

Muriel Gertrude Donahoo Graham

as told to

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History of Wyoming

December 3, 1985

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Edgar ran out of their log home, saddled up, and hurriedly rode the mile and a half to the country store. He needed the phone; he had to call the doctor in Green River, Wyoming; his wife was in labor with their first child--Muriel Gertrude Donahoo¹, born June 20, 1921 at home in Lonetree, Wyoming.

Edgar Donahoo was born in Arizona. His family moved to Utah where they started farming in Sandy. Edgar came to Lonetree at age seventeen with his family. His father homesteaded 160 acres, left the place in the charge of the oldest son, and returned to Sandy for a few years.

He met Gertrude Decker in Lonetree. Her father had been a railroad engineer in Utah and she have lived all over that state. When he died, her brother asked the family to move in with him on the Lonetree ranch where he worked.

Edgar and Gertrude fell in love but decided to postpone marriage until he came back from the war. He had joined the Army during World War I. When he returned home to Lonetree, they were married and homesteaded 160 acres next to his father's. They built a log house which he and Gertrude made into a home for their three daughters and son.

Muriel's earliest memories are of the ranch and the garden, especially the garden: "We always had a garden to take care of from spring until

¹The pronunciation of Donahoo is don·ă·hō.

winter." They raised almost all of their food: garden vegetables were canned, meat was either raised beef or sheep, fish, or wild game. Sage chickens were a favorite Sunday dinner and always in season with no hunting license required. Because they did not have an ice box or an ice house, meat was not eaten much in the summer months. However, if mutton was wrapped tightly and hung outside at night, it would usually last until almost all eaten.

Water was precious. It was not a convenience like today with a turn of the tap, but a necessity which required work and forethought. Edgar tried to put in a well, but the hole was dry. (The dry well did come in handy to keep butter and milk cool in the summer. Milk and butter were put in a bucket with an attached rope which would be dropped down into the well.) In the winter, snow was brought in and melted on the stove; in the summer, it was carried from the small creek which ran closeby; and in late summer, if the creek dried up, water was hauled by wagon in creme cans from a larger stream about one-quarter mile from the house. One of the children's chores as they got older was to haul the water.

Firewood was usually hauled in for the year from the woods in one week. The team and wagon would be hitched up, lunch was made, and they would go up in to the woods, cutting and hauling logs down. Although, her father would cut and chop the wood, it was one of the kids chores to haul it in the house.

The middle school building in Mountain View was moved from Lonetree. Muriel wished she had been able to see it moved. That old school

house held lots of memories...It had three rooms: one was for grades first through fourth, another for fifth through eighth, and the teacher lived in the third room. Enrollment for the entire school was usually about twenty-four students. The building was heated by woodstoves. (Her father had the contract on year for supplying the firewood.)

Some of the teachers were local. There were a few times when two would be teaching if there were a lot of students, but for the most part, only one teacher taught. The teacher who taught Muriel in the first grade was especially motherly; eventhough, she had three boys of her own who made her awfully mad at times. Then, there was the man teacher from around this country whose wife played piano for them to dance during noon recesses. Also, another male teacher who organized plays, dances, and basketball games for the whole community to enjoy.

There were two bus routes--the upper (Muriel's) and the lower. When Muriel started school at six years old, the bus was driven with teams. In the winter, as the snow drifted in, sleighs were used. It was five or six years later before a car was used to run the routes.

Very few new kids came into the area, most of the students grew up together and always knew each other. So when a new boy came to school, most all of the girls got a crush on him. Because of the small enrollment, the boys and girls played together. Three games stand out: "kick-the-can"--a can was set out, kicked, and everyone ran and hid; "Annie-I-over"--a ball was thrown over the schoolhouse to the other team, if caught, they would run around and try to hit an opponent with the ball and gain themselves a new teammate; and "prison"--a line was

drawn, sides chosen up, someone would go up to the line and make a dare and try to pull another over the line to their side.

A favorite lunching spot was called "the Pines". Everybody brought their lunches and sat on logs to eat. In the fall of the year, it became quite a swampy spot. One day some of the girls got quite muddy walking out there to eat lunch. When the teacher saw the muddy stockings, she made them rinse them out and dry them on the furnace. Nobody's mother ever found out.

Boys and girls were not treated differently at school. Of course, the dress was not the same. Pants were not in fashion for the girls or boys--boys wore overalls. The girls were dressed with long stockings, and in the winter, added long underwear. As soon as they got on the bus when the weather got cold, those socks were rolled down and the long underwear rolled up. None of the mothers ever knew their daughters went around all day with "bare legs" because on the bus going home the long stockings went up and the long underwear went down!

Since the old community building at Lonetree was so drafty and cold, a lot of the dances were held at the schoolhouse which was right across the road from the only other building at Lonetree--the country store. Everyone came to stay all night until feeding time the next morning. Food was brought and about midnight, the dancing would stop and everyone ate. Lots of blankets were brought to bundle up the little ones who would sleep under the tables. Most of the older children could stay up as long as they wanted. There was usually a fight or two outside--always some drinking goin'on. Then, early in the morning, Muriel's

parents would bundle them all up, put them in the back of the wagon which was loaded with straw, and they would go home. Her dad would carry the bundled up children in the house and put them to bed, clothes and all, build up a fire in the stove, then go out to feed the livestock.

There were always salesmen coming around selling anything and everything. One time a fellow came around selling heavy aluminum pots and pans. These were much better than the enamelware usually used.

"Moma traded him two of Dad's chickens. Dad never did know what happened to those chickens. That's the way we go things when we had no cash money." They traded and bartered.

Dad had just finished shearing the sheep. There were three nice bags of wool. Then, he went out on some road work. It seemed they could always use his team of horses and grader he had.

A salesman came out selling (treadle) sewing machines. The salesman said he would sure like to sell Moma that new machine.

But Moma said, 'Oh no, we just haven't got the money.'

'What about one of those sacks of wool?', he asked.

'Oh, I wouldn't dare.' But she did.

Dad never said anything about the missing bag of wool and the appearance of the new sewing machine.

But then his fellow went on up country and told my aunt that Moma had bought a new sewing machine.

The next day down came Grandma: 'How come Edgar can afford to buy you a new sewing machine?', she said.

'Cause she knew we had no money. Mom never told her!

But a good sewing machine was a necessity. Muriel never remembers a coat that was bought. Old coats were passed around, ripped up, and remade. Her mother was a good seamstress and made almost all of the

families clothing. Material was ordered from the catalog and old clothes were recycled.

A truck load of pianos, organs, and phonographs came out from Madison's Furniture in Ogden one day. It stopped at our house to show their stuff. When the salesman put on the record "Listen to the Mockingbird", the music just filled the place up. It was beautiful. Muriel's mother couldn't play the piano or organ and she was bothered that her children were growing up without some kind of music at home. Because it was so important to her, somehow her mother and father managed to buy a big phonograph and records. They derived so much pleasure out of that thing. Even after the spring broke, one of the kids would get up and turn the records with their finger to play the records. And, when little brother was getting around and cutting his teeth, he made little bite marks all around the edge of the cabinet. That old phonograph was kept forever...when the old house burnt down, it went with the house. The whole family mourned its loss, more than many things with more money value which were also lost in the fire--it was special.

Mail order shopping with Montgomery Ward and Sears constituted almost of all the major purchases. Most orders were filled by the catalog stores within two weeks. (Better than today!) The mail was delivered daily by truck to the country store every day. The mail truck would haul up groceries and things from the stores in Mountain View, too.

The coming of the Christmas catalogs were the first hint that

Christmas was indeed coming. One day Muriel and her sister were sent to the store after a few things needed for dinner and to pick up the mail. One of the first of the season's catalogs was in the mail-- they forgot about getting home with the things Mother needed; instead, they sat on a fence and read the book "from cover to back, picking out things" they wanted.

Christmas traditions remembered tenderly was the little candy animals found underneath the pillow every morning the two weeks before Christmas morning. Mother made or ordered from the catalog special Christmas dresses of taffeta with lots of ruffles and lace. A nice tree was cut from the woods by Dad, decorated and lit up with real candles. There were some years when there were no new toys or dolls-- perhaps just a new dress for the old dolls. But, Christmas was always a special time of year. When Muriel lost her belief in Santa Claus as a child, she still kept the magic and spirit.

A most important book around the house was the "doctor book". It was very important to have a good medical reference when there was not a phone for emergencies to call a doctor, nor a car to get medical help. (Muriel's parents did not have a car until after she was married in 1941.) There were remedies for coughs of honey and lemon, mustard plasters and "Vicks" for colds. When Muriel burned her hand badly, the "book" gave a recipe for a poultice which her mother prepared to put on the burn--it healed quickly without scarring.

There was a doctor for awhile in Mountain View. He delivered the Donahoo's second child, Nelly Rae, when Muriel was three years old.

But when brother, Pat, and later, Donna Mae were born, her mother stayed with relatives in Green River.

Muriel went to stay in Mountain View with her Grandmother Decker after she completed the eighth grade at the Lonetree School. All of Muriel's friends who went on to high school had to stay with relatives in Green River or Mountain View. She met Harold Graham there, dated him all through school. When she was elected prom queen, Harold crowned her. She and Harold were married in 1941, a year after they graduated from high school together.

They stayed in Mountain View, eventually buying a home there. Harold went to work at one of the trona mines, Westvaco now FMC. He quit when they bought his dad's ranch and dairy where they live today. Just recently they retired and are doing a lot of traveling in their motor home. They have seven children, seventeen grandchildren, and three great-grandchildren.

Muriel tenderly looks back at her childhood and her loving parents. She says although they never had a lot--it is amazing how her mother ever managed--they never lacked anything important. Somehow there was always enough. But she is concerned about the economic future of her children and grandchildren. Because she and Harold worked so hard to give to their children a better and easier life than they had, have they denied their own the knowledge and where-with-all to handle hardships and doing without? Now if things got tough--could they overcome and handle it? With the love and concern that shines from her eyes--she has imparted to them a valuable gift: the ability to love, care for others, and enjoy life.