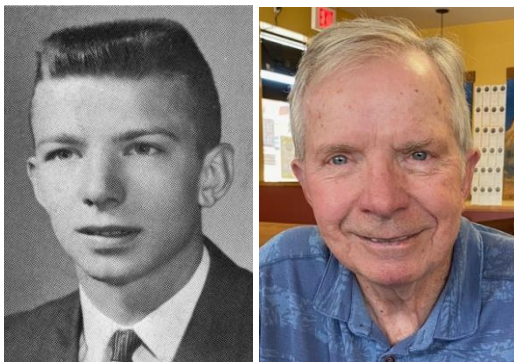




## THE WAR BABIES OF WORLAND: ORAL HISTORIES FROM THE CLASS OF 1960



### DAVID LLOYD SCHEUERMAN

Extended conversation after videotaping

Interviewers: Cathy Healy

Proofreader: Peggy Steele Porter

**January 13, 2022**

*This transcript expands from the video due to additional conversations.*

This is **Cathy Healy**. This interview is being done on January 13, 2022, at 11 am in Washington, D.C. and I'm talking with David Scheuerman, who is in Grand Junction, Colorado.

Dave, let me thank you for agreeing to be recorded for the oral history collection of the Washakie Museum and Cultural Center in Worland, Wyoming. What is your full name and was there a nickname you were known by during your Worland days?

**David Scheuerman:** David Lloyd Scheuerman, and just Dave.

### SCHEUERMAN, SCHNEIDERS (MOTHER) MOVED TO WORLAND IN 1917

**Cathy:** Were you born in Worland?

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**David:** Yes.

**Cathy:** What brought your family to Worland?

**David:** My grandparents, Peter and Marie Scheuerman, came to the United States on May 22, 1902, from Jagabnaja (which means “strawberry meadow” in Russian), which is in the Poljana area of Russia. They left Russia because of the Russian government; they didn’t want the Volga Germans in their country anymore. They first came to the Red River Valley in Wisconsin to farm sugar beets. In 1911 they moved to Colorado, and then in 1917, they moved to Wyoming. They farmed south of Worland at Neiber, north at Basin and Kane, and in Worland. They had 15 children, with four dying at a young age. My dad was Jake Scheuerman — his twin brother was John. My mother was Rachel Schneider. I understand an “n” was removed from “Scheuermann” to make it less German. The Scheuermans and Schneiders were told not to speak German in America.

**Cathy:** Why did they leave Colorado and Wisconsin? How did they end up in Worland?

**David:** That's a good question. I can't answer that. I know they were farmers, and they were looking for farming country.

**Cathy:** Were they sugar beet farmers in Russia?

**David:** No. rye, wheat, millet, oats, barley, potatoes, and gardens. But sugar beets have been the main crop in Wyoming for years because of the factory, of course.

**David:** My mother's father was a blacksmith in Worland. There were a lot of Schneider’s that were farmers in Worland.

**Cathy:** Were the Scheuermans and the Schneiders from the same town in Russia? Had they known each other before they got over here?

**David:** That, I don't know for sure, but I have to figure that they did. When they went to Russia, the Scheuermans were on the west side of the Volga River, and the Schneiders were on the east side.

But they were very close. It was like a colony of Germans that were settled in Russia. They did not come to the United States at the same time. It was about five years in between. The Scheuermans came first, and then the Schneiders.

Now, whether the Schneiders followed coming into the United States to go into Wisconsin or Colorado or Wyoming, I can't tell you. But it's the Scheuermans that did that route and ended up in Wyoming in the Worland area.

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**Cathy:** Do you know anything about the history of when they left Germany and went to the Volga area? Did your grandparents ever talk about any of the stories that they'd grown up with?

**David:** Never, never, never talked about it at all. I have done a little bit of reading to try to understand that. It was right at the end of the European Seven Years War— it just went on and on, and there were a lot of fires, and so the Germans were desperate. You know they were poor, and Catherine the Great in Russia was inviting the Germans to come into Russia for a better life, and so they did. Her First Manifesto wasn't very successful. There was a Second Manifesto that gave them money and supplies and food on their trip to come into Russia to settle there, and of course, they were farmers, so that's what they did. They grew the grains that we were talking about.

They had big gardens, and the history of that continued in Wyoming. Those are the same things that we did on the farm. I lived eight miles north of Worland on a farm with 300 acres. The history of what they did in Russia, the hard work ethic that came along with them, and my parents also have had a great effect on the rest of my life. After the harvest blessings, we would soon forget the hard work. But I can't tell you why they came to Wyoming, probably homesteading. I think it was just more farming country.

**Cathy:** When did they come? Do you know the years? Maybe it was right after the canals opened up lots of land.

**David:** Well, I think that's true, and I have the dates here. Let's see. They came to the United States on May 22, 1902. They first came to Wisconsin, living there until 1911. They then moved to Colorado, and then in 1917, they moved to Wyoming.

**Cathy:** I can't remember when Joannie Culbertson's great-aunt Mary Culbertson and her friend, Helen Howell — Helen Howell Coburn then — came out from Iowa to homestead when they opened up the canals. But people were still homesteading when we were in school — my dad and Fred Snyder homesteaded some land. So, your grandparents could have taken out homesteads.

[Dave's parents' farm was irrigated by the Lower Hanover Canal, north of Worland which opened in 1906. Two canals were dug south of town, Big Horn Canal (1907) and the Upper Hanover Canal.]

**David:** That very well could be. I know my dad farmed for an individual who owned the farm for quite a few years until that fellow was getting older and he decided to sell it to my dad. He bought 300 acres, eight miles north of town, on the west side of the Big Horn River.

## **ENDLESS FARM WORK CUT SHORT SOME VOLGA-GERMANS SCHOOLING**

**Cathy:** My dad would have been contemporary with your parents because he and Rick Hake's dad and Grant Ujifusa's dad all graduated from high school together. Dad said a lot of the German kids had to quit school after eighth grade because their parents said, "We need you to work on the farm." Did that happen to your parents?"

**David:** It certainly did. It happened to my dad. He didn't go beyond the eighth grade. He stayed on the farm. His twin brother John graduated with a diploma from high school, but my dad did not. He only went through the eighth grade. You're right about that. They needed him on the farm, so my grandparents made that decision – my uncle John would finish school, and my dad would stay on the farm.

**Cathy:** Tough decision! How about your mother?

**David:** She did finish high school. She sure did, as a Schneider. They lived south of Worland, and the Scheuermans lived north.

## **IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II – AND WORLD WAR I**

**Cathy:** You must have been conceived right after Pearl Harbor. Do you remember if you were impacted by World War II?

**David:** My dad had a little spot on his lung, so he couldn't volunteer. However, his twin brother, Uncle John, went to the service, and I remember him coming back from the army.

I don't remember anything specific that was different during World War II. I know supplies were difficult, a lot of things were, but we had big gardens. We had sweet corn, we shelled peas, and we dug potatoes. Then, of course, the potatoes were in the root cellar, and Mom would say, "Hey, go get four spuds", so I'd have to go down and open up the big, heavy door of the root cellar and go into the sacks and grab some potatoes. You know that's what you do on the farm, that is, you grow a lot of food and make do with it.

**Cathy:** Your grandparents came to Worland while World War I was still going on, with the United States and the Allies fighting the Germans. Did you ever have any prejudice, or did they ever talk about any prejudice?

I ask because my mother's cousin married a woman who was from a German-American family from Ohio — her grandparents had immigrated here, and they

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changed her name from Marta to Margaret. When the war started, when the U.S. went into the war, she said they took all the German books out of the house, piled them in the front yard, and burned them. He said, "We're Americans, and we will not speak German anymore."

**David:** Wow!

**Cathy:** Did you ever hear any stories like that from your parents or your grandparents?

**David:** Oh, no! When our families get together — you know a lot of Sundays you'll have dinner with one of the brothers and their family — once in a while, they talk in German. If it was a joke or something like that, or if they would remember something that happened, they would speak in German. But never did they attempt to teach us to speak German. That was not in their DNA. I mean, they just didn't want to do it.

Now I have to tell you, on Christmas Eve, we always had a Christmas program at the Zion Lutheran Church in Worland. And when leaving for the Christmas program, we would all get out to the car, and that's me and my four brothers — I'm the oldest of five — and all of a sudden, there was this guttural language going on between my mom and my dad. It was German. And all of a sudden Dad would get out of the car, go back into the house, and he would be in there for about five or ten minutes while we were warming up in the car. Lo' and behold, he came back out, we went to the program, and when we got home after the program, Santa Claus had been to the house.

Mom was telling Dad, "The gifts are blah, blah, blah," in German, and of course, I couldn't understand any of that. But you know, it took me a few years before I finally understood what they were talking about and the reason that Dad went back into the house.

**Cathy:** When they began teaching German in high school, did you take German from Mrs. Fassler?

**David:** I sure didn't, I did not, no. To me, foreign languages were for the ladies. I have to tell you, I'm more of a hard-working guy like my dad. And, you know, German as a language just never, never appealed to me, so I never had any desire to take it. Now, my daughter took German in high school — she's the one that lives here in Grand Junction. She can speak it pretty well, but I never had a desire. I was more interested in math and sports, I'm just a typical guy, I guess.

But I have to tell you, my mother made sure that her five boys learned how to wash dishes, clean the bathroom, clean the mud room, make up our beds, and put clothes away.

## SCHOOL DAYS WERE FARM DAYS

**Cathy:** When you think about your neighborhood, your home in your neighborhood, out there on the farm, what are some sights and sounds and memories that you have?

**David:** Tractors, mooing cows, baaing sheep, early in the morning going to the sugar beet factory and getting a load of the beet pulp, which was steamy, taking it back out and then running it into the feed troughs of either the cows or the sheep. I did that before I went to school.

**Cathy:** [Laughs] You didn't mention the smell of the steaming beets.

**David:** Oh, my goodness, oh, yes! But I want to tell you that the livestock absolutely loved beet pulp. And it was just those times of the year when the beets were being processed at the factory that it was available. Otherwise, we were busting hay in the wintertime to be fed to the stock.

**Cathy:** What does that mean to “bust hay?”

**David:** When you cut hay and stack it, it's long and loose. We busted that up into small pieces with a hay buster machine, which makes it a little easier to feed the stock in a feed trough. We had a truck that had a conveyor system inside, which would move to the back and knock the busted hay out into the feed troughs.

**Cathy:** How would you get the loose hay out of the stacks, were you using pitchforks, or was there some sort of attachment on a tractor?

**David:** It was a tractor with a forklift on it, and you just go drive into the stack, lift up a load, come over, and then dump that into the hay buster, and of course, we were helping to feed the hay into the hay buster. We were standing up on platforms as the hay was brought over. We'd make sure it went into the hay buster and got broken up. This is in the wintertime, of course, but in the summertime – I have to tell you – today it would be child abuse, and my father would be put in prison. My dad wired blocks of wood to the tractor clutch and the brake so we could reach them because we were young and our legs were not long enough to reach those, so he just solved that problem. We drove tractors all the time.

**Cathy:** How old were you when you first started driving a tractor?

**David:** I think just around junior high because, in the eighth grade, I remember I played basketball only one time, one year. It was too difficult to keep coming back and forth from the farm because we just had way too many chores to do, so I just gave basketball up after that.

I did very well. I remember the coach. We played Ten Sleep one time, and I scored a bunch of points. When we got on the bus, I was howling about that, and when the coach came over, he said, "But how many points did the guy you were guarding score?" That set me down.

But we were talking about the farm. I guess my whole elementary, junior high, and even high school, my life revolved around the farm because of all the chores and the work that we had to do. I wasn't involved in town activities, you know. All my friends were in town, and I remember Chester Pierce coming out on a weekend, and he was just absolutely amazed at the pickups and the trucks.

## **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: DRAGGING MAIN > WHAT FOR?**

**David:** Driving to us was just something you had to do. It was normal. It wasn't a big deal like some of the guys, you know, dragging Main. I've dragged Main a few times, but to me, it was like, "What's the reason for dragging Main? We're wasting gas, you know." I did it a few times. So, the farm was big for me, the farm, and church.

## **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: CHURCH**

Church was a big part of our life. I think the experience I had on the farm really set me up for my life's work because of the hard work. As you know, it's not 8 to 5. Many jobs are if you work in town at a store. But farming is this, you do whatever it takes to get the job done, and so we had chores. We had milk cows and hogs.

I don't know how many times I've squirted fresh milk over to cats when I'm milking the cows. They would always come around, but then we had a separator, and we separated the cream from the milk. And my mom would make cream puffs like you wouldn't believe. I have blamed my mother for my sweet tooth. She said, "No, you need to blame your dad for your sweet tooth. He's the one that wanted all of the German pastries."

Which by the way, I have to admit in the Volga German history book, there's a chapter that talks about German pastries and the recipes. It's typical of what I grew up with.

So you see, the food and how they prepared it came with them, not only from Germany to Russia but to the United States. That's what I grew up with. We were skin and bones, eating that heavy food, and it never made any difference. We were doing heavy work.

After supper, I'd have to move a set of plastic tubes to water the beets. And you would have to pick up 50 of those pipes and move them to the next section. And

then let the ditch water flow and dam up the water, and then set the tubes. When you picked up 50 tubes, or whatever you could, at 6 o'clock in the evening, you had to hang on to the tubes so you weren't able to swat the mosquitoes and would just eat you alive.

I remember that specifically. And then you'd move to the next rows of beets that were dry, and lay out those 50 tubes, and then come back and set them all. [start the water flowing in them] The plastic tubes went to aluminum. Aluminum tubes went to the gated pipe. They actually came after I graduated from high school. It's changed drastically today. We still have Scheuermans who are farming in Worland today. It's all sprinkler systems that you can control on your iPhone. Start number one, start number eight, and if you have a problem with one of the sprinkler systems, the system tells you. It's still farming; it's still a lot of work.

**Cathy:** Wait. I have a question. Did they have mosquito soap to keep the mosquitoes away?

**David:** Oh, oh, yeah, yeah. And we tried to use that. But they'd just swarm you. So that experience, having chores and milking cows, is seven days, 24/7. Even when you're at a cousin's house after church, having lunch, and you're playing, you would hear your parents say, "Alright, boys, we've got to go home." What did that do for me? It gave me things to do. I didn't have time to get in trouble, you know. It's a work ethic that you learn, and it stays with you. It's really helped me in my professional life because it was never an 8 to 5 job for me. Whatever it takes to get the job done, that's what you do.

### **Father Shaped David's Faith**

The other thing was, of course, religion. The church was important, and what really made an impression on me was my dad. One time, just before it was time to harvest grain – and we always had grain – that's the time of the year when there are hot temperatures in Worland, and you get those storms coming through, and you'd get hail.

We would be out irrigating, and I'd hear my dad say, "Lord, let this storm pass." You know that makes an impression on you. You know it's not like going to a church or sitting at a pew, or listening to somebody; this is real-life attention to God. When you are out on the farm, and you are asking Him to please let the storm pass. If you get hail on that grain, you've lost it. Hail just shreds everything, and there's nothing left.

I remember specifically, my dad's saying, "Lord, let the storm pass."

But he worked hard. We'd go to church on Sunday morning, Dad in his suit. He'd have a tie on and would be wearing his dress shoes. And we'd be going to



church, driving by a set that we had made that morning, and some of the water wasn't going in the direction that he wanted it to go, he'd stop and jump right out of the car, jump across the irrigation ditch, and with a stick or his hands, made that water go where he wanted it to go. Then he'd jump back across the ditch, get in the car, and then we went on to church.

So he's a hard worker with an eighth-grade education, and I've never seen anybody more mechanically inclined than my dad. He could weld, he could use the torches. He got that, I think, from my mother's dad, who was a blacksmith. We had a shop with a forge. You could heat things up, put them on a big anvil, and make it any size that you wanted.

I remember him always talking about "those engineers, they don't know how to make stuff." It never was strong enough, as far as he was concerned. I used to laugh, and of course, I became a civil engineer.

When it came to fixing things, he just had a knack for it. Those are the things he could do with an eighth-grade education.

## **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: CHURCH BASEBALL TO FAMED ARIZONA STATE TEAM**

**DAVID:** I've got to tell you what happened in the youth group at my church. My brother Jakie, who's dead now, and I liked to play baseball. So, we got a team together, and we started playing. We went to Ten Sleep and played their team. I was a pitcher, and the Junior Legion Baseball heard about us and saw us play and wanted us to play baseball for them. And, of course, in Worland, Wyoming, you really don't have the weather for school-sponsored baseball, so it's sponsored by the Junior Legion in the summertime. And so, we started playing with the Junior Legion. To make a long story short, we played Sheridan in Worland at the State Championship series. I pitched, and I think the final score was 4 to 3 in favor of Sheridan, but they were the State champions from the year before. I made All-State because of that one pitching performance.

Earlier, I had been talking about the farm and all the chores, but it was in the summertime when the Junior Legion asked us to play. I was totally shocked when my dad allowed us, myself and Jake, to play baseball in the summertime. I knew that the hired men were going to have to pick up a lot of slack because we were always busy. Well, my dad loved baseball. And that's the reason he let us play.

And then, from that, I got a scholarship to Arizona State. I wish I could remember the American Legion sponsors. One of them was an accountant in Worland. He

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was an alumnus of Arizona State. He's the one that got me the scholarship to Arizona State.

And here I am, graduating in May of 1960, and in September flying down to Phoenix. On the plane in Denver, I sat beside a young man who was a senior in high school. Turns out his mother worked at Arizona State. This is on a Sunday, September the fourth. The next day was September 5th, my birthday, Labor Day, and the Arizona State campus was closed. I told him what I was going to do and where I was headed.

He said, "Well, they're closed tomorrow". He invited me to stay with his family. I spent two nights with them. His mother took me down to Arizona State. And the reason I say that is I was like a fish out of water.

Let me go back to high school a little bit.

### **WORLAND HIGH SCHOOL: 1956-1960**

**David:** My whole experience during high school was basically wrapped around the farm and my church youth group. Chester Pierce was one of my good friends. Lowell Peterson was one of my good friends because we went to church together. But being involved in Worland and the people in Worland, you know it was we had to get back on the farm because I had work to do there.

**Cathy:** Did you do 4-H? Was that part of your farm life?

**David:** No, I started that but didn't finish. I drove a school bus when I was a junior and senior in high school. I don't know if you remember, but the high school kids drove school buses, and because we were from the farm, driving wasn't any big deal. I look back on that now, and I think, my goodness, there's no way that would be allowed to happen today. You know, it's completely different. But anyway, that's part of the experience of growing up on the farm, the things that you learn, the hard work, the spiritual aspect of it.

### **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: CHURCH, PART 2**

**Cathy:** There was more than one Lutheran church in Worland, How many were there in those days, and why were you in Zion?

**David:** Well, the only thing I can say is that a lot of the Germans went to Zion Lutheran. All of the ranchers, the farmers, the Schneiders, and the Scheuermans went to this church — I can't say all of them, but the bulk of them went to the Zion Lutheran Church. [Currently called Zion church. The church is no longer affiliated with the Lutheran doctrine. It is now an independent Bible Church.]

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**David:** Yeah, they still do. We always had a picnic every summer down in Thermopolis in the big park there. Everybody brought fried chicken, you name it. That's one of the big things that we as a church, did. And of course, the youth group, which I've already mentioned to you. We played baseball. We did a lot of other things through that youth group.

We had hay rides on Easter Sunday, Easter Sunrise, and Sunday. We always went someplace for an Easter sunrise service.

**Cathy:** I have a question about religion. One of the things that — and Peggy, I don't know if it's true today or not — but it was which church you belonged to was really important socially. I don't mean “socially “like higher status or lower status. I mean that the goal for the parents and grandparents, I think, was that you would hang out with and fall in love with kids from your church. There was a community-wide emphasis on that. All of the churches had youth groups. Wednesday nights were church youth group night. Nothing else happened then.

Laine Bailey DeFreece talks about it. She and Paul Engleman really liked each other, but her parents were Methodists and threw a fit because he was Catholic, and she was absolutely not to go out with him.

Do you have memories of that kind of separation by religion? Peggy, do you have memories of that?

**Peggy:** I do. I don't think it is that way now. We went to the Methodist Church. That's where I was raised, and Wednesday nights were church nights. You didn't have homework on Wednesday night.

**David:** Yeah.

**Peggy:** But the Methodist Church at that time was probably the “biggie” in town. Reg Golf was the pastor. And the church you were talking about when Zion started, Dave, was on the corner of Grace and 7th. It was across the corner from Dr. Birkenkamp's house.

**Cathy:** Was Dr. Birkenkamp the pastor for Zion?

**David:** Yes. Oh, man, that almost brings back some other names that were after him, maybe, or before.

**Peggy:** Pastor Wayne was there then when we went to Zion. Then while we lived in Douglas, they built the new church on Circle Road. That's where we go now.

**David:** Right, yeah. You remember what your parents set up for you, like my dad, out there on the farm speaking to God — that meant more to me than probably a lot of sermons that I heard.

**Cathy:** True, your parents really set you up with your faith, and often it lasts. My dad was brought up Unitarian, and we belonged to a correspondence church for people who were like us, Unitarians who lived 500 miles from the nearest Unitarian church. Even though I was also in the Episcopalian youth group, by my senior year in high school, I was president of our Unitarian church's high school youth group -- 70-some kids who lived all over the world.

**David:** Really? That's good. During the pandemic, we were streaming from the church. There would be the minister and me -- as an elder, I was to sit in -- and we would stream the service to the congregation because the church was shut down.

## **JUNIOR HIGH: 1954-1956**

**David:** I have a story from 8<sup>th</sup> grade about what may have been the most embarrassing thing ever in my life - at least it was then. The mixed chorus was meeting, and someone asked the double quartet to sing a couple of songs. (I guess we harmonized well). Anyway, being the last day, some of us guys brought water pistols to school. We were sitting in the back of the chorus, sneaking pistol shots, when the request was made for the quartet to sing. I jammed my pistol into my front pocket as I strolled up front. Little did I know the pistol was leaking petrol, oh I mean water, until the chorus started laughing. I pulled out the pistol, trying to explain the wet pants, front and center.

Now that I'm thinking back. Do you remember Kathy Bohl, who was our classmate? And she had an older sister —

**Peggy:** Audrey.

**David:** Audrey. They lived down about a mile from us on our farm. Now on the farm, we always had hired men, and we always had a shepherd every fall when we'd put sheep out on the corn and grain fields. The beet tops still had chunks of beets on them, and they couldn't eat that, so we had a shepherd to run the sheep away from those.

Well, this one shepherd taught my brother Jakie and me how to make bows and some arrows.

So we called up Kathy and Audrey and said, "Come on over we, you know we just want to meet you." Well, we ambushed them. When they got close to where you walked in to go into where our house was on the main road, there was a big, big

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cottonwood tree, and as they got close, we shot two arrows into the cottonwood tree. Needless to say, that ended the visit right there.

We had another hired man that taught Jakie and me how to throw a curveball -- this started probably right around high school time. After we were in Junior Legion baseball, my Dad built a pitcher's mound out on the farm, and we had a backstop -- Jakie and I practiced there, so there are things we learned on the farm other than just hard work and farming, and what have you.

We had milk cows, and I had to carry the skim milk and a slop bucket from where our milk barn was, past the house, over to our stream where we had the hogs. To this day, no doctor has ever told me this, but my right arm is about an inch longer than my left -- I'm right-handed. There's nobody who can convince me that carrying those heavy pails at that age, you know, 15, 13 didn't cause that.

And when I was pitching. I used to just push very hard off the mound with my right leg, and that compresses that right side. That hip talks to me today.

### **BASEBALL: ARIZONA STATE**

**David:** To continue with the story about going down to Arizona State. Baseball is the thing that really put me into college. It wasn't because I wanted to study engineering. It was to play baseball.

Okay, I got down to Arizona State, and I ended up on campus and met the baseball coach. He took me over to the big athletic building where we had our rooms, and then I had to go sign up for classes. I was like, "Oh, what!?! I've got to go to school?" And I had to take 12 hours, and that was a minimum of course.

Well, Arizona State is a land-grant college, what that means is that you have to provide military training. They said you have to sign up for ROTC, Reserve Officer Training Corps. At Arizona State, it was either the Army or the Air Force. Well, I knew the Army uniforms are green and Air Force uniforms are blue. Blue is my favorite color.

I said, "Sign me up for the Air Force." I spent five years in the Air Force because I like blue better than green.

I got hurt playing baseball that first year there at Arizona State and I didn't get my scholarship back. So I had to go to the University of Wyoming, my in-state school.

### **BASEBALL: UWYO > PITCHED AGAINST ASU's REGGIE JACKSON**

**David:** Two years later, I could start throwing again. So dumb me, I went out for the University Wyoming baseball team. I made the team and rode down to Arizona State, and I'll be darned if it was the year that Reggie Jackson (Mr. October) was playing at Arizona State. The crowd was yelling, "Come on, Reggie, come on, Reggie!"

I got him out the first time. Reggie Jackson! If you've ever watched him hit, if he hasn't seen the pitcher before, he watches you wind up, and he measures how fast and what's going on. Well, he did the same thing to me. That's why I got him out the first time.

The second time? I think that ball is still rolling because it went over the palm trees and right out of the field.

From there, we went down to the University of Arizona, and I got pounded. My earned run average for 9 innings was like 18.

When we got back, I just told the coaches, "Guys, there's no way I can stay in engineering and play baseball."

Well, UW is a land-grant college too, so I continued with the ROTC; the second year was required. During that second year, I got interested in the advanced ROTC to become an officer in the Air Force. I qualified for pilot training and went into the service when I graduated from UW's College of Engineering in 1966.

## **WE FEARED NUCLEAR ATTACK BY AGE 3 OR 4 > THEN CAME VIETNAM**

**Cathy's Note:** The Cold War between Communist dictatorships like Russia and China vs. the Free World defined our lives from the time we were about three or four years old. But it was the Vietnam War (mostly from 1960 to 1975) that battered us – no one our age escaped the war's impact since 18-year-old boys had to register for the draft, and many were drafted.

Dave learned to fly in Laramie's gale-force winds with ROTC funding. During our 2-hour, 20-minute interview, he told terrifying stories about near-death moments when he trained to be a fighter pilot like the Mav – Tom Cruise as Maverick in Top Gun. Instead, Dave was assigned to fly B-52 bombers. He rotated six-month assignments between Vietnam and flying for the Strategic Air Command's 24/7 mission, which was to be ready to fly to Russia with atomic bombs to retaliate in case of a nuclear attack. B-52s could fly 8,000 miles at an altitude of 55,000 feet, but pilots also practiced flying about 500 feet, lower-than-radar with their vision blocked by radiation shields, Dave said.

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SAC's low-level drills relate to Worland: Rick Hake's siblings and cousins have talked about relaxing at their cabin in the Big Horns when a giant military plane would pass just above the trees like an earthquake in the sky. Although Dave never skimmed the Rockies, the following is the view from his cockpit.

**David:** B-52s were not my first choice of an airplane. I wanted to carry supplies and people around the world and see the world, but you're going to fly whatever the Air Force wants you to fly to wherever they tell you to go.

I'm going to serve my country. You know, I love this country. So Vietnam happens, and I'm assigned to Plattsburgh Air Force Base, Upper State, New York, 30 miles from the Canadian Border, Plattsburgh on Lake Champlain. This was during the Cold War, so there were six crews sitting alert one week at a time, waiting for the Russians to start shooting some missiles. Then we had 15 minutes to get the airplanes off the ground from wherever we were on the base.

When I crawled around on the atomic bombs in the bomb bay for the first time to make sure all the dials were in the correct position -- that's spooky -- and when you think about the reason that we were doing that, sitting alert. This is during the Cold War. Believe it or not, back in what was it -- '68, '69 and we still had B-52 bombers on the ground, sitting alert. If you're not sitting alert, you're flying training missions.

Those training missions were to take that B-52 to Russia. The only way you could get into Russia with a B-52, as large as it is, is to go low level. So our training missions were low-level training missions all over the United States.

**Cathy:** Like over the Big Horns.

**David:** There are areas where you can go down to 500 feet above the ground. You'd put your terrain avoidance radar to go out and get blips three miles, five miles out in front of you, so if there's a mountain peak coming, the radar tells you. So now you've got a fly to go over that mountain top. [Dave's hand goes straight up.]

Low-level is the only way we would have gotten into Russia to bomb the targets. I mean, think about it. When we went low level, we had thermal shields on the windows to protect our eyes from atomic bombs going off, the flashes. It finally occurred to me to ask the question, "What do you expect of us returning?"

"Maybe 20%," they said, even though we had elaborate exit plans. After we dropped our bombs from a low level, you popped up to 3,000 feet. Set up to drop your bombs, and then, of course, get out of Dodge.

**Cathy:** These were atomic bombs —

**David:** Oh, yes, that was, that was the Strategic Air Command. That's Cold War stuff. And I hope in this recording and whoever reads this is not upset by that. But that's what we were doing. I don't know what the situation is today. I know we've got planes that are probably on some kind of alert 24 hours a day.

**Cathy:** I would assume the Russians were doing the same thing, wouldn't you?

**David:** Oh, I'm sure. But when I came up for reenlistment, I had just married Glenda, and Vietnam was still on. I don't know if you remember any of the details, but they started bombing around Hanoi to get some kind of peace, whatever it was, and the North Vietnamese shot a lot of B-52s down. I knew I would have been right in the middle of that and decided to get out of the service. That was the end of January of '71.

The USA lost that war and a lot of cherished souls. I lost five members of my pilot training class. I have struggled personally with the realities of my 56 B-52 bombing missions (sorties). Because of the faith instilled in me by my parents, I've accepted that reality. Would I defend America again today, the answer is a resounding Yes!

## **FULL CIRCLE: FROM FLYING A-BOMBS TO PEACEFUL NUCLEAR ENERGY**

**David:** We went down to Chattanooga, Tennessee; that's where my wife is from. I went down for an interview with Delta Airlines. But at that time, the economy was not good. They had pilots furloughed, and Delta told me. "We don't have a slot for you."

There was a good friend of the family who worked for TVA (the Tennessee Valley Authority) who got me an interview. Two weeks later, I was working with the TVA in Chattanooga, Tennessee, as a Civil Engineer designing electrical transmission lines.

**Cathy:** What is the Tennessee Valley Authority?

**David:** It's a government outfit that tamed the Tennessee River in the Tennessee Valley. The Tennessee River had flooded year after year. So the government put together TVA to build hydro dams on the Tennessee River to stop the flooding and produce cheap electricity. Now, today they've got nuclear-fired plants, but they still have coal-fired plants. They're getting rid of them, but they've got a lot of hydro – and that's what they did to tame the Tennessee River.

Tennessee is beautiful and green. You go over a hill, and it's nothing but trees. My folks came one winter time from the farm. My dad, at the dining room table with



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Glenda and her family, said, "I don't understand how you can stand or live in this place."

I said, "Dad, what, what are you talking about?" "Well, I'm from Wyoming."

Of course, in Wyoming, you can see 80 miles or 100 miles. After 10 years in Tennessee, I just had to get back out West. We spent 10 years in Casper and still have some dear friends there, but it is tough weather.

In 1980 I moved to Casper, Wyoming, as a Project Manager for TVA, managing uranium properties in Wyoming, Texas, New Mexico, and South Dakota. TVA had plans to build 18 nuclear power plants and wanted to own their own uranium. After the Three Mile Island disaster in 1979, the safety aspect of nuclear plants became a social and economic burden.

TVA had purchased an operating uranium mill located in Edgemont, South Dakota. When TVA decided to decommission the mill the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) forced TVA to bury three million tons of uranium tailings plus the mill structure. I became the Decommissioning Project Manager. The TVA Casper Office completed the project two years early and two million dollars under budget. I wrote a letter to the US Department of Energy (DOE) advising that the Edgmont Mill Tailings Disposal Cell was ready for Long Term Surveillance and Maintenance.

In 1980 TVA shut down the Casper Office, so I moved my family to Grand Junction, Colorado, to work for the DOE as a Project Manager restoring other uranium sites and maintaining remediated sites all over the US.

Today the TVA has 3 nuclear units, 29 hydroelectric dams, one pumped-storage power plant, and six coal-fired (fossil) power plants serving a seven-state area. Today the spent fuel from U.S. commercial nuclear power reactors is stored at more than 70 sites in 35 states.

I'd been all over the country with DOE's construction group, doing remediation and maintenance work. I finally decided I don't want to stay in another motel room again, and in 2013 I retired. I loved the work, loved working with contractors across the country and going to different places. It was a lot of fun, but I just finally got tired of all the travel.

## **FAMILY FARMING: FROM TWO HORSES TO GPS-GUIDED TRACTORS IN THREE GENERATIONS**

**David:** My grandparents harvested beets with a horse and a plow, digging out one row of beets, picking up each beet, and then using a beet knife, which had a

tooth on it, chopping off the leaves and then throwing it into a wagon pulled by a horse. They did that for years, and then technology came up with a machine that can cut off the leaves and pull out one row of beets.

That's how we did it in the '40s and '50s. The beets go into a bin. At the end of the row, we'd empty that bin into a truck. That one row went to three rows that the machine could harvest at a time, and those three rows went to six rows.

And now we come through with a six-row puller –

**Peggy:** My granddaughter is married to Steve Schneider they have a 12-row digger–

**David:** A 12-row?! I'd like to see the size of that tractor to be able to pull it.

**Peggy:** I rode in it with Steve one day. It was fun.

**David:** Cool. 12 rows, and obviously, you don't have a bin big enough to put those beets in there. You've got to roll the beets out into a truck that's running right beside you to catch all those beets.

**Peggy:** Yeah, I drove a beet truck during harvest one year for Paul Scheuerman.

**David:** I got up into the tractor with Paul on time – they use GPS to plant the beets, and those rows are as straight as a string. I remember planting beets. I mean, you really had to pay attention to know what you were doing. Now, with GPS, he's sitting there just watching the screen, I mean, he didn't even have to drive until he got to the end of the row.

## **LOOKING BACK: WHAT DO YOU WISH WE'D KNOWN THEN?**

**Cathy:** I have, David, I have a question. So, looking back, are there things that you wish that you know now that you will, that you wish we could have had?

**David:** I was the student body president our senior year, you know. You're always talking to kids about what they would like. Oh, candy machine! Why not? But why not some of our smart folks helping out some of those in our class that really needed the help? You talked about geometry and Mr. Kinlein stopping by your house when he was walking home and told your folks that you're hurting in the subject.

What about other kids? You know, that would have been something as a student body president, to have involved different people to help out those in our class, if they would admit that they needed some help with geometry. I was thinking

about college guys in sports. They got tutors all the time, you know. Why can't a normal student in a classroom in high school have that kind of ability?

I don't even know if the high schools have somebody like that you can go to on any subject. Why not a student? It takes time, but Can you imagine being helped by Rick Hake? Oh, my goodness! I think he would have had the ability to visually talk to you about physics.

## **THANK YOU ON BEHALF OF THE WASHAKIE MUSEUM**

**Cathy:** This has just been great, David. Thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed for the Washakie Museum.

**David:** Well, thank you, Cathy. I appreciate it, you know I thought a lot about it, and I did a whole lot more talking here today than I thought I would. I thought about just answering the questions -- what's the question, I'll answer it. But I just took off and went to a lot of places, so I appreciate it

**Cathy:** That's because these conversations, thinking back, and remembering are really enjoyable. They also offer important facts and personal experiences about local life, national life, and global impacts on us.