

## Oral History

### Beverly Shuck, Speaker at PVHS General Meeting February 18, 2006

This is the monthly general meeting of the Prescott Valley historical society. We are meeting today at orchard ranch. And our speaker is Beverly Shuck talking about growing up in Yavapai County in the 30s and 40s. She will be introduced by our treasurer and board member Peggy Magee.

Good Morning, thank you for inviting me to come and share some of my recollections of the Humboldt and Prescott area, and how I remember the old days. To give you a little background of my family, my grandparents William and Rosa Baker Love came into Arizona through Globe and Phoenix and into the Prescott area in 1888. They purchased a home on Montezuma Street, south Montezuma, and I have a few pictures to pass around. It is still standing. Buildings on either side are newer buildings, I have not gone through it. It's on my schedule to do that. My mother Elsie was born in May of 1896. William, my grandfather had a blacksmith shop and was a freighter between Prescott, Humboldt and Jerome. He had a wood yard in Prescott and for a time worked for the city.

They sold their home in 1908 and moved by horse and wagon out to 80 acres on the Agua Fria near Poland Junction, between Mayer and Humboldt. Here is a copy of the original homestead. My mother talked about walking behind the wagon and beating a cow on the old Lynx Creek road on the Black Canyon Hwy near the bridge that is still there. They have made a new one (bridge) for the cars but the old one is still there. It's a walking bridge. They camped overnight on what we called Jackass Flats in Lonesome Valley which is now Prescott Valley.

She rode horseback into school in Humboldt, tied the horse outside of school and took biscuits and jelly for lunch. One time she was riding home and she saw several men in a shack sitting around a table counting money. She rode close enough to see what they were doing and then rode home and told her father. In an article in the November 1909 Prescott Journal Minor it tells of a manhunt of a counterfeiter Tom Shemus who was shot and captured in the Rosenberger corral. My mother's older sister had married a Will Rosenberger and they had a ranch in the same vicinity on the Agua Fria River, and I think those two incidents were related.

Elsie worked part time in the Humboldt post office and also was a clerk in the Wingfield store on Main Street. My father Nels Johnson came to Humboldt from Joplin Missouri to help his older sister Betsy who ran a boarding house in Humboldt. Her husband was electrocuted in an accident at the smelter in Humboldt when she was pregnant with her second child. The daughter was born in the Humboldt hospital and was named Vivian after Dr. Charles Vivian, a local Doctor.

My dad went to work for Charlie Wingfield as the general manager in the store and he met my mom and they were married in October of 1917 in the parlor of the Head Hotel on

Cortez Street. The Head Hotel is still there, the name has been changed to the Downtown Inn.

My dad entered the army in April of 1918 and left by train with many of the others from Yavapai County. After he came home he worked at the smelter until it was closed and then the family moved to Cottonwood. In 1938 my dad purchased the Humboldt store from Charlie Wingfield, he renamed it the Leeway Department Store. My brother was in high school in Clarkdale and I was in first grade and so my mother, brother and I lived in cottonwood. We came over on weekends until my brother graduated and then we moved to Humboldt. My dad bought a house for 600 dollars and it's still there on Hecla Street. Our old school is the icehouse which is the yellow building on Main Street that you can see from the highway and is now the Sweet Pea.

When I started second grade there it had 3 rooms and no indoor bathrooms, two out houses in back of the school, one for the girls and one for the boys. The school yard had monkey bars and maypole, some swings and on the north side you could play baseball. There were no fences, just dirt and rocks. The first room had 1,2,3rd grade, the middle room had 4,5,6 and the end room was 7,8<sup>th</sup>. They had a typing room there and for a time there was 9,10th grades. Any other high schoolers went to Prescott or just dropped out. A lot of the homes didn't have indoor plumbing in those days and at Halloween the activities were to go around and tip over the outhouses. I was told that on one occasion that the kids tipped one over and there was someone in it. He came running out and the kids took off and I wasn't with them that time. My dad provided ice cream cones for the kids to keep them from soaping the windows at the store and the coffee shop. An ice truck came out from Prescott once a week to deliver blocks of ice to people that had ice boxes.

During the 1940s the roads were dirt and graded by the county but my mother said she was sure that the grader graded all the rocks to the middle of the road. Just before the 4th of July in 1950 my mother wrote an article that appeared in the newspaper describing the awful condition of the roads. A follow up article appeared in the Arizona Republic that backed up her claim.

Every Christmas for several years the Iron King mine provided a community tree. It was put up on Main Street across from the store and the women stitched mesh stockings and my dad provided an apple and an orange and ribbon candy for each one.

The post office was inside the Leeway Store and that was a gathering place for the local residents to come and get their mail and local gossip and buy their groceries. The store had a full line of groceries, fresh vegetables and a meat market. And over the years the coffee shop next door was open and leased to various people and they served sandwiches, ice cream and malts and for a short time, evening meals. It had a jukebox that played the latest 78 records and for a time had slot machines; 3 slots, a nickel, dime and quarter machine. I spent many an hour reading movie magazines.

A freight truck came up daily from Phoenix and brought milk products from the old Mission dairy and the Phoenix newspaper. The store also acted as a bank. The minors

would get their checks from the Iron King mine and bring in their checks and settle up their accounts. There were not many families that had telephones so we took messages for the various people in town. My dad also ran the gas station across the street for a time, and you'll note that gas was 23 cents a gallon for regular and 25 cents for supreme and that included 6 cents tax. Our groceries mostly came from the Thrifty Wholesale in Prescott. We had a loading dock in the back of the store. I was about 11, and messing around the store and a delivery came. He unloaded the boxes from the loading dock in the back of the store, it was a closed in type truck and he left the door open so I went in and sat on the box. He came back after getting the delivery signed for, and he didn't see me and shut the door. Many times he came around the front of the store and stopped but this time he headed down the hill toward Mayer. I panicked at first and started hitting on the sides of the truck and then I realized that he couldn't hear me so I waited until he got to Mayer. When he opened the door and I said Hi. He turned positively white and he said you get in there and call your mother. And I called my mom and told her where I was and I was told later that there was a child hunt going on around town. I don't remember that part of it. I was lucky in that sometimes he didn't stop at Mayer and went on down to Phoenix. So he turned around when he was though unloading in Mayer and took me back to Humboldt. No Amber alert.

In September 1944, a new postmistress assumed a new position in Humboldt and it was Gladys Watts. Her husband was a retired minister and their daughter was LaVera who married Elmer Young. Reverend Watts was very active with us young people and taught us how to square dance and tried to instill some religious standards a time or two. But he came down to the church in Humboldt many times and other times we went up and had many a good time square dancing in Reverend Watt's barn.

One family was Arthur Jones who ran the water company and his youngest son Lloyd had access to a vehicle and taught many of us to drive. As usual in rural America in the 40s there were no cops around. There was a deputy in Mayer but he didn't pay too much attention to us. Lloyd's truck was a 1923 Dodge truck. It had a front seat, no top, no doors, a windshield and an open bed. The steering wheel was a large wooden wheel and was very hard to turn. In those days you could ride on the fenders. The headlights were big and round with brass rings. One evening Lloyd came by and picked us up and as usual I was sitting on the right front fender. We went to Dewey and out on the Cherry Road and he was teaching a girl that was visiting relatives how to drive. She was doing fine until a car was coming toward us and then she turned hard to the right, hard to the left and over corrected and on the last swing my feet caught on the side of the ditch and pulled me off. Fortunately we were going pretty slow and I wasn't hurt but everybody was laughing at me sitting in the ditch holding that brass ring. The next morning I was getting ready to go to school and the school bus came by and our phone rang and someone wanted to know how I was. My mother said I was fine. They had heard that I had fallen off of Lloyd's truck and I was in the Prescott hospital with a hurt back. That's living in a small town.

The Rivera family had a couple of burrows that roamed free through town. My folks had given me a bicycle and Ramon and Juan would try to trade rides on the burrow for rides on my bicycle.

Many people also didn't know that for a short time in Mayer in 1942 there was a concentration camp at an old CCC camp that held Japanese for a short time before they were shipped to other locations in Arizona (these were American Japanese interred during the Second World War). I remember my dad taking me down there and looking at them through the fence. I didn't really understand the significance of what was happening.

Another activity that was always fun was the Dewey rodeo. It was held at the Henderson ranch the last Sunday in June before the Prescott rodeo. It was located on 169 just past the bridge on the left side of the road. It was Perry Henderson who supplied most of the stock for the Prescott rodeo and towns all over Arizona. It was held in the corral and people just parked their cars around the corral. Women set up a concession stand with soft drinks, sandwiches and candy, and a beer truck was brought out from Prescott. According to the newspaper in 1947, the twenty first annual Dewey rodeo featured bull riding, calf tying, team roping, wild cow milking, steer riding and bucking broncs. A bus was provided out from Prescott, \$1 for adults and 50 cents for children. \$4,000 was paid in prizes. Perry died in 1961 so that was the last year it was held. When Perry took the stock in for the Prescott the rodeo, it was herded down the Old Black Canyon Highway, down Sheldon, along the railroad tracks to the rodeo grounds. It was probably quite a sight.

We had a lot of free time in the summer. The only place to go swimming was in Prescott in the Dells. So we teens asked Elmer Young if we could swim in his tank, and all it was was a big hole hollowed out mud hole and we had a lot of fun for several summers just swimming in the mud. Don't think you could do that these days, and I don't think you'd want to anyway.

There were ball games in the evenings in the flats. The Leeway store and Iron King Mine sponsored teams and they played at the Ken Lindley field in Prescott.

There were several regular Saturday night dances in the old theater building. A local musician named Art Wilcox played the steel guitar and Leonard Owens from Cherry played guitar, and Bill Martinez played piano. My dad played a banjo mandolin and often sat in with them.

The Timberlake family lived just this side of Poland Junction and they had a herd of Angora goats. They allowed my dad to have cookouts and steak fries on their land. It's an Indian ruins and had a flat area, and during WW2 anytime a young man came home from the service on furlough my dad would have a steak fry for him. One Thanksgiving in 1947 my brother and my cousin Vivian and I were hiking around that area and we discovered a large rock with an inscription of 1673 SCHEM on one side and 1673 NCLH on the other. I took pictures of it and left it standing on the hill. Fast forward to 2002, Jackie Mathies of Humboldt and the historical society made arrangements for us to tour the area

and I told Buzz Fornier of the FX ranch about the rock. He said maybe he'd go look for it. So later when his family was visiting they did go out and they did find the rock and it was pretty much where I said it was, still standing on the side of the hill after all these years. The' inscriptions on it are still there, still readable. He has the rock.

In 1946 it was decided by the school board with the help of the Iron King mine to put a bus on to take the high school kids to Prescott to school. A used bus was obtained and a new era began. Our driver was Fred Wells who had a gun shop on West Gurley. You may have seen his obituary in the paper. He passed away on January 16th. He put up with a lot transporting us back and forth. It didn't start out too well because the bus broke down quite-often. It was a pretty dusty 45 minutes to an hour ride both ways going in on the old dirt road.- And in May and fall it got pretty hot so Fred would open the door. He also carried the spare tire in the isle which was kind of annoying to us rolling up and down. One day we were coming home on-the old road across the flats and we got to rolling it up and down the aisle back and forth, and you guessed it. It went out the door, over the ravine and on down. Fred stopped the bus and went down after it. He wasn't too happy with us. Sometimes for a change of scenery we would take the long way around on 89a and the old Fain road. Lots of times we did that anyway because Bill, Sue and Donna, the Fain kids, rode the bus with us.

On Saturday night in May 1948 I usually attended the dances but I was asked to baby-sit and I missed going. A young man named John Maddox who lived and worked at the APS substation at Poland Junction got in a fight with Lee (?) from Mayer over a girl. John pulled a gun and shot and killed Lee. John left on foot over the hills toward Prescott, and got as far as the Walker area and turned around and came back and turned himself in to his boss there at Poland Junction. For the next several weeks it was big excitement and they had the trial and he was sent to Florence.

One last recollection, a friend named Harvey and his sister lived on Main Street and his mom married Elton McCormack. Elton bought land in what is now 169 just before you go across the bridge on the Agua Fria. He made arrangements with the company that owned the smelter to haul away some bricks that had been left from blowing up a building to make a movie. Harvey and his sister had to spend an hour every day chipping mortar off of the bricks. Elton hired a couple of local people to build his house. They were heavy drinkers and the later in the day the more crooked the bricks became. They stuccoed over to cover the waves in the wall and he put in a wood stove and he had them build a chimney up through the roof. He sold the house and if you go in the Young's store you'll see the stove and the crooked chimney.

I thank for inviting me to share a few of my recollections of growing up out here.