

# Life Sketch of Harold West Smith

---

Harold West Smith was born August 22, 1910 in Marysville, Idaho to John F. and Lillian (Arehart) Smith. When Harold was three years old his father died (suicide by drinking horse pain killer) in 1913. His mother was soon after committed to the mental hospital in Blackfoot where she died in 1915 when Harold was just four. Harold remembers being brought into her bedroom and lying next to her while she was sick in bed.

As a boy, Harold lived with various family members and family friends – "here, there, and everywhere", he said. He had no real recollection of whom he stayed with in these early years. He remembered one lady he lived with told him she was going to give him a lickin' and he was to go and get a stick. Not knowing for sure what he was looking for, he dragged back a large branch almost as big as himself. When he brought it to the lady she just started to laugh and went into the house.

Harold was just four or five years old when he went to live with his mother's brother Joseph Howard Arehart and his wife in Idaho Falls. He lived with them for a short time. Joseph's second wife Lena beat him. One day a Swedish woman named Eva Eklund saw him with welts on his back. She called the truent office and they took him away from Joseph Arehart. Harold then went to live with Eva and her husband Francis Oscar Eklund who never had children of their own. He is found living with them on the 1920 census at the age of 9.

Harold later moved to the Rose area near Blackfoot to live with his father's sister Sarah Agnes Jensen Peck. He remembers walking to school with his cousins Arthur, Jennis, and Ruth Peck and the kids teasing them saying "Here comes four pecks and that makes a bushel!" He said it really made him mad because he wasn't a Peck, he was a Smith.

The Pecks sent him to Nampa to go to school. From there he took all his money and ran away. He hitchhiked to Montana to live with his sister Madge Marie and her husband William John Howard. They were newly married (they were married in 1923, Harold would have been only 12 at the time) and Harold wasn't sure he could get along well so he left and headed for North Dakota. There he found a job in a pool hall owned by a Syrian. Harold swept the floors and cleaned the spittoons in exchange for a bed in the corner.

One day the Syrian told him he found Harold a job. He took him to the Wickhams. Mr. Wickham was about 6 feet 6 inches tall and weight 300 pounds. Harold just stood and stared at him with his mouth gaping open. The Syrian assured him he'd be OK and wouldn't be hurt. Harold milked cows and learned to drive a team of horses. He worked on the thrashing crews through the Northern US and across Canada until he was 20 years old. He also worked in Oregon (probably near his sister Madge) at various farms and dairies.

Harold joined the army 16 September 1940 in Harlem, Montana and served during World War II in France, Denmark, Sweden, and Finland. His job was in supply and he was very proud of having served his country. Harold spent some time in France (he kept a photo of a young French lady, though nothing is known of her) then returned to Idaho in 1945.

After the war he worked odd jobs, farmed, and milked cows. He went back and lived with Uncle Joseph Arehart where he spent some happy times with Joe's children Lizetta Arehart (Crockett) and Bonnie Jo Arehart (Rich). He taught them how to drive by putting them in the car and telling them to go. Not knowing how to shift, Lizetta threw Harold from the back seat up into the front seat. Harold chaperoned them on their first dances. They had a great deal of fun together.

In 1946 at age 35, Harold married Blanche K. Wright (maiden name Blanche Elizabeth Kingdon, she was previously married to a William Reister Wright) in Beaverhead, Montana. They lived in Mud Lake, Idaho, but the marriage did not last and they were soon divorced. Interestingly, on their marriage records it indicates that Harold was previously divorced. Nothing is known of any previous marriage.

Harold met Verna Fae Barzee and on April 11, 1952 they were married in Dillon, Montana. Harold started working for the railroad in the fall of 1952 on the maintenance crew. He was a hard worker and enjoyed doing a hard day of work. Their family started to rapidly grow with children Beth (Bourgeret), Darrell, Evelyn, Lynn, Lloyd, Lawrence, and Sandy. Harold worked hard to provide for his family, many times working extra jobs to make ends meet. He retired from the railroad in 1977.

There wasn't much time for play, but he took some time for 2 trips to Oregon to see his sister Madge. One trip was with the girls Lynn and Sandy; another time with the boys Wayne, Lloyd, and cousin Jack. He was a great sports fan and saw the boys participate in Little League Baseball and Grid Kid Football. He supported them and was proud of every accomplishment.

In the years before his passing, Harold lived with his son Wayne and his family, occasionally sharing tales from his youth, the war, and his time working on the railroad. He once said that his only two wishes were to make it to age 81, then go to sleep. Harold passed away on 23 August 1991, one day after his 81<sup>st</sup> birthday. He is buried in Shelley, Idaho.

*Compiled by Jared Wayne Smith, grandson of Harold West Smith. More information at <http://ancestry.smithplanet.com/>.*