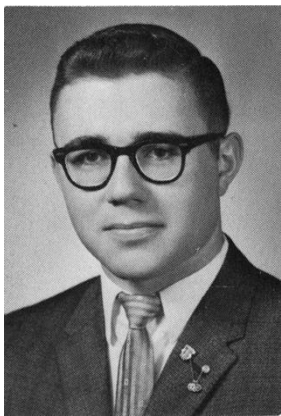




## THE WAR BABIES OF WORLAND: ORAL HISTORIES FROM THE CLASS OF 1960



### JOHN RILEY "JACK" IVERSON

Extended conversation after videotaping

Interviewers: Joanne Culbertson Jeffres & Cathy Healy

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**March 29th, 2023**

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

This is **Joanne Culbertson Jeffres** visiting with Jack Iverson on the morning of March 29, 2023.

Jack, thank you for agreeing to be recorded for the oral history collection of the Washakie Museum and Cultural Center in Worland, Wyoming., would you please give us your full name and tell us where you currently are while making this video?

**John Riley Iverson:** Yes, this is Jack. My Full Name is John Riley Iverson. I'm in Lake Havasu City, Arizona. This is our winter home.

**Joanne:** Were you known by any other name or nickname while you were in high school, or during your school days.

**Jack:** During my school days, I started out as John Riley Brown, nickname Jack because I have a twin sister Judy. My mother thought that Jack and Judy sounded better than John and Judy. So, my nickname was Jack. And that's how I was known throughout school as Jack Iverson.

## **SNYDERS (MOTHER) MOVED TO WORLAND IN 1920'S, STEP-FATHER IN 1948**

**Joanne:** If you weren't born in Worland, how old were you when your family arrived and what brought them to Worland? Tell us a little bit about your family.

**Jack:** My mother married James Rowland Brown in 1941. We grew up for two-and-a-half years in Ten Sleep, Wyoming. The house still stands on the back street behind Dirty Sally's. My dad worked for Leo Rhodes' general store on Main Street in Ten Sleep. I found out later that he lost that job because there were some indiscretions. He did wrong while he was working for Leo and Leo had to let him go.

So, at that point, my mother and dad decided we needed to move, because he didn't have a job in Ten Sleep any longer. She had three children at that point. I have a twin sister, Judy, and an older brother, Terry, and we had to move somewhere. So, we moved to my grandmother's house out on South Flat Road at the Fairview Dairy. And we lived with my grandma for most of my young years. And that was a really positive experience for me. I don't remember Ten Sleep that much, except I remember I met a gal who was the Post Mistress in Ten Sleep and she said, "I remember you and your twin sister coming in and talking to me every day. Because your parents would allow you to walk around the town a little bit." And that's when we were between three and four years old. I don't know how we got out of the house at that age, but we did.

## **FAMILY LIFE: FAIRVIEW DAIRY, WHERE EVEN THREE-YEAR-OLDS WORKED**

We moved out to Grandma's house on the South Flat Road. Her name was Daisy Belle Snyder, Daisy B. Snyder. And her husband was John Riley Snyder. You can tell that's where I got my name. Everybody loved John Riley Snyder because in the early days, he was the only person to have milk cows, so he was the only person who had milk for the town of Worland. He had a pasteurizer; he had a bottle washer –those were glass bottles back then.

We had 87 Guernsey, Jersey, and Brown Swiss cows whose milk was high in cream but very low in volume. We would milk them every morning and every night. Even as young kids, we were expected to be down at the milk barn every morning and every night. When I was three and four years old, four and five years old at the most, we'd be down there. And we'd have to go down every morning before we were in school and have to "help with milking," which meant for us little kids, meant feeding the cows and then helping clean the gutters after the

cows were out of the barn. This meant cleaning the poop out of the gutter and getting all of that pushed out the end of the barn and then their hired man would come in with a machine and pick it up the manure and put it over in a manure pile. After that ripened and seasoned, they would put it on the fields to help grow the crops.

But that was a very, very important part of my life: Learning responsibility –just getting up and getting down there. I remember one day when I didn't feel good, and I didn't go down to the barn. Suddenly there was a tap, tap, tap on my window and it was my uncle, Clifford Snyder, saying, "Jack, you must be down at the barn. You get down here right now." It was a sign of laziness and not wanting to do my share of the work. So, I went down and after I vomited in the middle of the barn. He said, "Now you can go back and go to bed. Now I understand why you're not down here". But there was always that response.

I think that was the way his kids were treated. He had four children; Bill was the oldest — Bill Snyder. And then Joanne, who married Harold Coe, and then Buddy Snyder and then Lloyd Snyder. And Lloyd is the only survivor of that family right now. He lives in Powell, Wyoming. And I do stay in touch with him from time to time. But that was really an important part of growing up, being out on the dairy farm.

### **Strong Impact of the Methodist Church and Rev. Goff**

One of the neat things, there was a guy that was their hired man. His name was Ralph Cornwell. And Ralph Cornwell was a tremendous, hired man! He headed up the milking every morning and every night and then he was out in the field, cultivating or planting sugar beets and doing those things that he was assigned to do. But Ralph tended to get drunk on Saturday night and he was allowed to go into town on Saturday and Uncle Clifford, who is very high in the Methodist Church, I mean, way up high, I mean, he was on the church board and worked with Reverend Goff making the Worland Methodist Church the finest church. It was the only church. This is what we were taught. The Methodist Church was the only church to go to and the only true church because of the minister and how they saw themselves. They did not care for Mormons, for Catholics, for Presbyterians, did not care anything for Baptists. Baptists tend to dunk people. We baptize with the water on the hand. There's just lots of things that we learned when we were growing up. They told us that the Methodist Church was the place to be.

Uncle Clifford would go in and get Ralph Cornwell out of the jail later that night, and he would say, "You go home and sleep because we gotta get out and do milking in the morning," and that was that. That's how good Ralph Cornwell was that Clifford Snyder would actually allow him to stay out there and work even though he tended to drink too much once in a while. Not every Saturday night

but at least once a month. That's my memory that Clifford would have to go in and get him.

### **Daisy Belle Snyder Ruled**

Daisy Belle Snyder was maybe five-foot, four, maybe five-foot, three. When Mother would go to work, she was in charge. I can remember when we would get in trouble, she would cut off a branch off the willow tree just off their back porch. And she'd say, "Stand there and you'll get your whipping and if you run from me or I have to chase you, you will get it twice as bad." We dropped our drawers and got whacked across the butt with a willow branch when we did things wrong. And, of course, I thought we were perfect, but she didn't think we were.

I'll give you this background. Daisy Belle grew up in High Point, North Carolina, and later moved to Missouri. She talked about the slaves being sold on the auction block when was a child. Her mother told her about this many times and attitude about Black people and "colored people" was that they're fine, as long as they stay in their place. They have a place, and they should not try to become white people because they are not white people. I knew what she was saying. And I didn't agree with it, but I didn't know why. That was Daisy Belle Snyder. And that was kind of an environment that we had around us.

She was a very important part of my life. She moved out of her bedroom into what they call the south bedroom of that house and my mother lived there and we lived in a little bedroom. They finally put a bathroom in the house. Before that, we had to go out to the milk house where they had a shower and a bathroom. They finally got a bathroom put in Grandma's house and a bathroom with a bathtub, not a shower. Showers came later. It was a big event for us to be able to live with her and live in security.

## **IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II: PARENTS DIVORCED**

When what I would call my sperm-donor father was allegedly off at war, as the story goes – and it was verified by my mother – he took off to be in the Merchant Marines down in the New Orleans area. I don't remember him very much because I didn't get to see very much of him. It was right after he was fired in Ten Sleep when he decided he needed to take off and go to the war effort. I remember him coming back once with a really neat uniform. It was a Navy uniform. And I remember him sitting in my grandma's house with Terry on his lap. There were pictures taken that I've seen of him sitting there. I did a complete study on him with DNA genealogy to try to find him to see if I had any half-brothers and half-sisters.

My mother divorced him after she received a letter back by general delivery that was not deliverable in New Orleans. It was sent back. Somehow it got back in our

mailbox at the post office. It was a letter to his girlfriend. It was that letter that my mother took to Judge Harkins and she said, "I want total custody of these children and I want to divorce immediately."

Judge Harkins read the letter, and he said "Josephine, I totally understand. We do have to search for him to see if he's interested in any custody." He allegedly had gone to the war, which he was not in.

He was an only child, and his name was James Roland Brown. I believe his dad worked on the railroad between Worland and Thermopolis. I don't know if it was farther up the line or not. But there are some good things that came out of that that I'll share later. But some very wonderful things happened because of his mother and her feeling more responsibility for us as grandchildren than he did as a father.

Mom was granted a divorce from him, and Mom had total custody of us, thanks to Judge Harkins. But it really built a rift between my mother and her brother, Clifford Snyder, because he did not believe in divorce. He didn't. And he really liked Jim Brown, because Jim worked out on the farm a little bit before he took off. Clifford always thought that Jim was just a very good person.

Of course, he didn't know anything about the letter. Those were closet type communications that you didn't share with your brother, or your, well, I don't think that my mom shared it with her mother either. It was just something between her and Judge Harkins. I found it in the lockbox after my mother had passed away. I got ahold of my stepdad and he said, "I want you to come down and be with you in Worland at the bank when we open up the lockbox," and that's where we found the letter that was returned back to a general delivery to my mom indicating that he had this girlfriend. Her name and her address were on the envelope, but it didn't have any return address. Somehow from the stamp on the envelope back then they knew where it was from. So, it came back to Worland, and somebody made the connection and the letter got back to mom.

## **IMPACT OF POST-WORLD WAR II: A POWERFULLY POSITIVE REMARRIAGE**

**Jack:** At that point, World War II was impacting the world and it impacted our family in a huge way. John Iverson returned from the service after being the lead mechanic on a P47 Fighter. That was a fighter squadron that was sent from the US to England and then from England to France and then to Belgium. He followed that squadron because he was the lead mechanic for one of those airplanes.

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He was a mechanic because that was the kind of work he did. He worked on cars. They took those people during the service and just said, "Okay, here's the difference between a car and an airplane - if they even went to that extent. You're going to repair and keep these engines working on the P47s". So that's what dad did. In the service, and at the end of the service, he came home to Sydney, Montana, he thought to the love of his life. Well, his six brothers and one sister took him aside and said, "John, you need to be aware that your girlfriend was not faithful to you."

Dad, immediately after hearing that, drove a fuel truck in and out of Sydney, Montana and Glendive and those places for about a year. He would see her occasionally around town, and he just couldn't handle it anymore in Sydney. He had a car and he had one of those trailers that looks like a teardrop – just a little tiny trailer that you could sleep in. And that's all. That's what he hooked at the end of his car on the hitch, and he headed toward Worland.

He said, "Why did you come to Worland? And he'd say, "Probably because I ran out of gas." He said, "It was time I had to get a job". He looked around. He knew how to frame houses and do some things like simple carpentry. He ran into a guy by the name of Martin Martinson in Worland. And he said to him, "I need a job." "What can you do?" "I can build garages." "Certainly, if you can build a garage, you can build a house. It's just a matter of adding more rooms and making sure everything is structurally sound."

One of his first jobs in Worland was for Martin Martinson. It was building a garage for Bonnie Bailey's family. She's not known as Bonnie Bailey any longer, [Bonnie Laine Bailey DeFreece] It was a metal garage right by their house. Do you remember the German family who lived right across from the Bailey's? [Dr. Burkenkamp] and then the Lutheran church was across the street on Grace Avenue? Dad built the garage and then he got on with the Holly Sugar Company during the beet harvest campaign. But it was not a year-round job, so he continued to work during the summertime for Martin Martinson.

### **How John Met Josephine**

Martin Martinson was given a job of building a house for my mother at 515 Obie Sue Ave, right next to the Chastain's on one side. The good-looking Danish guy obviously showed some interest in Mom because he kept calling her up and saying, "You know, I'm just a working man, but I've got some ideas how we can make your house look even neater. Instead of having square doorways let's round them. And to carry that theme through where you have the telephone, we'll have a little inset into the wall with a little rounded top to that inset," and she thought it was neat and the more they talked, the more they started liking each other and, and John Iverson then proposed to her. They could not get married in Worland because of the Methodist Church. They just would not marry divorcees. So, they got married by a minister in Basin, WY.

My brother and sister and I were still out at my grandma's house when they got married because the house wasn't quite finished. They got married in Basin and went up to the Big Horn's to the cabin which was up by Deer Haven. It's the old Snyder cabin. I don't know if you remember Sissy McKean's cabin [a very popular girl a few years old] and Hampton's cabin and Snyder's cabin. It was the Snyder cabin. But my mother had half interest in that cabin as time passed. Anyhow, that's where they went for their honeymoon. And his brother came down and visited him. There were two brothers who thought it was neat that dad had gotten married. They didn't come to the wedding. That was a very private thing, again, just between the minister, my mom and my dad-to-be, my stepfather.

When Dad and Mom came back to Worland, he finished the house and we moved into town. And that was my first moving into town experience.

### **The Middle Child > The Introvert Between Two Extroverts, including a Twin**

Because I was born on December 16, 1941, nine days after Pearl Harbor was bombed, I always told my twin sister that the only reason you're alive is that mother got excited that a bomb had been dropped and World War II had begun, and you were finally born and you're the younger of the two of us, so I'm the middle kid.

I think I acted as a middle kid over the years. I was the peacemaker in the family. And I wanted to always have peace and tranquility in the family and that's who I was – the introvert in the family. Terry was the extrovert, no doubt about it. Judy was an extroverted person. I was not. I was very much an introvert during my growing up years, and I had to learn lessons the hard way sometimes, because I did not tell my parents what I was doing. That would bring me home late from my paper route. And I'll get to that in a minute.

### **HIGHLY UNUSUAL FOR THE ERA: MOTHER EARNED MORE THAN FATHER**

But getting back to how World War II impacted our family because we gained a father. And he was just an extraordinary, extraordinary quiet man, very quiet. But when he talked, you wanted to listen, because it was always worthwhile to hear what he was saying. He worked hard. He never made more money than my mother. My mother always made more money than he did. He didn't talk about it, but I do believe it bothered him. I could tell that he wanted to have extra jobs even after he went to work at the factory full-time even during the summertime. He would want to have extra jobs in town just to make more money. I think it was a thing with him that he wanted to make more money than Mom and it wasn't going to happen.

My mother was the office manager for PMA, the Production Management Association. It was the first government program for farmers way back when they just started farm programs for sugar beet raisers, for cattle, sheep, for the wool program. They had different programs that supported farmers and ranchers and she was just an employee. I think her boss was Terrell Gibbons during that time, and he was the manager in the office. Then he became a field guy for Holly Sugar, going out trying to get farmers to put more of their land into sugar beet acreage. Mom then took over the office, and it was renamed Agricultural Stabilization Conservation Service Office, the ASCS office. She was the first woman manager of a government office like that in the nation. And she worked hard at it, very hard at it.

I know that she and her brother didn't get along too well from time to time. But giving credit where credit was due, I think Clifford Snyder helped her get that job. You had to have an advocate somewhere as a woman to get jobs like that. You know, you were either a schoolteacher, a nurse, or a homemaker. And that was kind of it back then for women. But she got into that job, and she did very, very well.

## **LIFE IN WORLAND: BASEMENT BEDROOMS AND APARTMENTS**

We moved to town in 1949. We lived at 515 Obie Sue Avenue. My dad said, "Okay. We have this house payment to make, I'm going to finish the basement and turn it into an apartment so we can rent it to help make the house payment." That apartment was first rented to Harold Coe's parents, and Harold Coe married Joanne Snyder, my cousin. Harold was the head salesman at the Buick garage. I think even a manager at the Buick garage later in life; he was such a neat guy, and his parents were fabulous people.

My brother and I lived in that basement over in the corner and we had sliding doors that kind of separated us from the apartment. We had to use the bathroom downstairs – their bathroom – and they knew that. We had to be in and out of there by a certain time so that they could have it the rest of the day so they would have access to that bathroom. So that's where Terry and I grew up. We had bunk beds initially, and then the big thing was trundle beds. Those are the beds we had back then Terry always had the top one and I had the bottom one because he could jump down on top of me, and we would wrestle.

But that was how my dad was able to afford things and I think he looked at his contribution to the family was that he had finished the basement off. So that income from the apartment was looked at as Dad's contribution to the income of the family and made him feel really, really positive about living with Josephine Iverson, the office manager for ASCS office. Their final office was down on Big Horn Avenue across from the courthouse. There was a series of offices there and



that's the last location for the ASCS office that she worked in. We would stop there on the way home from school and check in. We had to do that on the way home from school. That was part of the ritual or the routine for us.

## **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: MRS DYER RESCUED A SHY BOY FROM HUMILIATION**

**Jack:** Getting to the school part of my life where I have very, very positive memories of Mrs. Dyer. I don't know if either of you remember Mrs. Dyer.

**Jack:** She was my second-grade teacher. I believe the Watson Building was the only elementary school we had back then. I can remember being bused into school and the kids out in the country did not get a kindergarten experience. Our first day of school was first grade. So, I think it was about the second or third day. And it was in the fall, and it happened to be a cold day. And it was rainy, and the merry-go-round next to that school had been used over the years and had developed a divot in the ground where we would run and push the merry-go-round. So, there was a ditch around the merry-go-round and that ditch had water in it, but nobody worried about it. You'd just push it really quick and jump on it from outside that ditch and you got on. That would be our activity before we'd go into school when the bell rang.

And that morning, I arrived at school, and I got on the merry-go-round, but I fell in that water. Now this is a kid that grew up with long johns on and that's with the flap door in the back. My older Terry and I each had one pair of bib overalls. Everybody was poor back then. So that was no big thing. But we had a new pair of overalls with bibs that we were given to go to school. And I always wore Terry's hand-me-downs for shirts. I had what I had on, and I didn't have another change of clothes that I could call to get. Nobody could get a hold of my mother. So, Mrs. Dyer took me in, and she said, "Jack, I'm going to have you sit on the heater."

There were heaters that were right next to the window, a kind of a bench type heater and a fan, which would warm the room. She said, "I'll turn up the thermostat, turn up the heater, (I think it was just a knob back then to get the heat going) so that you will dry out by noon time and you can keep your clothes on because I know that would embarrass you." She was just fabulous. Just fabulous. Fabulous. And I remember her for taking care of me more than anything that she taught me. Mrs. Dyer was just an extraordinary person.

She became a really unusual part of my life. Because when I was superintendent of schools in Cheyenne, Wyoming, we hosted the Wyoming Education Association convention in Cheyenne. And as the host superintendent, I was asked to come and give the opening address at that convention. They were honoring Mrs. Dyer as part of the legendary teachers in Worland schools. She

was in her 90's at that point. She had to be. This little old lady was out in the audience, and I thought her face remained unchanged to me. I began telling everyone about that story and began crying while giving that story. I had her stand up and went down to the audience and hugged her again. Because she was the person that took care of a very quiet, introverted, very self-conscious little boy.

Mrs. Dyer was a very, very important part of my life. And that was what I remember most about my elementary school. And as I proceeded in elementary school, my vision became worse. I couldn't see. I had to sit up in the front row in order to see the blackboards. I can remember in junior high, and I cannot remember the name of the teacher. But I do remember her. I can remember the teacher saying, "Jack, you're having to get your nose so close to the board to be able to read what I'm doing. There's something wrong with your eyesight." So, they referred me for glasses. I got my first pair of glasses, and I could see the world. It was just a fabulous experience to be able to see and be able to learn and not have to ask for special accommodation to get up and move to the front of the room or go all the way to the board and put my nose on the chalkboard in order to read it. That was a big event. And that teacher was very important to me.

When the Southside School opened, our classes were moved to the new school. My memories of my 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Mrs. Foster, were not the best. We had the type of desks that had a lid that you lifted up and you put your books and stuff inside and you, also, had an inkwell on one side. Sometimes we had the lid up so we could visit back and forth without her seeing us.

I might have been doing that – who knows, I probably was, but it was towards the end of the year, but she came by and yelled at me. She had her hand on the metal part of the desk that had a wooden top which was up, and I just tipped it so it would come down, on top of her hand. The last three days of school, she had a mitt that she wore on her hand. And she then wrote me up as a belligerent child who did not learn my prefixes or my suffixes. So, I had to go to summer school. This was the biggest embarrassment of all. if you had to go to summer school, you are a dummy.

## **JUNIOR HIGH: 1954-1956 > STARTED WITH SHAME OF SUMMER SCHOOL**

**Jack:** I had to go to summer school at the new junior high school and I'll never forget the teacher there. She just said, "Jack, I know you. I live close to you." It was Mrs. Young.

**Joanne:** Yes, Charlotte Young.

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**Jack:** Charlotte Young, and she said, “Jack, as soon as you learn your prefixes and your suffixes, you're done with summer school.” And in three days, I was done with summer school. She said, “Now you can go and play in the community and have a wonderful summer.” She said, “You really did not need to be here. But, for some reason, there was a deficiency in your program, and you were recommended for summer school.”

I was very embarrassed about that, because Judy didn't have to go to summer school. Terry didn't have to go to summer school. None of the Snyders had to go. None of my friends had to go to summer school. I had to go to summer school. And there were a couple of people that were in summer school that really did struggle with learning for whatever reason. That was a big event. Mrs. Young was a very important person in my junior high as it turned out she taught English during the summer,

In junior high, the teacher that probably had the greatest impact for me was Hilda Meyer. She was eight-foot tall and weighed 200 pounds and was a weightlifter, I swear she was a big, tall gal. And she had an assignment every year for her 7th grade English classes; We were to read *Evangeline*, memorize the first and last stanzas of the poem and then recite them in front of the class. *Evangeline* was one of the extra poems that we had to memorize for Hilda Meyers on top of the regular curriculum.

Anybody who could recite the first stanza of *Evangeline*, got to pick your time to recite, unless you were at the tail end of the school year, and then she would just call on you. And I certainly did not want to wait until the end of the school year. *Evangeline* by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was just a fabulous poem, but it was one that was very difficult to read. He was a poet who talked about things that I just didn't understand, but I memorized well enough to be able to stand by my desk and recite the first and last stanzas of *Evangeline*.

I remember Hilda Myers. If anybody was not paying attention and disrespecting the student making the recitation, she would take an eraser and throw it at them. I don't know if any of you were in her class, but she did that. If she had a book handy, she'd throw the book and she would seem to be a pretty good aim with her throwing. Sometimes it went to the back of the classroom. She taught us respect and how to stand and deliver.

When Mrs. Meyers retired, she went to the Wyoming Industrial Institute [south of Worland] and taught out there. I always thought if anybody could keep those kids on task, it would be Hilda Meyers. I was scared of her, but I respected her. I really liked her very direct and over-communication with what we had to do, and she had to over-communicate with some of us, certainly, but she was a fantastic person.

## **AFTER-SCHOOL JOBS: DELIVERING NEWSPAPERS**

During junior high school, I had a paper route and I got to know the town that way because living on Obie Sue Avenue wasn't the beginning and the end of the town. Worland had so many things in it. I delivered the *Denver Post* and I think the *Casper Star-Tribune*. We picked up our papers from Mr. Glass, who lived on Grace Avenue, then we delivered them around town. That was in my junior high years. My dad always believed that idle hands would do the work of the devil. So, you had to have a job 24/7 all year and that was just part of it. After school you delivered papers. So, that's what Terry and I did. And we did that until we were old enough to do some other things – there were a lot of after school jobs for this guy and for my brother as well.

## **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: JACK WAS AN “APE” AND “A TEA DRINKER”**

In junior high, my folks would not let me play football because I had knee problems. I grew too fast, and my knees had the little tendon pocket right below the kneecap. I could not play football until high school. Everybody in Worland wanted to be on the football team and they were in the junior high program. They knew a lot about football. You know Dick Yingling, Jim Storer, and Grant Ujifusa, all of those were fantastic players. And Loreny Laird, I mean, those are fantastic football players who played all during junior high. So, my folks finally said, “Okay, the doctor said you can play football.”

That's when Joe Kinlein was the coach and a math teacher at Worland High School. I was so excited that I could play, so I went over to Joe Kinlein's house. He lived a couple of streets over from Obie Sue Avenue. I told him, “I'm a big kid, I weigh 180 pounds, and I'm going to be good on your football team”. He said, “We'll give you every opportunity to grow and see what you can do.”

Well, I got into the locker room. And back then you had hip pads that came in three pieces, one for each cheek, and then one to protect your tailbone. And there was a strap around the front. I didn't know how to put on hip pads. It was Dick Yingling who took me aside and said, “Jack, you got it on backwards. You don't protect what you got in front; you protect what you've got in the back. And you wear your jock strap in front.” And I said, “What's a jock strap” and he showed me, so I went out and got a jock strap. They taught me how to get myself dressed up for football. And that's when they just said, “Iverson, we don't know what you can do. But we're going to have you start out playing guard. And that was really Loreny Laird's position. And then they said, “No, we don't need you there. Loren is doing a very good job. So, we're going to have you play offensive tackle and defensive end.”

That's what the positions were that I learned, and I had to learn them from scratch. I had to have a lot of coaching after school and Joe Kinlein did that. We did not have a very successful year, and that's when they brought in Wimp Hewgley. He married a girl from Thermopolis and that's what interested him in the Big Horn Basin. He liked the tradition of Worland High School football, winning all those state championships. And we wanted to get back to winning those again.

### **How the Class of '60 Ended Up State Champs, Again**

My cousin Lloyd Snyder's dad – Uncle Clifford – was on the school board, and he was instrumental in removing Joe Kinlein as the head coach. He wanted Lloyd to have a better coach than that. His son, Buddy, had been on Carl Selmer's teams that won the state championships every year he was in high school. In fact, Carl Selmer's team took the state championship even when Buddy — and Terry, who didn't play football — were in the eighth grade. Carl Selmer started coaching in Worland in 1948, when we started first grade. From the time we were in the fifth grade, Worland never lost a state championship until our sophomore year in high school. We lost after Carl Selmer left Worland to go to the University of Nebraska as an assistant coach. I can remember how proud we were — we felt like we were unbeatable. It was really neat how academic teachers helped with the athletic programs by selling tickets, taking photos from the sidelines to go to the Daily News or the school annual.

Anyway, that's how we ended up with Wimp Hewgley. Wimp was just an outstanding teacher of basics. He would run us through all of them day after day after day after day. And then at the end just before the game, he'd say, "Here are the fifteen plays that we will run during the game. Make sure you go home and have them memorized because those are the ones that you've got to know and know what your responsibilities are!"

It took him just one year to get us in shape to win the state championship. Football was important to me because I wanted physical competition and I was big enough to be successful at it. My brother Terry was not big enough to play football – in fact, he went out for football but was so skinny that the coaches told him they were afraid he'd get hurt. So, he was into debate and into doing panel discussions and school plays and stuff like that. And back then, Reverend Cook who was the minister at the Episcopal Church, was their debate coach. Reverend Cook was just an outstanding debate coach. Because of that, his debate squads would win everything. The speech meets were usually held at Northwest Community College in Powell. They would win there and then get to go to the University of Wyoming for the state finals in speech and debate.

Football was as important to me as was being on the debate squad. That's where I ran into Grant. He was the quarterback and the smartest guy that went to school with us. Wimp said, "I want the smartest guy in Worland High School to

be the quarterback. Because this is a very, very complicated offense that we're running. It's not that he has to be big because he's never going to carry the ball, but he's got to pass short passes and he's got to be able to hand it off to the right person."

We had what we call the triple-auction option backfield and Grant will hand it off to various people on the defensive line. My job was to get to the opposing team's quarterback. I had to learn a little bit of offense but mostly defense and they ran us in and out. I relieved Jim Storer when he would get tired or if we wanted to run Dick Yingling as a running back for one play because he was so big and so athletic. I would take his spot on the offensive line.

Football was important, but I was not really an outstanding player. I just loved being part of the group though. I enjoyed traveling and getting outside of Worland and going to Riverton, going to Lander, going to Thermopolis. Thermopolis was usually our last game of the season.

I remember some of our pepsters would go down to Thermopolis and burn a "W" in their football field and they would come up and burn a "T" in our football field when they came to Worland. And those were some of the neat things with the football program.

### **Speech, Debate, Plays and Opera at Miss Stuka's**

I enjoyed speech and debate, and I enjoyed Nellie Mae Stuka. Nellie Mae was probably the most influential high school teacher in my life. And she really served two purposes in my life. She was a surrogate mother for all intents and purposes. When I would come home from college, that's the first person I went to see, Nellie Mae Stuka. "When are you going to be out of school? I'll meet you," I'd ask. That's part of the reason how I got to know classical music. Nellie Mae had a group of about four of us come to her apartment and that was in McClellan's house on Culbertson Avenue.

Nellie Mae rented the apartment upstairs. She had a neat record player that had two speakers off to the side, and we would listen to opera. That's where I first heard the operas composed by Verdi. My favorite opera was Aida composed in 1891. She would have us sit down and read the story beforehand and then we would listen to it. It would be in a foreign language, obviously, but that didn't matter because it translated into English below the Italian written script, The Libretto. She said, "enjoy the music." Read the story before so you will know what's going on. And then you tell me what you think of it and why you felt the way you did about Aida or the other great operas.

I learned to love opera because of that. And later when I married this gal who was an opera singer, opera became an important part of what I took to the relationship with Connie because she was an outstanding opera singer. She had

a dramatic soprano voice that was unbelievably good. This little girl from Guernsey, Wyoming.

In Worland High School, I also was an actor in the plays. Rick Williams used to say, "Why are you getting all the parts in the play?" I think a lot of it had to do with who Nellie Mae Stuka wanted to work with; Rick was sometimes pretty overbearing. He was a very extroverted individual, very extroverted; in fact, he was so extroverted that in his last couple years of life, he would call up and say, "Jack, I still need to know why I didn't get into the play – Why wasn't I the lead in *The Pink*?" Remember that play we put on? I played the part of the boxer. Rick kept saying, "I could have been a boxer. I could have gotten in shape. I could have played that part. And she knew it. And she knew I was the better actor." I truly respected Rick and his talents. He was an extraordinary person!

Well, I don't know why Nellie Mae did what she did. But I remember going into her English classroom during noon because I had to have a quiet place to study and to get my work done so that I could participate in extracurricular activities. I would go into her classroom during lunch hour, right after I grabbed my sack lunch. I would sit in the back of the room while she was up front grading papers or doing whatever she thought was necessary. I hardly ever talked to her. But she had just taken an interest in Jack Iverson. I had the lead in most of the school plays and I really liked it.

My sister Judy was an actress who was unbelievable. She was a gal who took on the really tough roles. There was an all-girls play that we had. Nellie Mae had me as the assistant director of that all-girls play, and that was exciting. She said, "I need to teach you how to direct plays." And she said, "I'll sit back and watch you do this." That was in my senior year. And Judy was in that play. I think it was a story about seven women. I can't remember the name of the play. But that was an exciting moment for me directing that play.

## **HIGH SCHOOL: OLDER BROTHER & PALS MADE THE "TEA DRINKERS" TO RIVAL THE "APES"**

**Joanne:** Jack, we were blessed to have an older sibling while we were in high school. Your brother, Terry, was the same age as my sister, Marilyn. Because of them, we were aware of the different groups and kids and things that were going on in high school. I believe Terry was involved in two rival groups called the apes and tea drinkers. Can you tell us about these groups and how that came about?

**Jack:** I've done a lot of thinking about that because of our earlier conversations. We were in the eighth grade when all of this happened. Terry was very active in Tea Drinkers and Buddy Snyder, our cousin, and his athlete friends were in what

## The War Babies of Worland: Oral Histories from the Class of 1960

the tea drinkers called the ape group. They just thought that the athletes were getting all of the attention, and they were. Their football team was fantastic. Terry was too small to play, and Bill Howard didn't want to play, could not do it or had no interest in it – he went on to the Navy Academy. Nor did Morgan Hicks. Hicks was really an oddball type guy who did some pretty strange things in high school.

Anyhow, those three had this kind of rivalry going on between the tea drinkers who were the people in speech and debate and school plays and under Nellie Mae Stuka and Reverend Cooks' tutelage The athletes were defined by their athletic coats and letter-sweaters. The tea drinkers didn't have anything like that.

They decided that they were just as important to the school as the athletes were, so they set themselves up as the tea drinkers. They would go to Nellie Mae Stuka's place, and she would make a big pot of tea. They would sit around and drink tea and listen to music. That was before my group went up to her place to listen to the opera. So that's how the tea drinker name was dubbed on those people.

There was a rivalry going on even in school and in classes where Terry and his group and the athletes' butted heads from time to time. You know, if you weren't an athlete in high school, back when Carl Selmer was the winningest coach in the history of high school football in Wyoming, you weren't too important.

There was a night I've never forgotten. It was really the day after that I remember. So, I'm going to share it with you from my perspective.

I came home from school and Terry was home and I said, "What are you doing home, Terry?" He said, "I got suspended." And I said, "Why were you suspended?" I found out on the front page of the paper, the Northern Wyoming Daily News, because they had a picture of the sign hanging down over the front door of the high school. It said, "Ape Headquarters," and down in the corner, "By Tea Drinker Sign Company." The piece of plywood, my memory is, was about four-by-six or three- by-six. They had snuck up on the building and hoisted the sign up there maybe three nights before and hid it right over the main office for the principal, Ralph Wellman and assistant principal, Charlie Roberts.

The night before a Friday home football game, they dropped the sign over the edge of the building, down over the front door. They had just the right amount of rope that they could hang it on something that was attached to the building permanently. When Ralph Wellman came in, he just walked in underneath it. He didn't look up. Nobody hardly ever looked up. Finally, Charlie Roberts, the assistant principal, came in and said to Mr. Wellman, "Did you see what's up there?" So, they went out and looked and the sign said, "Ape Headquarters". They were sure that an athlete had done this. So, they called in Buddy Snyder, and they called in. Oh, who else?



**Joanne:** Scott Johnson

**Jack:** Scott Johnson. Oh, yeah, there were about fifteen of them that they called in, one at a time.

**Joanne:** The Bashford twins?

**Jack:** The Bashford twins, yes. And they said you guys are the suspects and until we find out who did it, we're calling off the football game tonight. When the tea drinkers found out that the punishment would be that the athletes could not play their game, they just said, "No, no, no, we've got to 'fess up." So, they went down to the office as a group. There were three or four of them that were involved in this, and they 'fessed up. The principals said, "No, no, you couldn't have done it." They were incensed. "We did it." "How did you do it?" Well, this is how we did it". And they traced it all back and it was determined that "Yes, yes, they could have done it". And they admitted to doing it. At that point, Terry was sent home and the football team was able to play the game on Friday night.

Because they 'fessed up, they were only suspended for that one day. Terry didn't feel too bad about it. He didn't get into too much trouble for it, but my folks would not even allow him to go to Foodland [grocery store] to go to work that day. (He worked when he could as a carry- out boy and as a cashier during his junior and senior year.)

There was a respect between the two groups that they would not cause each other trouble. But there was also this belief on the part of the tea drinkers that they were an important part of the school, and they wanted people to know that. After that event, a lot of people knew that they were around and who they were, and not in real positive terms back then. But pretty darn positive because they were the outstanding members of the speech and debate team. Yes, it was not a violent relationship, it was a good relationship.

So that's the tea drinkers.

**Joanne:** What a wonderful memory. I think that both (the athletes and debate kids) became more respectful of each other, because the tea drinkers confessed. And you're right, the debaters just did not get accolades like the athletes. Well, they still didn't when I was teaching at Riverton High School.

**Jack:** Yes, the Worland athletes were getting state competition trophies and the speech and debate team were getting their state trophies. But they weren't put in the same trophy cabinet with the athletes' trophies. They finally were included by the time I got there. The speech and debate trophies finally were placed in the one and only trophy case that we had at the school. So yes, they made a difference!

## IMPACT OF THE VIETNAM WAR

**Joanne:** Jack, after we made it through high school and graduated, the Vietnam conflict came to light. Did this have any effect on you or your family?

**Jack:** It was on my dad's side, my adoptive dad side. My dad's brother, Dan Iverson, and his son Steven were in Vietnam. He was a patrol leader. I visited with him several times during his tour in Vietnam because I really did a lot of research on Vietnam. I wanted to know a lot about the war that I was not a part of. I was not selected to go because I had an educational deferment. I don't know how people were selected to go but back then, but I got the feeling that the local draft board looked at last names and who was doing what. If you were going to college, you didn't have to go to the service. If you couldn't afford to go to college, you were available. Jim Heron, I know, went to Vietnam as an enlisted person. I'm trying to think of the classmate who was one year ahead of us, whose remains were found last year. (2022)

**Joanne:** Ray Krogman. He graduated from the Air Force Academy.

**Jack:** Ray Krogman, yes. He was brought back from Vietnam, which spurred me again to do more and more research on Vietnam. But I spent a lot of time visiting with my cousin, Steven Iverson, and we still talk from time to time about his time over there and what it was like. And he said, probably his greatest concern was that he had to pick out a leader from his patrol members who were not high on marijuana. There were a lot of drugs available over there. And he said, "I had to make sure that they could pass a very simple cognitive test and convinced me they were not on drugs." It was a very unpopular war. There were a lot of drugs. And he said he just couldn't have somebody protecting your backside who was high on drugs. Patrol Leaders sometimes were murdered by people within the patrol because they didn't want to go into the areas of Vietnam that were being patrolled by the Viet Cong.

## UNIVERSITY: BIOLOGICAL GRANDMOTHER HELPED MAKE POSSIBLE

**Jack:** I thought my dad was not excited about anybody going to Vietnam. He just didn't feel that it was a war that should have been fought. My dad was very quiet about it because he was a very quiet person. Right after high school, he said, "Tell me where you want to go to college." I said, "Well, you were from Montana, so I want to go to the University of Montana at Missoula." And he said, "Fine."

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I skipped over this about my maternal dad, James Rowland Brown. His mother remarried after her husband died. She married a very rich farmer out in California who grew black-eyed peas and cotton in a very, very fertile area of California. He was very wealthy. About a year before she died, when she knew she was ill, she set up a trust fund for Judy, Terry and me to go to college. It was a small amount, like \$5,000 to \$6,000. But that grew to about \$7,000 by the time we graduated from high school. That gave us a nest egg to go to college. Otherwise, there was a question whether or not we'd ever be able to go to college. So, I told my dad, "I want to go to college, and I've been saving all the money that I got from delivering papers and working at Foodland."

Working at Foodland is another one of those stories that I'll cover here in a minute, because it was such an important part of my life. My dad said, "Okay, we're going to put you on a bus here in Worland, and you're going to the University of Montana, Missoula. I did have to change buses in Billings, MT, with the next stop being Missoula. I'd never been to Missoula, Montana in my life. The only place in Montana I had been was my dad's place in Sydney, Montana where most of his siblings lived. They were all military people. One was a pilot; one was a tank driver who fought against Rommel in North Africa. Another one was a part of the Northern Defense Command in Alaska against the Japanese. Several of them were in the army.

I went up to Montana, all alone, very much alone. Again, an introvert takes a little time to get to know people. I had a roommate who smoked, which bothered me a great deal. I couldn't study in a room with smoke. I would go to the library all the time to get my work done. And I was burning up my trust fund pretty fast. So, after two quarters, I just said, "No, I can't do this any longer. I'm going to quit this college and transfer to the University of Wyoming."

So, my dad said, "I have a sister who lives in Grand Coulee Dam, Washington just north of Spokane. I don't know if you've ever been to Grand Coulee Dam, but it's a beautiful, beautiful dam. They have a motel there, and they will help you get a job working for the government. You can make that money back and put it back into your trust fund by working up there if you're willing to do that."

He had coordinated with his sister and brother-in-law to do that. That job was an important part of my life. And, if the truth be known, not coming back to Worland after being in the University of Montana, on the quarter system, I lost a lot of credits – only two credits transferred – but this probably kept me out of Vietnam. I was "warehoused, out of sight." The Worland draft board had never received a record that I was not still going to school at University of Montana, Missoula during that time. I came back home to Worland and went to work at the Cold Springs Lumber Co. delivering lumber to construction sites in the Worland, Thermopolis, Basin area. In the fall I went down to Laramie to the University of Wyoming.

## **AFTER-SCHOOL HIGH SCHOOL JOBS: MEAT CUTTER**

Let me go back and just cover working in a grocery store in high school. After school and during the summers, I worked for Alex Schlothauer, a Volga-German who was five when he immigrated from Kraft, Russia. His wonderful family – Jack, Sally, Judy, and David were just tremendous friends of mine. I befriended them through the store. I was a sacker boy, and I would stock shelves, and I was just bored. And finally, Alex came up to me and said, “Would you like to learn how to be a meat cutter?” I said, “Oh, yeah, yeah, that's the exciting part where you're behind a meat case, and you cut cuts of meat for people, and you make them happy. And they get to help pick out the cut of meat that they're going to buy for the day.”

Back there in the meat department was Lloyd LaFleur. I don't know if you remember Lloyd LaFleur, he was a tremendous baseball player, and he married Sally Schlothauer. Lloyd taught me how to cut out meat and so did Alex – the seventh rib down on half a beef, that's where you cut off the quarters and you hang them up in a big walk-in cooler. Triangle Packing would drop off however many front quarters and hind quarters that Alex had ordered, and they would be brought in on a rail. I would lift them off the rail, bring them in and put them on a meat cutting block and begin breaking them down further with the help of a 220-watt bandsaw. That was my main job. You did a lot of that in the back room where people wouldn't see the messy part of it.

Lloyd would say, “You stay back there and break down stuff until you're good enough to be out front, and you don't know how to talk to customers anyhow, Jack.” One time, after I had been working back there as a meat cutter for over a year, Lloyd looked at me and he said, “It's time to break you in to go out front.” And he said, “You have to kind of talk to your customers and promote the best cut of the day and what you've got a lot of and what's on sale.” I remember he was listening to me – I think he was in the backroom, and they had these flapping doors between the meat market and the back room where we broke down the beef. And Mrs. — Oh gosh, they ran a plumbing outfit—

**Joanne:** Was it Denny Plumbing?

**Jack:** I believe it was. A lady came in and asked, “Do you have any round steaks”? And I said, “Absolutely.” And I took the round steak out and I showed it. You had to pull it out, put it on your hand, of course pulling the tissue paper down first, and you held it up like this. And I said, “Mrs. Young, this is a perfect, perfect round steak. In fact, you can roll it all the way home.”

And I heard this giggle, giggle, giggle. She was giggling, and she said, “That's good enough for me.” She said, “I'd like to have one and a half of those steaks.”

At that point, Lloyd LaFleur was laughing in the backroom. He said, "You're going to do fine Jack. You related it to the cut of meat, and you were telling her what the cut of the day was, and it was on sale and it's what she wanted. And you gave her a really good cut." There was a difference between the good round steaks and the ones that had too much gristle and fat in them. It took me a while to figure all of that out.

But they taught me how to be a meat cutter and believe it or not, being a meat cutter helped me get through college. I became a meat cutter at Green's Grocery when I was at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. It was about five or six blocks from the campus, and I would drive my little car down to Green's Grocery and go to work every afternoon as a meat cutter and I'd work the weekends. That job helped me get through college – again, trying to get through college without any debt. That was the goal. And that trust fund helped a great deal that saved us and Grandma Stenslen, that's just coming to me now. Her married name to this guy, Al Stenslen, was my adoptive grandfather on my dad's side— the Brown side.

He called himself that – he'd never really adopted anybody, but he fell in love with my grandma and when she died, Al Stenslen, was the one who delivered the checks for each of the trust funds. And he came with a roaster for my mother. That was the favorite roaster that his wife, my grandmother on the Brown side had. And he wanted us to have that. And then he found out other things that we needed. And we would, occasionally, have letters from him saying I want to give you another \$1,000 to help you out with your college. I want to give you stuff for your family, so you can have more food.

## **FAMILY ACTIVITIES: GETTING YOUR DEER WAS ESSENTIAL, NOT A SPORT**

As we went through high school, we didn't have a lot of beef. We went up and shot deer. We shot many, many deer, two or three deer a year. And if we didn't have a good deer season, we would get a front quarter from the locker plant. Remember the locker plant not too far from where we lived?

Dad would say we're going to have one meal of beef every week, and the rest of the time, we'll eat venison. It was important that we got the venison. When Dad came back from the war, he had a German Mauser rifle that he had gotten off a German soldier that was killed. He brought it home – they were allowed to bring those guns home from the war. That was our only gun, and it kicked like hell. He didn't have a pad to protect his shoulder when he shot that long-range rifle. I don't know what caliber it was probably around a .30-06 caliber. I remember him up in the Ten Sleep Canyon area. He would look over and you'd see that deer way

down there, barely. He didn't have a scope; it was just an open sight. And he was able to kill it in two shots.

We were the happiest people in the world as we ran down to the deer, carrying the knives and stuff so we could gut it out in the field. And then we would drag it out. Sometimes we had to cut it in half and drag a half at a time with the hide on – we'd split the hide down the back – and drag it out. But we knew we had meat for winter. It was my brother who went hunting with one of the Evans' families. They would take Terry up to go hunting separately and they would always make sure that he had a deer to come home, even though he didn't shoot it. But they knew that we needed to have meat in the freezer.

**Joanne:** Slippery Evans was just a little ahead of us. They called him Slippery. Was that it?

**Jack:** That could be it, yes.

## **FARM LIFE IN WORLAND: BARTERING WITH MILK**

**Jack:** You know that was important to us, having enough food. We had lived out at Grandma's house on the farm. When we moved to town in 1949, that built a barrier between the Iverson's and the Snyder's, because we left the farm, and we were able to survive without being on the farm. But Clifford Snyder was a very generous person. And if anybody was short of money and needed milk, he would give them milk.

He would barter with his milk. Kathleen Albert's parents grew strawberries. They had a strawberry patch out by their log house south of Worland. That's how her dad would pay for milk during the strawberry season. Clifford Snyder and his dad were very, very generous people.

When Meadow Gold came in finally, not too far from the Washakie Hotel back on a side street there, that's when the Snyder family began to do no more deliveries, no more bottle washing. We just pasteurized the milk and pulled the cream off and sold the cream and the milk to Meadow Gold. That was a transition point for our whole family and how Clifford and Joanne and that whole family worked after I left the farm.

## **IMPACT OF TEACHERS INSPIRED A FUTURE EDUCATOR**

**Joanne:** Jack, what drew you to education?

**Jack:** I would have to say people like Irene White. When she taught English, you knew that you were completing the freshman year in college English because

she was such an extraordinary teacher. Nellie Mae Stuka certainly was a key and she encouraged me to go to college. I think the Snyder family. Lloyd going to college was part of it and I did not want to be left out as a person who couldn't afford to go to college. Buddy going to college. That was important. Joanne went to a business college. That's about as far as she went. Bill stayed home and took care of the dairy. He inherited all the dairy farm. Bill carried on with the business and the sugar beet business and all of that after his dad died. He then inherited that.

But, as you know, it was just kind of expected to go on to college and get your education and that had to do with the teachers, Joanne. They were extraordinary teachers. I remember Mac McDonald standing up in front and he'd say, "Mr. Iverson, you will come to the board, and you will solve this problem." You knew that problem related directly back to the assignment you had the night before. He would know if you did your assignments. He didn't want to do a lot of grading of papers, so he would have you stand and perform. And that was it. That was an important part of also leaving an imprint.

I thought Joe Kinlein was an excellent teacher as well. I really liked Joe Kinlein a lot. The only bad thing about him for the Snyder family was he was Catholic. But he married a Mormon, and he then joined the Mormon Church. I just thought he was a very, very special person. The teachers we had in Worland were what guided me into the field.

## **LOOKING BACK: WHAT DO YOU WISH WE KNEW THEN?**

**Joanne:** Jack, looking back at everything that you've talked about and all your experiences, what do you wish that we had known back then, that we know now. How would that have changed things?

**Jack:** I wish I would have had a greater appreciation for the Japanese who were in our community.

**Cathy:** We were lucky — we had several Japanese in our class — Tom Fujikawa, Mickey Tanaka, Decker Nomura, Grant Ujifusa and his cousin, Margaret. They were one of various cultures that enriched our lives. Interesting, isn't it, that no one in our class had spent the war in the Heart Mountain Internment Camp up between Powell and Cody — in fact, most of us hadn't heard of it back then, even Tom Fujikawa.

**Jack:** A few of the Japanese families had little truck farms, like Tommy Fujikawa's. While I was at Foodland, they would come in with their vegetables. They were tenant farmers back then and didn't have their own land. They were given a little bit of ground to grow vegetables and they were just barely making it hand-to-mouth. Alex Schlothauer would say, "We have Tanakas coming in

today or we have Fujikawas coming in today, and they're delivering vegetables. Get them cleaned up and get them weighed so we can pay them." We always paid them cash on the barrelhead when they brought their vegetables in. Alex Schlothauer was a wonderful person who always took care of our community.

I didn't know a lot about their background until later, when I studied World War II. I did talk to Tommy a lot about it when he was in Cheyenne for a while as I recall, and then down in Denver where he ended up.

During our class reunion last May (2022), I was able to sit at the table with Tommy and Grant and discuss some of those things openly. I wanted to know how they felt growing up in this environment of Worland, Wyoming. It was a very, very conservative environment. But we were accepting, I think in many ways. (Pauses.) But I didn't know about Hattie Peoples and the Black population we had and the restrictions that they had. They had to be home by, I think, four or five o'clock at night. And they were not allowed to participate in school activities. And they had to be sponsored – the Peoples were sponsored on a farm. Those were things that I didn't know about.

I wish I would have known about the Spanish elementary school on the west side of the tracks. Some great students came through that program. And we finally got to integrate them, and I say "integrate them" – they got to join us in the junior high and high school years. We had an opportunity to get to know them better, to open up with each other, but back then, it was live and let live and not ask those tough questions.

That's one of the things I wished I would have known more that I learned later on.

**End of first video.**

## **JACK IVERSON: PART TWO**

This is **Cathy Healy** interviewing Jack Iverson on April 1, 2023.

We have some additional information we'd like to add to Jack's oral history about some of the many awards he's won, including one of the United States' top secondary school principals. I wonder if you could tell us about a few of the awards and how you felt about receiving them.

**Jack:** I sure can. Cathy. Let me start out with my time as principal at East High School in Cheyenne. East High School needed updating. In the other school across town, we called them "the other school," – Central High School – had a new field house, science rooms, it was a brand-new modern school. The



superintendent and his staff came and visited me. He said, "Do you want the Field House?" I said, "No, I don't want a field house. I want science rooms. I want a new library. I want a whole new wing for industrial education. I want a Production TV studio where we can put our announcements of the day on TV, not just across the public address system.

They came back with this counterproposal: "We'll give you everything you want. But, Jack, you must accept the school district's secondary school program for handicapped children." Handicapped children were being mainstream back into the main part of the high school during that time period. I said, "Absolutely we can do it, but on the condition that I get to talk to the special ed teachers, and they get to tell me the facilities that they want."

When we got through negotiating, we ended up with a kitchen so that the special education kids could become self-sufficient in preparing their own meals. These kids were not profound, but they were very significantly handicapped. I loved them. They were just lovable kids. They would come up and grab me, and we would walk down the hall together. I introduced them at an all-school assembly. I said, these are our expanded population. If you want to become a friend of any of these students, you can come to lunch with them, if they invite you to the Special Ed Cafe." So, teachers, staff, and administrators then began to do that.

But the Administration gave me what I wanted, which was really good, and what we ended up with were those new facilities.

### **Jack's Cheyenne East Recognized Nationally as Best in Wyoming**

**Jack:** The Cheyenne East High School was selected to represent Wyoming in the secondary school recognition program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education in 1987, because of our academic programs that we had. We had advanced placement classes, and we had two other programs for advanced kids that we would just peel them out of, because they were totally bored in the classes they were in. They would, in most cases, be able to identify, especially in science and math and writing courses, that that would challenge them. So, we had kids that were completing their curriculum and were actually taking college classes. And when they would graduate from advanced placement classes, they had already completed several classes for community college and it for the University of Wyoming as well, which was fantastic.

I think of how that could have benefited us in Worland, had they had programs like that. It was just so neat to do that. Central High School was across town and anytime I would do something, the principal over at Central High School, who had formerly worked at East High School in the Social Studies department, just resented it. He'd say, "No, I'm not going to do it. If Iverson's doing it, it's not any good." And that was okay. I talked with my boss who was the assistant

superintendent for instruction, and he said, "That's okay. If he wants to have a jock school, you can be the academic school".

### **First Academics, then – Of Course – Sports**

**Jack:** I said to my boss: "That's the reason I didn't want a field house. I want to be the academic school for Cheyenne, and we will have a football team. You can't live without it. Your patrons will not allow you to live without it, and a basketball program and a wrestling program, and all of those things. And I said, in time I'll ask for another gymnasium and in time, I'll ask for a larger swimming pool. Those are all things that are down the road and a weight room. And all of those things that are important for building the athletic program." And I said, "Let's take care of the academics first, and we did."

### **IMPACT OF WORLAND: "FAILURE WASN'T AN OPTION FOR US."**

**Cathy Healy:** Jack, you've had impressive professional success. You ended up superintendent of schools in Cheyenne, the largest city in the State, the State capital. You were on all kinds of statewide and national boards. We've had lots of other students that we grew up with who've had tremendous success in what they decided to do. All the way from Rick Hake, being head of maybe eight hundred rocket scientists to Calvin Lawton, who nearly bought the farm a couple of times, doing amazing kinds of firefighting as a pilot.

**Jack Iverson:** Yes.

**Cathy:** What do you think was the impact from Worland for us, what did growing up in the 1940s and 1950s do to us, do you think?

**Jack:** I think we were very fortunate, Cathy, to have parents in our community who imparted to us a work ethic. A work ethic, that if you work hard, if you did what you were told to do, you could accomplish your goals. And we had parents who believed in the teachers that we had in our community, they believed in them. We didn't hear about teachers getting in trouble and teachers being challenged by parents. In the environment that we grew up in, teachers were revered. We held them in high regard.

When we transitioned from elementary to junior high, or junior high to high school, we knew that those were big transition points, and we had to be ready to succeed at that next level. And we did. You know, I can't think of failure as being part of our class. We just did not have failure as an option for us, you know. The skills that we were taught provided us with successful tools for writing, for being able to read, and to do so critically, and not accept everything that was thrown in front of us as being factual. We were taught how to be skeptical.

## The War Babies of Worland: Oral Histories from the Class of 1960

I think most of all Worland – the school system and the parent community were a place you were safe all the time around school. Everybody took care of everybody else's kids.

### **WASHAKIE MUSEUM THANKS YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION**

**Cathy:** Your information, your insights and your memory are just terrific, Jack. Thank you so much for participating in our class's oral history project.

**Jack:** Oh, you're so welcome, Cathy, and thank you for this visit. I've really enjoyed you and Joanne, and you're assisting in organizing my thoughts about the past and the present and the future too.