



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



### JOYCE TAYLOR SPENCE

Extended conversation after videotaping

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

This is **Joanne Culbertson Jeffres** on June 23, 2022, at approximately 9:10 am Mountain time. Joyce, 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, including your maiden name?

**Joyce:** My name is Joyce Ann Taylor Spence, which is my married name, although I am not married to that individual anymore, I continue to keep the name.

**Joanne:** Was there another name or nickname that you were known by when you were in Worland?

**Joyce:** No, not really. Sometimes people would call me Joyful – Joy – but it was always Joyce. I happened to be named after my grandfather, whose name was spelled Joice, which I'm told is an Irish version of John.

### TAYLORS MOVED TO WORLAND IN 1957

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**Joanne:** What originally brought your parents to Worland, Joyce?

**Joyce:** My father had taken a job at one of the oil recovery stations east of Worland, off the road to Ten Sleep.

**Joanne:** Had he been in the same business for years?

**Joyce:** Yes, my father started out in the '40s in seismograph, which is exploration. He worked on an exploration crew all over the state of Wyoming through the '50s. Then we moved to Midwest, Wyoming, which is a company town on the east side of the Big Horns, until 1955, after which we moved to Brownsville, Texas, and from there, up to Worland. So Dad had been in the oil business, as he said, pretty much his whole life.

**Joanne:** When you moved to Worland, did you live right in the town itself, or did you live outside of town and city limits?

**Joyce:** We lived in the town. We rented a house for a few months, and then we bought a house a few blocks down from the high school on Culbertson.

**Joanne:** I remember. I believe it was Schwarghert's house, now that you say that — I don't know why that sticks in my mind.

### **WORLAND: SIGHTS, SOUNDS, SMELLS**

**Joanne:** As you think about Worland. Do you remember any of the sights and the sounds like in the neighborhood, or like around Main Street, etc.?

**Joyce:** Well, I remember Worland as being a thriving little town. Having come from Brownsville, Texas, it was quite different, but there were a couple of nice clothing stores. There were lots of bars, just like all over Wyoming, and lots of busy things happening on Main Street. I thought it was a sweet little town, actually.

**Joanne:** Did you like the surrounding areas, such as the mountains or the Badlands? Did you go out in the country much?

**Joyce:** Well, remember I had just come from Brownsville, Texas, with palm trees, tarantulas, and shrimp boats. Before that, I had lived in Midwest, where the landscape is largely sagebrush and oil derricks. My view about landscapes is generally appreciative. I think the Wyoming landscape, even the so-called ugly part, is quite beautiful.

So I like the area, and the agriculture made it interesting. I had never lived in a place where agriculture was part of the local economy. I found the fields of sugar beets and the irrigation systems quite amazing.

## **WORLAND HIGH SCHOOL: 1958-1960**

**Joanne:** Joyce, you've chosen just to share a few topics with us, and we'll talk mainly about your high school years since you did not spend your early years with us. What do you remember most about high school? And that would have been in your junior and senior years.

**Joyce:** Well, I, of course, spoke Spanish already, having lived in Texas, so I took Spanish, and I thought that the class was kind of behind, so I was a little critical about that. My experience in Brownsville as a non-Spanish speaking gringo in a class of native-speaking Spanish was really good for me at that time. Of course, the Spanish-speaking kids were a little like our English class students in finding the technicalities of the language very boring!

I remember taking geometry with Mr. Kinlein. I was taking geometry in Brownsville at the time we moved, and the teacher there made us write all the proofs out in ink. I think the requirement was designed to make sure that we thought through what we were writing. When I told Mr. Kinlein that I was supposed to write it in ink, he was quite surprised and told me that it wasn't necessary. I thought that was kind of lax, actually, but certainly didn't complain. It seems that when you're that age, you think you are awfully smart and know everything, and I thought I knew everything, so I was a little critical.

However, my main overriding impression was how friendly everybody was. Everyone was very friendly and helpful, which I really appreciated. By that time in my life, I'd been in lots of schools, and I would say, having sampled more than a few, that the general approach to the new kid is not necessarily one of the friendliest, if not downright hostile. I was very appreciative that the kids in high school were actually quite friendly, and I was very grateful for such a warm welcome.

**Joanne:** Well, that's quite a compliment to Worland and to our classmates

**Joyce:** I thought we had two wonderful English teachers, Mrs. White and Miss Stuka, and I remember specifically, in a class with Miss Stuka, having a conversation about condensed books. My family was not very intellectual, for all sorts of reasons, but my mother had subscribed to the Reader's Digest Condensed Books for years. Those were the available books at home, and those

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were the books I read. I had started to read very young, and I read all of them all through the years, so I was quite a fan.

But Miss Stuka made it absolutely clear that this was a very poor excuse for literature, and I remember Grant [Ujifusa] was in that class, and he was a bit of a teacher's pet, and so he took up her position also. So we had quite a discussion. But of course, later on, as an adult, I totally appreciate her point of view because she's absolutely correct. But at the time, I had to stand up for condensed books because, after all, they were better than no books, right?

And then, Mrs. White. I remember as a senior, when we were getting ready to go to college, we had to take these sorts of exams to assess where we were going to be placed as freshmen in English. I had grown up going to lots of different schools, and I was always a reader, so I always did very well in the comprehension and reading part, but I had never ever been instructed in grammar, the parts of speech, and the diagramming of sentences. It seemed that every time I arrived at a new school, they had just had grammar, and now they were going to go into literature.

So I flunked that whole thing on her quiz. I did not know anything about any of it, and she kept me after class and said, "I don't understand how you could do so poorly on this," and I said, "Well, —I've never been instructed. I know, theoretically, what a noun is and the verb and the modifier, and so on. But I don't know how you put them in these little boxes." So she helped me, and I was not quite as ignorant as I was before her kind intervention.

That tutoring was what helped me get into the higher-level English classes as a freshman at UW. But I must say I had my comeuppance there. I thought I was really hot stuff, you know. And in English class, the first paper I wrote, which I thought was brilliant, I got a C on, and I was devastated! But I thought Mrs. White and Miss Stuka were really very good. I appreciate them.

I also really liked the biology and chemistry classes. I took the chemistry class, I think, as a senior and loved the lab work and everything about it. I remember asking Mr. Schwartz to explain the meaning of the atomic weights and not getting an answer I understood. I knew I could memorize the numbers, but I didn't understand the significance of the numbers themselves. He never gave me an explanation or at least one I could understand. The fact that we had those fine classes and a lab was quite wonderful. I loved it.

**Joanne:** And are there any other teachers? Were you fortunate to take Latin?

**Joyce:** No, I did not take Latin because I came in being a Spanish speaker. So all the language classes I took there were Spanish.

**Joanne:** And what about art? I don't remember, did Worland have much of an art program?

**Joyce:** There was an art teacher, and I took art classes. It wasn't very memorable because I don't remember the teacher and I don't remember what we did so, whatever it was, it didn't stick very well. I thought the band teacher was very good. I liked him.

**Joanne:** Yes, Mr. Collier. And one of the other people in our high school that had been there forever was the school secretary. Do you remember Mary Ludwig?

**Joyce:** Yes, she was very nice, and she always helped me with all my transfer things.

**Joanne:** She was very good. Having that consistency of those people year after year was really a nice thing.

## **YOUTH ACTIVITIES: DECORATING FLOATS, PROMS**

**Joanne:** Did you get involved in any activities, both in school or out of school?

**Joyce:** I remember working on the floats for the parades. I was in the band and played the trombone. I was elected — I think it was secretary, and then vice president, of the Student Council. I believe that was when Jim Storer was president. I belonged to the Future Teachers club and tutored students in Spanish.

## **AFTER-SCHOOL JOBS: PIN-STRIPING CARS**

**Joyce:** I had a couple of jobs. I worked at Penney's, down in the basement, counting inventory. It was a dark and dusty job, but it was my first experience earning money, which I loved! And I also was a carhop at the A and W, which was a great way to meet boys! I was honored to be chosen to attend Girls State. I ran for governor, and I lost, but I had a great campaign and learned a tremendous amount about the basics of state governance.

Oh, I had a little business doing pinstriping, and that was kinda fun.

**Joanne:** And I remember one of your pin stripings, Joyce. You had drawn some little feet that walked outside the car into the wing area that we used to have in

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the cars and into the glove box. Do you remember? I don't know why I remember that, but that was so clever. You are very artistic.

**Joyce:** Cars were very interesting in the 50s....Unlike automobiles today, which are practically identical to one another, back then, cars were designed to have personalities. That was when the Ford Mustang came out and was a sensation. The Chrysler cars all had enormous fins, and the "luxury" cars like Cadillac and Buick had fancy grill work and distinctive designs, as well as being very large. This was all before the influx of cars from foreign countries and a much larger number of American-made cars competing for market share.

Having access to a car to drive up and down Main Street was a particularly important activity for teens. Those of us who actually had their own car spent many hours cleaning, polishing, and accessorizing that car; all with the intent to inspire admiration and jealousy from their peers. My pinstriping was part of the decorations that some used to make their "ride" very personal and unique.

I also designed the cover for the layout for the school newspaper and also for the yearbook. I was proud of both of those designs.

**Joanne:** I was going to comment on that, we've all remarked and we've used the cover of our yearbook on many of our reunions because it is such a nice cover, and you were responsible for that design. Do you still do anything with your artistic talents?

**Joyce:** Well, not really. As an adult, I got sort of waylaid in a whole other set of careers. But I have a big garden, and I think the garden is somewhat artistic.

I do love art in all its forms, and I have a lot of art and sculpture and artists who are important to me. When I travel, I usually take my pencils, my watercolors, my paper and dabble.

**Joanne:** What is your favorite medium?

**Joyce:** Well, I still prefer drawing and a little watercolor. I don't paint with oils anymore, but have done some experimenting with pastels.

**Joanne:** So you just keep a notebook, and then just take that with you so that you can draw at any point in time?

**Joyce:** Yes.

**Joanne:** Do you have a favorite subject or topic that you draw?

**Joyce:** Oh, I just think anything around you is interesting. Remember, if you're an Albrecht Durer fan of the 14th century, you know one of the most amazing drawings I've ever seen in my life is his drawing of a rabbit. If you remember that, it is the most gorgeous, amazing piece of graphic art I've ever, ever seen. Anyway, just a little side light.

**Joanne:** Joyce, I don't believe I have seen that.

## **IMPACT FROM WORLAND: CREATIVITY, CONFIDENCE, COURAGE TO TRY**

**Joanne:** What of your experiences in your last two years in Worland? Did they have an impact on your life? For example, maybe your occupation or the career that you chose.

**Joyce:** Well, because of my long life history in drawing things, I ended up being an art major. I think, as girls in the 50s, which we were — I'm sure you can relate — when you went to see the counselor, you were suggested to be either a secretary, or a nurse, or a teacher, right? Those were our choices.

**Joanne:** Yeah.

**Joyce:** I certainly didn't want to be a secretary, and I would be terrible as a nurse, and I wasn't crazy about being a teacher, but I thought, well, I have three choices, so I'll be a teacher.

Well, I went to the University of Wyoming, and I did get a teaching certificate in art and Spanish and — what can I say? I was somewhat precipitous in my life decisions and married very young, and went out into the world.

The first place we went was to the mountains of North Carolina, and they had no need of either an art teacher or a Spanish teacher. And, so I found myself in a situation in which the school would allow you, if you were a faculty wife, to take classes at no charge.

Well, being very penniless, that sounded good to me. So I just started taking classes that were interesting to me, and it turned out that they were part of a program in special education. I had also never heard of special education. It was new at the time. If you recall, John Kennedy had a sister who was mentally disabled, and as a result of his pressures, there was a movement made to train teachers to work with handicapped children. So that was the birth of special education.

So I continued taking classes, and as what happens when you keep taking classes, pretty soon they give you a degree, and then they want you to do this, and they want you to do that. And anyway, that's how I ended up doing my Ph.D. in special education and psychology. It's actually in psychology, and my specialty was behavior-disordered children, which, of course, now is another whole psychological category, and all of that stuff from back in the old days is relabeled. But that's how I got off of the being-an-artist track.

**Joanne:** Did you stay in the world of special education until you retired, or did you vary from that area?

**Joyce:** I came to the University of Oregon to teach here at the university. I had a joint appointment in psychology and special ed, and I did that for a few years, and I became quite frustrated with the department and academia in general.

And so I started a nonprofit agency, a treatment agency for children and families. Emotionally disturbed behavior, disordered children and their families. Which I might say is still going strong. Actually, it's done very, very well. At any rate—

### **Psychologist, Clinic Founder to Financial Advisor**

And at some point, when I got into my 40s, I decided that I really was very, very frustrated with the politics involved with dealing with state agencies and funding, and generally was kind of burned out, and needed to figure out a way to provide for my own retirement, because the nonprofit sector is not really very well paid.

So I changed careers, and I went into finance. I spent the next 27 years designing and managing investment portfolios for individuals.

**Joanne:** Did you work independently or with a large corporation?

**Joyce:** No, I started with Smith Barney, which doesn't exist anymore. Smith Barney, over the years, went through several iterations and is now Morgan Stanley.

But I started late, I was over 40 when I started. So by the time you build the business, it is difficult to go out independently. And if I had made different decisions earlier, and started younger, and so on. But you know how it is, you make the decisions that seem like the right ones at the time, right? So, at any rate, the answer is “No,” I continued with the large firm throughout my years and retired at 69.



**Joanne:** You have had quite a diverse life, Joyce. You know, from foreign languages, and then going into special ed and psychology, and then into finance. And through all those years, is there any particular memory that stands out the most with you?

## **IMPACT FROM WORLAND: CONFIDENCE**

**Joyce:** Well, I think Worland certainly played a big part in that, in terms of helping me develop confidence.

I also think, and I would just say this in the most general way, that while I see parents often not wanting to subject their children to the trauma of moving, as I did, and I must say, I wasn't always delighted to be moving. But if there's any sunshine in that whole thing, I think moving over the years taught me a certain level of resilience that stood me in good stead as an adult. The many moves to new places, new environs, and new people taught me to adapt, to listen and to watch. I think that sense of resilience—for want of a better word—is helpful as you navigate the inevitable challenges of adulthood.

## **Friendships**

**Joanne:** You know, It's funny that you mentioned that because when you moved to Worland, I remember meeting you, and it was like you'd always been there. You have that ability to greet people and to make them feel welcome, and you were just always part of everything. I don't remember you not being there and I think that's quite a compliment because you were just one of those that became part of the whole group almost instantly—

And thinking of that, do you still keep in touch with the friends that you've made throughout all of your adventures?

**Joyce:** Well, yes, I do, and I've just been thrilled to be able to keep in contact with you all. Carol Woodhams was one of the first people who I became acquainted with in Worland.

You know I was very fond of Janice Voss and Joan Walseth.

I didn't know Cathy Healy so well, although I told her one time that she made a presentation in a class. It was maybe Miss Stuka's or someone. I can't remember the class, but she gave us a presentation on the technique of sauté. How to sauté something. and of course, growing up as I did in a family that came from Texas,

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in which everything was pretty much fried, I loved the fact that there was this wonderful word for frying, and I had never heard of it before.

**Joanne:** Did you go home and teach your mother a new word that she was actually sautéing?

**Joyce:** She probably wasn't too interested. But I thought it was a lovely word, and so that's the main thing I remember about Cathy.

And then, of course. Joannie, what I remember about you is that we were talking about driving at one point. I don't know if you remember this. We were both learning to drive, and I said, "Gee, it's kind of hard to tell where you are on the right-hand side, you know, in your lane." And you told me, "Well, you just line up the little ornament on the hood with the right-hand of the lane," and I thought that was the most useful tip I have ever received.

**Joanne:** Well, bless your heart, I think I still do that.

**Joyce:** I remember that I thought that was really useful, and I remember when we lived in the dorm. You know Joanne Culbertson was Miss Cordiality. You were there being cheerful, even when I hated it.

I think one of the reasons I got married so young was I hated the whole social thing at the university. I pledged a sorority because everybody did, but I hated that. I felt very out of place and very unsure of myself. I especially disliked the mandatory "meet and greets" with these fraternity boys. I wasn't very successful as a co-ed.

**Joanne:** One of the most unique experiences we had in college, Joyce, was the fact that all freshman girls lived in Hoyt Hall, the same dorm. We had 9 o'clock hours on Monday through Thursday, and you got points for the first five minutes if you were late, and then one point for every minute after that, and after 16 points, we were campused, which meant you had to be in — I'm not sure what time it was — by 9 o'clock every night and on the weekends. You were just sort of like a little prisoner there. After your third campus, you had to go before the Dean of Women, and she could determine if you would be allowed to stay in school or not.

And Hoyt Hall was such a wonderful place because everybody in it was freshman. Do you remember that? And we knew everybody on campus within our class, and I thought that was wonderful. I know from what you said you didn't enjoy that as much.

**Joyce:** Well, I was one of those that got into trouble with the Dean and was restricted to campus because one night I stayed out very late. Anyway, those

are fun things to think about, old times. I did enjoy the dorm, Joanne. We made some good friends during those times.

## **WISDOM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS**

**Joanne:** Well, those are awesome memories. Is there anything else that you can think of, Joyce, that you would like to say to those listening to this, wondering what our life was like, way back then.

**Joyce:** That is a difficult question. — older adults all say all of the same cliches, and of course, the nature of cliches is they do speak to the truth. But if pressed — I would remind them that time passes fast and don't forget to enjoy yourself. Being young is a wonderful thing, and life is good, if the door opens, go through it, work hard and play hard, and embrace it all.

## **LOOKING BACK: WORLAND AND WYOMING**

**Joanne:** And one last question, Joyce. Looking back at your time in Worland, are there any words that you would like to share about the town of Worland itself?

**Joyce:** Well, I think Wyoming is a very special place. People on the East Coast are not quite sure that it really exists. That was my experience living on the East Coast. If you say, "I'm from Wyoming," they look at you a little funny, but I think Wyoming is a very special place.

A little bit of a tiny story illustrates how out of place I sometimes felt in Wyoming, was when I was in school in the '50s, in elementary school. If you remember, when Adlai Stevenson ran for President. And here I am in Wyoming, and the school had a straw vote for the president. There was one vote for Adlai Stevenson in the whole school, and that was mine.

So the fact that Wyoming is as Republican as it is, I think, it's a unique sort of aspect of the state, and probably not inconsistent with its history either.

So, for whatever it's worth, I think Wyoming is quite unique.

## **WASHAKIE MUSEUM: THANK YOU FOR BEING INTERVIEWED**

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**Joanne:** Well, thank you, Joyce, for sharing your experience for the public about growing up, or about living your last couple of years in Worland, and sharing your life with us.

We were so blessed to have you join us, and you were a very important part of our class, and we are very fortunate to have such a good group of kids all through K through 12, and those that were blessed to join us. So thank you, Joyce. We appreciate it.

**Joyce:** Thank you. It was my privilege and my good fortune to end up in Worland