BIOGRAPHY OF
MRS. MARGE MORRISON
OF GREEN RIVER, WYOMING

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Marge Morrison was born in Wyoming, Pennsylvania in 1926 to Mr. & Mrs. William Scharada. Marge came into this world in what is known as an emergency birth. Her mother had fallen down some stairs -- an act that contributed greatly to Marge's early birth. She was, of course, born at home and there was no midwife in attendance. Her father was a miner who had worked in the mines in Pennsylvania from the time he was twelve years old until his daughter Marge was one year old, and this was in 1927. Marge's father then moved his little family to Sweetwater County in Wyoming where he went to work in the Union Pacific mining camps. The first camp he worked in was Dions where he stayed but a short time. He then took his family to Whitton where they remained until the mines closed. Her father then opened the gun shop that was located at 157 "K" Street and maintained that until he died in 1981. Marge's first impressions of Rock Springs were that there was a lot of different nationalities living here at the time. She also remembers the coal burning trains that came through this area and the piles of cinders that they left beside the tracks. In some places the cinders were piled up as high as three to four feet. When the wind blew the streets used to be covered with cinders.

Any time they had any big programs everybody would come from the camps. The biggest day that they celebrated then was Labor Day. All the coal miners and their families would meet at the Coal Company store in Rock Springs where the company would put on free shows using all the local talent. When Marge was older she and her brother would play their accordions in these presentations. Races were also held. The women would have potato peeling and egg carrying contests. The men would play Bocchi Ball and nail pounding contests. These celebrations were not a one day deal -- sometimes they would

last up to three days, but most of the time two days. Weddings were also a big thing back then -- these would also last for days. Whenever a celebration was planned, no matter what it was, the people would go all out.

Rock Springs was very small back then. The course of Bitter Creek had been changed because it had flooded the town once. Marge remembers that they had built a rock retaining wall around it then to keep it from happening again. She had an aunt that lived on Clark Street that had gotten flooded. The old part of town is down around "K" Street. There were two main streets -- the one that the Park Hotel is on and the one on the other side of the tracks across from the Depot. Across the street from the south side Catholic Church was where the old army barracks used to stand. Marge's grandmother used to live on "M" Street. There was at one time a little store there that sold mostly meat. Most of their shopping was done at the company store's though. The Lincoln Market, which was the store by where her grandmother lived, would have a whole yard out back full of live turkeys on Thanksgiving. It had a little shed out back where the turkeys were killed. The turkeys were then hung up in the store for the shoppers to inspect. After the turkey was picked, they were plucked and the insides were removed. Marge remembers riding the turkeys around the yard after their necks were broken.

Marge attended the primary school in Whitton from the first grade to the seventh grade. She then attended high school in Reliance. The house that Marge lived in when she was a little girl had four rooms, two bedrooms, a front room and a kitchen. They didn't have indoor plumbing when Marge was young. They had four or five outhouses out back. She relates that her dad had built them a wooden sink in the house, but the kids had to haul the water in and out. Until later years when her dad put a pipe out to the ditch out back to carry away the dirty water. This was the only kind of plumbing that they had for a long time.

In Whitton, besides the mine and the miners houses, they had a company store. Next to the store was the post office, a bar, and in front of the bar they had a candy store. All the drinking was done in the back of the candy store. According to Mrs. Morrison most of the people that her family knew at this time made their own wine. They would buy grapes by the ton -- a ton of white grapes and a ton of red grapes. The people with the presses would then go house to house pressing all the grapes. All of this, of course, would then go into barrels and everybody would then make their own wine. Whitton also had a recreation building where the school kids would put on Christmas plays and other activities. On Christmas and Easter the mining company would take money from the miners' pay checks so that the children would get something. On Christmas the girls would get a doll, the boys a truck or car, and they would all get a sack of candy.

Rock Springs, for as long as Marge can remember, has always had a lot of houses of prostitution. When she was a kid she was told that there were certain streets that she could not go down because of these places. It wasn't until later years that she found out why. These brothels were always right next to the bars or over the bars. This was also the case in Green River when Marge moved there as a young woman. There was a brothel on "K" Street that used to sit right next to where the Mercantile is now located. There was another one down the street where Jeffries Furniture is, and going back up the street there were three more on the main drag. Two of these were the M&M and the OK Bar. There were also three more across the railroad tracks that Marge knew of. Marge attributes this to the fact that Rock Springs has always had a lot of bars.

When Marge was growing up she said that as far as she knew there wasn't much violence around this area. The biggest things that she remembers is that

in Green River a colored man was shot on the south side of town for insulting a white woman. His body was hung from a lamp pole in front of the Union Pacific Depot in Green River. There was one other incident in Green River that Marge remembered. There was a brothel called Cat Willis's and one of the ladies of the evening stabbed a customer in the stomach with a pair of scissors and he expired in the street out in front of her house. The major violence didn't hit Sweetwater County until the boom showed up. Marge doesn't remember seeing or meeting any outlaws in Rock Springs or Green River. Of course she states, "I wouldn't have known one if I would have met him anyway".

As for religion, there was a church in Rock Springs for every denomination. The blacks and the CHinese had their own houses of worship. Behind where Marge lived there was a colored church. She used to go down there and peek through the window at them. Marge does not know what religion they practiced but she states that, "They used to burn candles all the time, and they used to holler and go through quite a few different antics. Maybe they were Holy Rollers". The kids used to pick up the candles that they used. Rock Springs also had a Catholic school back then too.

The only major disasters that took place in this area during Marge's life were mine cave-ins. She remembers a few earth tremors but she says that all they did was break a few dishes and these were really miner. Marge believes that these things really don't make a big impression on you until you're older. Mine accidents were the big thing though and made a big impression on everybody young and old alike. This was because everybody around was a miner and it could be your father or somebody else's father down in the mine. There were epidemics when Marge was a child. She related that when one child got sick they all got sick. Marge doesn't remember getting any shots for these kinds of childhood illnesses. The worst epidemic that they had she believes

was scarlet fever. The only hospital was in Rock Springs. The camps did have company doctors -- one in Reliance and one in Whitton. As far as she knows Dions didn't have a company doctor unless the doctors from one of the other camps went there from time to time. For any serious illnesses one had to come all the way into the hospital in Rock Springs. All the medicine she used to receive was given with castor oil. She states, "It was pink and peppermint tasting and it was just as greasy as grease, you know, yuk!" She remembers when she was in the hospital for a ruptured appendix and they would give her castor oil with soda in it to make it fizz, and the more you drank the more there was. She never got any shots when she was young.

Everybody up in the country had their own gardens. They raised chickens. Some raised hogs for slaughter. Marge's mother baked all the time. There was always fresh bread and pies on the table. She says that in the winter time the milk man would leave the milk outside on the porch and it would freeze and the cream would rise up out of it and her mother would save it for special occasions. There were no washing machines around at this time. All the clothes had to be scrubbed by hand. They had wooden floor that they would scrub by hand with lye soap.

The holidays that the whole town celebrated were of course Easter, Christmas and Labor Day. New Years everybody usually stayed home because they didn't have dances and stuff like we do now. They all stayed home and at midnight would go out on the porch and shoot their guns off for good luck to bring in the New Year. Back in the camps people were friendly and helpful. If anybody had a streak of bad luck, everybody would pitch in and help out. This is one of the things that Marge misses seeing today. They had a big holiday to celebrate the eight-hour work day every September. Everybody would bring pot luck and they would have a big picnic. They'd have barbecued goat

and pig that they would cook on a spit over an open fire. On the Fourth of July they had big barbecues also. Her dad and grandfather would get up early in the morning and put these animals on the spit so that they would be ready by the afternoon. Back then everybody came to Green River on the 4th to witness the fireworks. Green River had two nice parks, one on either side of the depot. Plus they had a nice one on an island. This one had a gazebo on it and they had a band play there every weekend. Marge's family would load up the family Model A and go to Green River from Rock Springs on the weekends. They would go over to the park to picnic and listen to the band. The Union Pacific would bring people in from Nebraska and Arkansas to play baseball during some of these holidays.

There were Blacks and Orientals around and it appears to Marge's narrative that the kids at any rate did mix pretty well. There was not much prejudice among children in those days. It seems that everybody got along pretty well. Marge had colored classmates in school and they all played games together like Kick the Can, Run My Sheep Run, Red Light. The Crowch family of Rock Springs was a colored family that got along famously with everyone. They worked in the coal mines here in Rock Springs. Nobody had any problems with them or for that matter with any of the other families. According to Mrs. Morrison she never heard of the K.K.K. ever having any kind of demonstration here in Rock Springs. There were lots of Indians around in this area. Marge remembers when they used to have the rodeos down near Blairtown. (The rodeos were held across the street from the now existing Green House -- a floral shop in Blairtown.) The Indians would ride into town on their horses with their possessions loaded on travios. On one of these occasions when Marge was very young she danced with a young Indian lad and he gave her a beautiful pair of buck skin gloves with beadwork on the backs of them.

Marge Morrison has worked in a store, for a doctor, for the telephone company and now works for Union Pacific Railroad as an Engineer. Her and Carl Morrison, her husband, live on a small ranch on the Green River a little west of the town with the same name. She is a very friendly woman that would help anybody out if they needed help. I spent two very interesting days talking with this very wonderful woman. What she would like to leave for her heirs is this. "You are only as good as your word. If your word is worth nothing, then you're not much better."