

Johana Bird Whisenant

My memories of Salida go back to July 1936 when my parents, John (1900-1963) and Beatrice Bird (Okla. 1904-1978), moved back to Salida from Colton, California. We stopped in Gunnison to pick up my mother's sister, Pearl Cope. Pearl had finished summer school at Western State College. We drove over the old unpaved Monarch Pass road. I watched for the colored insulators on the telephone poles and I remember thinking that the green ones and the purple ones were much prettier than the clear ones. We went to my maternal grandmother's house at 1229 H St. Her name was Melissa Cope.

Both of my parents had ancestors with earlier ties to Colorado and Salida. My paternal grandmother, Maude Carnes (1866-1928), had arrived in Gunnison from Vienna, Canada in 1889. She went to work at the La Veta Hotel. My paternal grandfather, Charles Bird (1863-1946 Alpena, Michigan) had arrived in Gunnison in 1892 to work for the railroad. He met Maude at the La Veta Hotel where many railroad men rented rooms and ate their meals. In 1894, Justice of the Peace George D. Bird, uncle of Charles Bird, married Charles and Maude. George's wife, Ann, and Joseph Blackstock were the witnesses. Grandpa said that Joe Blackstock, who started Blackstock Drugstore in Gunnison, was his best friend. Grandpa Bird was a fireman, and his railroad run was over Marshall Pass to Salida. A son, Dean, was born in 1895, and a son, Carl in 1899.

By the time my father was born in 1900, the family had moved to Salida to 504 Dodge St. A daughter, Esther, was also born at that house on Christmas Day in 1901. In 1903, Charles and Maude purchased a ranch from Charles Blanchard. This ranch was located on what is part of J and K streets, over to the present Holman Avenue, and up to the bike path. For many years it was known here as the Bird Place. I have a picture of the house that was torn down in the 1960's. Charles and Maude's last child Opal was born there in 1905. She had a defective heart, and lived only three days, and is buried in Fairview Cemetery.

Josie Price, Chester's mother, told us that she remembered Maude Bird driving a small horse cart and delivering milk. About 1909 or 1910, the family had to move to a lower altitude because Charles Bird had a very bad heart. After moving to Salida, his railroad run had been over Poncha Pass to Moffat. The family ended up in Colton, California, where they each spent the rest of their lives, except for my father, John. The family held on to the Bird Place here in Salida. By 1918, John came back to stay on the ranch until he joined the Navy in 1920. In 1922, he returned again to ranch. By 1926, he had had enough of ranching, and sold the Bird Place to H. E. Reynolds, and John went back to California. In 1929, he made a trip back to Salida to marry Beatrice Cope, and they lived in California until July 1936.

James (Jim) Orval Cope (1874-1956) and Melissa Cope (1879-1963) were my maternal grandparents. They were born in Missouri, and had married there in 1897. Soon after, they left on an Oklahoma land grab with Jim's parents, brother, and several other relatives. They obtained land near Buffalo, Oklahoma. Jim was a good worker, but in the fall when the crops were in, he started a habit of leaving until the next spring. Colorado was his usual place to roam. Finally, he stayed in Colorado, and they lost their homestead in Oklahoma. Melissa and their three children followed him to Colorado twice, only to be deserted by him. The first time he deserted them in Meeker in 1910. The second time he deserted them in Fowler, Colorado in 1913. In Fowler in 1913 the oldest child, Orval, age 13, was the sole support for his pregnant mother, his brother George and sister Beatrice, until sister Pearl was born in 1913. In 1914, Melissa received word that Jim was in Salida. She arrived on the train with four children and nine dollars. She rented the house at 900 J Street. Soon, Jim showed up at the house.

They moved too many times for things to have been prosperous. They lived in the house on the Bird ranch. They lived in the Gilligan house near K Street, between 12th and 13th streets. The Gilligan house was a large two-story stone house. It burned in the 1950's. Mother said it had a beautiful front door with a leaded glass design. It had beautiful wood inside the house, and on the staircase. It had been built by a man with the last name of Gilligan, who was an early settler to Salida. They also lived at the Plimpton ranch. This was on a small hill that sets back and above Wendell Hutchinson's house and the Denison property on U.S. Highway 50. (I have a letter that the Plimpton son wrote to my grandfather Jim just before he was killed in World War I.) Then they lived in the large old house on the present Denison ranch. That house had been built by a gambler, and mother said it had a hidden staircase that was slater taken out.

They also lived across the road from the County Poor Farm on what is now Terry Everett's property. Many times grandma would say that she was always afraid she might have to go to the County Poor Farm to live. Finally, they bought 1229 H Street, but in 1918, grandpa took a job working on a ranch near Alamosa. They rented 1229 H, and

went to Alamosa. Orval was on his own by this time, and remained in Salida. Grandma only remained in Alamosa about three months. She, George, Bea, and Pearl came back to Salida on the train. 1229 was rented. Melissa took a job as a cook and housekeeper for Art and Bailey Hutchinson on their ranch on Highway 50 in the old homestead that was recently put on the historical register. She worked for them two or three years, and then she and the three children went back to 1229 H.

They really struggled financially. Grandma Cope worked in some of the restaurants and sometimes the Salida Laundry. She also took in washing and ironing. George had a donkey and cart, and he gathered wood for the family, and also to sell. He did any odd jobs that he could find. He had always lived on ranches, and was a good ranch hand. George Cope told me that someone gave grandma an electric iron. He said they couldn't afford the few cents of electricity that the iron would require. Grandma heated flat irons (she called them "sad irons") on the stove and ironed beautifully with those. She never had a washing machine. All of her life she washed clothes with a scrub board and had two galvanized tubs. George would pick up and deliver the wash and ironing.

In 1921, a friend asked Grandma Cope if she knew her house was up for foreclosure. She didn't. She found out that Jim, who was still living in Alamosa, had borrowed money on 1229 H and hadn't paid back the money. Grandma said she was one of the first clients of a new young lawyer, William Rush. Grandma divorced Jim Cope and kept the house from foreclosure, and it was put in her name.

Orval Cope worked on the railroad as a switchman here in Salida all of his life. He retired in 1964, but died in 1965. He married Leola Langfield in Salida in 1919. Their only child, Norman, was born one year later. Norman now lives near Chicago.

Bea, George, and Pearl all graduated from Salida High School. Both girls became schoolteachers.

George Cope was in the first class of 19 men of the Colorado State Patrol (1935). Carl Lantz of Salida was also in that class. Here is what Aunt Pearl wrote for me about that first class:

"George was one of the first 19 men that established the Patrol in the State of Colorado. When the unit was established, there was no law enforcement on the highways. People could drive as fast as they pleased, trucks had no regulations, etc. So that first Patrol was the first to bring law to the highways. I recall _____ said to Mama, "Well, _____ said that he would just like to see one of those men give him a ticket! They have no authority."

A lot of people felt that way, and so two patrolmen always traveled together, for people would want to attack and question their authority. They were at first called the State Highway Courtesy Patrol. They later dropped the "courtesy" adjective, for people thought possibly that meant coming and changing tires for them, etc. That first year, and a few years later, were years of testing the authority of the Patrol. However, people soon learned that they were called up before the court and given a fine. If they used motorcycles or if they were in their cars, two officers traveled together for safety for themselves, because they were so resented.

Many highway laws went into effect during that first year. Trucks had to have lights, showing the width of their truck. Anyone carrying a long board or something sticking out of their vehicle had to have a red flag on it, kids could not ride on the floorboards of pickups, there could not be four in the front seat to crowd the driver, etc.

Jobs were so scarce at that time; it was during the depression. When asked if they could ride motorcycles, all the fellows said, "Oh, yes!" Most had never even been on one, let alone ride and control one -- George included! Well, when those fellows were taking their training and they were ordered on their motorcycles they said they could ride, it was hilarious! The lot was covered with guys on the ground with their motorcycles on top of them, etc.

George was first placed in Montrose with a very fine young man. Their run also included Gunnison. At that time the cattlemen in Gunnison were having their cattle rustled by truckers. So one of the Patrolman's duties was to watch and check trucks for stolen cattle; however, not many Patrolmen could read brands. Since George was well versed in that, the cattlemen of Gunnison asked for George to be stationed right there where he was needed so badly."

Later George Cope was sheriff of Gunnison for 18 years. Most of that time he didn't have a deputy. He bought 1229 H St. from his siblings and came back to Salida to live his last years. He was buried in Gunnison in February 1980 beside his wife, Louise Howell Cope. At his funeral they told of that Colorado Patrol badge #1 of which he was so proud.

George and Louise had three sons; Jack, George and Craig. Louise died when their oldest was 15, and George raised the three boys. Jack died a number of years ago. George is a dentist in Brighton, Colorado, and Craig is a salesman in California.

Pearl Cope taught her first year of school at Centerville and then was accepted into the Salida grade school at McCray. She always credited Dr. and Mrs. Gregg Larimer for encouraging her to attend college and giving her a good reference to be hired at McCray.

In 1940 when Pearl married, she could no longer teach in Salida. Married women were allowed to teach only in the rural schools. The first year of her marriage she taught at the Sand Park School. World War II changed the rule for married women who were teachers. The men teachers had to go to war and there was a shortage of teachers. Then married women were allowed to teach in the city schools.

The streets in Salida were still dirt in the late '30s. The only exceptions were F Street, which was paved, and G Street was paved up to 11th Street. First Street was paved all the way through town. The city had an ancient looking truck with a water tank (orange and black) that went up and down each street twice a day and sprayed water out both sides to wet the street down and settle the dust.

There was a ditch with running water in front of Grandma Cope's house. Almost every street had a ditch on both sides with running water. Many people irrigated their lawns and garden from these ditches. Mrs. Jensen on the corner of 13th and H streets irrigated her beautiful garden every night with the ditch water. Mrs. Jensen was a widow and had raised a large family. She worked for the Catholic priest as cook and housekeeper. She raised almost all her food in her garden and also had some chickens.

There was a maple tree and two cottonwood trees in front of 1229 H Street. Currant bushes were along the fence that faced the Bertchy house on the corner. An apricot tree, which Uncle George had planted from a seed when he was 15 was on the other side of Grandma's house next to Mrs. Beaugaurd's kitchen window. That tree is still producing apricots. Mrs. Beaugaurd at 1225 H was Eugenia Mary Herbert Beaugaurd, widow of Joseph, and she was close to 80 years old in the late '30s. She had 13 children and had helped raise some grandchildren. She could walk with crutches, but usually used her wheelchair. She credited George for saving her life. She had fallen one winter night on a trip to the outhouse. She broke her hip and couldn't get up. Uncle George had heard her cries and went to her rescue. She and her husband were early settlers in this area. She died in December, 1942.

If Grandma wanted a bottle of milk, she would put a dime under the clean milk bottle and set it on the front porch step. Mr. Sneddon, our milkman, would drive by. When he saw the empty bottle, he would replace it with a full bottle. This was done for people who weren't regular customers every day. Whipping cream came in a bottle. Usually we didn't need that because a good 1/3 of the quart of milk had cream on top thick enough to whip.

There was a card saying "ICE" to put in the window when ice was wanted. We didn't get ice all the time, and never needed ice in the winter. The ice man would drive down the streets every day in his ancient looking covered truck with big blocks of ice in the back of his truck. I liked to watch for the iceman. He always handed a child a piece of ice to suck on. Ten cents worth of ice was all Grandma's icebox would hold. If company was coming, she would get fifteen cents worth, as lots of iced tea would be drunk. Then the lid wouldn't go down on the icebox, and she would put layers of newspaper over the ice so it wouldn't melt so fast. The back of the ice truck had a scale. The iceman had big tongs with which he carried the ice. Grandma disliked her icebox. Today it would bring at least \$200 at auction. It was just a wooden cupboard where milk, butter, eggs, meat, leftovers, etc. were kept cool. If anyone brought any ice cream home, it was eaten immediately as the icebox wasn't cold enough to keep ice cream. I now have Grandma's green-handled ice pick that she used to chip the ice. She gave it to me on my request when she got her refrigerator.

One day, Aunt Pearl bought a little chair and a stool from a peddler who came to the door selling small furniture he had made. The bark was rough hewed on them. Sharon now has the chair and I have the stool. Peddlers selling items were common in those depression years. It was also common for men to come to the door asking to do any

work in payment for something to eat, or even just asking for a sandwich. It was common to see men walking along the highways with a bundle of possessions.

There was a loud whistle at the railroad depot that would blow a steady whistle for about 5 seconds at 12 noon and 12 midnight. Clocks could be checked by it, and it was heard all over town. It also blew when there was an emergency. I remember how it blew when the nurses quarters at the hospital burned in 1945, and also when WWII was over.

My parents were gone a good portion of the time between the fall of 1936 and the summer of 1938. I was left with Grandma and Aunt Pearl. My folks would come in on Saturday night and leave again on Sunday. One early memory of mine is being in Bowers Grocery on Saturday night. Saturday night was a busy time downtown. People worked six days a week. All the stores stayed open on Saturday night so people could come to town and do their shopping and the men could get a haircut, etc.

Grandma and I would walk to town about two times a week. G Street was Grandma's favorite street because there were huge, big trees on both sides of the street and it was a shady walk -- 90% of those trees are gone now. Often we would go to the library and I liked walking through Alpine Park. The bandstand in the center was still there, and in the summer, music would be played there on a Saturday night. I always enjoyed looking at those lions at the entry on F and 4th.

Whenever I went to town with Aunt Pearl, she would take me to see the big fish in the pond on the corner of East 3rd and F. This large shaped "S" pond was built as a WPA project. (The courthouse and the swimming pool were also WPA projects.) The first time that I was taken to the fish hatchery was the summer of 1936 or 1937. They had a big St. Bernard dog. It was the first time I had seen a St. Bernard.

Across from the fishpond on the west side of F Street was the Y&R Garage. Mrs. Young would come out in a nice dress and high heels and pump gas for a customer, with hands covered in beautiful diamond rings. All garages and gas stations pumped the gas for their customers and cleaned their windshield. There wasn't self-service in those days.

Salida's downtown area is much, much different today than the '30s and '40s. Some of the stores that I will name now were from the late '40s, but most were doing business in both the '30s and '40s. Starting on the east side of East 3rd and F there was a garage. Next to it in the late '40s was a McDonald's Dry Goods Store, and later, Public Service was in that building. Then there was a Golden Rule Dry Goods store, Hayes Picture Studio, Isis Theater, Ned Lanari's Shoe Repair, and next to Ned's in the late '40s was Dietrich Heating and Metal Works. Joe and Margaret Dietrich gave me my first summer job of 1951. They had a young married man working for them by the name of Johnny Berndt.

Andon's Cafe would later open where the Golden Rule was. The flower shop was next. Davis' had it in the '40s. In the '30s, an elderly couple by the name of Hodding had the flower store. They lived in the little house on the alley in the 300 block of F, just a block from their store. Tuttle Trading Post and Koster Finance on the corner of F and East 2nd completed the rest of that block. Oh, yes, also in that block was later the B&C Variety Store. It was a wonderful store run by Mrs. Budd (Dr. Ed Budd's mother), and her sister, Mrs. Cooper. The store was so crowded that customers could hardly pass in the aisles, but they had a wonderful quality of merchandise. They had their variety store earlier in a larger store across the street on the alley. I don't remember if they had their store there before or after Archie Costello had his variety store there.

On the west side of the 200 block of F was Crews Beggs. In the late '20s, they also had a shoe store besides the main building. Across the alley to the north was Costello Variety Store. Then came Gilbert Dress Shop, and then Allen Book Store. Allen's carried mostly the school textbooks and school supplies. There was Lewis Candy Kitchen, and then on the corner of West 3rd and F was the First National Bank. Safeway was on the west corner of the 100 block of F. Later it would be Boy's Market and still later Montgomery Ward. Then came Woolworth, which I will miss forever. Then came Gloyd's, which later became Salida Building and Loan before they moved to West 2nd. Shay Drug Store was on the alley before one came to the bakery. Just before Shay Drug was Patterson Hardware. Beyond the bakery was Mode O' Day dress shop, Gorsline Jewelry (later Donahue Jewelry), Flory's Shoe Store, and the Men's Store on the corner.

Across from Safeway on the corner was Alexander Drug (now Lallier's). On the 2nd Street side of Alexander's were all the names of the Chaffee County men who served in WWII, and those who had died had a gold star by their name. I hope that list was kept somewhere! Powell Beauty Shop and Cady Hardware came next, and then Indian Grill Cafe and Gambles. Bill and Bob Cook's grandparents and their sons, Sanford and Raimon, had Gambles in 1945. Cox Drug Store was across the street from the bakery. They had the best sodas in town for 20 cents, shakes 25 cents, and Cokes 5 cents. Then came Bateman Hardware (later Sharpe's Dress Shop), Ralston the dentist, The Candy Kitchen that we always called The Greek's due to the two Greek men who owned it. They had wonderful homemade candy and ice cream. It was a favorite hangout for high school students. Waggoner Pharmacy was on the corner of 1st and F streets.

On the north corner of F and First was Trephone Grocery, and across the street, Frank Runco had a liquor store. North of the liquor store was Doveton's Clothing Store. The next two blocks north had many liquor stores, bars, restaurants, grocery stores, and the Palace Hotel and the Manhattan Hotel. The Victoria Tavern has been in the same place as long as I can remember. The picture show has been on west First as long as I can remember. The Sherman Hotel and restaurant was on the corner of G and First. Once during WWII they had a black chef. The corner of G and West 2nd had the Costello Garage (Ford), and the Costello Bar and Dance Hall were behind it on G. City Market was across the street on the west corner of 2nd and G. Bowers Market was across the street from Costello Garage on the east side. Later, Western Auto would have a store there, and later still Dr. Lund remodeled it for his office.

One of the prominent buildings was Lippard Electric on the alley of the 200 block of G. It was a two story red brick building, and Mr. Les Lippard could fix anything electrical. On the corner of G and West 3rd was the Red Cross Hospital. It had three stories when I was small. The Masonic Order later bought it for their temple. They took the third story off and then in the '70s they took off the second floor. Safeway didn't always have the entire 200 block of G. To date they have had four stores in that block, and Foster Lumber Co. used to also be located in that block.

Salida Transfer and Storage was by the railroad tracks on West 3rd. Across the street was Rio Grande Motorway and Frieght Co. Cowan Feed Store was on West 7th past the Longfellow School. Vaughn Feed Store was on West Sackett. The Salida Creamery was on the corner of H and West 3rd. Ranchers brought their milk and cream and eggs there to sell. Ice cream was sold there, and a cone was 5 cents.

Purcell's Phillips 66 Service Station was at the end of H Street and Highway 50. Two Purcell brothers owned it. The married brother lived in the log house next to the station.

Across Highway 50, behind the present Country Bounty Restaurant, was the Lyons Ice House. One ancient, green-colored house still stands behind the U.S. Forest Service building. There the ice was cut and stored for the year.

Shonyos were a farm family that the Bird family was acquainted with. I asked later where their farm was located. I was told Shonyo's was what is now the Mel Keserich property on West Highway 50.

The one place that I hated to see lost and not put on the state historical register was Dr. Newton's place on Highway 50, where the Collegiate Peaks Bank is now located. Dr. Newton's house was a two story gray stone house with a large barn in the back. Mrs. Newton was a well-known early photographer of Colorado. I have seen some of her pictures in histories of early Colorado.

Mrs. Nederman was librarian at the library when I was little and in high school. She had neuralgia, and her head and hands shook. I hoped that I never got neuralgia. She had three shelves covered with a black curtain by her desk at the library. There she had all the "sexy and dirty" books. She wouldn't check anything out that was under the curtain to anyone under 21 years old. Often those books were best sellers. When I was in high school, my mother was on the library board. Mother would substitute for two weeks each summer when Mrs. Nederman took vacation. For those two weeks Mother would let me read anything under the curtain. I remember that "From Here to Eternity" and "Knock on Any Door" were under that curtain.

Gypsies camped at the base of Poncha Mountain every summer. They had little homemade wood caravans on the back of pickups or trucks, and sometimes pulled homemade caravans behind their cars. They dressed as one sees

Gypsies dressed in movies. Women wore long gathered skirts and a blouse and a kerchief on their long hair. Men wore regular looking pants and loose shirts. Word would go out that "the Gypsies are in town." Gypsies had the reputation for stealing.

My early school memories are not of Salida. I would like to include a few because they are memories of rural Colorado and a two-room school.

In the fall of 1938, Mother, Beatrice Cope Bird, was hired to teach the first four grades at Villa Grove. Her salary was \$40 per month. Her salary would increase \$10 during each year she taught at Villa Grove. Daddy, John Bird, took a job helping at the Sipe ranch and we rented two rooms at that ranch. Daddy took me with him while he worked that year. In the summer of 1939, we rented the little log house that still stands on the left after crossing the bridge to enter Villa Grove. We rented that house for the next six years. Poncha Pass was being paved that summer. In the fall of 1939, I was five years old. Daddy had gone to working the mines and there was no one to take care of me. Mother took me to school and put me in her first grade. Problems and duties that a rural schoolteacher had were much different from duties of public school teachers. They were totally from the later 20th century. There were two teachers and less than thirty kids. The teacher had to empty ashes and start the fire when she arrived each morning. She kept the fire going all day. It was up to the school board (usually three or four members in a rural school) to see that there was wood and coal. The teacher pumped a bucket of water from a well and kept that bucket on a small table or cupboard. There would be a dipper or a cup to dip the water. There was a tin or enamel pan or basin to wash hands, and a bar of soap nearby. A slop bucket would be on the floor to empty water not drunk or from washing. The teacher emptied the slop bucket each day.

We had to have a small glass or cup in our desk for a drink from the dipper. There was no community drinking from the dipper in Mother's classroom! Everyone was supposed to get a drink during recess or before class. Holding up one finger during class to get a drink was seldom granted unless the student had hiccups. Holding up two fingers was for permission to go to the toilet. Holding up a hand was to ask a question. Teachers had to clean the floors, the blackboard and erasers and any messes (sick child) that might be made in the schoolroom. At other schools, Mother had even killed rattlesnakes in the schoolyard using a shovel. At Villa Grove, a man took care of the furnace and cleaned the windows.

Occasionally, Mother had to whip someone. She was afraid of the boys who were as big or bigger than she was. Carrying a knife or stealing meant an automatic whipping. Parents wanted their children to mind and there wasn't any trouble. Mother was very prone to tap a child's hand with her pencil if the child wasn't holding a pencil or crayon properly. She would not allow a student to crouch with his nose just above his work. Teachers had to prepare LOTS of seatwork for students while the teacher worked with one class at a time. All this was run off on a mimeograph machine by the teacher. Teachers graded all of those papers. Children of migrant workers would arrive in the spring, perhaps at sheep shearing time. Those children always had lice. Both teachers would always examine the children's hair during recess when the other children were outside. When the lice/eggs were observed, that child was sent home to stay. Out would come the alcohol and everything would be wiped down.

The only playground equipment was a small merry-go-round and one large red ball and a length of jump rope. Often we played hopscotch. Boys sometimes brought their marbles and girls their jacks. Mother had a rule that no marbles could change hands. When there was snow on the ground we played fox and geese. On Arbor Day we spent the day cleaning the playground. There wasn't a tree anywhere on the playground and not enough moisture for one to grow.

Every morning just before school started, we stood outside and said the Pledge of Allegiance with our hand over our heart as the flag was raised. When Mr. McClarity taught the upper grades, he led us in calisthenics for a few minutes before we went in for class. The lower grades had singing for a few minutes each morning. Art was for one hour only on Friday afternoon. First grade learned to read from a large Dick and Jane folder that hung down over the stage. Then we went to a red Alice and Jerry reader. Each child brought a box of eight crayons, a Big Chief tablet, a pencil, and a wooden penholder with removable pen tip. Each September we received a large trunk of library books from the state. Those were sent back in May. Each year a different selection was sent. A child could keep one of those books in his desk to read when seatwork was done. Those books were a very important part of school for me. As soon as I learned to read, I found that I loved to read. Reading has brought a lifetime of enjoyment to me. I read every night after school while waiting for Mother to go home.

We didn't learn to print but we were taught cursive writing in the first grade. All four lower grades had writing every

day. We did lots of push and pulls and ovals on our writing paper. The third and fourth grade had geography and history which first and second grades didn't have. I remember listening to them recite multiplication tables. Lower grades usually had those pretty well memorized by the time they got to third grade.

Every year the school board furnished a supply of yellow sulphur ointment for impetigo, which seemed to erupt every winter. Impetigo is contagious, so it was important to check it fast. Mother would wipe the desks and books every night with rubbing alcohol.

The Christmas program was always the Christmas story from the Book of Luke in the Bible. All the traditional Christmas carols were sung and ending with "Silent Night." Afterward, Santa would come in with a sack of treats for everyone, not just the students.

The summer of 1940, I sat on our front porch and watched the Villa Grove Hotel being torn down. It was a large two-story building and had many rooms. It had been a stop on the early stagecoach line.

There wasn't any transportation for children attending school past the eighth grade. Some children went to live with relatives in other towns. A special driver's license was available to allow a 14-year-old to drive to Saguache to attend high school.

December 7, 1941; "a day that will live in infamy." I remember President Roosevelt's speech. I am not sure that I would remember that day if the electricity hadn't been turned on so everyone could hear the speech. I was so very impressed that the lights were on. The town generator was at the town garage, and even if it was on at night, we weren't supposed to use the electricity. My folks never cheated and used it. The generator was started on Monday mornings 'til noon so the women could wash. It was started again on Saturday morning 'til noon so that the two school teachers and the postmistress could wash. Soon after Pearl Harbor, my folks bought a battery radio from Ward's catalog. The cover was a "first experiment," and made with something they called "plastic" made from soybeans. At night we would listen to the news. We listened to a few programs such as "Fibber McGee and Molly," "Henry Aldrich," "Amos and Andy." Daddy liked "The Lone Ranger" and "The 20 Mule Team Borax show -- Death Valley Days." We were careful not to run the battery down. We had one gas Coleman lantern and one coal oil lamp. I didn't have homework, as Mother didn't believe in homework for little children. I seldom read at night, as the light was too poor. Daddy was very good about playing dominoes and board games with me at night.

The men talked of war and had to register for the draft. Daddy was A2, meaning he was in good physical condition (A) and had two dependents.

The miners were "frozen" on their jobs and couldn't quit unless called up for the draft. The Bonanza mines started working six, and sometimes even seven days a week. The freight train into Villa Grove was active carrying out the zinc, lead, silver and gold ore.

World War II brought shortages of many items, and rationing of sugar, meat, gas, shoes, and tires. New tires were not available, and retreads were hard to find. There were coupon books for sugar and another for meat. One was blue and the other red. I don't remember which color was for which one. There were little round cardboard tokens of blue and red given in change. We didn't have trouble with sugar, as we didn't use it in coffee or tea, and Mother seldom baked. Many people used saccharin. The women passed a recipe around for making a cake with a box of pudding mix. They were terrible cakes -- not like the recipe we have today made with pudding mix. Butter wasn't in the stores. We had margarine and it looked like white lard. A small red capsule of dye was with the pound of margarine. That capsule was broken into the margarine to color it. We worked in the color with a spoon.

The meat coupons were harder for us to stretch, and sometimes we ended up with sardines for supper. Daddy would go duck, rabbit, and deer hunting, and fishing in season. Occasionally, a rancher would sell us a chicken. Chocolate candy was what I missed most. Hershey bars were seldom seen, and not ever again would they be wrapped in foil. Candy bars, when available, were five cents, as were packages of peanuts and gum. Big round suckers of every color were available and were two cents. Pop was five cents, seven cents if you didn't have a bottle to return. Gas was rationed, and the miners from Villa Grove stayed in Bonanza until the weekend, as they didn't have gas to drive each day.

Rural Electrification did more for the housewives of rural America than anything else. REA was just about to reach Villa Grove when we left. REA brought refrigerators, freezers, lights, and electrical appliances. What a Godsend it

was to have a refrigerator and electric iron. Later, television would be an important part of everyone's life.

In 1945, when I was ready for sixth grade, Mother quit her job and brought me to Salida and put me in McCray Elementary School. She wanted me to graduate from Salida schools. McCray was where the Post Office is today. She rented two rooms at the Groy Apartments above Crews Beggs store. Weekends we went back to Villa Grove if we had enough gas. By summer, we all moved to 214 C Street. Daddy continued to work in the Bonanza mines, and he and several men drove from Salida each morning five days a week. In 1950, my parents bought 430 East 2nd Street where they lived the rest of their lives.

When I was growing up, Salida still had its "red light district." It was on West Sackett from F over to G (earlier called Front Street). I remember seeing women standing in this area. It was one block from the train depot, and usually the train depot was the area for prostitution in any town. Laura Evans was the "Madam" of Salida prostitution. She had the reputation for running a "clean house." She and her girls had helped nurse people back to health in the flu epidemic of 1919. I heard one of my aunts once say that many of Laura's girls had married railroad men and businessmen in this town. A man who had grown up in early Salida told me that there was a black woman who had her own little house behind Laura's place. She was called "Black Mary." She would call to the men from her doorway as they passed by, "Come on over and have a good time." Across the street from Laura's were the "cribs." They are now apartments behind the Palace Hotel. Dr. Larimer insisted that the Masonic Order buy Laura's place in the '50s and keep that end of town from deteriorating or getting bad. Laura's place is now the Shrine Building. When I was in high school, some of the boys would sneak down the alley at night, trying to see or hear something. I never heard that they saw or heard much.

Our Civics teacher in high school, Mr. Ellis, took us to a trial at the court. It was a case of a man from Howard accused of murdering his wife. She had left their home in Howard and come to Salida and joined Laura Evans' girls. Her husband came and took her out and was accused of killing her. We didn't get to stay for the trial, which disappointed all of us. Our teacher wanted us to hear the jury selection and how a case proceeded.

The year (1945-46) we lived in the Groy Apartments, Mother had her hair done every week by Lucille Howell. Lucille had her beauty shop there in her apartment. For a time she had her mother with her because her mother had been sick. Her mother had long white hair that she wore combed out over her shoulders. She always had on a robe and bedroom slippers with pom-poms on top. She would sit there and play solitaire and smoke. If the customers talked to her, then she would talk to them. My mother made it plain to me that she disliked Lucille's mother. I couldn't understand why she disliked Lucille's mother, even though I knew Mother didn't approve of smoking and playing cards. Later I learned that Lucille's mother was Laura Evans.

The only year that my mother didn't teach when I was growing up was the year she brought me to Salida for sixth grade. The following year she taught the upper four grades at Poncha School. Poncha was the first rural school in this area to consolidate with Salida. When Poncha consolidated with Salida in the fall of 1948, Mother went to Adobe Park School to teach. One year later, Adobe Park consolidated, and Mother went to Smelter School to teach. When Smelter consolidated in 1952, Mother was hired at Longfellow to teach first grade. She taught there until her retirement in 1971.

Mother's first year of teaching was 1923-24 at Nathrop. In 1924 until May 1929, she taught the first four grades at Poncha. She lived in a small little cabin behind Oatman's house and store. (I have pictures of that cabin and of the Poncha Church that burned in the early '40s.) When we came back to Salida in 1936, Mother taught the St. Elmo School that fall. St. Elmo didn't stay open in the wintertime because of the severe winters. In the fall of 1937, Mother taught at the Hollenbeck Gold Camp. From the fall of 1938 until June, 1944, she taught the first four grades at Villa Grove. She loved teaching and was a strong disciplinarian. Once Roy McGrath, principal of Longfellow School, told her that he always gave the problem children to her and Reva Holman because he knew that they could handle them. Mother wasn't sure that was a compliment! Three times at my high school class reunion, a boy I sometimes dated has said to me, "I sure was afraid of you mother." Three times I have answered him, "I sure was, too."

Johana Bird Whisenant was born to John and Beatrice Bird on December 29, 1933 in Colton, California. She graduated from Salida High School in 1951. She attended Western State College in Gunnison, then went on to graduate in 1955 from the University of Utah. She worked 23 years in Salida for new car dealerships as a bookkeeper. The car dealerships were McCoy, Argys, and Economy Datsun. Then she worked 14 1/2 years as a bookkeeper in the Chaffee County Clerk's office. Johana's children are Ed and Sheryl. Ed graduated from Salida High School in 1976, and is now a mechanical engineer in the Denver area. Ed and Elisa have three children:

Katherine, and twins Victoria and John. Her daughter Sheryl graduated from Salida High School in 1977, and is now a registered dietician. Sheryl and Husband Keith Farley live near Boulder. Sheryl's son is Dane.