



THE WAR BABIES OF WORLAND: ORAL HISTORIES FROM THE CLASS OF 1960



CATHY HEALY

Extended conversation after videotaping

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This transcript expands from the video due to additional conversations.

This is **Joan Walseth Purcell**. This interview is being done on June 10th, 2022 , at 3 pm in the afternoon. Cathy , thank you for agreeing to be recorded for the oral history collection of the Washakie Museum and Cultural Center in Worland, Wyoming.

Can you please tell us your full name, including your maiden name?

Cathy: It's Edith Catherine Healy.

Joan: And what were you called growing up?

Cathy: Cathy. I still go by my nickname. I was named after both of my grandmothers, Edith Healy and Catherine Omenson.
The War Babies of Worland: Oral Histories from the Class of 1960

Joan: Wow! Edith Healy was a big name to live up to.

Cathy: It was, yes.

HEALYS CAME TO WYOMING IN 1891, TO WORLAND IN 1922. OMENSONS IN 1912

Joan: Your family has been in Wyoming for a number of generations, would you talk a little bit about your grandparents, and how they came to be living in Wyoming?

Cathy: I am hesitating to give too much information here when our Class of '60's goal is to describe growing up in the 1940s and 1950s. You can read the Healy history in the book I put together for the Washakie Museum with my grandmother Edith's letters, *An Improbable Pioneer*.

Joan: I've read a number of those letters. I haven't finished it yet.

Cathy: {Smiles.} She wrote a lot of letters. I wonder how many people have finished the book.

Basically, my family is the story of America. We are European immigrants who intertwined several ethnic groups, religions, and cultures, which probably is why I have always felt part of U.S. history. Even when I was a kid, I wanted to know about and understand how people in Worland fit into this history. I'm going to include my family's various religions because everyone in the Class of '60s oral histories talks about what a strong influence their church had on our lives, often who our friends and [allowed] sweethearts were.

My Great-Grandfather, Patrick Healy came to Wyoming when he escaped underground copper mining to help build the intercontinental railroad. A teenage Irish immigrant, he went from pounding rails to being an engineer and was at Promontory Point in Utah in 1869 when the golden spike connected the East and West Coasts.

Patrick, a Catholic, moved to Ogden and married a Mormon woman, Mary Ann Patterson. Her family came from the coal mines in Scotland and were on the

fourth wagon train after Brigham Young's. Patsy and his brother-in-law, Adam Patterson, formed a partnership and started trailing sheep from Idaho into the markets in California. Their herders took sheep into the Red Desert in 1891 – a year after Wyoming became a state.

By then, they had been staking sheepherders to go into business for themselves by borrowing money to purchase a herd and then pocketing the profit. This is how Patrick got into banking.

The next year – 1892 – the Johnson County War so upended the cattle business that the empty Big Horns were open for grazing. Six weeks after the war ended, Healy & Patterson trailed about 40,000 sheep into the Big Horns. I think my Great-Grandfather must have been a very tough guy.

Joan: Sounds like it. And what about your grandparents, then?

Cathy: Patrick and Mary Anne had 13 children. Only the first three lived. My Grandfather was the youngest of the three survivors. The final baby – and they all died as babies or toddlers – died when Grandfather was 14. I think about what a house of grief he must have been raised in. The three oldest lived. Patrick, Jr., named after his father, went into the sheep business with his father, and uncle after he graduated from high school. There was a sister, who married and stayed in Ogden. My grandfather, Alex, was named after his mother's father, Alexander, in the Scottish naming tradition. He went to MIT to become a mining engineer – both of his grandfathers had worked in mines, but with picks and shovels. About religion: the family story is that my grandfather left the Catholic Church after his first Communion. He didn't join the Mormon church either.

When my grandfather was at MIT, he met my grandmother, Edith Holden, who was living the privileged life of a rich young girl in Boston. She was a *Mayflower* descendant and was focused on playing her violin. They were Unitarians. Months after Grandfather met Edith, her pregnant older sister – it was her first baby – was diagnosed with diabetes. In those days, a diabetic bled to death when they delivered their baby. That happened. The grief broke her father's health, he lost his insurance agency and died. Edith and her mother took in boarders to make a living. It took Grandfather seven years to persuade her to marry him and move to Buffalo, Wyoming, which had become the now-Healy Brothers headquarters.

The two brothers didn't get along, the wives didn't get along, and the luckiest thing in the universe happened, which is, their father, who had been sick for some time, died in May of 1919, six months after World War I ended. There had been a tremendous demand for wool and mutton during the war. The price for wool and mutton was very, very high when Patsy Healy died at home in Ogden. Healy Brothers split their partnership immediately and sold out of Buffalo. Patrick Healy, Jr. moved back to Ogden and took over his father's bank, and my grandfather and his family moved to Denver for a couple years to decide where to relocate. The sheep market crashed before the end of the year.

FAMILY HISTORY IN WORLAND: LU RANCH, GIRL SCOUTS

Cathy: My grandparents decided on Worland because the irrigated beet lands were opening up. There was a sugar factory that had been built with Utah money, so, I think Grandfather's father might have been involved somehow. Plus, sheep that grazed in the mountains in the summer, could eat beet tops down on the farms during the winter. In 1922 – 100 years ago – Alex and Edith moved to Worland.

My grandfather bought into the First National Bank. It was one of the two banks at the time; the other was the Stockgrowers State Bank. I don't know when, but First National became the Farmer State Bank. I don't know what it's called now.

Edith and Alex had two sons, my Uncle Alec, Jr. and my dad, Dan Healy. They moved into a house at 920 Culbertson Avenue. In 1924, they split the boys' bedroom in half and adopted two girls from the Cathedral Home orphanage in Laramie, Eileen, eight, and Helen, six. I didn't know until my late 20s that they weren't my blood aunts. I didn't know they were adopted. The full story is in my book.

The Healys were raised Unitarian and belonged to a correspondence church in Boston for people like us, with sermons coming every week by mail, a lending library, etc. Until about my junior year in high school, I went to the Episcopal Sunday School and the Wednesday night youth group with my best friends, Eleanor Dent and Judy Van Buskirk.

Joan: What about your mother's family?

Cathy: My mother's father, William Omenson – Bill Omenson – was born in Poltava, Ukraine. They were Jews who fled the pogroms. His father, Abraham, got away first, and when he had enough money, sent for Rebecca, his wife, and their son, William, 6. Abraham had been a translator in “the old country.” My Grandfather was 14 when his father died. He had to drop out of school and to help support the family. He became a cigar maker. I don't know if you remember from our U.S. history classes – I think in the 5th grade – we had to match the name “Samuel Gompers” with his achievement: He was founder of the first union in the United States. It was the cigar makers union. My grandfather said that belonging was like having a Diners Club credit card because you could borrow money from the union in one town and pay it back in another town.

My grandfather was following the horse races in those days, and then his jockey started to lose, somehow, he ended up near enough to try to get into San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake. He said they wouldn't let him in because he had soft hands – they wanted people who were going to build the city back. So, he went to Reno where he had a cigar factory. He lost his “factory” (and pool hall?) when he bet in 1910 on “the Great White Hope,” a boxer who lost his fight.

Then, somehow, my Grandfather Omenson ended up in Douglas, Wyoming, when years of rains created a grazing bonanza. When he arrived in January, 1912, the newspaper reported that he was going to build a cigar factory with six or seven workers. How can this be – how many cigars did they smoke in Douglas?! We used to joke when he came to live with us after he sold the Carter Hotel in Thermopolis when the doctor told him that he had to cut back on his cigars, so he cut back to 17 a day!!!! That's why our family smelled like cigar smoke. Anyway, in Douglas, he made cigars, had a pool hall with a soda fountain, a boarding house, was very active in community activities (including being a free employment agency) and he expanded to Lusk. People really liked him.

My Grandmother, Catherine Parr, came from a Scots-Irish/Dutch family who pioneered a farm in Indianola, Iowa and raised corn. Her Dutch forebearers arrived in New York in 1659. The Parrs were very religious Presbyterians. She was the youngest. I think she had an adventurous soul. After her parents were both gone, Catherine ended up in Denver at St. Joseph's Hospital and where she became a Registered Nurse (RN). When she was hired to do some private nursing in Douglas, she met Bill Omenson. She returned to Denver, and suddenly, they were married there. It was a big surprise to the community, according to the Douglas newspaper. They were an improbable couple too.

Joan: Sounds like it.

Cathy: They had one daughter, my mother, Martha. She and Catherine were Presbyterian and Bill was very active in Shriners. I think of it as his religion. He had a Shriner funeral.

I think my family represents the story of America, where newcomers are absorbed into the mainstream culture.

My Grandmother hated that my Grandfather had a pool hall. They loved to take vacations in Thermopolis, So, they sold out and moved to Thermopolis in 1924, with my mother, Martha, their only child. First, they bought the Plaza Hotel in the Hot Springs State Park, and then they bought the Carter Hotel across the street. The hotels were complementary. The Plaza Hotel was a residential hotel where people would stay longer for the mineral springs treatments for their arthritis. The Carter Hotel was a commercial hotel where people would stay for short times. And, it had some of the best food in the Big Horn Basin in its restaurant.

Joan: And one of those hotels is still there, right?

Cathy: Yes, the Plaza Hotel. The Carter Hotel was torn down by the people who bought it. They built what then was a very nice motel. The Carter was a grand building with white pillars and lots of steps leading up to the entrance, which would have been on the 2nd floor. Here's something very Wyoming, where everyone knows everyone: The daughter of our ranch's long-time cattle foreman, Sam Cramer, and her husband bought the Carter.

CHILDHOOD NEIGHBORHOOD> OLD TOWN ON CULBERTSON, NEW TOWN BY THOMAS

Joan: Where did you live in Worland?

Cathy: First we lived in a house that we rented from my Grandfather and Grandmother Healy, at 809 Culbertson, and in February 1951, we moved to 711 South 8th St., a house that my parents built in a new development on the southern end of town near Washakie Avenue.

Street. I roamed and played with friends and family in a very small rectangle, going from Coburn-Culbertson-Grace and bounded from 8th to 10th streets. I played with George McClellan to the left and Sharon (older) and Wayne (younger) Waller next door. Their dad worked for Pepsi and would drive home in a special, open truck with cases of pop and sometimes, all of us kids would get a bottle. Mr. Waller died suddenly; Mrs. Waller, who was very beautiful, remarried a famous artist in Phoenix, Dale Nichols, and the Wallers moved to Arizona.

My Healy grandparents were on Culbertson at 10th Street. Joannie Culbertson lived just one short block south, at 10th and Grace Avenue. Right across the street from Joannie were my cousins, Diana, Sandy (Alex III), and Timmy. Diana was three years older than me; Sandy was six months younger; and Timmy was about two years younger. My best friend, Eleanor Dent, lived one block north of my grandparents' house, at 10th Street and Coburn. Ricky Hake lived with his parents and grandparents in his grandparents' house, which was next door to Eleanor.

The odd thing is, my territory was only to the east, to 10th Street, and then, in first grade, it stretched east on Culbertson on to the high school, which is where I went to first grade. The strange thing about only looking to the east, is it turns out that Bonnie Laine Bailey DeFreece, our classmate, lived a few doors across 8th Street, to the west. We didn't play together and I don't know why. We are very good friends now.

Sometimes my mother would drive me to visit her friend, Edna Van Buskirk, whose daughter, Judy, was my age (six weeks older.) They rented at what was the far northern end of town on, I think, Pulliam Avenue, and either on 14th or 15th Street.

I can remember that Judy and I were so shocked to learn that, in what we thought of as modern times, the old lady who lived in the rundown house next to them, had an outhouse. We just couldn't believe there was an outhouse in town – but we knew about outhouses because our grandparents had cabins in the Big Horns and they all had outhouses.

Joan: And it was in use!

Cathy: Oh, yes. I guess!! [Laughs.] That old house is long gone. That's where Elaine Martinson Decker – quite a bit older than us – built her cute, French-style house with a mansard roof.

That 8th to 10th Street rectangle was my neighborhood – wait, add to that, I'd walk across Main Street to the library. The library was on 10th Street in the basement of the courthouse. I know I was walking there by myself by the second grade, because I started reading Nancy Drew, about the middle of the year and I became scared to go down into our cellar by myself.

The other linchpin in my neighborhood wasn't the shops downtown. I don't remember thinking much about them – maybe the ice cream cones for A's on your report card at a drugstore – but I must have lived for fantasy. The Kirby Theater had a matinee every Saturday that was a cowboy show. And every Sunday, they had a glamorous, wonderful movie, like Doris Day, *Helen of Troy*, or *The Prince of Thieves*. Great escape movies. Lots of times, I'd go to both Saturday and Sunday movies – after Episcopal Sunday School. If it was a Doris Day movie – she used to dance on tables in restaurants! – I would dance my way home on Coburn. In the mid-1950s, after we moved into our new house, there were lots of movies about Africa and Zulus on the warpath. I'd have nightmares about being attacked – we had too many windows to guard in our new house. In my nightmares, I couldn't find a place to be safe.

I've been thinking about these movies and their impact on me. Do you remember the March of Time news?

Joan: Yes – they were in black and white and changed every week. I always wondered how they shot those films where you'd see the tanks coming up and then see the bottom of the tank, those roller tracks coming up and over the bump.

Cathy: To this day, I can't get the images out of my mind, of millions of frantic people screaming, blood running down their faces, and murdered bodies – this was from "the Partition" in India, when Hindus and Muslims were separated by religion into the new Muslim country of Pakistan and the mostly Hindu country of India. I've only been to India once and I was very uncomfortable.

Joan: Do you remember any of the shorts that had the military operations going on during World War II?

Cathy: No, I don't remember World War II newsreels, do you? The war was over before I went to my first movie. I remember Big Quemoy and Little Quemoy (Wikipedia says they are called "Kinmen" now). Do you remember when the Chinese Nationalists were fighting the Communists from these two little islands? The soldiers looked like World War I pictures. They were wearing tin hats and shooting cannons mounted on wooden caissons and every so often, you'd see puffs of smoke when their cannonballs hit the mainland.

There must have been Korean War newsreels, but I don't remember them.

Joan: What about your neighborhood when you moved into your new house? What was it like there? I was in a different neighborhood. My parents built a house north of Main on Circle Road. Even our rental house was north of Main, and we went to school north of Main.

Cathy: I was in the third grade with Mrs. Sprague when we moved in February 1951. I really, really liked her. Class was interesting and well-organized, and fair and fun. Mrs. Sprague lived on Circle Drive by you, didn't she?

It was too far to walk from our new house to the Emmett Building so I'd ride with my dad to work at the Worland Machine Company about 7:30 in the morning. Could it have been earlier?!!! They had a promotional blackboard and chalk upstairs in a storage room, so I'd play school up there, writing on the blackboard and lecturing imaginary students until it was time to walk a few blocks over to the school. (The Worland Machine Company, which Dad, Fred Snyder, and John Biehr owned, sold International Harvester farm equipment, refrigerators and Suburban SUVs. After several years, maybe when we were in junior high, they started selling Chrysler cars.)

But let me tell you about my new neighborhood!!!! It was a child's paradise. First of all, Rick Hake's and Judy Van's parents built houses there, so I was with my very first friends from Worland, which was a secure base from which to explore. We had houses going up everywhere. Draglines would pile up big hills of dirt when they'd excavate basements. We'd play King of the Hill until it was time to go home for dinner – everyone ate dinner about 6 pm. I LOVED scrambling my way to the top. We'd push and shove each other– surely girls were in pants for King of the Hill?

We'd play Kick the Can when it got dark, always at Judy Van's house – 4th in from the corner of 8th and Park – I don't know who lives there now. Denis O'Mahoney would join – he lived two houses from Judy. Peggy Steele would come over from Thomas. I don't remember Sharon Chagnon coming over – she lived on Thomas and 8th. Dennis Paul Smith would join from across the street. Handsome Herkey Brown was too old and sophisticated for us, even though he lived across the street, maybe next door to Dennis. It was a big-enough gang for a lot of fun.

[In his oral history, Rick Hake describes the rules for Kick the Can.]

Joan: What about the area surrounding Worland, the back roads, the mountains, the badlands? Do you have a picture of those in your mind?

Cathy: Oh, yes! I have really strong, happy pictures in my mind. I wonder – don't you think that most of us felt like we had a very large space, personal space? We weren't just in the town of Worland.

Joan: A lot of people went up to the Big Horns to get out of the heat in the summer. They'd go up for picnics and go swimming in Meadowlark Lake, or wading in those freezing cold creeks – something, to cool off in the summer months.

Cathy: My space probably was about an hour in every direction. My grandparents had built a cabin up on the Big Horns and Rick Hake's grandparents built a cabin right next to it. We'd go up to my grandparents cabin – about an hour to the east. And then our ranch was in the Absarokas. "The Dickie," the LU's headquarters ranch, was about an hour to the west.

To the north, my dad's sister, Eileen Healy Horn, and her husband, Jim, lived in Greybull. And my Omenson grandparents lived in Thermopolis about 30 minutes south. We went down to Thermopolis a fair amount to see them and to go swimming. Those were the only swimming pools available to us in Worland for a long time.

Joan? When I go home, one of my favorite things is to drive and drive, mostly alone, with little traffic and relax.

Joan: That's something very different from where I live now, to be able to see the horizon in every direction. We didn't have many big trees, so you could always look up and see the mountains and orient yourself. Even when I lived in Denver, you could always look up and see the mountains and know that was West.

IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II > RAISED IN A HOTEL, PTSD DAD

Joan: Did World War II change your life?

Cathy: Hugely!! Actually, it took me quite a long time to realize how much the war had impacted me, until my sister Debbie, who's eight years younger, and I compared our zero to seven years. Our lives were exceptionally different.

By the time Debbie was born in late 1950, both of our grandmothers had died earlier in the year – and these women had been a very big presence in my life. My father was the reform mayor of Worland. We were finishing a new house at the far end of 8th Street to the south, where Debbie lived from the beginning of her life. My Dad was settled. He was starting businesses. He'd been named president of the ranch by my Grandfather, and had taken over management of it.

So from the very beginning, Debbie's life was solidly fixed. I was born about nine and a half months after Pearl Harbor was bombed, in Wenatchee, Washington, which was the nearest hospital to the Army Air Force base where my dad was stationed. He had been in the ROTC in college – Reserve Officer Training Corps. After the attack, dad immediately telegraphed his commanding officer and asked where he should report for duty. By the time I was four months old, he had been transferred twice before being shipped out to Italy. Mother took me home to her parents in Thermopolis.

I spent the war years in Thermopolis. I lived with my grandmother and mother in the Plaza Hotel. If you go to the Plaza now, the breakfast room was part of my grandmother's apartment. The sunniest part is where the bedroom was that mother and I shared.

My grandparents had a very bitter separation. I never saw them speak to each other. He lived across the street at the Carter Hotel. So, I would get to go over to my grandfather's place if someone walked me across the street. My grandmother, being a nurse, was pretty casual about what I did. I don't remember anyone saying "No," but I always knew the rules and obeyed them.

Lifelong Impact of Growing Up in a Hotel

Cathy: One of the expectations in a hotel is you pay attention to all of the guests, you make them feel welcome, you give them attention, you learn their names and you include them in whatever you were doing that they might enjoy doing. I still have to do that to this day. I often have guests. Some have stayed a long time— even in my one-bedroom condo.

In our hotels, people would stay, sometimes for months at the Plaza or a day or two at the Carter, and then they would leave, and then they'd come back, or they never came back. My life has a lot – a LOT – of coming and going, me, friends coming here, friends of friends coming here, even children of boyfriends from nearly 50 years ago staying with me. I make jokes that people should beware, if we meet and become friends, they are velcroed to me.

Joan, do you remember iodine and how it burned?

Joan: Oh, yes!

Cathy: My knees were coated with dark orange iodine on scabs because I was always running and falling, scraping my knees. Wasn't it ridiculous – in those days, little girls wore easily-wrinkled cotton dresses with little puffed sleeves that my mother wasted hours starching and ironing. None of us got to wear pants.

I'd follow my grandmother around while she worked, she was always working. I had a sandbox where I'd play with my parrot, Powder River, and a Sheltie named Fella. Mother said that Fella was afraid of everyone, but Powder River was a guard bird. He'd cower when I'd poke at him with a stick but if someone approached, he'd fly at them, squawking.

My Grandfather had candy and cigars under the counter at his front desk, and *his* rule was that if I wanted some candy, to just help myself. (This was not my mother's rule.) The result is, I seldom eat candy. I'm just not interested.

So I was raised like this in Thermopolis.

I think my father came home with some PTSD. In his oral history for the Washakie Museum, he said he came back “restless and always angry.” He had been stationed as a quartermaster in Foggia, Italy, which was where the Allies flew their bombing missions to Germany and Austria, which I found out more recently in reading about the war. German pilots heavily bombed Foggia while he was there – and I didn’t know that until today, when I looked up how to spell Foggia.

Dad didn’t talk much about the war, except when he’d go hyper-protective, like about flying, when he’d mention to us about having to pick up pieces of the bodies of pilots who crashed, which of course means that I still am nervous flying. Or the time we took a ferry boat in British Columbia and he kept muttering that the pilot was going too close to the shore. We had to go find the exits and the life jackets so we could jump and swim fast to safety so we wouldn’t get dragged down by the undertow. My mother said, “Dan, depth charges were during the war! Don’t spoil our vacation.” (The next boat crashed – my Mother said, “Why is your father always right?! We probably would have been the only people who drowned because we’d have jumped off.”)

I wasn’t the only kid in our class who got the full brunt of “restlessness and anger” from a father who was used to giving orders.

We all have stories about how our early years shaped us. Who would have guessed what happened to me when I moved to Woand from Thermopolis, my life was filled with Latin America. Starting in 1946, my Healy grandparents spent winters there and they would bring back presents to their eight grandkids, like dolls. I still have them – they are displayed in my living room.

Dad was going to take the proceeds from the sale of the ranch that he and his sister and brother-in-law owned out of Miles City, Montana, and buy a ranch in South America because he was angry about how heavy the taxes were that he’d have to pay in the states. He came back early from his scouting trip. It reminded him of wartime Italy with hunger, poverty, and corruption.

Joan: But your Grandfather Healy already had the ranch that is still in your

family?

Cathy: Yes. My grandfather bought the LU Ranch in the mid-30's after he had a heart attack and closed his livestock loan business. The stress from the Depression was just too much. I'm told he worked with the farmers and ranchers who owed him money so that they could pay him back eventually, but keep their land. About that time, Dave Dickie, the Scottish founder of the LU Ranch, had died. The ranch was in bad shape. The LU was a public corporation so my grandfather was able to buy the controlling shares. Maybe in about 1935.

Joan: A long time ago.

Cathy: It doesn't seem like the LU has been in our family all that long, not like the pioneers. It doesn't seem like one of the old ranches to me. Isn't that funny?

Joan: Well, it probably is one of the older ranches, isn't it?

Cathy: Oh, yes. It had the first registered herd of Angus in the state – that was way before my Grandfather bought it. But my brother's oldest son, DJ – Daniel John -- Healy, is now president and part-owner of the ranch and he said to me, "My great-grandfather bought the LU, Aunt Cathy! It is old to me."

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: SPEED-READING, RESCUE FROM A BULLY TEACHER

Joan: Well, if we skip ahead a little bit, to our elementary school, what was your experience? And oh, maybe in kindergarten. You went to kindergarten, didn't you?

Cathy: Kindergarten was controversial, I learned later, Mrs. Cannon had a private kindergarten in her basement. I think in Joannie Culbertson's oral history, she mentioned going to it. I went to it. Rick Hake didn't go to it. I think I remember Bruce Kimzey there. We learned to read and we learned to do numbers.

Can you imagine how frustrating for the first-grade teachers in Worland to have all these kids that could read and do numbers, mixed with all these kids that couldn't read and couldn't do numbers. What on earth were they supposed to do to get them all moving along at the same pace? But I didn't know that and I liked Mrs. Cannon's kindergarten.

I really liked first grade. Worland was having an oil boom, but not like Gillette with its coal boom that became famous as the "Gillette Syndrome," meaning the collapse of a town when it is overwhelmed with hard-drinking single men and fragile families. Worland had post World War II families who were building houses and buying houses. Maybe there were some children of oil-worker families with bad family situations, but it was hidden. Because of the oil boom, we had smart, likable kids transferring in all through our school years.

But, as you can imagine, also because of the oil boom, Worland didn't have enough schools when the Class of '60 started. And we weren't even the Boomers! [Laughs.]

First Grade in the High School

The kids who lived south of Main Street went to the High School building for first grade. I'd walk down Culbertson, past my grandparents on 10th and get to the high school which was on 12th. Our classroom was in a semi-basement. The windows were big and ended at ground-level. For fire drills, we would climb up on Rick Hake's desk and crawl out the window.

We had Mrs. Dyer for our teacher. I must have liked Mrs. Dyer, because in the class picture out on the steps of the high school, I was standing next to her, tucked into her side. She taught me one of the most valuable academic skills I ever learned, but inadvertently. We had *Dick, Jane, and Their Dog Spot* books for reading. I was always so curious that I couldn't wait to know what was going to happen next. But, Mrs. Dyer made us put a rubber band around our book where we were reading, to keep us from reading ahead. We had to wait while each student would take turns reading out loud, which just took forever.

I'd put my finger where I really was, take the rubber band off, flip over quickly, read two, or three pages, really, really fast, and then put the rubber band on for the next official page. This is how I learned to speed read, and to keep my face shiny and interested, no matter where my mind was.

Joan: Wow. Interesting how those early reading experiences fostered our interest in reading and learning.

Cathy: I still crank through books really fast, thanks to Mrs. Dyer.

Joan: Good skill. How about in second grade? Were you still in the high school in the second grade?

Cathy: No, we all went to the Watson School – with you. [Smile]. Watson School was on 10th Street, the famous 10th Street, where my grandparents lived, and Joannie lived, and my cousins, and Eleanor Dent lived and where the library was that had my favorite books.

The Watson Building and the “Old Emmett Building,” as we called it, had gravel playgrounds with strides, a jungle gym, swings –

Joan: Those swings must have been 15-feet tall! They were as tall as telephone poles, weren't they? [Laughs.] I don't remember that there was gravel at the Watson and Emmett buildings.

Cathy: Oh yes! We had scrapes and bruises. No soft landing for falls. We were so happy to have grass – that came later, when those of us who lived south of Main got to go to the new Southside School.

Joan: What about second grade?

Cathy: [Laughs] You know this too, Joan! You talked about it in your oral history. We had a teacher who was a bully; she was memorable – we *all* still remember her. You, and Bonnie Laine Bailey, and I have talked about being in her class. In his oral history, Dennis Bower remembers how glad he was that he didn't have her.

Second grade was a terrible year because of Mrs. Sisk. I have wavered whether to name her or not. You decided not to. I think we should not be afraid to say it. Mrs. Sisk had a curved section of a black hose that she'd whack on her desk. She also had a hard ruler with a metal edge. She'd walk around and hit people on their

hands with the ruler. I don't remember seeing her use the hose on anybody, but she used that ruler, and she would hit hard. James, who sat near me, especially aroused her ire. I could hear her hit him.

In doing these oral histories, I've heard that James used to tug on somebody's long braids, so he wasn't completely innocent, but she would come at him again and again. We all knew he hadn't done anything wrong, and we felt helpless to stop her. I heard years later that he became a "juvenile delinquent." I don't know if that meant that the courts sent him to the Institute – the state's juvenile prison on the outskirts of Worland – or what being a "JD" meant for him. I believe that Mrs. Sisk set him up to fail.

That year I started having stomach aches every morning and would beg my mother to let me stay home. She threatened to give me cod liver oil, which globs in your throat and chokes you, so I'd get up and go to school.

I don't even think we talked much about Mrs. Sisk. In those days, your parents said you have to mind the teacher, and they'd think it was your fault, not the teacher's fault, because you must not be minding them.

Let me say something positive about elementary school. Every classroom had roll-down maps of the US and the world and different regions of the world. I relaxed when a map was left down and I could sit and look at it and wonder what it was like there. As an aside – I was a kid who was crazy to experience what was on the other side of the mountains. I can even tell you what I was wearing and what I was doing when I first met someone who worked for National Geographic. I still love maps. And I still marvel that I got to work for National Geographic.

FAMILY HISTORY: TRANSFORMING SHOCKS OF 1950

Cathy: As I look back at second grade (September 1949 - May 1950), I am amazed how experiences that year transformed my life. Mrs. Sisk and her unfair attacks on James. Slowly, I began to fight for those who needed help.

Christmas of 1949 was unnerving, I was to learn later. The Korean War was heating up. My father was a major in the Army Air Force reserves, and the military were talking about calling up the reserves. That meant my father would

go back to war. Right before Christmas my Grandmother Healy was diagnosed with terminal colon cancer. She was told she would be dead in about six months, and the doctors were accurate. She and grandfather had heard of a place in Los Angeles with a strict anti-cancer diet and they moved there to begin treatments. She died in June, 1950.

In the meantime, on Lincoln's birthday, February 12, my Grandmother Omenson died suddenly from a heart attack. She was buried on Valentine's Day.

I was close to both my grandmothers and I suffered a lot.

My poor parents. They decided to escape the dreary winter and go where tropical flowers bloom. They took me out of 2nd grade (THANK YOU!!!!) and with my little brother, Mike, nearly four, we went to Mexico. We stayed right on the central square of Mexico City. We were still living at 809 Culbertson, and our hotel room was almost bigger than our whole house.

I had never seen anything like downtown Mexico City. The main street was maybe eight car-lanes wide and full of traffic. The National Cathedral, which was on the same plaza where our hotel was, was extraordinarily ornate – it was spectacular. The floating gardens really were gardens in those days and I climbed the Pyramid of the Sun. I experienced Mexico's extraordinary culture.

This experience set my career. I became a Latin Americanist. Right now I'm on the International Board of Partners of the Americas, which was inspired by John Kennedy. It is a people-to-people program for the Americas with volunteers doing all kinds of projects, from art to education and climate. Right now, I've been working with La Paz, Bolivia Partners and Utah-Partners on an eco-camp in a town on the shores of Lake Titicaca in Bolivia.

So, in the second grade, I was transformed, despite Mrs. Sisk. May she rest in peace.

Oh – and by the time my Grandmother Healy died in June, North Korea invaded the South and the US military started calling up the reserves to fight in the Korean "Police Action." My father wasn't called up, though, because Grandfather Healy made Dad president of the LU Ranch. Being in agriculture, Dad was essential at home. Grandfather said that Dad already had served his country. He

had been in Italy for at least two and a half years and was sent home for R & R. He would have then been shipped to the Pacific for the invasion of Japan when the atom bombs were dropped, and Japan surrendered.

Joan: My dad wasn't called up, but it impacted our family. One of my uncles was recalled to active duty even though he was in agriculture and was married with three kids, but never went to Korea. He was stationed in Colorado Springs. Another uncle was a career Marine and got a purple heart in Korea.

A Laugh: "Nice Bonnie Bailey Fought Back"

Joan: Is there anything that you remember about elementary school that particularly amuses you when you think of it now?

Cathy: There is a story that I love. We had another bullying teacher – I'm going to tell you about the wonderful teachers in a minute, because we had many – but this story makes me laugh every time I think about it. We had Mrs. Chapman in the fifth grade. Her way to control us was humiliation and public shame. Like, she had a cardboard box that she'd cut down and put in the front of the room. "This is a playpen," she announced. "If you act like a baby, then you have to sit in the playpen." One time she put a rotund girl and a rotund boy in the box. We all were traumatized from embarrassment – even though we were older than second graders, we were still helpless to stop her.

But not Bonnie Laine Bailey, known as "that nice Bonnie Bailey." Her mother was a teacher. She was the oldest child and had to obey a strict path.

Years later Laine told me that one day she had a pear on her desk for her lunch. From the front of the room, Mrs. Chapman yelled at Laine about something unfair. Laine got so mad she threw the pear at Mrs. Chapman and barely missed her. The pear splattered on the blackboard and shocked Mrs. Chapman. She immediately stopped.

I think that's the bravest thing that any of us ever did in our entire elementary school years. To this day, it makes me happy.

Joan: I love this story! Laine was such a perfect child, she never did anything naughty! That was very brave and courageous, especially since her mother was a teacher.

Cathy: Fortunately for us, Mrs. Chapman got pregnant. In those days you couldn't be pregnant and be a teacher. Gretchen Bower and I figured that she got pregnant deliberately because she didn't want to be around us anymore. HOORAY! We felt likewise about her.

Those of us who lived south of Main had been with Mrs. Chapman in the junior high building. After Christmas vacation (I think), we moved to the beautiful new Southside School where we had the most wonderful teacher, Pearl Marie Mesta, who loved us. She thought we were wonderful. She thought we were funny. She thought we had great courage and moral values. We came to her as beaten down kids and we just blossomed. Years later, after Mr. Mesta died, she and Rick's uncle, Ray Hake, fell in love and married, so I'd get to see her when I'd come back to town as an adult.

In sixth grade at Southside school, I had Mrs. Foster. She taught world history, and she loved stories. We learned about Hannibal taking his army and elephants over the Alps to attack the Romans from behind, and we learned about Marie Antoinette saying, "Let them eat cake," when all the people were starving, and she got her head chopped off. We heard the most interesting stories, which is how I discovered I have a talent for learning and remembering stories, which ended up being my work.

Joan: You want to talk a little bit more about the careers that you had?

Cathy: I became a newspaper reporter. I became a published novelist – both books took place in Latin America and I lived "on location," in the places where my books took place – Chile and the Galapagos Island. I became a magazine editor-in-chief of two print magazines and then an Intranet. To this day, sixteen years after I retired from National Geographic, I'm still helping people tell their stories.

Joan: Including this oral history project.

Cathy: Including this project, yes. [Happy smile.]

Joan: If we go on to junior high, what was your experience like moving from elementary school to junior high?

Cathy: That's when I learned to not be part of my body.

Joan: Wow!!

Cathy: It was horrible. It was just horrible. I was born with cross eyes. My father didn't believe in surgery, so we went to all these different specialists in Casper, in Denver, and in Billings to correct the problem naturally. All through elementary school, my mother and I spent thirty minutes every morning doing eye exercises to strengthen my eyes so I could hold the one eye straight.

The summer before we started seventh grade, the eye doctor in Billings, said, "We're going to try something different. We'll paint her eyeglass lenses black on the lower part, from about halfway to the middle from her nose. That way, if her eye wanders, it'll jump back."

So, I started seventh grade looking like a freak.

Joan: That's a hard time to feel like a freak.

Cathy: It's a godawful time to be a freak.

Joan: How long did you —

Cathy: I don't know. Maybe one year? I can't remember. I have blocked it out.

What I loved about seventh grade were my teachers, especially Hilda Myers. She was the character of the school. Kids said she would do things like pop her girdle. I really liked her and she already was predisposed to like me, because her first year of teaching in Worland, when she was still Miss Sunny, she'd had my father,

all in the same class, so she started off fond of us.

Mrs. Myers did us an academic favor and scared us to death in the process. She made us memorize poems and stand in front of the room, one at a time, and recite them. I can't remember whether it was every month, or every six weeks, but it was fairly often and we learned to memorize.

Joan: I remember doing that in fifth grade. I don't think I had Mrs. Myers.

Cathy: I thought everybody had her in 7th grade English. Reciting in public – well!, I thought some of the boys might just drop dead on the spot, or they wished they could, everyone except Larry Forsberg. He could memorize in a flash. He'd volunteer to go first. Larry became a priest for a while.

One night I was practicing the opening and ending stanzas of *Evangeline* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. "This is the forest primeval, the murmuring pines and the hemlocks – when my Grandfather Healy joined in. "Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight," he recited.

"Grandfather!" I said. "Did you have Mrs. Myers too?" He'd had to memorize *Evangeline* when he was in high school in Ogden. Grandfather was widowed then and living with us part of time and with my Uncle Alex's family the other part of the time.

Joan: Is there anything else about junior high you'd like to mention or shall we move on to high school?

Cathy: BAND! We were the best in the state. We marched, we danced, we performed in parades all over the state. We drilled like crazy, we worked hard for our excellence and we knew we were good. Worland had the famous band and we had the famous football team. We were the high school state champions from the time we were in the fifth grade clear through our sophomore year in high school – we even beat Casper, and I assume, Cheyenne. We thought Worland was invincible.

WORLAND HIGH SCHOOL: 1956-1960

Joan: Moving on to high school. Do you remember memories from high school?

Cathy: I've been running the zoom rooms for all of the interviews, so I've been reliving what good teachers we had and how they built us up to be the adults we became. The only story I haven't heard is about freshman English with Miss Nadine Thomas. About the time we were reading *Romeo and Juliet*, she became engaged to our classmate Judy Schlothauer Thompson's brother, Jack; so, Shakespeare was especially romantic to me. We read one Shakespeare play every year in our English classes – *Julius Caesar*, *MacBeth* – can't remember the other one.

Joan: *Hamlet*. Why didn't we do a comedy?! Not academic enough, probably. We didn't read any American authors, did we?

Cathy: Hawthorne, Edgar Allen Poe–

Joan: They pretty much concentrated on the classics, wouldn't you say that?

Cathy: Yes. That dreadful, boring Silas Mariner and "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

I remember how busy we were. We had football games and basketball games. I wasn't in debate, because I'm kind of a chicken despite how brave as people think I am, but I was in the Thespians. I did drama and I did competitions for 4-H sewing including the Make-It-Yourself with Wool contest. We had so many activities, and our parents were engaged in our activities. They were so supportive. They drove us to games. They encouraged us, they helped us with the practices. This was the '50s and a lot of us had mothers waiting at home for us to hear about our day and give us snacks.

Over and above that, Worland was organized by its churches. Wednesday night was sacred. Nothing was scheduled except church youth groups.

There were quite a lot of friendships within your own religion. There wasn't as much mixing as there is now. Laine was crazy about a guy who was Catholic. She

was a Methodist. Her parents put the kibosh on that. And his parents probably did, too. Interracial dating was frowned on and for the most part, not done.

So, there were lots of barriers you didn't cross. On the other hand, what we did have were connections beyond Worland made by going to games in other places, debate, band, drama, and 4-H, where you'd have district meetings, and state meets where you'd go down to Laramie and stay in dorms at UW. So, I think we had lots, and lots, and lots of activities during high school.

If you were in enough activities and had grades, you might get accepted for Girls State or Boys State, which was put on for a week in the summer by the American Legion Auxiliary. I wonder if they still have it. I was shocked and overjoyed when I was selected. It was a very big honor.

The girls stayed in a dorm at UW and the boys were in Cheyenne, each acting as the Wyoming legislature for the week. We went to the Capitol in Cheyenne, and when our classmate, Grant Ujifusa marched at the head of the line as the newly elected governor, we cheered him like mad. That was thrilling. Grant and I became very good friends later in high school, after he and Rick Hake became close friends. We still are today. All of us. Laine and I went to New York for the ceremony when Grant was knighted by the Emperor's Order of the Rising Sun of Japan.

AFTER SCHOOL JOBS: JANITOR IN THE MUSIC STORE

Joan: Did you work during high school?

Cathy: I started working at my dad's music store in the eighth grade. I was the janitor. I kept the store clean after school, during the summers, and every Saturday I washed the windows. After a while I also got to order records, the 45s and the LPs (long-playing, multi-song discs.) I was thrilled to do that because we all paid attention to how songs placed in the Top 10 that week. We'd watch *American Band Stand* on TV and listen to KOMA—an Oklahoma City radio station—while dragging Main. The only place in town to buy the songs we heard was at Broadbent & Healy Music Store.

At the end of the summer before our junior year, I had to quit because I was signed up for college prep chemistry with Mr. Swartz, and you had to do a lot of lab work after school.

I don't know how the kids did sports and did Mr. Swartz's college prep class, come to think about it. The joke in my family was that I had to work two more weeks after I quit at the music store to pay for all the records I bought.

Girls Styles: Painfully Ridiculous

Joan: Do you remember anything about what we wore?

Cathy: Oh, my gosh! First of all, we were not allowed to wear pants, no pants, and we wore bobby socks which were thick white cotton socks that you would fold over so it looked like you had big white donuts around your ankles. Unless you had skinny, slim ankles, bobby socks make your ankles look fat. And, then people wore white buck shoes. How could anyone keep those white bucks clean?!!! I never had any – mine would have been disgusting.

For the girls, Jantzen sweaters and pleated Pendleton skirts were greatly desired. Girls with shape would wear their Jantzen sweaters tucked inside their skirts, and then they'd put on wide belts. If you were one of the well-endowed girls, you looked like a movie star like Lana Turner. I mean it was a really sexy style. If you were like me, even in the fifth or sixth grade I had to wear suspenders to hold up my skirts because I didn't have enough hips. I wore a blouse over my suspenders, and then a pull-over sweater over the blouse, so that nobody would know I was wearing suspenders. Gayle Swan would complain that she was still wearing undershirts in the seventh grade!

Joan: And poodle skirts. Circular skirts made out of felt with an embroidered, fuzzy poodle with a leash going off into nowhere on them. I didn't have one, but Sonja Song had one and maybe Jacque Hampton Harrod, too.

We wore slips and half-slips under everything. And how could we forget crinolines – those big, full half-slips that you'd soak in sugar water or starch to make them stiff so your skirt would stick out. They were sharp! My knees would get chapped raw until they would bleed.

Cathy: I just remember getting sweaty, especially in math class because I'd get nervous and those slips would start sticking to you.

Joan: Oh, I remember – Remember the hoop skirts that you'd have to pat down

when you sat. If you didn't, your skirt would fly up and your underwear would show?

Cathy: Those styles were so ridiculous and we wore those clothes

anyway! **Joan:** That's true.

Cathy: Remember the day it was 46 degrees below 0 – this was not wind chill, this was straight temperature. It was the coldest anybody had ever seen in Worland. AND!!!! We had to walk to school. I'm sure some kids got rides. I didn't get a ride, so I bundled up in my wool coat over my skirt and my ugly bobby socks. My nose was so cold, my nostrils stuck together, because nobody knew about neck gaiters in those days and I don't think we had scarves. I didn't.

So I ran over to Judy Van Buskirk's house to pick her up for school and warmed up inside. Then she and I tried to run to Sharon Kleinschmidt's house over by Sanders Park, but we had to slow down because it was too cold to catch our breath. Then the three of us scurried to the high school. Why couldn't we wear pants? Why didn't we challenge the rule? It never occurred to us. I don't know anyone who even thought about rebelling.

Joan: It seems to me that they let you wear pants, if there was a football game that day, because that was kind of the uniform for cheering for the game.

Cathy: Cheering spirit.

Joan: Yes, you wore what you had, the black saddle pants. In fact, my mother still had mine when we cleaned out her house when she died. They were wool. They were really warm. Why didn't they let us wear them? And, no mothers would buy their kids long stockings, and they didn't have tights back then.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES: JOBS DAUGHTERS

Joan: Cathy, did you want to tell me something funny that happened in high school?

Cathy: I joined Job's daughters. And you had to wear white stockings with the white robes and –

Joan: I can't remember that.

Cathy: Oh yeah, you wore white nylon stockings and white Grecian goddess gowns with white ropes tied around you like a Greek statue. You needed garter belts to hold up your white nylon stockings. Garter belts were uncomfortable – not as uncomfortable as girdles, but not great. Sylvia Burgess, who was a year ahead of us and very sophisticated, told Eleanor Dent and me that we could skip garter belts by just twisting a knot on top of the nylons and they'd stay up.

Joan: When your mother finally agreed that you could wear nylons instead of those bobby socks, you wore garter belts to hold up the stockings.

Cathy: So the Jobs ritual started. You had this marching pattern where you'd turn corners and such. Suddenly I could feel my stockings start to fall down. I glanced over and Eleanor's were puddled around her ankles and she just kept walking. So did I, what could you do but try not to trip on them.

Mr. Ralph Wellman, the principal of the high school, was the "male guardian" of our bethel, as chapters were called. We thought he was the most straight-laced person ever. He always had a stiff posture, and that night he didn't shift. He just sat there and looked straight ahead.

Finally Eleanor and I could sit down for the meeting and hide our stockings. But then to close the ceremony, we had to march around again. It was humiliating.

Joan: Sounds like it.

Cathy: Sounds pretty tame now. It was heart-stopping then. I don't know why Sylvia's stockings didn't fall down.

RADIO TO TELEVISION GENERATION

Joan: What about television? Did you watch television at all when you were growing up?

Cathy: I remember when the cable company was promoting this new thing called television. We drove out to some little shack on a hilltop in the badlands south of Worland when the cable company was showing what TV was. We sat there and watched a kind of snowy, black-and-white screen. Maybe when we were in the 7th grade? 6th?

My father started selling television sets at the Broadbent and Healy Music store, so we had to have a television set right away to encourage other people to buy them.

Joan: Maybe that was one of the reasons your dad started the music store.

Cathy: [Laughs.] One of the many reasons! My dad loved to start new businesses. And he loved music. He was quite a musician. He could play any song you could name. "Hum a little of it," he would say while sitting at the piano, and then he'd play the whole song. When he was in school, the band teacher would have him play any instrument that they needed. Dad said it took him about two weeks to learn to play a new instrument.

Anyway, we had a television set in the living room. How did it impact our lives? One way was that every Sunday at 8 o'clock (or was it 7 pm?) we would watch *Maverick*. We loved *Maverick*. To this day I don't watch much television. I feel lonely if I sit by myself and watch television. I wonder if it's because in the beginning, I always watched with my family. I think all of us must have watched *Maverick* because I remember everyone on Monday morning at school talking about it, repeating the jokes.

My sister was into TV – my sister has no memories of life without television. She's eight years younger, my sister Debbie. And, she ended up being a producer, and a host for Wyoming PBS.

Joan: Wow!

IMPACT OF WORLAND ON YOUR LIFE

Joan: What experiences of growing up in Worland created the most impact on your life? I know you talked about your writing and being an editor and a reporter, and about Latin America and fighting for underdogs. But, were there other things or activities that were affected by your experiences in Worland?

Cathy: I can think of several, one of them is 4-H. The kids that participated in 4-H learned to do things with a goal to be excellent and to be judged on their results. I think that was really important. When I was writing novels for a living, it was just like sitting by myself, sewing an outfit for 4-H or Make-It-Yourself-With-Wool, paying attention to every detail. And always, struggling to complete the project. What is it they say? The last 20% takes 80% of your energy to finish. But you'd finish it in 4-H, because you had the Washakie County Fair coming up, and your club and your leader, and your parents were pushing you on.

I think another thing that is a huge impact is the personal power you feel by growing up in a place where there aren't very many people, people are connected – the ol' 500-mile Main Street.

I was in college before I realized it was a very big deal to have even seen your state senator, let alone having met him. But across the alley and across the street was Dennis O'Mahoney, who was a year or two younger than we were. His great uncle, Senator Joe O'Mahoney, would come to visit. So it was just like, "Oh, Dennis O'Mahoney's uncle is here.

Joan: That's true, I agree with you living in a large metropolitan area is very different from growing up in a small, compact safe community.

Cathy: I think you learned also, the people that you don't necessarily agree with politically can be good people who are generous and do good things for you and others.

Joan: And for the community.

Cathy: Right. I see some of the kids here in Washington who have never met and actually had conversations with people who don't come from their income bracket, and their parents and grandparents' level of education, or even another race. They don't have a clue about *others*. I suspect that a lot of them don't even know who their senators are.

Joan: Sure

Cathy: In Worland, we knew most everyone and they knew us.

WHAT DO YOU WISH YOU HAD KNOWN THEN THAT YOU KNOW NOW?

Joan: Do you wish that you had some learning experiences as a young person in Worland that were not available to you?

Cathy: Oh, I'm so glad you asked me that. I've been thinking about this question ever since our oral history team put it on the questionnaire.

First!!! I wish we had known about dyslexia. I don't even know if the word existed then or not, but we kids had never heard of it and the teachers had never heard of it. Now teachers are taught how to teach kids to read who see words in reverse. Now their classmates are taught that people with dyslexia have exceptional spatial abilities. Now kids learn that this spatial ability can be genius level, like Niels Bohr, who conceived of the structure of the atom. I remember hearing that when Bohr was teaching, that sometimes he'd forget and would start writing in reverse. We also had a classmate in the fourth grade that couldn't read –

Joan: I remember.

Cathy: And, I'm ashamed to say I couldn't figure out why he couldn't read, so I concluded he was kind of a dummy. Shame on me. I wonder what he has done with his spatial abilities, which, in fact, I severely lack.

Here's something else I wish we'd known: What to do to stop bullying.

Joan: Bullying is a common issue, but sometimes it's so complex for everyone involved, including teachers, administrators, parents, and kids.

Cathy: We knew the word back then. We guessed who the ones being bullied were, and who was bullying them. But we didn't know what to do about it, so I'll bet most of us just looked the other way and felt bad and helpless. Now, kids and teachers not only know about bullying, they talk about bullying. They teach kids what to do if they're being bullied and what to do if they see people being bullied.

By the way, apparently the correct meaning of bullying is that it generally happens with your peers. So, the bully teacher you and I had in the second grade wasn't a "bully." However, in my mind, she will always be a bully.

Joan: I've heard from my grandchildren about a few times the things they have done such as a group of friends going to teachers and administrators and describing painful interactions between bullies and their victims. It was at least addressed and the group of friends invited the person being bullied to eat at the lunch table with them. My grandchild said the boy was being bullied because he was a little effeminate. He may or may not have been gay, but one boy in the group said he knew someone who was gay and was a friend of his mother. She said he was a good guy, and another one said, "Yeah, they had friends that they knew were gay, and they were good guys too." My grandson came home one day and told me about it and I was pleased he and his friends would support a kid that was being bullied – and in the lunchroom, where there isn't much supervision.

Cathy: That's impressive! The third thing I wish they'd had are *real* aptitude tests. We had an *interest test* in high school and I think half of the class ended up being *interested* in tractor mechanics or such. Think how we could have used the guidance of real aptitude tests where you are tested on all kinds of individual skills – a day-and-a-half of little skills tests that created a profile of what you are naturally good at. They then compare your skills profile to all areas that require the skills you possess. This opens your brain to what you think is just normal for everyone, but in fact is something that you are exceptionally good at. Or bad at. Or, simply only okay.

So if you're like me, you're exceptionally good at generating ideas. The flip side is, you have a hard time focusing your brain because it keeps distracting you with ideas. Aptitude tests have been invaluable for me. But I didn't take one until I was in my forties and floundering around in my career.

Joan: I think you're right. Would this have changed the direction of your careers?

Cathy: It might have helped me understand early on that because I am interested in many things and have so many ideas and curiosity, that telling people's stories – newspapers, novels, magazines, online – would be a good fit. The aptitude test showed, though, that daily news would be hard for me because while I see patterns accurately, I don't see them quickly. On the other hand, the test didn't show that I thrived on the excitement and the constant unexpected turmoil in newsrooms.

WISDOM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Joan: In closing, for generations to come that may listen to your story years from now, is there any wisdom you'd want to pass on to them? What would you want them to know?

Cathy: In my career, I discovered that what I was doing for fun in high school became my profession, so pay attention to what you are naturally drawn to early on.

As I mentioned before, my family was Unitarian. Starting with my grandparents, we belonged to a correspondence church in Boston. Long story, but I became the president of our high school youth group in my senior year of high school. There were about 70 members of the youth group, living all over the world. I wrote to every single one of them, and lots of them wrote back to me. Once a month I wrote a column in their newsletter. Today, that's called community communications.

My last job was for the National Geographic Society. I was the founding editor of their Intranet, basically, keeping everyone connected – just like with my church youth group. And for the past 16 years as a retiree, it's my volunteer career.

Joan: It's been a lifelong adventure for you, and it continues.

Cathy: Knock on wood in every direction. I want to keep doing it.

THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF THE WASHAKIE MUSEUM

Joan: Thank you, Cathy. We'd like to thank you for participating, not only for participating but for spearheading this project.

Cathy: Isn't it fun? Haven't we had a good time, and learned, oh, my gosh, what we have learned from our classmates. Thank you.

INTERVIEW CONTINUES: GRANDMOTHER AND GIRL SCOUTS

Joan: Cathy, your grandmother, Edith Healy, had some interesting activities she was doing involving the Girl Scouts. Would you like to talk about that?

Cathy: Yes, and I'm sorry I didn't put it in earlier. I think the life lesson is, you never quite know what things will come your way and will open new opportunities. When my grandmother and grandfather adopted the two girls, they were first grade and third grade, and by then my Uncle Alex was in the eighth grade. I think that my dad was in fifth grade.

My Grandmother started thinking, how can I help the girls make friends so they wouldn't be bullied newcomers or curiosities. How can we do something that will teach them some self-confidence, and learn other kinds of skills? My grandmother loved going to summer camps when she was a kid. When she was first married, you can read in her letters home to Boston how much she enjoyed spending the summer in a sheep wagon in the Big Horns. I can remember how she loved being up at the cabin with the wood stove. These were all the kinds of things Girl Scouts did, and so she got involved with the Girl Scouts because of my Aunt Eileen and my Aunt Helen.

My grandmother got very enthusiastic about the program, and she started

promoting the Girl Scouts. She recruited leaders all over the Basin. I think she must have inherited her father's ability with sales. He had his own insurance agency. In his obituary, you read about what a great salesman he was. Eventually, Edith was called the Juliet Lowe of the Big Horn Basin – Juliet Lowe being the woman who founded Girl Scouts in the United States. At one point there were about 1,000 girls in the Big Horn Basin who were involved in scouting.

She ended up being on the regional Girl Scout Board, and then, on the National Girl Scout Board with women like Mrs. Herbert (Lou Henry) Hoover and Mrs. Harvey Mudd – who started Harvey Mudd College in honor of her husband. Tom Fujikawa's daughter graduated from Harvey Mudd, which some consider even more difficult to get into than MIT or Caltech.

There was my grandmother, coming from Worland, Wyoming, with all these people. Lou Henry Hoover even came to visit her once.

Anyway, it all started by figuring out what to do with the two daughters that she'd adopted.

My grandmother was buried in her Girl Scout leader's uniform. She had been going around the Basin helping get what the Girl Scouts called "little houses," where the troops could meet, because in those days we had the Community Hall in Worland, but it was too big and it wasn't set up for kids to meet. After she died in 1950, my grandfather donated money so that a little house could be built in Worland in her name: the Edith Sampson Healy Little House.

Joan: I remember going to Girls Scouts meetings there.

Cathy: Joannie and Carol Woodhams Day mentioned it in their oral histories. I went, too. I didn't find the Girl Scouts very interesting. It took me about two years after my grandmother died before I had the courage to ask my father if I could switch to 4-H.

FAMILY HISTORY: VISIONARY FATHER

My Dad did an oral history so people can read about him, but the oral history collection he set up at the museum kind of disappeared into a closet. The collection is alive and thriving now. My dad was a visionary. IBM told him that he had the first ranch in the world to go on computers – that was in the mid-60s, when “computers” were big, with bulky vacuum tubes. They had to be kept in climate-controlled, data processing centers.

Dad wanted so badly to compile information from the LU Ranch to make more knowledgeable decisions. He knew that if he collected all kinds of data, like how fast a cow would “mother up” her newborn calf, he could improve the survival rate of calves by selling a percentage of the lowest performing cows. A computer could quickly rank the cows on that and other elements and he could continually improve his herd. He put together a four-way partnership with the two Worland banks and Security Bank in Basin for a data center.

Here are two more examples: When Dad took over the ranch management, it was badly overgrazed by sheep and cattle – the government had encouraged ranchers to raise as many animals as possible to feed and clothe the troops during World War II. Dad cut the herd size by one-third and soon neighbors were complaining to the BLM of the unfairness that the LU had gotten better land than they had. The difference between grass on our side of a fence and the neighbor’s side became impressive – I saw it change. Dad foresaw environmental regulations and hired a decorated, retired Bureau of Land Management manager to conduct an environmental survey so that the ranch had a baseline for the future.

Something nice, Joan! Our dads were on the school board together when you and I graduated from high school and they gave us our diplomas.

FAMILY HISTORY > VERY SMART MOTHER KNOWN FOR HER BEAUTY

Cathy: My mother – Martha Omenson Healy – was known in Wyoming for her beauty. She was really smart and incredibly intuitive.

Joan: She was quite a lady.

Cathy: Mother graduated in three years from Hot Springs County High School. My Grandmother Omenson was afraid to let her stay for her senior year because the girls in Thermopolis were getting pregnant in their final year when their

boyfriends got cars. Her mother sent mom to a strict Baptist college – Colorado Women's College. Mother was there for a year and transferred to Laramie for a couple of years.

As I mentioned, both of her parents had hotels. So she ended up going to Cornell to the hotel school – it was called hotel engineering at Cornell, and classes met in the engineering college. She and Dad, who was at the University of Pennsylvania, went out a few times. Kids from Worland used to drive down to Thermopolis for the live-band dances in the state park, so they knew each other – she was a year behind Dad in high school. I think she went out occasionally then with Rick Hake's dad, Dick.

After Mother graduated from Cornell, the state hired her as “Miss Wyoming “ to represent them at the World's Fair in San Francisco.

It was hard as an awkward teenager to have a mother who was a known beauty. I've talked about the advantage of being in Wyoming because everyone knows everyone. Sometimes that gets a bit painful. One time I was in Laramie, I must have been a pimply sixteen year old and down there for some state meet. I was talking to a couple that I'd never met and the man said to me, astonished, “You're Martha Omenson's daughter?! She was the most beautiful woman in Wyoming. I used to walk three blocks out of my way at UW so that I could watch her walk to class.” After a pause, he said, “You must look like your father.”

Joan: That's the same thing that someone said to Joyce Taylor Spence!

Cathy: I read somewhere a long time ago that girls psychologically take after their fathers and boys their mothers, so maybe a number of us experienced that. In fact, I do look like a Healy and I'm certainly more like my dad than like my mother.

Speaking of my mother, this reminds me about careers and gender. In our generation, Joan, any girl in our class who was good in math was advised to major in home economics in college, remember? Jacque Hampton, Laine (Bonnie) Bailey, Gayle Swan!!! They were so smart. They used their bachelor's degrees in home ec as the foundation for satisfying careers, so it worked out okay. My mother's generation had strange experiences from our perspective. She – an engineer! – had a job selling tickets at the counter in United Airlines office in Los Angeles. One of the men who answered the phone and took ticket orders

went out on sick leave. *Even though it was a man's job to answer the phones*, Mother was allowed to fill in for him, temporarily.

Joan: Well, that's really interesting. Anything else you'd like to add?

Cathy: [Laughs] Of course! But no, there's already too

much! **Joan:** Thank you again.