



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



LOREN E. LAIRD

Extended conversation after videotaping

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This transcript expands from the video due to additional conversations.

This is **Joanne Culbertson Jeffres** on Monday, August 1, 2022, at approximately 2:00 p.m. Mountain time. Loren, thank you so much for agreeing to be recorded for the oral history collection of the Washakie Museum and Cultural Center in Worland, Wyoming.

First, Loren, what is your full name?

Loren E. Laird: Loren Edward Laird.

Joanne: Was there any other name or nickname that you were called when you were growing up in Worland?

Loren: As you well know, I was called Loreny.

Joanne: Yes, I tried not to call you Loreny when we started. [Laughs]

Loren: That's fine. When I talked to Rick Hake at the Reunion [who used to be Ricky], the first thing he asked me was – “Do I still call you Loreny?” “Yes, that works.”

Joanne: That's neat — it's a good name, and you've had it for a long time.

LAIRDS MOVED TO WORLAND IN 1902, SEINS (MOTHER) IN 1928

Joanne: Were you actually born in the town of Worland?

Loren: Yes, I was born here in 1942.

Joanne: Was your home in town or located outside the city limits? And if so, where was it?

Loren: I was born on what's called the Laird Farm, two miles east of Worland, in the home place.

Joanne: You were born right there in the home itself?

Loren: Well, I was born in the hospital.

Joanne: I see where you lived out there. Are you living in the same place now?

Loren: I am. In the same home.

CHILDHOOD: SIGHTS, SOUNDS, SMELLS

Joanne: Now, thinking about your neighborhood. What do you see as you close your eyes, what do you see about your surrounding area, Loren?

Loren: Well, right now, they're harvesting malt barley outside the windows. That's what I can see right now. If I close my eyes, I can see empty fields of malt barley being harvested with John Deere combines.

Joanne: You have a lot of fields right around. Can you see the mountains from your home?

Loren: I can see the mountains if I step outside. Yes, I can see the Big Horn Mountains towards Ten Sleep, and I can see the Owl Creek Mountains south towards Thermopolis, and see the Absorkas to the West – I can see all of them.

Joanne: It sounds like an absolutely beautiful setting, Loren.

Loren: It is.

Joanne: Did you have a lot of fun out in the hills as you were growing up?

Loren: Yes, we spent most of our time outdoors. I had an older brother, Gene. He was a year and a half older than me, and we spent more of our time as small children doing things together. In later years, we hunted rabbits together in an area now called the Colby Mammoth Site. George Frison, a University of Wyoming archeologist who used to be a successful rancher from Ten Sleep, discovered the first Woolly Mammoth out here. A historical marker marks the site, just past the farm about a mile on the right-hand side of the highway. Nobody knew it was there. It was just the badlands until George Frison discovered it.

Loren: I'm going to show you a picture of Gene and me.

Joanne: Are you out fishing?

Loren: We're playing tennis outside the house. That's how we looked, and that's what we did before we went to school.

Joanne: How fun! Before we started this recording, you agreed to answer many questions. Do you have any memories of your childhood prior to starting first grade, like from 1941 to 1948?

Loren: I really don't. It's hard for me to remember. I was a little kid, that's all I can say, I had a happy childhood. I played with my siblings and friends if I had any, which I really didn't have probably until I started school.

Joanne: How many siblings did you have, Loren?

Loren: I have my older sister, Julie, my older brother David, my older brother Gene, and my younger sister, Penelope. Most of you knew her as Penny. There were five of us, two girls and three boys.

Joanne: So you had a lot of siblings to play with and entertain each other?

Loren: Yes, we did.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: 1947-1954

Joanne: When you started school, where did you go? And did you ride the bus into town for elementary?

Loren: I did ride the school bus, and the first grade was in the Watson Building. Mrs. Berkencamp was my first-grade teacher. I don't remember anymore after that until we got to the third, fourth, and fifth grades, which were in the Emmett Building.

Joanne: Do you remember anything about the buildings or the teachers?

Loren: I don't remember too many teachers.

JUNIOR HIGH: 1954-1956

Loren: I went from there to junior high. That was the sixth, seventh, and eighth, I think, when I went over there – the kids who didn't go to the new Southside School went to sixth grade in the junior high building.

Joanne: Okay, and that was approximately 1953, 1954 to 1956. Was there any teacher in that time that was significant that you remember?

Loren: In junior high, two or three teachers come to mind. The seventh-grade teacher was a man by the name of Chuck Donahue, and he was the first male teacher I had ever had. Before that, they were all women. Sadie Nederbet taught math, and she was my eighth-grade homeroom teacher. I really liked and admired her because she wouldn't let me flunk. No matter how hard I tried not to do anything, Sadie Nederbet made me learn it. So, I'll always remember and respect her for that.

There was a real lively woman, her name was Charlotte Young. She was a good teacher. She taught Wyoming History in the 8th grade – I remember her as an English teacher. And then, I remember the Picards. There were two Picards — they were married to the Picard brothers. I always thought they were kind of mean. Velma Picard taught English before she became the librarian, and Esther Picard taught 7th-grade geography, which was all about South America.

Joanne: Yes, they were very strict

Loren: Yes, and Joe Kinlein, of course, was there, and he taught 7th-grade math. He was also our football coach. The first time we were allowed to go out for organized sports was when we got to junior high. So I played football in seventh and eighth grade for Joe Kinlein.

Joanne: What a nice memory!

YOUTH ACTIVITIES: FARM CHORES AND 4-H

Joanne: Did you fill your time after school with activities, or did you have to go back to the farm and help?

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Loren: Usually, I had to get back on the school bus and go home and do my chores, yes, my farm chores.

Joanne: Did you participate in 4-H or any other activities like that?

Loren: Yes, 4-H until I graduated from high school.

Joanne: What projects did you have in 4-H? What did you start with?

Loren: We had pigs that we showed and raised to be judged at the county fair by their size, confirmation, and showmanship. You had to walk the pig around the arena with a cane to turn it by poking it so the judges could rate the pig and how you showed it. We also showed Hereford cattle that we raised, and we competed with sugar beets and malt barley. They were the 4-H projects that I took. You were judged by your record books that showed the work that you did from the beginning of the planting. I showed those, and my brothers did too. We all shared the same thing. That's generally what we raised.

Joanne: And you're still raising malt barley.

Loren: Those are the two cash crops around Worland, malt barley for Coors and sugar beets, same as it was 100 years ago – actually, the Holly Sugar factory started about 1905 or 1906.

WORLAND HIGH SCHOOL: 1956-1960

Joanne: Moving on from junior high, do you have anything you'd like to say about high school and any of the teachers?

Loren: Moving into high school in what we call the old high school building — do you remember how that building was kind of dark and stark-looking, at least to me? There was no real lighting or color in there. We all just went to our classes. Initially, the farm kids all went into FFA, Future Farmers of America, with Mr. Ray Lowe teaching us, but I didn't stay in it very long. I was looking at our high school annual the other day, and there were a lot of farm kids it seemed, in our class who did not take the FFA for some reason. David Scheuerman, Grant Ujifusa, Max Ogg, me – because there was no future for them in agriculture. If you were a family of four or five, who was going to inherit the farm? Only one of you, so they all went to college.

And I was one of those. I went the first year and then decided I didn't want to do that. I didn't think I was going to be a farmer for some reason or other. They made me take vo-ag: but my mom wanted me out of there, so she changed me out of that.

Joanne: What did you take instead? What were your favorite classes?

Loren: You know I liked Mrs. White. Mrs. White was the mother of a classmate, Mary Elise White Sande. For some reason, I liked her English class, and I remember Asa Brooks, our biology teacher. I liked him. He was a funny guy, but he liked to teach you, and I could learn from him. And the math, of course, was Joe Kinlein and Mr. MacDonald. I took algebra from Ray Harrison. Speaking of the biology class — we had to take at least one more science course to graduate. There was chemistry for juniors and physics for seniors. Roy Swartz, the chemistry teacher, came into Mr. Brooks' biology class to talk to us about taking chemistry. He decided right then if you would pass his class or not.

Do you remember going to the chemistry classroom? You had that cabinet and stuff in the front of the room, and there were desks, and then you went behind the cabinet and did the experiments. He gave you some simple little quizzes, and if you didn't do well on those tests, you had to go sit at your desk, and the people who passed those tests got to go to the back and do the experiments and what he told the rest of us was "If you attend every day and don't cause any trouble, I'll give you a "C," so that's what we did. That's how I got through that class.

Joanne: You don't feel that you were really taught much chemistry.

Loren: No, I wasn't, and that was his choice. I mean, he did not tolerate people who couldn't learn what he wanted. He decided for himself if you could do it or not. So, generally, there were like 20 in the class. There might have been five or 10, maybe, that were good enough to do the experiments. The rest of us sat at our desks, and then as long as we attended and didn't miss class, we got our "C's."

Joanne: Boy, how things have changed, right?

Loren: Charlie Roberts is a person that I truly respected. He was one of our coaches and a physical education teacher. Charlie liked discipline. He didn't want anyone messing around. I have good memories of him.

Joanne: You said that you weren't involved in the FFA, but you did 4-H, and you continued those projects. Did you take all the projects all year?

Loren: Yes, I did take them, and I actually belonged to the FFA. I did not attend the vo-ag – vocational agriculture — classes, but you could still belong to FFA, so I was a member of the chapter. I did not attend the classes for sure.

Joanne: Did you get to travel with the FFA judging team or anything?

Loren: No, I didn't because I wouldn't take the classes. You had to be in the class with the qualifier to do the judging. I was just a member.

Joanne: While you were in high school, were your parents involved in your activities? I know they gave you a lot of support.

Loren: Yes. So actually, they were always involved with my brothers and sisters, and all the events that we did. Mostly they helped or advised on what to do.

Worland was inclusive to the Mexicans and Japanese

Loren: Okay, now I have one thing I would like to say. I was thinking about Cathy Healy when I was doing this interview. You know, right now, in 2022, ethnic groups have become a prominent issue. I don't know about you guys, but we grew up with two other ethnic groups. I think there were the Mexicans and the Japanese. I never thought of them as other than who they were. They were never anything else. But I never thought of them as Japanese or I never thought of them as Mexican. They were actually just my classmates and people I knew. That's how I felt about that.

Joanne: I agree with you 100%, Loren. They were never segregated, or we even thought about segregation in my home and in my life. We weren't exposed to that dislike or hatred that many people were.

Loren: No. I thought they were just who we are to me.

Joanne: Inclusive.

Loren: Inclusive. That's right, and they were my friends and classmates, and I played sports with them. I dated them, I went to school with them, and included them in whatever else we did when we were there. They were just the same as us, as far as I could tell.

IMPACT OF GROWING UP IN A BOOM TOWN

Joanne: That's a wonderful memory! What about the experience of growing up in Worland? Did anything create an impact on your life? For example, your choice of occupation, hobbies, and where you were living.

Loren: Well, growing up in Worland, I thought we were all right. I enjoyed Worland, and actually, I'm still here. So, what can I say? But, yes, it was a good town to live in. The only time I actually left, I went to the army for three years, and then I went to college, and other than that, I've lived here all of my life. To be honest with you, Worland's changed a great deal. The town is less than it was. We're not as important. When I was in the military, we were the eighth largest

city in the state of Wyoming, and we are not now. And yes, it was a wonderful place to live.

AFTER-SCHOOL JOBS: FARM BOYS DROVE SCHOOL BUSES AND DID CHORES

Joanne: Were you part of the bus-driving group, Loren?

Loren: Yes, I was. I drove a school bus in my junior and senior years.

Joanne: Where was your route?

Loren: Well, my area was where I lived out here east of Worland. I picked up the kids in my neighborhood that I knew who were around here. That was my route.

About other jobs, I never did anything else but what I was told to do on the farm.

Clothing styles

Loren: You asked about children and teenagers' clothing. We wore Levis and shirts. That's what we always wore, tennis shoes or regular shoes. Of course, when we went to church on Sunday, we had to put on a sports jacket, a tie, and a clean pair of pants.

RADIO TO TELEVISION GENERATION

Loren: Television? My granddad moved to Worland in the early '50s. and he had a TV. I can't remember when we first had our television out here, and when we did get it in, there were only two channels. I think there was Casper and somewhere else. That was all we had to watch, and we didn't watch much of it at that time because we were so busy with our outside activities and doing other things. But if we were watching TV, it was all in black and white.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES: WATCHING SEMI-PRO WORLAND INDIANS BASEBALL

Loren: I also remember going to watch the Worland Indians, a semi-pro baseball team that played on the baseball field behind the junior high school. We could sit in the stands or park our cars around the outside of the fence on the road, which

was between the fence and the Lower Hanover Canal. It was a wonderful way to visit with people and something I won't forget.

FAMILY HISTORY IN WORLAND > FARMING, OIL IN THE '20s

Joanne: What about your parents, your mother, and your dad? Obviously, your dad was born here.

Loren: The house I live in now is where my dad was born in 1909. His father, Leroy Laird, was born and raised in Iowa. We called him LE. His father was in the Civil War, and his mother was a Hatfield, like the famous (feuding) Hatfields and McCoys. LE's parents were farmers from Red Oak, Iowa. LE's father died and left his wife with four children. She couldn't afford to feed them, so she had to give the children away. Their two daughters were old enough to work and went to a family. LE was a four-year-old boy, so they stuck him in an orphanage. He had a younger brother, and people wanted babies, so he was adopted, but they didn't want kids who were a little older, so LE was raised in an orphanage.

In his adult years, he became a farmer. LE saw an advertisement from the Lincoln Land Company and the Hanover Canal for available land, so he jumped on a train and came to Worland to investigate. Apparently, he decided that's where his future was, and he moved his family to Worland. He had a wife, Juliette Burton, and two small children at the time. They rode the train to Ralston in the north of the Big Horn Basin, where he got a wagon for their household goods and a cow and came down to Worland. If you decided to stay, you went to work for the Hanover Canal company helping them dig the canal. Two of the big shots on the canal were Pulliam and Culbertson. That was your great-uncle, Roger Culbertson, Joannie. In the museum, there's a big picture of some people digging the canal. One of the people in that picture was my grandpa.

If you did help dig the canal, they would sell you land. Where I live now, that's where he started his farming operations.

LE and Juliette had three more children after they came to Worland. She got pregnant here with her son called Glen and went back to Iowa to give birth to him. Then she had a baby girl that died. She had Russell – my dad – and she had Bernice.

Until he got rich, LE was a farmer. While we were growing up in the early 50s and early 60s, most of the money that came into town came from the oil industry, so we think of Worland's oil boom as happening then. But in the late teens and early 20s, the oil industry was developing in Wyoming. They were discovering major oil fields in Wyoming, like the Hamilton Dome and the Teapot Dome near Casper. My grandfather, "Dad" Worland, and his son, Charlie, Dave Kent, and Joe Cook – those five – went up to the Elk Basin oil field up out of Powell, which goes clear

up into Montana. They were early investors in Elk Basin. That's where he made his fortune. Later on, LE tried his best to invest in the oil boom around Worland when we were growing up, but he didn't have as much success there.

Joanne: What about your mother?

Loren: My mother, Florence Sein, was from Denver, Colorado. She had an older sister who married a beekeeper by the name of Raufus , and they came to Worland. His name was Herman Raufus, and he had bees. My mother was one of four sisters. They were very austere. My grandmother had divorced my grandfather early on, so the daughters were raised by their mother. As soon as they got old enough, she threw them out. My mother came to Worland in her high school years to stay with her older sister, and that's how she came to be in Worland, and that's how my dad met her. He was going to college and was trying to be an engineer at Utah. She was working for the phone company. The old phone company where everybody worked down there and plugged in the lines.

Joanne: Mountain Bell?

Loren: Yes, and so that's how they met and came to be here, and after they were married, he farmed, of course. Then they had the Worland Garage — if you remember that, and they sold Buicks, Pontiacs, GMC,s and Willys Jeeps, and my dad managed that.

We had a farm foreman whose name was Jack Smith. He came out here and farmed, and all of us kids worked on the farm. We worked for Jack Smith and learned how to farm and do what we could do.

WORLAND HIGH SCHOOL: SOCIAL GROUPS

Then there's a thing to remember — peer pressure – it had a lot to do with us in high school. You had to belong to some group. You had the athletes, and you had the normal kids, you had the brain kids, and whichever group you belonged to, you were the most comfortable in. I was part of the athletes, but I liked to belong to the group that you were in, Joannie, too. Just a common everyday group.

Joanne: Just the fun group.

Loren: There were classmates that I knew, but we didn't run around for one reason or another but we were all friends.

Joanne: I remember the terms they used. We had the apes and the tea drinkers.

Loren: Yes, I didn't want to say that.

[**Note:** In his interview, Jack Iversen tells the story of how the apes and the tea drinkers started.]

Joanne: You're right, they were very "cliquish" in some of those, and some of us just didn't fit into either one of them.

Loren: No, and that was all right. I liked being an athlete, of course, but that was the extent of it. One of the things that was hard for me at our 62nd class reunion was that – I didn't say anything – but none of my friends were there. They are dead.

Joanne: That's a harsh reality.

Loren: Yes, it is. Dick Yingling, Jim Storer, Sonny Shearer, Larry Kitchel. All those kids.

Joanne: The kids you knocked heads with on the football field.

Loren: Yeah, and then there was Jack Iversen.

Joanne: I was going to say that Jack was there.

Loren: And Dean Frederick was there.

IMPACT: THE FOOTBALL COACHES

Joanne: Do you have memories of any of the townspeople and what they contributed to our community?

Loren: Charlie Roberts was important to me. But as you recall, we were state champions in football, and I have that football. But anyway, I played football for Joe Kinlein, and before Joe Kinlein, there was Carl Selmer. Yes, Carl Selmer. He was a winning football coach. Worland had won the State championships, like for five or six years. It was unusual at that time, and then when we got to high school, Carl Selmer went to the University of Wyoming to work for Bob Devaney along with Jack Aggers, who also had been a Worland coach.

Joe Kinlein, of course, got Carl's job, and I always played for Joe. I had never had any other football coach. But we couldn't win a championship with Joe Kinlein. Our sophomore and junior years, we were not able to win a championship. So, I assume the school board, whoever they were at the time, decided Joe couldn't do the job, so they fired Joe Kinlein and hired a guy by the name of Wimp Hughley from the University of Wyoming. And we did win the championship. But I thought, and still do, that Joe Kinlein will always be my coach! He's one of the

people who influenced me. [**Note:** Jack Iversen's interview gives more background on how his uncle, Cliff Snyder, forced Joe out as coach.]

Another person I remember is Lucky Glen. He was our custodian at the junior high school and the meat cutter for the school district. What a character! He always had a smile and a "hello." Sally Culbertson, your mom, Joannie, our school nurse, was also very important to all of us. Whenever you got hurt or needed any medical attention, she was there to take care of us.

WORLAND'S THRIVING DOWNTOWN > FIVE CAR AND FOUR TRACTOR DEALERSHIPS

Joanne: You mentioned that your father had Worland Motors. Just thinking about Main Street and all the businesses, do you remember some of the businesses and the people there? Think about Main Street when we were in high school.

Loren: Do you remember all the filling stations we used to have, one on every corner? Then there was a Worland Garage, and there was Big Horn Chevy and Nielsen's Tires, and then the Ford Garage down on the end of that. Oh, what were their names? You know what I'm talking about — Ray Varney, he rode in the parades – Varney Motors, and I remember stores like JCPenney and Marvin's Men's Store and the grocery store.

Joanne: And do you remember the Hudson dealership with Spragues?

Loren: I do. Yes, I do, and Ernie Cook owned the Cadillac dealership. Remember, that was Gerald Cook's dad. Gerald was in our class. And there was a John Deere dealership, a Farmall dealership – that was International Harvester – and there were Ford Tractor sales. There was a feedlot that we had close to downtown, the sales barn for livestock, and then we had the dairy. What was the name of the dairy?

Joanne: We had Fairview Dairy – Cliff Snyder's dairy – and then we had Meadow Gold wasn't it?

Loren: Yeah, remember Meadow Gold. Then there was the Kirby Theater and the old Washakie Hotel.

Joanne: Oh, yes! Very few people know about the hotel now except for people our age.

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Loren: The Washakie Hotel had a restaurant, and it had a bar, and people stayed there; of course, we didn't stay at the hotel, but we went to the restaurants and the bar.

Joanne: It was a big hotel. What do you remember about the businesses in the hotel? I know Geis's Trucking Company had an office in there—

Loren: There was a barber shop there, remember?

Joanne: Silver's ... was it? It was Foster Silver's. I believe he had the barbershop. Where did I pull that memory from? [Laughs]

Loren: And then there was a real estate office in there, I think, or something like that, but I don't remember who that was. Then, of course, you had the banks down the street — you had the Farmers' State Bank, and the Stockgrowers' State Bank, at the time when we were kids. There were only two banks, and of course, cowboys went to the Stockgrowers, and we went to the Farmers Bank, and the people that were involved in those — the Grays, Vernon Bower, Gretchen's dad, and who was in the Stockgrowers?

Joanne: Muirhead, and the other was Crouse, Del Crouse, who married George Muirhead, Sr.'s daughter, Muriel. Is that right?

Loren: Yes, Del Crouse and Muirhead, who ran that bank over there. Yes, and other businesses — there were more clothing stores, a jewelry store, you remember, there were at least three jewelry stores at that time.

Joanne: Swen Swensen Jewelry down by the Kirby Theater.

Loren: Yeah, and then there was, well, the jewelry store that Scott Paris bought, was it that one?

Joanne: Didn't he buy Swen's?

Loren: Yeah, maybe he did, but there was — still, there were two others as well. I can't even think of the name of the other one, but I remember there were three jewelry stores. And remember the drug stores, Joannie?

Joanne: Oh, Reeds and Grahams. Yes, what do you remember about the drugstores, Loreny?

Loren: I liked them all, and I liked the little bookstore that had the revolving book stand where you could buy a little paperback. I enjoyed that.

Oh, yeah, the library; damn right. I went to that library from when I started reading, and I read every book in that library I thought, and I didn't ever really try

to sneak anything past Mrs. Murray, the librarian, but I was late returning a lot of the books, so she would sometimes get me on that. But I enjoyed that library down there in the basement of the Courthouse. There were just tons of books all over the place, but I read a lot of books out of that library. Yes, I enjoyed that library.

AFTER GRADUATION: GOOF-AROUND COLLEGE > MILITARY > THEN SERIOUS COLLEGE

Joanne: Tell me a little bit more about your home and maybe some of the traditions that your family had, and if so, do you still have any traditions with the girls?

Loren: Well, let's see. I graduated from high school, and at that time, my dad was on the Board of Trustees at the University of Wyoming. He'd been appointed by [then Governor] Jack Gage, and so everybody would say, "What's your son doing? What's he doing? Is he going to this school or going to the military, or whatever it was?" And my mom was too embarrassed to say. "The dummy isn't doing anything." So, she arranged for me to go up to the University of Wyoming, and she arranged I'd be a roommate with Ricky Williams, who was our student council president because she thought he would help me out. He did help me out, which you knew he would. So, I went to the University of Wyoming, and I should not have. And I got thrown out of there for a couple of little things that I did. One was playing nude on a tennis court.

Joanne: You mean they were opposed to that? [Laughs]

Loren: You know, where Wyoming Hall was – the boys' dorm?

Joanne: Yes.

Loren: And then right across the street from it was the tennis court, and we were there partying, and a bet came up, and "Hell," I said, "I'll do it." So, I ran down there and took my jacket off, knocked the ball over the net twice, naked, and then ran back up into the Wyoming Hall.

Joanne: They frowned on those activities.

Loren: That didn't go well, so I left there. Then I came home, and I farmed. Casper College had a wrestling team that I applied for, and I made the wrestling team at Casper College. So, I was back in school, and I was doing pretty good there. For some reason, the college ran out of money, and they took away the wrestling team, but there was still a basketball team. The coach's name was Swede Erickson, and he had this real great basketball team. So, he took all the money

and threw the other areas of sports out. So, I said, "The hell with it" and I came home.

That was in about '62 or thereabouts, the draft was coming. You know the Vietnam War hadn't started yet, but we were all eligible for the draft, so I came home and decided just to join the army. I went to Fort Ord, California, for basic training. I got a really good MOS [monthly occupation status] because of my farming, and they sent me to Germany, and I was there for a little over two years. I served in Germany, and I got out of the military in '63-'64 and came back home.

I went to work out on the farm, and they wanted me to go back to college. So I used the GI Bill, of course, and I got a degree in political science because somebody said they were the toughest classes down there that you could take in the Liberal Arts College. So I did that, and I graduated from the University of Wyoming. Then I came home and have been here ever since.

Joanne: So, you use your experience from the military service and the college on the farm.

Loren: Oh, absolutely, yes!

Joanne: What do you think was the most beneficial thing you learned in the service?

Loren: I'll tell you. Remember when they stormed the Capitol building in Washington D.C.? on January 6, 2021. You know, Joannie, we were all raised to be patriotic from the first grade — we did the Pledge of Allegiance, we all sang the songs, we went to the basketball games, and we did all that — that's just how we were raised. And when I served in the military, I served with purpose, I believed in my country, I believe in God and country. I believed in what we were doing, and when they stormed that Capitol building, I thought that was very wrong! I still do! That hurt me to see that — I didn't know what was going on there. I really felt down about that. I like to think I am very patriotic, so that was really a terrible thing for me!

Falling in Love

The best thing coming out of the service is when I met my wife. When I got out of the service, there was this beautiful young girl working downtown in a Greek restaurant called Scotty's. And I thought — "Oh, my!" So, I courted Elaine, and we were married, and we had four wonderful daughters, and Elaine was the mainstay in my life. She died from cancer about a year ago; but yes, she was a great influence in my life. And so, coming home and having married Elaine, I tried to earn a living working on the family farm, and that is mostly what I did. We have four beautiful daughters: Christina, Margaret, Sarah, and Mary.

David — you remember my oldest brother David – he and I were kind of the partners on the farm. Gene was a year older than me, but he never was a part of the farming. He was out of the picture for some reason, and I'm still here. I'm living in the old home place; I don't know why, but here I am. David and Gene are both gone.

ADULT LIFE IN WORLAND: HOW ELAINE GOT LORENY TO GO TO CHURCH

Joanne: You said that Elaine was Greek. Did she instill any family traditions that you and the girls still do?

Loren: I'll tell you a good story. She was a Greek Orthodox, and my family, in 1956 I think, helped to build the Presbyterian church in Worland. So that's where my family started going to church. So I didn't go to church until we were freshmen in high school. [Note: The Lairds are Scots-American. The Presbyterian church was founded in Scotland and is the official Church of Scotland.]

So, Elaine was a Greek Orthodox, and they liked to go to church. The closest religion to them was Catholic, so they joined the Catholic church since there were no orthodox churches in the area. After we were married and we had our first child, Elaine said, "Would you mind if we baptized Christina in the Catholic Church?" I said, "I don't care," and she said, "Will you go to the Catholic Church if we do that?" I said, "No, I don't think I want to do that." She said, "Well, if we baptize Christina in the Presbyterian Church, would you go?" "Of course, I would go." She said, "If I join the Presbyterian Church, would you go?" What can I say? "Yes, let's do that." So she remained a Catholic, but she participated in the Presbyterian Church with me, and that's how we raised our children. That was one of the influences she had on me.

Joanne: Yes, that's a good influence, Loren. Now, what about food or any of your holidays? Did she or you have any traditions that you do there?

Loren: We, of course, observed the Christmas and Thanksgiving holidays as we all normally did. The Greek holidays — they had Easter Sunday, which was a slightly different time in the Orthodox religion — If you've ever been to an Orthodox ceremony, they're really quite elaborate. They're really something. So, whenever they had those holidays, they would invite a Greek priest to come to town, and there was still a little cadre, or, if you want to call it that, of Greeks that still lived in Worland. There were enough of them, so we would all go to the Community Hall to meet.

Our family all made Greek food dishes, and we still make Gramma Florence's twice-baked potatoes. We continue to celebrate the holidays at the church. The

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

Greeks used a lot of lamb in their cooking, especially at Easter, so we did and still do eat traditional food along with our Greek food.

Oh, another thing — 4-H, you remember where we did our 4-H meetings, Cathy? It was the Edith Healy Little House. Remember what that was for? Why was the Edith Healy House built? It was a community thing for the community, right? We had our 4-H meetings there.

Joanne: Isn't the little house still there? How is it used now?

Loren: You know, I honestly don't know. When they started building the community hall and other businesses, it lost its allure. But at a time in the '50s and '60s, it was a viable place for people to have meetings and parties. And I don't know who owned it, but I'm sure they had to rent it from whomever it was. It was called the Edith Healy Little House.

Cathy Healy: The local Girl Scouts used to own it. My Grandfather Healy built it for the Girl Scouts and for other community groups to use after my grandmother died. My Grandmother Healy was very involved in Girl Scouts. The Big Horn Basin Scouts had been on a campaign to build "little houses" for the girls to meet in each of the towns. She died in June 1950, and the house was built the next year. Eventually, the regional Girl Scouts ended up owning it. So basically, it's absentee ownership, and it has been for quite a long time, meaning it's a lot more complicated to maintain than in the beginning when it was owned by the Worland Girl Scouts.

Loren: The Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts — that's what it was used for. It was a needed place at the time.

Joanne: I remember that some of the Boy Scouts had a meeting hall on the west edge of the Emmett or Watson school buildings. There was one that was in the front of the lot. It was a big, long log building, and that's where Troop 3 met every week or two. My dad was their scout leader. Do you remember that building?

Loren: I didn't get to be a Boy Scout. Yes, I do remember that building now, Joannie.

Joanne: I don't know who it belonged to or why, but that was their troop building.

Loren: Right, it was that long building there. They used it for storage after that.

WORDS OF WISDOM: PARTICIPATE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

Joanne: In closing, for generations to come that listen to your story, is there any wisdom or any other ideas and thoughts that you would like them to know or to pass on to them?

Loren: The only wisdom that I gained has been trying to live a positive life. In doing that, you have to provide for your family, and for yourself, and for your community, and you want to participate in the community.

I ran for political office twice in Worland, but I was a Democrat in a Republican town; but I like being a Democrat. Cathy, your sister Debbie (Healy Hammons) pulled it off once. But everybody knew the Healys were damn Republicans anyway, so while the Democrats voted for her and —

Cathy: No, I must interrupt. My sister was not a Republican. My sister is very Democrat.

Loren: The Healy's were always Republican, so, anyway —

Cathy: But the Omensons were Democrats, my mother's family.

Loren: I did throw my hat in the ring. In the '70's. I ran for the State Legislature, and I also ran for County Commissioner. I feel I have lived my life as a responsible citizen and have been willing to be an active participant in what went on in Worland. I have tried to contribute in every way I can.

I like to participate in social gatherings and influence the town where I can. I liked raising my children here. I still have three of my daughters living here in Worland. My youngest daughter, Mary, charms people at the Comfort Inn where she works. She is currently staying with me and being my caretaker, and I have a daughter Sarah, who's an English teacher at the high school. I have a daughter Margie, who's a secretary for the athletic director at the high school, and my oldest daughter, Christina, is a nurse practitioner in Casper. I have six grandchildren — three boys and three girls. That's worked out all right.

We in Worland have – what do you call it — a boundary to protect us. We live away from the major cities, and here we have a coat of armor that protects us and allows us to live our lives easier than it would be in the city where you have the pressures of the major populations, which seem to be harming the country. Those cities are losing their way, and it's becoming tough for those people who live there, whereas here in Worland and in Wyoming, we are where we think we're independent of that. When things come down the pike and when worse comes to worse, we'll still be able to continue to take care of ourselves, and we can provide for ourselves.

Joanne: I think that's a good point you bring up, Loren. We learned to be very self-sufficient at a young age and learned how to do with what we had, and I think we could still do that.

Loren: Worland has shrunk. We don't have any car dealerships, we have one grocery store, we have no filling stations on Main Street. The Main Street that we knew when we were children, all the stores that run up down Main Street, the clothing stores, the jewelry stores, the whatever stores, grocery stores are gone. When you drive into Worland, you come across the railroad tracks, and God, the first block or two are just these old empty buildings. It's kind of sad.

YOUTH ACTIVITIES: DRAGGING MAIN

Loren: During our reunion a few months ago, Dennis Bower had the coolest little '55 Chevy Bel Air that he led us in dragging Main Street, and we all envied his car. I don't know where the custom came from of dragging Main, but we all got in our cars or our parents' cars and went up and down Main Street. Of course, at Christmas time, they put the Christmas tree at the end of Main Street, so you would have to turn around the tree and come back down Main Street. I don't remember who it was that told you [classmate Ray Godfredson in his oral history], but he said, "Yes, I did the damn thing backwards." I did it too. One time I started at Wilson Drive-In at 14th and Main Street and got down to about the Courthouse, and there was Connie Thomas sitting there with the lights on. He said, "What the hell do you think you are doing?"

Joanne: Connie Thomas was our local policeman, wasn't he? Think how blessed we were to have the policemen that were so understanding. And they knew what you were doing was harmless.

Loren: Oh, yeah,

Joanne: Who are the other policemen?

Loren: There were three of them that used to be together all the time – Tiny Erhardt, Connie Thomas, and what was the Chief's name?

Joanne: Was it Carl Sneed? That just came to mind.

Loren: Yes. There were four policemen. Oscar McClure was the fourth one.

Loren: Anyway, it was the summer of our senior year when Sonny Shearer and I decided we were big enough to go into the bar, So we went into Kelly's Bar down on Main Street. Do you remember when you were small, there were no liquor stores anywhere else except right there on Main Street? Back in the '20s or '30s,

for some reason, they decided that liquor stores could exist only in one area, and that was why all the bars were always lined up on Main Street.

So Sonny and I went in there. Kelly Cook, the owner, knew who we were and what we were doing. We were sitting there, big-time, drinking our beer, and Carl Sneed walked through the door. This was about nine o'clock at night, and Kelly Cook would give him a fifth or a pint of whiskey in a flask. He came in and got the flask. Sonny and I froze right there, and as he walked out the door, the Chief said, "Oh, by the way, you tell those two young gentlemen that if I come back, they better not be here." As soon as he walked out of the door, those two beer bottles were still in mid-air, and we headed toward the back door before the bottles hit the table.

Joanne: He didn't arrest you or anything. You know, that's how it was then.

Loren: I also remember Bill Barnett was our local Highway Patrolman. He was a wonderful person!

FAMILY HISTORY: GRANDFATHER OPENED THE BASIN TO THE REST OF WYOMING

Cathy: I've been listening and taking some notes and have a couple of questions. First of all, about your Grandfather Laird and how he opened the Big Horn Basin to the rest of the state. It's hard to remember that the Big Horn Basin used to be isolated in the winter. We couldn't cross the mountains to the East and the West, and you couldn't drive south because there was no road through the Wind River Canyon, and there was no train through the canyon until the early '20s. So how did your grandfather open the Big Horn Basin?

Loren: At the time, the railroad had already dug the tunnels and laid the track along the south side of the canyon walls. They were already established. So, the canyon was open for trains. But without a road, you had to go over Birdseye Pass on top of the Owl Creek Mountains, or you had to go through the Upper Nowood Creek in the Big Horns.

The governor, Nellie Ross Taylor, decided they needed a highway to connect the counties up here in the Basin with the rest of the state. My granddad was the State Superintendent of Public Highways at the time. That's how the Lairds got involved in this. So, they started building the highway on the north side of the river across from the railroad. He's the one that helped dynamite the holes through the mountain that are now the tunnels – those walls were pure granite, they are really hard. My granddad was the superintendent, and it was his job to do it, and he did it. There's a little more, but I'm not going to tell you that.

Cathy: I always heard that he took the entire highway budget for the State of Wyoming for two years to build the road. Have you ever heard of that?

Loren: I don't know that he used the entire budget, but he did build roads. He was the one that built all the roads going toward Cody and Riverton, Lander, and Buffalo at the time. Do you remember the old highways we used to drive up? My granddad was the engineer behind building all those roads, and then he achieved his success in the oil field, and after that, he moved on to other things.

Joanne: I am just going to say the roads in the canyon, as we know them today, are not the same roads that they put through originally because they used to be closer to the river, I think.

Loren: It was just a little two-lane highway going through there. It seems like you looked down over the river, and it was rushing by. Have any of you driven through there lately? You have, Joannie. Good Lord! the rocks could come down any minute now, they're just barely hanging on. The road could be closed in an instant if one little shudder happened.

Joanne: Every spring, they have rockslides. All we need is a lot of moisture. I think one of my favorite things is to drive through the canyon during the winter and see all the icefalls. You don't notice the waterfalls in the summer, but the canyon walls are loaded with icefalls in the winter.

Loren: And the rocks are getting worse every year. They have more and more slides. Do you remember that every time you were in the canyon and went through the tunnels, you had to honk in the tunnels as you went?

Joanne: Yes, we always did that. It makes a funny sound.

IMPACT OF WORLD WAR II > GERMAN POWS

Joanne: Loren, were there any impacts from World War II on your life?

Loren: The story about the German POWs you've heard – the picture I showed you earlier of Gene and me playing. At that time, there were farmers around here using German POWs. They had a POW camp in town, and they would send these German prisoners out to work on the farms. One time Gene and I were playing near the big irrigation ditch in our backyard, and some of the German POWs were working the field. Gene fell in the ditch, and he was floating down it when this big German soldier ran over and grabbed him, and pulled him out of the ditch. He was holding him and hugging him. My mother was watching this, and then she immediately went over there, and that big German was just crying his eyes out.

Gene was a redhead, and the soldier was trying to tell her that he had a family back home and one of his children was a redhead. So when he grabbed Gene, it reminded him of home, and of course, he saved Gene at the same time. As far as WWII, I didn't have much to do with it, Cathy.

Cathy: Your dad didn't go into the service because he was a farmer?

Loren: No, my dad was too old when the war started. First of all, they didn't want to draft farmers if they didn't have to, but a lot of them volunteered for it.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: LAIRD FARM CLASS PICNICS

Cathy: I don't know if you remember first discovering the difference between town kids and country kids. For me, it was when you had all of us first graders out to your farm for a picnic at the end of the school year.

Loren: It was a family thing. It was a school tradition back then. We had this big orchard down in front of the house here on the farm. It was full of peaches and apples and plums and a pasture. At the end of the school year, they would come out and have a picnic for all the grades or for the first grade or something like that. Yes, they did that for a long time. It was a tradition that the Laird farms provided for the school district. Mary said that her school and her class did it too.

Joanne: What year was that?

Loren: Mary said it was in the '90s; they were still doing it.

Cathy: The thing I remember is how surprised a lot of the kids were to see cow pies. They'd never seen cow manure before – I'm a ranch kid, and I couldn't believe it – and then Jimmy Hagen fell into a cow pie and had to be taken home to change his clothes. Do you remember Joannie? You were there.

Loren: Well, yes, cow pies from the milk cows that would go out into the orchard. But yes, the school buses brought the kids out, and we had a big school picnic out here. That's right. That was great.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL: SINGING

Cathy: And my last question was about Mrs. Laird, who taught us singing in elementary school. Do you remember all of us singing?

Joanne: Vivian? It was Vivian Laird.

Loren: She was Vivian Hayes. The Hayes ranch is outside of Thermopolis. She married my dad's older brother whose name was Glenn Laird. They had four children and lived here, and he was the apple of my grandad's eye. He died of an apparent gallbladder attack. For some reason, it got infected, and it killed him when he was only 37 years old. He had four children and a young wife, Vivian Hayes Laird. So, after he passed away, she took it upon herself — she was very independent, and she was strong-willed — so she took her family to Oakland, California. At that time, that's where my dad's older sister, Fern, was living. Vivian raised her kids out there for a little while, and then she came back. And I think it was in junior high when she was teaching music, wasn't it? [**Note:** One of Vivian's children was Eloise Laird Shaw, a longtime resident of Worland.]

Cathy: Mrs. Laird taught us in elementary school. Joanne, do you remember?

Loren: I remember taking classes from her.

Joanne: Early elementary.

Loren: I thought it was in the Emmet building, or maybe that's just where she taught.

Cathy: The Emmet Building would have been elementary.

Loren: Well, third, fourth, yeah yeah.

Cathy: Do you remember some of the songs she taught?

Loren: Oh, not really. They were traditional songs though I'm thinking

Cathy: *Cielito Lindo, Santa Lucia, My Old Kentucky Home* —

Loren: I remember learning all the Christmas songs. All the traditional Christmas songs we know and sing, she taught, and she played the piano.

Joanne: Did Vivian get involved with the Wedding of the Water ceremony in Thermopolis? It seems like she did.

Loren: I'm sure she did, but I don't ever recall that, but she probably did it, and she was politically active as a Republican. She had a lot to do with that — a huge influence there. She was something, quite an individual, really. And that was who she was.

LAST THOUGHTS ABOUT CLASS REUNIONS

Joanne: I think you've covered many, many things and details, and I think you've done a wonderful job. The last thing that our class has done together was the reunion we held at the end of May 2022, which was very well attended. We missed and have lost several of our classmates. We felt very lucky to have the ones we did at the reunion.

Loren: Quite frankly, I liked this class reunion. I enjoyed it very much. Everybody was just pretty much laid back, and we all enjoyed each other immensely. You know, I don't know who these people are now that I grew up with — Cathy, you moved away, and you come back — but they're all total strangers. I thought, and I still do think, we had a special class. I don't know if every class thinks that. Well, I thought we did. I thought we had some unique individuals. I thought we had good leadership. I thought we had good people, and I enjoyed being a part of that class.

There are classes now that don't even have class reunions because there's no organization, or they didn't get along. But I felt very fortunate that we did have a reunion. I just liked our class and the people who were in it.

Joanne: I agree 100% there, Loren. We were very fortunate that our group had so much in common, and we worked for the betterment of the whole group, not just an individual, and it's still that way when we get together. We've been friends for 60 years and can just be ourselves.

Loren: I mean that the people that were there were good people, and I was glad to be reacquainted with all of them. And especially you, Cathy, and Joan (Walseth Purcell) came around, keeping everything going, and I appreciate that too.

Joanne: I was so pleased to meet your daughters. I didn't get a chance to see Margie very much, but Mary has been wonderful, and you just raised several jewels!

Loren: Well, their mother did, anyway. I just benefit from it. Thank you, Joannie. Thank you very much.

Joanne: I told Mary that she didn't fall far from the tree and that she should never lose her "Florence," her grandmother's beautiful personality.

Loren: Yes, that's true.

WASHAKIE MUSEUM: THANK YOU FOR BEING INTERVIEWED

Joanne: Thank you, Loren, for being interviewed.

Loren: Thank you.

