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# JOHN WOOD

By

Shannon Griffin

JOHN WOOD

When I first went to the Wood's home to gather information about their lives I knocked three or four times but no one answered. I opened the door and asked if anyone was home and the Mrs of the house said "come on in". I entered the very clean, western style house and asked if her "old man" was home. She said "he was out working in the canals" and invited me to set down. Their house is a small old fashioned log home, but is kept up as neatly and spotless as can be. It is heated by a coal stove that sits along one wall and is accompanied by a few coal buckets full of coal.

The screen door squeaked as it was opened and in the doorway stood Mr. Wood. He is a big man, around 6'1" tall and with his blue denim overalls and his big derby hat makes him look even bigger. His face tanned and his hands rough from working out in the weather, he gives me a big welcome and asks me to sit down and visit. I talked with the Woods for a long time

and heard many stories of their lives.

I will now try to explain their stories and capture the historical background of John and Cathryn Wood.

John Andrew Wood was born in Howell County, Missouri on October 13, 1906, to James and Elizabeth Hopkins Wood. James Wood was born in Salen, Arkansas and was a farmer. He passed away in 1962. Elizabeth Hopkins was born in Howell County, Missouri on September 14, 1867, and was married to James Wood on February 25, 1894, near West Plains, Missouri. She died September 3, 1941. They had ten children, John being the eighth child. The oldest child in the family was Iva May, born January 21, 1845. She married Roy Morgan, July 26, 1914. The second child was named Irvin Malachi, born January 18, 1896, and was married to Fern. Irvin died on October 26, 1961. The third child born to James and Elizabeth was Laura Ethel. She was born April 17, 1897, and was married to William Hulsey on May 22, 1918. The fourth born was Roxie Ann, born January 17, 1899 and married Paul Buff. Lizzie Goldie was the middle child, born December 28, 1900. She was married to George Frank Carter on March 19, 1926.

The sixth child was born February 14, 1902, and was married to William Williams on February 19, 1926. The seventh child was Paul Franklin born July 8, 1904, and married Mary Huff December 25, 1926. John was the eighth child born. October 13, 1906. The ninth child died and was not named. The last one to be added to the family of ten was Carrie Mabel. She was born December 13, 1909 and was married to Vernon Huff.

John Andrew attended school in Missouri and graduated from the eighth grade. He wanted to be a cowboy and so fitting into that image he moved fourteen hundred miles to a wild place called Wyoming. He arrived here on the 25th day of May 1926. When I asked John of his first impression of Rock Springs and Eden Valley he said " If they would have give me the wold state, I would turn around and give it right back". On the first day of June of that year, he went to work for Mr. Dearth, who owned a ranch in Eden Valley. Dearth;s were one of the first people to settle in Eden. John remembers only eight families living in Eden at that time. Beside the Dearths, also the Hendricks, Hodsons, Olivers, Trovoughtons, Grandys, Young, and Floyds.

Mr. Wood remembers his first project in the valley. He was to set out some trees with a walkman plow and a team of horses. John carried water by bucket to the trees until they got a ditch built to water them. John worked for Mr. Dearth all summer helping with the sheep and experiencing his first days in Wyoming. He received the Lord and became a Christian in a bunkhouse behind Dearths house. Dearths granddaughter and family now own the Dearth ranch.

That fall, Mr. Woods cousin, Bill Hopkins, who owned a business college in St. Louis, wanted John to go back and attend a business course to get away from the hard farm work. This was during the depression days and so John did. He went back to Missouri and took bookkeeping and business law. They guaranteed him a job when he got through with the college and so John accepted. They gave him thirty five dollars a month, but, just board and room cost him sixty dollars a month. "They didn't have modern math in those days," says John, "so I couldn't figure how I was going to come out at that rate so I came back out to Wyoming because I could get sixty dollars a month plus board and room, work-

ing for Mr. Dearth". Mr. Wood worked for Mr. Dearth for many years and he stayed out on the range with the sheep. John says "you can call me a sheepherder, cowboy or a clod=hopper farmer, whatever you want." John was caught in a bad storm that winter and froze his face real bad. When Mr. Dearth came out to find him, he told John he hadn't expected to find him alive, and he knew John would have lost all of the sheep. But John kept all the sheep in a herd and only let one of them die. At that same time, Mr. Covey, who started Little America, got caught in a storm and promised God if he got out of that storm he would build a resting place where people could seek refuge, which he did.

John Wood served on the civil defense board in World War II. His duties were to find out what was needed in this part of the country. One of his accomplishments was to get the coal companies to sell coal to local people. Wyoming coal was being shipped out and no one could buy coal here. John also served as president of Weed and Pest Control for the State of Wyoming. He holds a citation for seventeen years of service on the Agriculture Stabilization Committee.

Mr. Wood explained the valley as being all dirt roads from Rock Springs to Pinedale. And there was only a trail from Farson to Lander. U. S. 30, which was called Lincoln Highway was also a dirt road. He took the last cattle drive in 1932, when the government bought up some cattle from the valley ranchers. They were being driven to the railroad in Rock Springs. John says "they were pretty hard to drive the first day, they were homesick and wanted to come back." He made it to the Wells the first day. The Wells were a stop for people in wagons. The old buildings are still standing today on the old highway about fifteen miles south of Eden Valley. A man by the name of Jeanks lived at the Wells. He was the road maintainer and run the Wells stop. The second day John made it to fourteen mile hill, which was the second stop on the road between Eden Valley and Rock Springs. Ray Cantlon ran fourteen mile springs and John says "he now lives in Mountain View, that is if he is still alive". The third day he drove the cows on into Rock Springs, by what is now KRKK Radio Station and across highway 30 which is now Interstate 80.

Mr. Wood built the John Hay place which is

located on the south end of Eden Valley. He burned the sage brush and got it into production in 1928. He leveled the ground with four head of horses and a fresno. No one staked it he just did it with his naked eye.

John talked about how the prices have changed. He says when he first came out to Wyoming on a train the fare was twenty six dollars. He took a bus back to Missouri three years ago and a round trip ticket cost one hundred eighty five dollars.

John said the Stock Growers Merchantile was the main store in Rock Springs and then J. C. Penneys. John met J. C. Penney one day and talked about the Lord with him.

Mr. Wood talked about what Rock Springs was like then, he said there wasn't any bars, that prohabition was in effect, but there was a lot of bootlegging done and a lot of wine made. John Wood was and is a christian and so he did not get around the prostitutes or any of the shanty part of town. At this time Rock Springs had 54 different languages. John did enjoy rodeos and at that time Rock Springs had their own rodeo on labor day. Henry Hiddle won the roping and Kacey Cline won the saddle bronc riding.

John went to work for Blair-Hay in 1937. He was the foreman of the hay crew. He needed someone to cook for the hay hands, so he hired Catheryn Anderson. John says "I guess I liked her cooking awful well, because after that we were married". John married Catheryn on August 18, 1937. Catheryn came to Eden Valley with her family on May 10, 1917. Catheryn is the daughter of Charles and Catherine Plander Anderson. She was born in Marshalltown Iowa. The family settled one mile west of Eden, Wyoming in 1917 under the Carey Act. Her father passed away in 1925. Her mother Catherine Plander was born in Iowa and was married to Charles in Marshalltown on November 14, 1907. She passed away in 1961.

John and Catheryn bought their home from Mr. H. E. Grandy in 1944. John thinks that his home is the oldest in the valley. The Woods have three children, Dolores, Mary and Nancy Lee. Dolores is now married to Ben Lucero. Mary married Tom Arnagost and Nancy is married to Douglas Iseman. All three girls graduated from college in Denver and have made a good life for themselves.

John is a Democrat but says "whoever is elected, I'll still go to work the next day".

He relates more to religion and home products than he does to politics. He has had important dealings with Washington D. C. and he has actively participated in politics.

Mr. Wood has always been concerned with the irrigation water in Eden Valley. He told me about the ditch rider who used to ride ditch in the valley on horseback. His name was "Trapper" Bill Meyers. Bill was always on time and never complained. In the winter he trapped and thats how he got his name.

John wrote a short story about Eden Valley; It deals wigh the irrigation systen of the valley. (A copy of the story is attached to the back of this paper).

I asked John what it was like when he first came to the valley and he said "it was real desolate". He said when they first started settleing in the valley there was a joke about "when a jack rabbit crossed the valley he had to carry a sandwich to make it". I asked John, if it was so bad why did they settle here? He said there was a natural setting for a reservour and they would have water to irrigate with.

The saddest time of Johns life was in 1948 when he found the Lake kids forze to death. They

were laying fifteen feet apart and "if you weren't tracking them you wouldn't have known you were tracking human beings".

John has a theory on how to make it farming. He says to make one tractor do and try not to get too big. Poor management is the problem of foreclosures. He says "if they throw money at you, sometimes it's best not to catch it".

# THE EDEN VALLEY STORY

Just thirty miles west of the Continental Divide in Western Wyoming there's a small battle shaping up that's really only a small part of a much larger coming war. In a few words it spells water. The water is running out, or as some farmers here put it "It just isn't as wet as it used to be". A bigger question that might encompasses the whole problem is: How many more dams can be built on the Colorado River and Its' tributaries? The States involved and the Department of Interior are, obviously, not willing to admit there is any limitations whatsoever. In the case of the Interior Department their future existance depends on there being no limitations. Others feel that we are fast approaching the day when the Colorado complex will be nothing but a series of mud holes. On the brighter side they point out that one problem will be solved- that of Mexico getting salty water. They just won't get any water at all. In fact, from the California-Arizona border south , the Colorado may become a dry creek bed. At some future time some "wit" may propose a toast: "here's to us - til the Colorado River wets its bed".

Generally speaking no one is as yet seriously hurt - except on the Eden Project, and that's a very small group, a few dozen at most. This small project, one of the most recently completed in the West, lies in a very dry part of the country. Although the local area is named Eden Valley it is not a valley in the true sense - rather a broad sandy plateau surrounded by low rolling hills with ranges of the Rockies in the distance, and according to some, bears little resemblence to the Garden of Eden. No fig trees are living here. Killing frosts may occur as late as June 21st, and as early as August 21st.

This project was a refurbishing of an older project started in 1908. Taken over by the Bureau of Reclamation, in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture, they enlarged the irrigated acreage from about 9000 acres to 17,500. This was to provide farms for 30 additional families plus supplementary units for existing farms. They failed, however, to enlarge the drainage area from which the project received its' water. Therefore, during the last seven years, and despite the fact that only three-fourths of the project has so far been irrigated, there has been a critical water shortage. This includes years of above average snowfalls as well as below average snowfalls.

While most of the farms here are connected to some out-

side enterprise, such as ranching operations or local businesses, some are not. From this latter group has come an increasing wail of anguish. During the last seven years there has been (at last count) no less than 17 hearings, reports, studies, surveys etc., but nothing much came of these until quite recently. Now the State, mostly in the form of the Natural Resource Board, has decided that in order to stop a movement that would retire a part of the land- they would offer a sum reported to be between twelve million dollars and twenty two million dollars. This money to come from Wyomings' share of revenue accuring from Reclamation of Power Projects, and would be used to re-level farms, enlarge head ditches, line canals, and bring in water from other water sheds. There is some question whether this would provide the necessary additional water. No doubt it would help those with only a part time farm interest, but would do little, or nothing, for those in different circumstances. This sum of money is felt to be rather large in considering the fact 2 or 3 million would solve the entire problem by retiring acres. A majority of State Officials have taken the position (with the full cooperation of the Bureau of Reclamation), and also a few local people who have businesses in the Valley, that if they allow a reduction in acres, it will drastically hurt the Reclamation Program in general. To this end they have evidently solicited the support from the other Upper Colorado River States, for in November 1964, these Upper Basin States passed a resolution which said they opposed any reduction of acres on Reclamation Projects. Someone is running scared. Also on the side of the Government Bureaus, and the State Groups (and not a small force at that) are the local towns and cities, and the Politicans that want to stay in office. Not a little of the monies spent on these projects finds its way into the pockets of local business interests. It could truly be said according to the way the battle is shaping up now- it's simply another story of David and Goliath.

Not all State elected officials are opposed to the only real solution to the problem. Outstanding among these are two: Former U.S. Senator and Governor Joe Hickey of Wyoming, and former U.S. Representative William Henry Harrison III, also of Wyoming- a name familiar to U.S. History students. (note the use of the word former) Although these men are on opposite sides of the political fence, they have one thing in common:ie. They both lost in their bid for re-election. Although it cannot be said they lost

because of their stand on the Eden Project, there apparently is a connection- however remote. They are known for their ability to call a spade a spade.

All things considered, it may be interesting to watch the outcome of the Eden Valley skirmish - for a preview of things to come. It may well be recommended that Washington take a look now while the ussues are relatively simple.

*THANK YOU*

*This day is filled with happiness*
*And joy is ours to share*
*With all our friends and relatives*
*Who come because they care.*

*The prayer we carry in our hearts*
*Of love and joy and peace*
*We give to all of you with hope*
*That these will never cease.*

*John and Cathryne*
*August 15, 1987*

# 50th Wedding Anniversary

*John and Cathryne Wood*
*1937 - August 18 - 1987*

**Then**

August 18, 1937

**Our Children**

Dolores Lucero
Mary Armagost
Nancy Iseman

**Now**

August 18, 1987

**Our Grandchildren**

Kelly Lucero
Russell Armagost
Randy Armagost
John Iseman
Cathryne Iseman