

JOYCE KRAMER: North High Class of 1959



Joyce Kramer

Long before any non-Indians came, my Omaha ancestors may well have been in what is now the Denver area. (Anthropological literature documents Omaha oral history to the effect that the Omahas followed the Platte River as far west as Wyoming on their annual buffalo hunting forays.) My great-great-great grandfather was Big Elk, Paramount Chief of the Omahas. His daughter Meumbane (Bright Sun) married Lucien Fontenelle who was a fur trader with the American Fur Company. He headed brigades into the Rocky Mountains, and in the 1830's, they too probably traveled through what is now the Denver area.

During the American Revolution, my Kramer ancestor came as a mercenary soldier from what is now Germany to fight on behalf of the Colonies. The most recent immigrants on my father's side were my great-great grandparents, the Edwards, who came from Wales.

JOYCE KRAMER: North High Class of 1959(2)

My father was a hydraulic engineer. He and my mother met on the San Carlos Apache Reservation in Arizona where they both were employed by the Federal Government. They moved to Sacramento, California, where I was born. Then in

1944, my father began working for the Bureau of Reclamation in Denver, supervising water resources development on the Platte River. Housing was scarce in Denver during the War, so we settled in Louisville, and then in 1946 we moved to 2608 Eliot Street, on the block where North High School's athletic field is presently located. I believe they selected that site because my father was able to bike across the viaduct to work at the Federal Building (which was downtown at the time). Our neighborhood was delightful to a growing child. We lived one block away from the Granada Theater, where my sister and I went to Saturday afternoon matinees for only 13 cents each. Within one block, there was also a corner grocery, and the Rainbow Bakery (where I was regularly sent to buy day old bread), plus a "five and dime" (where you really could buy something for a nickel). There was a park within walking distance, which had a hill for sledding during the winter, and we attended Boulevard Elementary School only three blocks away. After school I regularly stopped at the fire hall on my way home. The bored firemen always heartily welcomed me. Summer times, our family would walk to the Denver Bears Stadium for games. There were vacant lots near my house for playing; the closest (where North High's athletic field is) had a good climbing tree, from which I fell at least once. On one side of us, our neighbor raised chickens. We kids would watch in amazement while the chickens' heads were lopped off. One summer, Grace Kelly rented an apartment in the basement of the house on the other side of us. She was a relatively unknown actress at Elitch Gardens. (After the leading lady became ill, she was promoted to leading lady, and her rise to fame began.) In about 1951, our house was condemned for replacement by the athletic field, so my parents built a home at 3413 W. 26th Ave. across from Brown Elementary School. That was our family home until my father took a job with the U.S. Agency for International Development in Ethiopia, where he was on a joint Ethiopian-American team which conducted the first water resources survey of the Blue Nile. I had attended my freshman year at the University of Colorado, but in the summer of 1960, I left to join them in Africa, never again to live in North Denver, which I still love.