eleanor M. Gehres, et. al., eds., The Colorado Book (Golden, CO: Fulcrum Publishing, 1993), pp. 359.

Red Rocks Amphitheater

This is a photo of Red Rocks Amphitheater near Denver.



Red Rocks Amphitheater

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The outdoor theater in this photo belongs to the City of Denver. It was built during the 1930s. It is still used for concerts during the summer.

Their Own Words

“Cultural attractions have been crowned with some success [for keeping tourists in and around Denver]. . . . The summer of 1948 saw the first of an annual series of musical extravaganzas in the huge, awe-inspiring natural amphitheater of city [Denver] owned Red Rocks Park nestled in the foothills.”

Source: Charles A. Graham and Robert Perkin, "Denver: Reluctant Capital," in Ray B. West, ed., *Rocky Mountain Cities*, (New York: Norton, 1949): 302.

Recreation

What do these photos tell you about what they did for recreation?

Littleton YMCA Pool (1960's)

This is the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA) pool in Littleton. The photo was taken sometime during the 1960s.



Littleton YMCA pool

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Swimming has always been a popular form of recreation for young people in Colorado. By the mid-1900s, the most popular pools were those run by cities and by non-profit groups such as the YMCA.

Skiing Aspen Mountain (1950)

This is the town of Aspen viewed from Aspen Mountain. The photo was taken about 1950.



Skiing in the Aspen Mountains

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

By the 1950s, downhill skiing was a popular form of recreation in Colorado. Aspen, an old mining town, was one of the state's first ski resorts. The skiers in this photo are taking part in a downhill slalom race.

Their Own Words

“Until the winter months of 1936-1937 there had been aroused no appreciable interest in the sport of skiing in the town of Aspen. The total numbers of skiers was small, and the general proficiency of what skiers there were was practically insignificant.”

Source: Frank Willoughby quoted in Stephen J. Leonard, Trials and Triumphs: A Colorado Portrait of the Great Depression (Niwot: University Press of Colorado, 1993): 224.

The Royal Gorge Bridge (1930)

This family was sightseeing at the Royal Gorge in southern Colorado. The photo was taken about 1930.



Royal Gorge Bridge

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Sightseeing is one of Colorado's oldest forms of recreation. Owning an automobile made it possible for more and more people to get away for sightseeing. One popular spot was the Royal Gorge, a deep canyon cut by the Arkansas River. The road over the bridge is 1053 feet above the river.

Their Own Words

"In the afternoon I had an invitation from the Edwardses...to take an automobile trip to Lookout Mountain. The outing was breathtaking because of the wonderful air.... After the outing all three autos dropped in at [the Edwardses] for supper.... And so I spent Easter."

Source: Lucy Fronczak to Francis E. Fronczak, April 9, 1917 in "Polish Impressions of Colorado," Essays and Monographs in Colorado History, No. 7, 1987, p. 69.

Mountain Car Camping (1930)

This is an auto campsite in the Colorado mountains. The photo was taken about 1930.



Auto campsite in the Colorado mountains

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Many Coloradoans have enjoyed camping in the mountains. Earlier generations reached camping sites by wagon and packhorse. Automobiles and modern equipment made camping much easier. Among the equipment of the campers in the photo are tents with awnings, a folding table and chair, a campstool, and metal tubs.

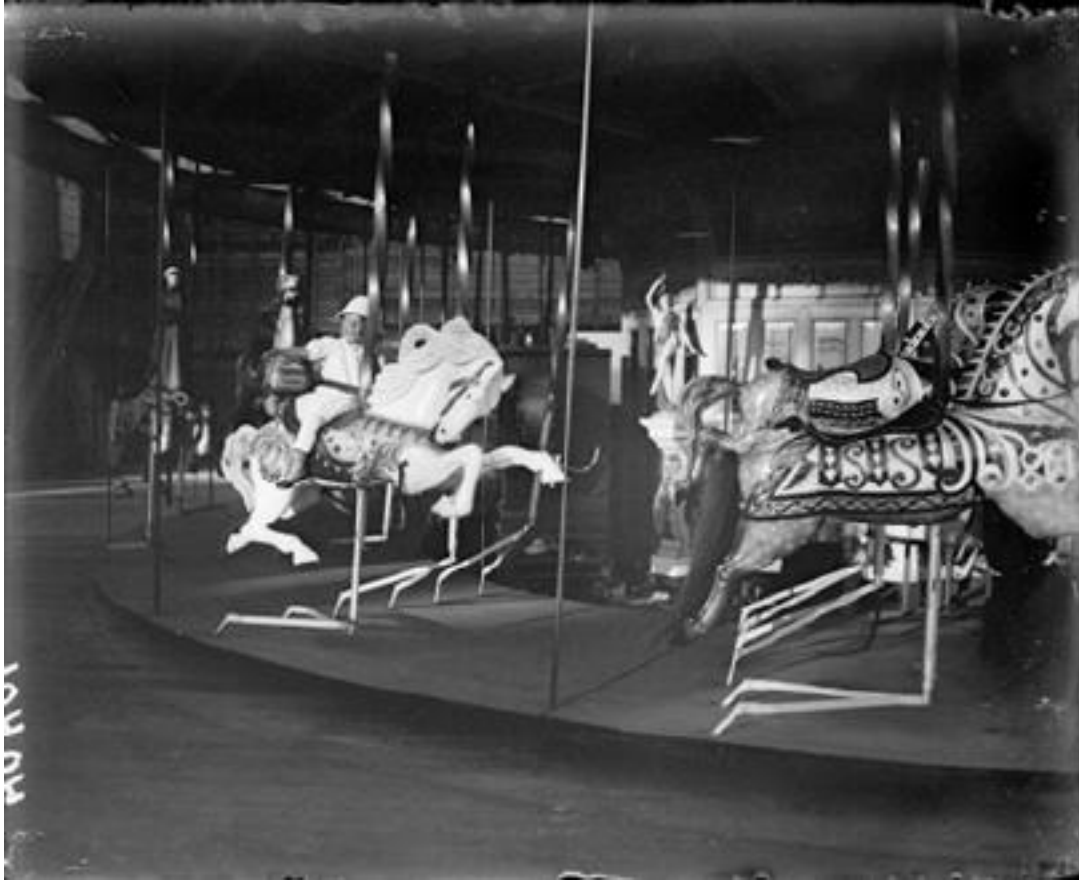
Their Own Words

“More people than constitute the population of the ordinary small town last summer enjoyed life in the open under the trees in the public camping grounds at Denver’s beautiful City Park. For in two years these attractive grounds became so widely known throughout the nation that during the summer months of 1916 they were utilized by 5,047 motorists.... There were 1,963 automobiles registered in the City park camp directory last summer and they came from thirty-seven different states, from Canada and the Philippine Islands.”

Source: Denver Post, “Automobile and Prosperity,” December 31, 1916, p.5.

Lakeside Amusement Park (1925)

This is the merry-go-round at Lakeside Amusement Park in Denver. This photo was taken about 1925.



Lakeside Amusement Park in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Denver had two popular amusement parks—Elitch’s Gardens and Lakeside. Lakeside Amusement Park is still at its original location on Sheridan Boulevard.

Skiing Steamboat Springs (1920)

The girls and women in this photo are getting ready for a ski race. The photo was taken in Steamboat Springs about 1920.



Skiing in Steamboat Springs

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Cross-country skiing is an old sport in Colorado. Miners used skis as a form of recreation as well as transportation.

Sports

What do these photos tell you about the different sports they played?

Overland Park Race Track (1925)

These racecars were lined up for a race at Overland Park in Denver. The photo was taken about 1925.



Overland Park in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

During the 1920s, auto races were held at the Overland Park racetrack in Denver.

Off To The Races (1925)

This photo also was taken at the Overland park racetrack.



Overland Park in Denver

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Auto racing was a popular sport in Colorado in the 1920s. The grandstand in this photo is packed with people.

Durango High School Football Team

This photo shows the Durango High School football team playing a game. The photo probably was taken during the 1940s.



Durango High School football team

Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

By the mid-1900s, football had become a popular high school sport. It was a more dangerous sport than it is now. The players in this photo are wearing helmets, but their uniforms have little padding.

Their Own Words

“Football was, by all odds, the most important athletic activity in the High School at this period, the early years of this century. Late Springs militated against baseball and track. There were basketball teams both for the girls and for the boys, although I have no recollection of competition with the other High Schools except in football and the annual track meet of the University of Colorado in Boulder. Our opponents in football were Aspen and Salida. We played two games each season with each team, giving us a total of four contests and this was plenty inasmuch as the football season in the high altitudes was short.”

Source: Ivan C. Crawford, “School Days in Leadville,” Colorado Magazine, 36 (July 1959): 226.

A 1941 High School Basketball Game

This is a basketball game between Sanford High School and Alamosa High School. The photo was taken in March 1941.



High School basketball game

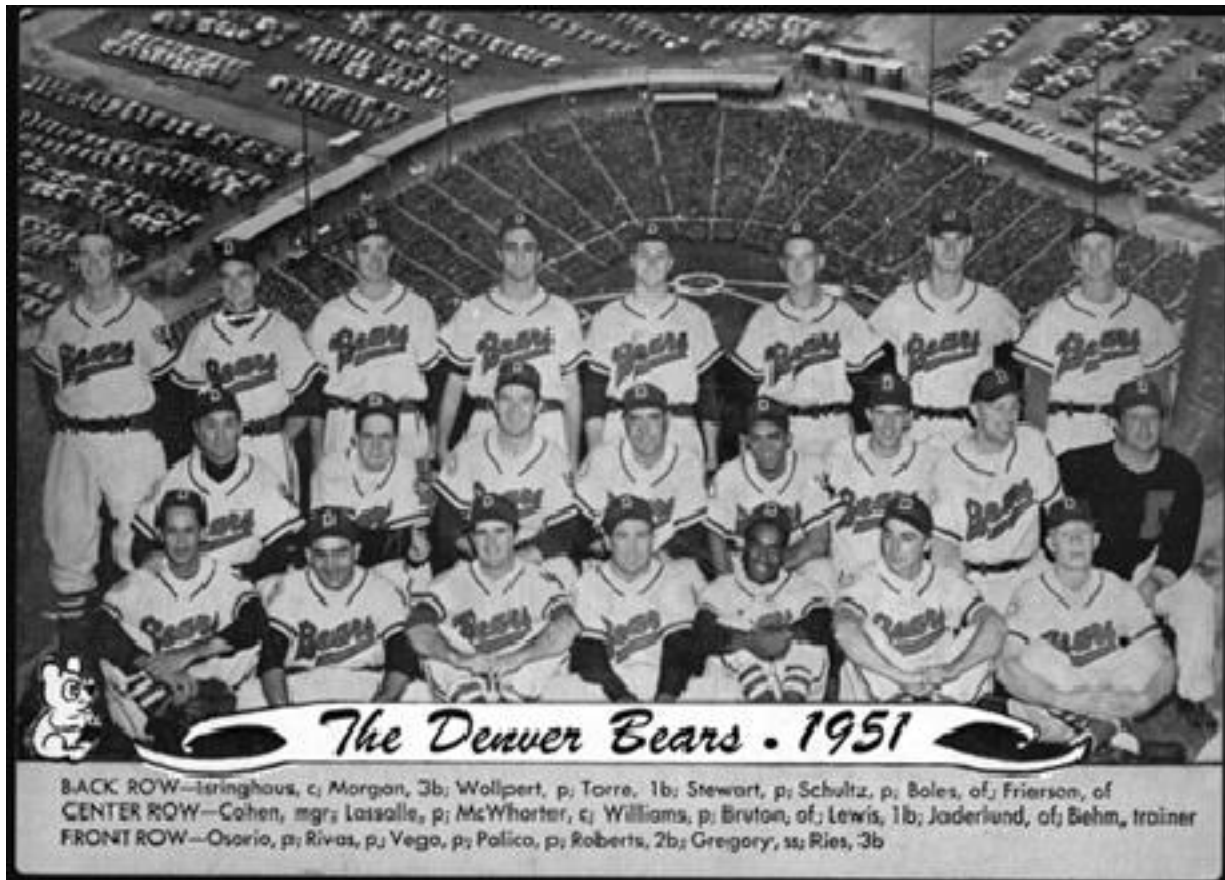
Photo: Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

More About This Topic

Basketball rules have changed since the 1940s, but the uniforms players wore are much the same. The uniforms worn by the players in this photo include high-top tennis shoes, short trunks, numbered tops, and knee socks. Some of the players are wearing knee pads.

The Denver Bears (1951)

This is the 1951 Denver Bears baseball team. A minor league baseball team began in Denver some time before, but only in 1949 was the Denver Bears team founded again.



The Denver Bears

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The Denver Bears were a minor league team that trained players for several different major league teams, including the Washington Senators and the New York Yankees.

Their Own Words

[In the later 1940s, as a way of attracting tourists, Coloradoans made plans for all kinds of activities.]
 “Horse racing, with legalized betting, has been suggested—and nixed twice by the state legislature—and an effort is being made to resurrect the old Denver Bears baseball team in the Western League.”

Source: Charles A. Graham and Robert Perkin, “Denver: Reluctant Capital,” in Ray B. West, ed., Rocky Mountain Cities, (New York: Norton, 1949): 302.

The Denver Broncos (1970’s)

This was a football game between the Denver Broncos and the Kansas City Chiefs. The photo was taken sometime during the 1970s.



The Denver Broncos

Photo: Colorado Historical Society

More About This Topic

The Broncos were Denver's first professional football team. They played their first season in 1960. When this photo was taken, their uniforms were orange and blue, with a large letter D on the helmet.

Their Own Words

"In the spring of 1971, KOA sportscaster Bob Martin was running defense for the (Broncos) this way: 'The Broncos had one of the top defensive teams in 1970, but had their normal plague at quarterback. New quarterbacks are being readied for the fray and will be in the breach this fall. In the meantime, over 43,500 season tickets were sold last year, and even more will probably be snapped up this season, despite a healthy increase in prices. In their eleven years, the Broncos have never had a winning record. One wonders what will happen to attendance when they do.'"

Source: Bob Martin quoted in Bill Barker and Jackie Lewin, Denver! (New York: Doubleday, 1972): 144.