

ZELDA DONA

Interviewed by Christie Horst

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Zelda Dona is a native of Sweetwater County, Wyoming. She was born in 1938 to at Memorial Hospital in Rock Springs. Zelda spent her first eighteen years growing up in Superior, Wyoming.

Zelda's father was a fireboss in the DO Clark Mine. This mine was the most modern mine west of the Mississippi during those days. The fireboss's job was to inspect the mine for gas and carry down explosive powder for the next day's job. At first, Mr. Blackwell used a bird in a cage to detect gases. If the bird died, then the mine was unsafe. Later, he used a special lantern to detect the dangerous gases. Zelda did not realize the intensity of her father's job until she was much older.

Mrs. Blackwell was the mother of four and her job was that of a homemaker; however, she was very involved in the community. Mrs. Blackwell belonged to several organizations such as PTA, Homemaker's Club, and the Governor's Committee on Civil Defense.

The Blackwell family lived on C hill in Superior in a four room company house with an enclosed porch which was used as an extra room. Although the house had water, there was never an indoor toilet. Later, the family owned a hot water heater, which would shake and jump around as it heated

up. Family outings were camping trips. Granite Hot Springs was a favorite spot. Although improvements have been made to the pool, it was originally built during the Depression. Fishing near South Pass brought in meat for the family, as well as did hunting antelope, deer, elk and moose. The Blackwell's shopped for staples in Rock Springs and would buy the remainder of their groceries in Superior. Zelda's family remained in Superior until 1958, when they moved to Reliance.

Superior was a "tough little town" with many bars for the miners. There were two banks at one time and many other stores. The mining company had its own company houses, company stores, and company doctor. It was not unusual, then, that Zelda thought that people did not have to pay the doctor until she was eighteen years old and left home.

Superior was a closely knit community of 5,000 to 10,000 people during the World War II era, with many children. The children played games like Run Sheepie Run and Superior also had a swimming pool and tennis courts. In the winter, the neighborhood children would go "sleigh riding all the time". A favorite activity was to have bon fires and roast potatoes. At Christmas, the town held a special program with dancing and singing and anyone who wanted to could perform. Then Santa would arrive and deliver candy to the children.

Zelda attended school in Superior and learned mostly by repetition. They did not have workbooks and learning aids

as schools have today. Even pencils, paper and crayons were supplied by the student. After graduating, Zelda attended college to study Education.

Zelda married Guy Dona in Rock Springs, Wyoming where they currently reside with their three boys. Zelda's brothers, one a State Representative, another a Deputy Sherriff, and her sister, who works at Bridger Coal, as well as her mother all still live in the vicinity.