



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



LAINE BAILEY DE FREECE

Extended conversation after videotaping

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This transcript expands from the video due to additional conversations.

This is **Joanne Culbertson Jeffres**. This interview is being done on June 14, 2022, at 11:08 am, Mountain Time. Laine, thank you for agreeing to be recorded for the oral history collection of the Washakie Museum and Cultural Center in Worland, Wyoming.

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

Laine: Laine Bailey DeFreece.

Joanne: Was there another name or nickname that you were known by during your Worland years?

Laine: Yes. I was known as Bonnie Bailey, and when I became an adult, I just eliminated the first name legally, and I now go by Laine DeFreece, using my middle name.

Joanne: Laine DeFreece. Beautiful. What are you doing now, as you make this recording?

Laine: I'm retired as a teacher in the Denver area, and just returned from this wonderful reunion in Worland, Wyoming, where our classmates were together and reflecting so frequently on the memories that we had of those four days together.

BAILEY FATHER MOVED TO WORLAND IN 1935; MEAJHER MOTHER IN 1939

Joanne: What brought your family to Worland originally?

Laine: Oh, this is so fascinating! My father grew up in the Black Hills of South Dakota. He was in college at the time the Great Depression hit and unfortunately, my grandfather was the banker whose bank was closed. So, my dad had to leave college and my grandfather found out from the traveling salesman, believe it or not, that there was a job opening at the Washakie Trading Company in Worland Wyoming. My grandfather put my dad on the bus and said, "Here you go son. Good luck". And off he went.

My dad was probably 20 years old when he landed in Worland. I think Worland had many, many young people who moved there in the late thirties. He chose to stay here for the rest of his life.

Joanne: What did he do at the Washakie Trading Post?

Laine: I'm not sure what he did. He probably was a go-fer. Who knows? Mrs. Hampton who owned the store, I understand, was rather difficult to work for. But he was glad to have a job.

Joanne: Laine, was your home actually in the town of Worland or did you live outside of the city limits? And if so, where?

Laine: Oh, no! I lived right in town on Seventh and Grace Avenue. But I remember thinking Worland was the whole community, the countryside as well as this city, and we often – as we talked about at the reunion–many of us rode our bikes out to the country, and we considered that our backyard, too.

CHILDHOOD: SIGHTS, SOUNDS, SMELLS

Joanne: When you close your eyes, what do you remember about those sights and the sounds as you rode your bike out through your neighborhood, or maybe downtown and in the surrounding areas? What do you remember?

Laine: What still triggers my memory are the sounds, the bird sounds. I can hear a meadowlark singing and it causes me to pause and relive my joy! And the same with the blackbirds. We had many blackbirds that resided in our area.

Joanne: There were all different kinds of birds.

Laine: Just to hear those bird songs – they reminded me of the beauty of our community.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: 1947-1954

Joanne: Thank you, Laine. Now you've chosen a couple of topics that you would like to share with everybody. We will go in chronological order to make it easier for those listening to follow, and then take a look back from your adult perspective. What do you remember about your childhood when we were in elementary school, which would have been approximately 1948 to 1954?

Laine: I'll long remember an article I wrote for the *Northern Wyoming Daily News*. Getting that news subscription was really important in our family and we always read it from cover to cover.

One summer, the reporters were having difficulty getting enough news to print because people were out of town and clubs weren't meeting. It was much quieter during the summer than during the year, so somebody came up with the idea that if people would submit articles for publication, their names would be put into a box and there would be a drawing. The winner of the drawing would get tickets to the Kirby [Movie] Theater. It was probably the summer after fifth grade that I decided to write an article.

The *Daily News* published it as the headline in the society page. It was called "New Club Organized" and this organization met at the home of Mrs. Robert E. Bailey. It told who came, what we did, and the refreshments that were served., I made up the whole thing!

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

The morning it was published, I could hear footsteps pounding up the wooden steps to the bedroom, and I knew something terrible had happened. My mother burst into the bedroom. She was waving the copy of the newspaper right in front of my face and she said, "How could you do this? Everybody in town will know this is fictitious."

I was in so much trouble. But I remember May Voss [mother of our classmate, Janice Voss] knowing about it because the next time I saw her she was barely hiding her laughter. She thought it was really funny.

Joanne: Did you have to make an attempt to retract this story?

Laine: No, they didn't because it was already published so it was out there in the community. I wasn't the winner of the drawing for the theater tickets. So, it was all for naught.

Joanne: A lesson learned, right? Yeah. What a wonderful memory!

JUNIOR HIGH: 1954-1956

Joanne: What about your time in seventh and eighth grade, which would have been like September of 1954 to May of 1956?

Laine: Teachers were very appreciated in our community at that time. I remember Elsie Huffman and Ohmer Huffman lived on a farm outside of Worland and they had four daughters in the school system, and Mother and Dad had three children in the system. The two moms, Elsie, and my mother, decided that they would put on a dinner and invite every teacher and their spouse to come to this dinner.

It was the teachers of their children, and they held it at our home, which was very small. They set up tables in the basement. They set up tables in the living room and in the kitchen. Elsie had fresh chickens from the farm and she and Mother fried chickens for a day. I now wonder how many chickens they prepared. They had mashed potatoes, gravy, green beans, Jell-O salads, fruit salads, pies, and cakes. They put everything out on the kitchen counter and as the teachers came, they could just help themselves and choose a table.

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

The dinner was done in appreciation for them. There was nothing expected in return from our moms. It was just a joyous time to thank them for their service and dedication to their children as well as all children in the community.

Joanne: Oh, wonderful! That's a good story.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES: PROJECT-ORIENTED CLUBS > 4-H, SCOUTS

Joanne: Now you've reminisced about elementary and junior high, what about your high school years from 1956 to May of 1960?

Laine: One of the wonderful things that I remember about Worland was the giving of our parents. At that time there was a great deal of concern for the community as well as for an individual family. To strengthen the community and benefit families, busy parents volunteered to be Girl Scout leaders, 4-H leaders, Cub Scouts, and Brownie leaders. They helped in schools and they did whatever they could. I was in 4-H and Mary Ujifusa volunteered for years to do a 4-H sewing club that we called "The Town and Country." We met at her home once a week, all summer long, and we were there all day. How did she do this? I don't know. She was a busy farmer's wife, but she made time for us.

One year Jacque Hampton and I each won a purple ribbon in 4-H at the Washakie County Fair, which meant we could go to the State Fair. We were to model our dresses in a style show in Douglas, Wyoming, where they had the State Fair. Louise Hampton offered to take Jacque and me, which became a memorable outing for me. We stayed in a motel. There was a carnival associated with the fair and Louise was determined that I was going to win a stuffed animal. We stood there while she put in nickels and dimes until I won a black poodle. Jacque won a stuffed animal, too. That was certainly a highlight of the summer.

Joanne: Do you still sew?

Laine: I do, mainly repairs, but I could sew if I needed to.

Joanne: Yes, what a wonderful memory of Worland from elementary through high school! Is there anything else that you would like to talk about?

PARENTS' LIVES IN WORLAND & THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT

Laine: I remember the Women's Movement in Worland, and I think this is an important part of our history. When my mother came to Worland, she was hired as a teacher. She only taught for two years because she married, and at that time, a woman teacher could not be married, or even engaged and be a teacher in the school system. For almost 15 years, my mother stayed at home.

In the fifties, there was a teacher shortage. In December of one of those years, Frank Watson [superintendent of the elementary and junior high schools] was absolutely desperate for a teacher to fill a position because a fifth-grade teacher's husband was transferred, and the teacher left with her husband. Superintendent Watson had nobody to finish out the year, so he called my mother. He said, "I know it's been years since you've taught, but would you be willing to do this?" And she did. She loved it, and she applied for a permanent position and was hired.

The good thing was that the school system finally believed that women hadn't lost their minds when they got married. The school administration started recruiting these women. But there was a problem. The problem was when they were first teaching, they were given the teaching certification after three years of college. So, by the fifties, they had to go back and get the fourth year. And that was really, really hard in Worland to do that. They had to take correspondence classes. The University of Wyoming would come to Worland and offer classes periodically, but this wasn't enough. The women often had to leave the entire summer and go back to the universities.

Joanne: I think that happened to many, many teachers in Worland as I remember, too. Your mother was caught up in that. How long did it take her?

Laine: I think it took about three years, three summers plus taking all these correspondence courses, but she wasn't the only one doing it. It was exciting to see what was happening to these women. I was thinking of the women of our parents' age and, Joanne, I know your mother went back to work. May Voss, remember, opened the Montgomery Ward business, so it wasn't only just teachers. I think Worland women, in general, were saying that it's okay, we can go to work. They were accepted and they were certainly role models for us.

Joanne: The role of homemaker was truly an elegant profession. but it's amazing that it was about that time when we were young that women started coming into their own and actually working in the world of business or education,

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

nursing all different areas. Yes. So, Rosie, the Riveter [an advertising poster in World War II] had an effect on everybody.

Laine: Yes.

WISDOM FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

Joanne: In closing, for generations to come that listen to your story many years from now, is there anything that you would like to pass on to them, any words of wisdom? What would you want them to know?

Laine: I would want people to know how important it is to not only take care of your families but have a sense of community. To appreciate the community in which you live and be active, and care about it, to try to support schools, politicians, legislators, and people in nonprofit organizations, and to have a focus outside of ourselves. I think that's important, and we learned that early on in Worland by examples.

WASHAKIE MUSEUM: THANK YOU FOR BEING INTERVIEWED

Joanne: Laine, thank you so much for sharing your experiences with the public about what it was like to grow up in Worland during our time in the early '40's until we graduated in 1960. I know this will be an eye-opener for many of them. Thank you, Laine.

Laine: You're welcome.