

Palisade Historical Society
Oral and Video History Project
Interview

Oral History # 018

Date:02/05/2016

Place: Lyman Wallace home on East Orchard Mesa
3647 F Road, Palisade, Colorado 81506

Length: 1 hr., 31 min.

Interviewee: Lyman Wallace

Phone:

Interviewer: Melodie Mariner

Phone:

Videographer: Charlene Weidner

This is a summary of an oral history video recording created for the Palisade Historical Society. Lyman's daughter, Nancy Wallace Alexander, and son, Galen Wallace, were present during the interview and provided clarification and additional information for this oral history.

The text in *italics* is not part of the original transcript and is added for clarification.

Family:

Lyman Monroe Wallace was born in Tribune, Missouri, on August 22, 1927. The former farming community is now Fort Leonard Wood, a military base. The family moved to Lewis, Edwards County, Kansas, by the time Lyman was 3 or 4 years old. During the "dirty thirties," his parents grew milo and sorghum crops. He was the middle child, between big sister, Juanita, who was four years older and little brother, Lyle, who was four years younger. Lyman believes they were of Cherokee descent on their maternal grandmother's side of the family.

Lyman's father, Roy Oliver Wallace, was born in 1897 in Tribune, MO and passed away in Lewis, KS on October 18, 1939, after which the family moved from the farm into town. His mother, Eva York Wallace, was born in 1906 in Tribune, MO and died on May 18, 1942 in Lewis, KS. After Roy's death, she worked as a cook for the hot lunch program during the school year and then cooked for various farmers' workers during harvest.

At the time of Eva's death, Lyman's sister, Juanita, was attending Dodge City Community College and helping Margaret Talbott at Sunday school. Juanita intended to drop out of college to care for her younger brothers. When Margaret Talbott found out, she and her husband, Harry Talbott, Sr., intervened and changed Lyman and Lyle's lives. The boys moved to Dodge City with the Talbott family, including their young sons, Harry Charles and Ross. *Nancy noted Harry A. Talbott was sometimes called "Harry Sr.," but his son, Harry Charles, did not share the same middle name.*

Margaret Talbott's paternal grandfather, Joseph E. Yager, was first in the family to come from Iowa to Palisade in 1907. They had a home and orchard on 4th Street. Joseph's son, Charles,

brought his wife and four children to Palisade in 1918. Charles and Mary Yager's children were Ruth (Ball), Margaret (Talbot), Vera (Foss) and Joseph B. (Joe). They lived in the large house at the corner of G & 38 Roads, where you turn to go up the East Orchard Mesa hill, directly across the road from Ball's Fruit Stand. They raised peaches, of course.

In November 1942, the Talbot family was ready to return to Colorado, accompanied by Lyman, age 15, and Lyle, age 10. Harry and Margaret had both come to Colorado as young children from Kentucky and Iowa, respectively. Lyman described his first impression of Palisade: “. . . [I] thought I'd come to the Garden of Eden, coming from [Kansas during] the dirty thirties . . .” Within a week, he had pruning shears in his hands and learned the use of stilts to prune trees.

Education:

After Lyman moved to Palisade, he attended Palisade High School for his sophomore and junior years. In his senior year, he enrolled in Grand Junction High School because he was also going to be able to take classes at Mesa College. At the time, Grand Junction High School was located at 10th Street and Gunnison Avenue. Lyman graduated from Grand Junction High School in 1945.

In his senior year, Lyman was hired to drive the Mount Lincoln School bus, so he picked up the Mount Lincoln children, took them to school, and then drove the bus alone to Grand Junction. During the day, he parked the school bus at Laycock's Garage. At the end of the day, he returned to Mount Lincoln to pick up the children and take them home. This arrangement worked well for both Lyman and the Mount Lincoln School – they got a bus driver, and he got transportation to and from Grand Junction for school. There was a large, two-story building to the west of the Mount Lincoln School, which served as a gym and auditorium. In later years, it was torn down, and the second floor of the school building was removed, as well.

Military Service:

Lyman was drafted and inducted into the Army in 1945. After completing basic training, he was stationed at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Although the war in Europe was over, he was assigned with U.S. occupation troops to the 11th Constabulary Regiment, 94th Constabulary Squadron, stationed in Weiden, Bavaria, Germany. Their duty was to patrol the border of Germany with Czechoslovakia on horseback or on skis and snowshoes, keeping the border clear of illegal activities. He was also the Staff Sergeant in charge of the motor pool.

Lyman was recalled to active duty in 1950 and assigned to Camp McCoy, Wisconsin. A little later, Katy went by train to Wisconsin, and Roscoe Power took care of their orchard. About a year later, Lyman was to be deployed to Korea with combat engineers. He had ten days to take Katy home, take care of his affairs, and report to Fort Lewis, Washington. Aboard ship, he made it all the way to Japan before a “typo error” was discovered in the orders. From Japan, he returned to the United States and was discharged.

Life in Palisade:

Lyman returned to Palisade in 1947 and bought his first five-acre peach orchard, including a very small house, at 3647 F Road on East Orchard Mesa. The current home was built in 1962. The original house burned on Christmas Eve 1968. A flower garden, berry patch, and garage are now

in its place. Lyman still resides there in his orchard. He purchased the original house and peach orchard from Roscoe and Faye Power who lived in the log home that remains about a quarter-mile to the east.

Lyman wanted to be a veterinarian, but “it didn’t work out.” During the summer of 1947, Lyman met Kathleen (Katy) Fullmer at the Baptist church camp on the Grand Mesa. Katy was born February 9, 1930 in Los Angeles, coming to Grand Junction in 1937 with her parents, John and Ellen Fullmer, and siblings. Lyman’s cousin, Elaine Hargis, was a school friend of Katy. One day at the camp, Lyman was going to go fishing at Eggleston Lake, and he invited the girls to join him. Elaine left to change clothes and never came back. “It was a set up,” Lyman says, “I didn’t figure it out. She (Katy) caught a sucker.” The rest is history. The couple was married on September 26, 1948 at the Fullmer home on 30 Road in Fruitvale where Plaza del Sol now sits.

Lyman and Katy’s first child, Nancy, was born January 21, 1953. She was followed by Juanita (“Nita”) on July 15, 1962 and Galen on July 21, 1965. Harry Senior and Margaret Talbott served as grandparents to the children.

Once back in Palisade, Lyman planted apple trees between the older peach trees, which were failing. Over the years, he bought additional acreage from Jamie Clark and Elmer Rice. It was explained that peach prices were poor due to tough competition with California and other states. The Elberta (a peach variety) crop, as many as 2.4 million bushels, all ripened at once in a two-week period. This caused too much supply all at once.

Some type of supplemental income was needed for “keeping the wolf away from the door” in the 1950’s. Katy’s brother, Paul Fullmer, and Lyman staked uranium claims in Utah. Because of the long distance, they would stay for a week and return home for a week. The first claim was located near Woodruff Springs in the Henry Mountains not far from Hanksville. The ore was good, but it was just a pocket, or lens, in the Morrison formation. The second claim was in the San Rafael Swell in Red Canyon. This claim was “not worth it; just paid wages.”

The Talbotts raised poultry for about ten years to supplement the orchard income. They brooded turkeys in Palisade in a building on 2nd Street, where a local cannery once housed employees. This location on North River Road was behind what is now Dale Rocco’s cabinet shop. The Talbotts also built an incubator house on their East Orchard Mesa property at 3782 F¼ Road, where Harry Charles and Bonnie Talbott now reside. The building was two-storied with the incubators on the first floor and batteries for the warming lights on the second floor. There were also turkey sheds against the hill just to the west of where Talbott Farms’ packing shed is now located. Feed for the chickens and turkeys was kept in a feed mill near the Talbott’s house, along the dirt road that runs along the ridge above the river bank. The feed formulas were prepared at the mill, then a “grainavator” holding 6,000 pounds of feed was filled to transport the food to the birds.

Work Life:

In 1954 and 1955, Lyman and his brother, Lyle, drove bobtail trucks loaded with the caged turkeys for processing between Thanksgiving and New Year’s Day. They first used Longmont Foods’ turkey processing plant in Longmont, which meant a trip over Loveland Pass at night.

The dark, nighttime journey provided a calmer ride for the birds. One year near Frisco, it was snowing and the snowbank forming beside the road was deep. Lyle was driving when the truck turned over and many of the turkeys smothered in their cages. The brothers had to unload and leave many dead turkeys in the snowbank. On their return trip, they discovered a “turkey special” at a diner in Frisco where they stopped for dinner. They declined. Later, they drove turkeys in semi-tractor trailers to Salt Lake City for processing until 1962.

Lyman worked at the Climax Uranium Mill in Grand Junction from 1965 to 1970 when the mill was decommissioned. The mill processed both vanadium and uranium, first together, then separately as vanadium was water soluble and uranium had to be extracted with acid. Lyman operated a filter machine which filtered out water during one of the numerous processes.

The Wallace family hosted numerous foreign exchange students through the Experiment in International Living program. It was “cheaper than traveling,” and seemingly more rewarding. Daughter, Nancy, said, “It was a way for Mom and Dad to show us a broader view of life.”

Nancy added the following to complete the family history:

In 2013, Lyman received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Western Colorado Horticulture Society. Only a few weeks after celebrating their 67th anniversary, Katy passed away on November 4, 2015. Galen now manages the orchard, Nancy (Alexander) is a teacher at Bookcliff Middle School in Grand Junction, and Juanita (Timmerman) lives in Greeley where she constructs beautiful quilts. Lyman enjoys visits from his five great-grandchildren, with two more to arrive later in 2016.

Summary written by Gary Hines for the Palisade Historical Society 03/27/2017.