

HAROLD HARVEY:
A BIOGRAPHY

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Harold Harvey's ties to Southwest Wyoming go back to the original settlers. His grandfather and great uncle, George and William Harvey, came to Bridger Valley in 1857 with Judge Carter. They were employed by Judge Carter to manage livestock for his company, Carter Cattle Company. Harold's grandfather homesteaded within the limits of what is now the town of Mountain View. Harold's grandmother, Agnes Hewitt, who was later honored by the title "Mother of Mountain View", owned the homestead from which the original townsite was surveyed. Her son William, Harold's uncle, surveyed the site in 1898. Harold's father, George Harvey, was born on the ranch in Mountain View; his mother was born on a ranch near Mountain View, in an area known as Poverty Flat. Harold's father later homesteaded a ranch on the Smith's Fork River, south of present day Robertson, where Harold was born in 1909.

When Harold was born, there were no doctors in the area; the birth was attended by a midwife named Mrs. Robbins. He was born in the cabin his father built on the homestead, which had been part of the land grazed by Carter Cattle Company livestock. The cabin was a single room log structure, with a wood cookstove which also supplied the only heat. There was no plumbing in the cabin, so water had to be hauled from the creek behind the house. The ranch also had a log barn

and corrals, including one large corral originally built by Judge Carter for the purpose of rounding up and branding horses.

When Harold was four years old, his mother died. For the next few years, He and his brothers lived with various friends and relatives around the Mountain View/Robertson area.

In 1918, while Harold and his older brother were living with the Hickey family on a neighboring ranch, an influenza epidemic struck Bridger Valley, resulting in the deaths of many adults and children. Although there was a doctor in Mountain View, with so many people sick and scattered all over, he could not possibly make the rounds. Harold's uncle, Wallace Johnson, was kept busy "...preaching his sermons, and conducting funerals" while his wife Alice Johnson traveled with him and "...doctored some people, too." Due to the shortage of medical treatment, people either survived the epidemic or succumbed. Harold and his older brother were lucky; Mrs. Hickey and her three sons all died from the flu within a day or two of one another.

Although there was a doctor in Mountain View, the difficulty in traveling to town necessitated self reliance on the part of the ranchers scattered over the countryside. Dental work consisted of pulling infected teeth, for example, without benefit of anaesthetic, other than a big shot of whiskey. The generally accepted practice was to give the victim a

shot of whiskey, hold him or her down, and pull the tooth with a pair of large forceps. Medications consisted of "Epsom Salts, if you needed it bad", Castor oil, or coal oil and sugar, which was the treatment for croup. Harold's aunt used Ipecac tied around the neck on a piece of yarn to ward off colds.

The only mode of transportation at that time was horseback or horse drawn wagon, and travel was often difficult. As a child, Harold and his older brother were transported in panniers on a pack horse, one on each side, while their father led the horse. It took half a day to reach Mountain View from the ranch on Smith's Fork. School aged children had to rely on horses to get to school. While living with the Hickey family, Harold attended the Willow Creek School, which was located about three miles up Willow Creek from the town of Robertson. He and his brother rode to school with neighbor children from nearby ranches. The other children stopped, and Harold and his brother climbed on the horses behind them. The next year, after the death of Mrs. Hickey, Harold and his brother lived with his grandfather and attended the school in Robertson which was served by the forerunner of the school bus - the school wagon. The wagon was horse drawn, and followed a route, much as the present day schoolbuses, with students meeting the wagon along the route.

During the winters that Harold lived on the ranch on Smith's Fork and attended the school in Robertson, he went to school on a horse drawn sleigh. Hay for the horses was carried on the sleigh, and upon arrival at the school, the team was put in the barn. At noon, the students went out to feed and water the horses. The sleigh enabled the students to get to school over the pastures and meadows, without being restricted to the rough roads. It took about an hour to reach the school from the ranch.

Harold was about thirteen or fourteen when he made his first trip to Evanston, Wyoming. His uncle owned a Model T Ford, and they went to shop in Evanston. On the return trip, they were caught in a sudden fall snowstorm, and got stuck on the muddy road between Evanston and Mountain View. They walked along a pipeline to Spring Valley where the next day they caught a train to Carter. From there, they got a ride to Mountain View with the mail. In Mountain View, they hitched the team and rode back to the car, which they pulled free of the mud with the horses. Harold's uncle drove the car and Harold rode the horses back to Mountain View. The trip took two days.

Life on the ranch was hard, and the chores that the children were expected to do occupied a large part of each day. Animals had to be cared for; cows milked and horses and cattle fed. Wood had to be split and hauled into the house every day, for heat and cooking, and water hauled from the

creek. Chores usually required an hour and a half before school, and a similar time after.

The Robertson School, now gone, was large for the time, consisting of two rooms. Eight grades were contained within the school, taught by two teachers, who maintained a "strictly business" classroom atmosphere. Discipline was strict "You didn't get up and fool around," or "...you got a piece of leather on you." The lady teacher used a leather strap, also, to keep discipline. Harold started out left-handed but his aunt, his teacher, "Beat me on the hand with a ruler," until he learned to write with his right hand. Following elementary school, Harold attended High School in Mountain View. Because of the difficulty of travel, He and his brother stayed with relatives in town.

Generally Christmas and New Years were holidays that the whole town celebrated together, either at peoples homes or in the new school house. An accordian would be played and people would square dance.

Other than working in the hay fields as a kid, Harold took his first job around 1924. He left school and went to work herding sheep. He stayed alone in a sheep camp and protected the herd from coyotes, and kept the sheep together. He was paid \$25.00 a month and board. Herding was a year round job; summers spent on the higher elevation summer range, and winters down lower. Occasionally, He would be able to go into town for dances in Mountain View or

Robertson, but since travel was by horse and he had to be back with the sheep in the morning before they began to wander off, such times were relatively rare. He later went to work for a larger sheep outfit, tending 4 bands with about 3000 sheep, for which he received \$125.00 a month plus board.

The Depression affected Bridger Valley much the same way it affected other parts of the country. Many of the original homesteads were repossessed by the state. When the land was homesteaded, the owners took out loans against the property to make improvements. Some of the men living on the homesteads worked in the mines during the winter, while the women remained on the homestead. When the mines shut down and the banks in Mountain View and Lyman closed, many of the local residents lost their livestock and land when they couldn't pay the loans. Most of the dispossessed people simply left Bridger Valley. The state subsequently resold the land, but reserved the mineral rights. Harold's sister-in-law and her husband bought several of the original homesteads, as did a few other families. The social structure of the Valley changed from many small ranches to a few large landholders.

During World War II, most of the young men in the Valley went into military service. Harold was not accepted because of an old injury. He worked for the Secret Service during the war, guarding railroad tunnels west of Evanston,

Wyoming. He and his wife lived in a sheep camp near the tunnel entrance and protected the tunnel from sabotage.

Following the war, Harold worked in the forests above the valley, cutting and hauling mine props, and worked on a ranch near Robertson. A few years after the war, Harold's sister-in-law was widowed, and Harold and his wife moved onto her ranch, at her request, and leased the property. In 1957, they purchased the property from her, and have remained on the ranch ever since.

Harold's daughters were born after the War, in 1945 and 1948. By that time, medical services were available in Evanston, Wyoming, about 40 miles to the west. There was no hospital available, but there was a doctor. The children were born in an auto court on the east side of town, and the doctor came out from the town.

Electrical service reached Bridger Valley in 1940, with the creation of the Rural Electric Association. Service to the ranch was not available until a few years later, however. The REA was reluctant to run the power lines out to the ranch, but finally agreed if Harold would get the necessary poles. Harold cut the poles, and hauled them with a horse, after which the power lines were strung to the ranch. Television became available with the installation of a translator station on Hickey Ridge in 1960.

The economy of Bridger Valley remained in a slump until the Trona mines opened after the war. The mines helped reverse the trend of migration out of the area, by providing a relatively stable income. Many of the young people who had left the Valley due to a lack of employment opportunities eventually moved back and went to work in the mines.

The 1970's saw a major boom in the mining and oil and gas industry in southwest Wyoming. Mountain View and Lyman went through an explosive growth period, with the population doubling in both communities. The state's reserving of mineral rights when reselling homesteads in the 1930's became important during this time. The current owners of the land received right-if-way payments for oil well access roads crossing their land, but since they did not have the mineral rights, they received little or no royalties from the oil production. The primary effect of the boom on the Harveys was a fluctuation in the price they received for their cattle. The price per pound doubled in one year, only to fall the next.

Travel of any distance has not been a common part of Harold's life, probably due to the fact that for much of his life, travel was exceedingly difficult. When asked what was the longest time he had ever been away from the Valley, he replied, "Long enough to miss the East Blizzard." As Bessie put it, "That's the only Wyoming blizzard we've missed." That was when he travelled to California to witness his

son-in-law's graduation from Army boot camp. He has flown only once, to Texas to visit his other daughter. For a person whose first remembrance of travel is riding in a pannier, air travel is particularly awe inspiring. His wife Bessie tells of his comment upon seeing an airplane high overhead while they were out gathering cows, "Look how far that's up there - and nothing under it!"

Harold, at 78, still makes a living by ranching, managing, along with his wife, Bessie, about 150 head of cattle.

Aside from the year he spent guarding tunnels during WW II, and the short visits to Texas and California, he has lived his entire life in Bridger Valley. When asked if there was anything he would like to say to his heirs about his life in this part of the country he said, "Well, if they stay here and make their home, its a good place."