

JOYCE BELGIN HAMMOND, North High Class of 1959



My Colorado connection is longstanding since both of my parents were grandchildren of Colorado pioneers. My dad's grandparents, Solomon and Mary Ann Belgin came here from England in 1870 and homesteaded 160 acres near Arvada at what is now W 80th Ave and Simms Street. My mom's grandparents emigrated from Germany or Austria and were very early settlers near Hayden, in northwestern Colorado. I don't know the date, but family lore maintains that my grandmother was the first non Native American child born in the Yampa Valley and that my great grandmother, the only woman for miles around, learned English by listening to the men talk and looking things up in the Montgomery Ward's catalog.

When my parents met through family interconnections my mother was teaching math in Ft. Lupton and my dad was operating a steam shovel for road construction in southwestern Colorado. A few years after they married, my dad gave up his nomadic construction job and began working for the Moffat (Denver and Salt Lake) Railroad as a fireman on the old steam engines. Since he had no seniority, he began at the bottom and that meant living in Fraser and working out of Tabernash on "helper" engines that provided the needed push to get eastbound freight trains over the continental divide and then returned to Tabernash, That is how I came to live the first 2 years of my life in Fraser, although I was born in Denver at St. Anthony's.

My dad having gained enough time of service for trips beginning and ending in Denver, we moved to Arvada and lived with my grandmother in 1943. But this arrangement was unsatisfactory for at least two reasons. The railroad required a private telephone line —this being the way they "called" you to go to work at any time of the day or night when your name worked its way to the top of the list and a train was "going out"—and only party lines existed in the rural area where my grandmother lived. And the Moffat Station at 15th and Bassett Street where trips began and ended for my dad was a long way from Arvada. So my parents looked for a house in north Denver that was closer to work for my dad and bought the house where I grew up on Stuart Street in late 1944 or early 1945. And we got that private phone line, too.

After the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad was merged with the Rio Grande in 1947 and all of the freight trips began and ended at the North Yard east of Pecos off of 48th Ave, the north Denver location was even more convenient to work and that was certainly appreciated in those days when our family had only one car and Mother needed to take and pick up my dad (often in the middle of the night) in order to have transportation for herself, my brother, and me. In later years, seniority often qualified my dad for passenger and ski trains that departed from Union Station, also easily accessible from the north Denver location. There was never any reason at all for our family to even consider leaving north Denver and I certainly am happy about that. I believe I grew up in a wonderful place!