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WILLIAM WARDLAW

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Daphne Driskell

November 27, 1984

William Nephi Wardlaw was born in Windsor, Missouri, on August 2, 1913, to Ira and Stella May Tryon Wardlaw. For the first few months of Bill's life, his family lived in Bowen, Missouri, a coal mining town. The Wardlaws were Welsh and for generations their men had worked in the mines.

In the spring of 1914, Bill's parents, along with his maternal and paternal grandparents moved to Wyoming and Montana to take up homesteading. Ira Wardlaw and his father-in-law filed on land around Sheridan, Wyoming and the elder Mr. Wardlaw choose land outside Decker, Montana.

Under the Homestead Act, the homesteaders were required to build a shelter of some kind within the first year which Ira Wardlaw did. It was a one room cabin with dirt floors and curtains for partitions. Bill was just a toddler at the time, but he remembers his father telling him this story: "As my Dad worked with a hewing axe on the logs for the cabin, I was sitting on the ground playing with the wood chips. My Dad happen to look up and saw a rattlesnake slithering directly toward me. He knew he could not swing at the snake with the axe without hitting me. So he grabbed me by the arm and threw me across the yard. Of course, I started to howl and my Mother came to the door to see what was going on. My Dad showed her the snake he had killed."

While the family was on the homestead, another son Raymond was born on April 18, 1916.

Homesteading a section of land or six hundred forty acres was a day in and day out task. Since there was no time for an outside

job, the farm had to be totally self-sufficient. If you did not raise livestock to sell, there was very little cash on hand, so in 1917, Ira Wardlaw let the land revert back to the government. He moved the family into Kooi, Wyoming, and went back into the only trade he knew, coal mining.

On June 21, 1918, another son was born, Louis Lester. Little Louis lived only five months. He, along with many others, was a victim of the flu epidemic that swept the country that year. Bill remembers that time: "So many families were affected by the flu. There were sick parents with sick children. I was only five years old and I had a little red wagon that my Father had made for me. The people would ask me to take my wagon and get groceries for them. They would give me a list and I would go to the store. The grocer would have me bring my wagon to the end of the counter and he would fill the order. I was just a kid, and I had fun doing this. But my Mother told me, "Bill, you will never know what a blessing you have been to this town!" I never did catch the flu."

Bill was not so fortunate, however, when it came to Rocky Mountain Spotted Fever. When he was about seven or eight years old, he was spending the summer at his grandparents homestead outside of Sheridan. While on his way to get the cows for the evening milking, he stopped at the house and asked his grandmother for a drink of water. When she brought the water to him, she noticed a tick embedded in his leg. Bill was not bothered by it. When you were out riding in the brush and grass, you were bound to pick one up. His grandmother doctored it with turpentine and tried to pull it out. But, unfortunately, the head remained under

under the skin. In the short time it took to get the cows in, Bill was sick. His muscles became flaccid and he ached all over. When Bill told his grandmother how he felt, she jerked up his shirt to find his body covered with spots. At that time "tick" fever was usually fatal. His grandparents were greatly concerned and dispatched one of their sons on a ten mile horseback ride to the nearest telephone to inform Bill's parents. When they arrived, Bill was unconscious. Ira Wardlaw asked the doctor what could be done, and his reply was, "Mr. Wardlaw, there is no cure. But try giving him orange juice and castor oil, three times a day." Bill was unconscious for fourteen days, but pulled through. Bill remembers his mother telling him of changing the sheets and how yellow they were. It was from all the orange juice he had perspired.

Years later when a vaccine for the fever came out, Bill and his uncles all got inoculations. The uncles complained to the doctor about how the injections had made them so sick. The doctor asked Bill if he had suffered any side effects. Bill said not a one. The doctor was surprised and wondered why. Bill explained he had had the fever. The doctor told him impatiently, "Get out of here, you are wasting my time and the medicine." Once a person has the fever and survives, he has a life time immunity.

In 1922, Ira Wardlaw and his father-in-law, Neff Tryon, decided to go to Illinois and help the United Mine Workers. Tryon was a charter member of the union and during its organization, had worked closely with John L. Lewis. The unions were having a tough time getting recognition with the companies in Illinois, Kentucky, and Ohio. Tryon and Wardlaw

felt they could lend moral support by walking the picket lines. But as the year progressed, the strike became nationwide and quite violent. The men dared not to put their lives in jeopardy because of their families and tried to avoid the riots. Due to their affiliation with the union, Wardlaw's and Tryon's names were placed on a blacklist which kept them from being hired by the coal companies. They all returned to Wyoming in 1923.

Bill's family then resided in the following Wyoming towns: Ranchester, 1923; Dines, 1923-25; Rock Springs, 1925-26; and Quealy, 1926-28. In 1928, Ira Wardlaw and his brother acquired the Riverside Mine in Kooil, Wyoming. They fell victims to the Stock Market Crash of 1929. The brothers lost the mine and were forced into bankruptcy.

That following summer, Bill worked on the Crow Reservaion breaking horses. He lived with an Indian family and received board and room for his wages. He had been hired to break saddle horses for the children. Bill relates: My boss wanted the horses to be broken in such a manner that the children could crawl all over it without the horse moving. To do so, I had to break the horse's spirit. I swore I would never do that again. I felt I had destroyed something."

After losing the mine, the Wardlaws moved into Sheridan, and Bill was in his junior year of high school, when his father came to him and said, "Bill you will have to bring home your books. The family needs you to go to work and I got a job for you at the mine." For Bill this was one of the most disappointing times of his life. Knowing he would probably never finish school, he obeyed his father and went to work. Bill's starting wage was one dollar for each two ton car of coal that he loaded.

During this time, Bill joined the National Guard. He attained the rank of Private First Class in Troop B of the 115th Cavalry. Every summer Bill reported for active duty at Pole Mountain Camp. The troops rode on scouting missions and would go through maneuvers of mock battles which included cavalry charges. The high light of the camp was Governor's Day. The troops, riding in formation, would parade across the field before the governor. Each time around, they would progressively change the canter of the horse. Finally, when they were suppose to be "smartly" galloping by, "all hell would break loose." Horses would be bucking and pitching and men would be flying in the air or wallowing in the dust. Bill reflects, "It was kind of embarrassing, but the Governor seemed to enjoy it." Bill served in the regular National Guard for three years and the reserve for eight years.

The year 1932 brought the Wardlaws back to Rock Springs. Finding employment was difficult and Ira Wardlaw went to the superintendent of the Quealy mine, Glenn Knox, and inquired if any positions were available. He was told nothing would be open for at least a month. Mr. Wardlaw asked if any housing was available. He was told it would be possible for the family to move into a house in camp. The family utilized powder boxes and kegs for furniture and slept on the floor. Meals consisted of macaroni and canned tomatoes. Bill recalls that the neighbor women brought in dishes of food. When they were able, the Wardlaws reciprocated in kind.

Bill and his father got jobs helping to replace the power line poles between Sweetwater (Quealy) and the central power station. One day, as they were working, a pole rolled, and in doing so, the live

wires caught Bill on the back of his head. He was wearing a cowboy hat with a buckle on it and the voltage went into his body at the base of his skull. Within seconds, his hair was burnt to a crisp and when his Dad got to him, Bill's mouth was turning black. Mr. Wardlaw managed to remove the wires off Bill and revive him. When the doctor came to check him over, Bill told him he had a terrific headache and asked for some aspirin. The doctor brusquely told him, "You are going to be all right. You do not need aspirin, in fact, do not ever take it." Bill continued, "I have followed the doctor's advice and do not take aspirin. But since that accident I have never had a headache."

After Bill recovered from this "shock" he went to work in the mines and continued to work in that industry for the next forty five years. Bill loved his work. He says, "I always preferred working underground and to be out of the weather. Underground mining is no more dangerous than walking across the street. You must always use caution." Bill eagerly learned all he could about mining and and mine safety. He received his first aid certificate from the Bureau of Mines when he was fifteen, and continued to study mine safety procedures until his retirement. Bill was always a member of the United Mine Workers Union and feels the organization definitely helped the miners and their families.

In 1933, Bill attended a birthday party where he met Irene Flew. As he was preparing to leave, Irene grabbed his neck scarf and absconded with it. The scarf just happen to be a gift from a young lady with whom Bill was corresponding. When Bill related the incident to his folks, they felt he needed to get it back. So Bill drove over to Reliance and met Irene's family. Irene, with twinkling eyes, asked Bill

the reason for his visit. Bill replied that she knew what had brought him there and that he needed his scarf. Bill then questioned Irene for her actions and her reply was, "I thought it was the only way I would get to see you again."

Bill and Irene were married September 30, 1933. Bill has this to say concerning the courtship and marriage: "I used to hitch a ride or walk the twelve miles between Sweetwater and Reliance to court Irene and even after I married her, she still keeps me hoppin'."

Irene and Bill are a couple who really complement each other. Irene is outspoken, excitable, and a worrier. Bill never gets agitated and takes each day as it comes. Regardless the situation, Bill never gets angry or raises his voice. Bill and Irene have shared fifty one years together and they still love and adore one another. They have two sons, Gene and Ron, who both reside in California.

A few months after the birth of their second son, Ron, Bill fell ill with inflammatory rheumatism. His hands swelled so, he was unable to make a fist. His feet were so misshapened, he could not tie his boots and shuffled as he walked. At the mine, the men were astonished that he even bothered to come to work. The doctors thought the infection his his body was due to infected teeth and they were extracted. This brought no change in his condition, however. He was sent to Lava Hot Springs, Idaho, for treatment in the mineral pools. Bill came back with a terrific tan, but was ill again in two days. Finally, his tonsils were removed and his condition improved dramatically.

If illness did not keep Bill from working in the mines, pro-

longed union strikes did. As negotiations failed and the walkout continued by the union, the miners found it necessary to seek other types of work. One job Bill remembers particularly, was the Farson-Eden Project. Bill helped in clearing hundreds of acres of sagebrush so the land could be utilized for farming and ranching. Water canals were dug to facilitate irrigation. Bill stated that a man could always find some job if he wanted to work to tide him over during these strikes.

It was a different story in 1955-56, however. At this time the Union Pacific Railroad decided to convert all its trains from steam engines which burned coal, to diesel engines. Since coal was no longer in demand, the mines were forced to close. This action effected between six to nine thousand men in the Rock Springs area. Many families moved. Bill stayed and worked nine different jobs that summer. He was employed by the Union Pacific Railroad for one year when hired by FMC, a trona mine.

At FMC, Bill was in underground mining again. He worked for ten years there when ill health forced him to the surface and to a desk job. He continued there for another eleven years and then retired.

Bill, of course did not spend all of his time working. As most Wyoming-ites, Bill is fond of hunting and fishing. He served on the board of the Holy Communion Episcopal Church for about twelve years. For thirteen years he was a scoutmaster with the Boy Scouts. He said this was one of the most rewarding experiences of his life.

When listening to the taped interview, one will notice at times that Bill's voice is choked with emotion. As he remembered his

family, the hard times they had, the joys and the heartaches they shared, Bill realized and expressed the love they had for one another. Looking back, Bill had this to say of his life, "I have had many experiences in my life time, from childhood up to retirement, and I would never, never take anything in exchange for it."

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NAME: William Neple Hardlaw

PRESENT ADDRESS: 1620 West 2nd - Box 1620

1.-Present profession or occupation: Retired Miner

2. Occupations followed in the past (give dates):

3. Date of birth: 8-2-13 Place of birth: Windsor Mo.

4. Date of moving to Wyoming: 6-15-1914

5.-Full name of parents (give mother's maiden name) Stella May Tryon

6. Names of brothers and sisters (and to whom married): Raymond Kuebel
4-18-16

Slow epidemic during 1st world war 1918
Lewis Lester b/21/18 1918 Deceased During
11-6-19

7. Schools attended (give dates): 1800-1919 - Ranchette 1920-1922

Tilden Ill 1922 - Minero Ill 1923 - Ranchette 1923-1928

Gene - 1923-1925 - Rockysing 1925-1926 - Quately 1926-1928

8. Places of residence in Wyoming (give dates): Shinden & Ranchette 1929

Shinden 1929-1931 - Quately 1932-1934 - Rockysing 1934-1935 - Reland 1935-1977

9. Military service (dates, awards, area served, rank, etc.): 1935-1977

Sheriff 1931-1942 - Horseman ship - Private First Class
Sargent for National Guard - Troop B 115th Cavalry

10. Political offices held (give dates): None

11. Political affiliation: Dem.

12. Religious affiliation: LDS - Now Episcopalian

13. Marriage (spouse's name, date and place of marriage): Catherine Grant

Married Sept 30-1933. Green River By Rail Road
Flaw
Riv. Cheyenne

14. Children (names, dates of birth, grandchildren, etc.):

See attached sheet of information

15.-List of clubs and societies of which you are a member:

odd fellow - Senior Citizens

Family Bible. 1922

Bowen Mo.

12-24-1912

Wardlaw

Father 11-17-1895

This father W^m Kennedy Mother Dora FRASHER

Mother 1-22-1896

Here father Hill Tryon Mother Della Walker

Myself 8-2-13

Wife 7-17-13

Sons 3-15-35

Wife 10-10-

Sons 7-24-36

Wifes Karen 6-21-1940

1st Sons.

Birth Days

Donny 2-22-57

"

David 3-14-58

"

Dione 2-28-62

"

Donald 3-26-65

"

2nd sons

Kenneth 1-15-58

"

Jon 8-24-59

"

Mark 12-3-63

"