

Larry Burt 0:06
Do Something

Nancy Lawthers 0:11
didn't mean to do that. I'm going to have to repeat asking you when and where you were born.
And your name.

Larry Burt 0:20
All right. My name is Lawrence Strite Burt. I was born in Boulder Canyon about four to five miles west of the city of Boulder at the power plant. And that was May 5, 1918.

The other question that I failed to ask before was, you told me your mother died when you were five months old? Well, what did she die from?

She died of the of influenza. This was during the big influenza epidemic and she was one that took sick rather quickly and within a very short time, day or two, why, she passed away.

Nancy Lawthers 1:13
Oh my goodness. Did anybody else in the family get it? No, no one else deal? No. And you said that your you had a story about your middle name?

Larry Burt 1:25
Well, that story is that my middle name was originally Roland and that was named for some good friends of the folks. Roland Rebel actually worked on some of the lines around the power plant. And his wife, Mrs. Roland Rebel was the midwife when I was born and so the folks like the Rebels so much that they included Roland as my middle name. However, my after my mother passed away, several years later, why my dad remarried, and this lady's name was Strite. Her family name was Strite. And she wanted that included someplace. So she renamed me my middle name Strite. So it was Lawrence Strite Burt. And I did have some difficulties through the years with both names, but I made it official and legal that it is now Strite. Roland, or Lawrence Strite Burt.

Nancy Lawthers 2:37
All right. Now, you said that you had some stories, more stories to tell?

Larry Burt 2:42
Yes, I believe that. Perhaps I need to give a little bit of background in order to get into this. And perhaps talk a little bit about the Kossler family. And I'm not sure that I'm well qualified to talk about them, because I think there are still several of the daughters around. But I don't believe that anything I say is going to be detrimental in any way to them. But my father was the superintendent of the hydro plant up Boulder Canyon from 1913 to about 1922. And one of the persons that reported to him was John Kossler. Actually, he was called Jack Kossler. Now, Jack had begun working during the construction of the Boulder Canyon project, and his main area of expertise had to do with dynamiting and blasting. And he was on a crew that did the gravity line,

they put in the concrete pipe that came from Barker Dam down to Kossler Lake. And this had to be cut out of the mountains, out of the rocks and hewn in such a way that there was a gentle slope from Barker dam on down to Kossler. And Jack headed a crew that did the dynamiting the blasting to break up the rock so that they were small enough to be handled, because there was practically no mechanical equipment in those days. And most of this was handwork. So the rocks had to be broken up to sizes that the rest of the crew can handle. So that was Jack's expertise in those days. And then later on why Jack became what we call a patrolman. And that is a person that actually patrols or looks after the, say the gravity line, that is this pipeline, and the line that went down to the plant, as well as the the electrical transmission lines that ran through the area. Now I do not know what sort of an arrangement the company had with Jack to do this work, it was undoubtedly just a part time arrangement. And I don't know how frequently he was required to patrol these lines. But there were almost no roads around and so much of this had to be done either on foot or on horseback. And I imagine knowing Jack that most of it was on foot. Jack was a very hearty individual a true pioneer and rugged individual.

Now Jack was from the Kossler family, the Kossler family homesteaded up on the back of Lookout Mountain in the area where Kossler Lake is now and next to where the rock, Walker Ranch is located. Jack's father was a miner and he is the one that homesteaded up there. And apparently Jack's father died when Jack was just a young man. And then Jack carried on with his mother and did ranching in the area, raised cattle and hay. Also, I recall that he at one time raised potatoes. And these were very excellent mountain potatoes, grown in a nice red soil that made them very, very delicious. But I saw Jack had several different things that he did it up there.

Now, the story, I guess, that I was about to get into is about 1923. My father, of course was very fond of Jack and his wife. And they were always very friendly. And so Jack's, Dad thought fondly of them. But anyway, after dad was moved to Denver to be an engineer for the company, he occasionally had to come up to Boulder Canyon and up to Kossler Lake for different studies that he was working on. And this particular time and I think was about 1923 in the winter time, why he had some project to do up there and so and we did not have an automobile at the time. So he got a company car, which was a Graham-Paige. Now I do not remember whether that was a standard type of car or whether it was sort of a pickup truck seemed like was a pickup truck type of thing. But anyway, we my mom went long and I was with them. And then my dad and dad drove to Boulder and then started up Lookout Mountain. And then from Lookout why then there is this narrow, mountainous road that heads up toward the rock, Walker, the Kossler ranch. And we got into one sort of a hog back and steep part where the snow was pretty deep and dad was having trouble moving through that and all of a sudden, the car just wouldn't go. Well, he had broken an axle on the car. And there was absolutely no way of moving the car. So dad hiked through the snow up to the Walker and up to the Kossler Ranch and got Mr. Kossler and with a team of horses and a wagon and they came down and met mom and myself and then took us back to the ranch.

Now the Ranch House was a log cabin, of course that had been built numbers of years before. But it was a very, very cozy ranch and just off of the, the house was just off of the road that we still go on when we go up to Kossler Lake and on over to the Walker Ranch. So there was in those days, of course, transportation was very difficult. And Mr. Kossler where I do not think owned an automobile, he had horses and that was his main way of getting around. In the winter time why he pulled sleds and different things with the with the horses. But so here we were, we were up there and stranded. And by the time we got to the Kossler house it was afternoon, late afternoon. So there was nothing to do but to spend the night and the Kosslers were very gracious to offer space to spend the night. So Mrs. Kossler prepared, very, very nice dinner, and which was a steak dinner. Now, I didn't learn until later on, that the steak which he served was venison. But Mr. Kossler wanted to be sure that they did not talk about it being venison and he did not want me to speak my mouth off to anybody else because it was a little out of season. But occasionally, why Mr. Kossler had to shoot some of the deer because they came down and ate his haystacks. And were really very, very bothersome. So occasionally why he would shoot a deer and butcher and they would have that to eat.

Now the Kosslers, as I recall, had five children there were I think they were all daughters. Many of them were just about my age, and some of them a little bit younger. But anyway, we spent the night and it was very cozy. And one of the things I recall, Jack's mother was there. She was an old lady in her 80s or 90s. And very, very nice old lady. But I recall Jack talking about her when, after she had retired that night, and told us the story that this lady, who was a small, a lady of small and stature, had lived up there many many years because she and her husband had homestead there. But in order to get provisions, why she would occasionally have to walk from Kossler Ranch on down to the town of Magnolia in order to get provisions. Now that was surely at least several miles. But he talked about her going down there with a youngster in arms and coming back with 100 pound sack of flour over shoulder and a youngster in arms. Now I just could hardly imagine that but that's the story that he told of this, this nice old lady and what she had done in her earlier days.

So anyway, after we spent the night it was very cozy night because they had featherbeds and course in those days there was no heat and some of the bedrooms and all that so it could be very cold without proper comforters but the Kosslers supplied us with everything we need. So the next day why some way or another why dad had arranged for someone to come up and get us and take us back to Denver. So that is that is really the story that I have of the Kosslers. The Kosslers and the Walkers, because they were so remote up there and and Jack did not have an automobile and roads were not adequate to say get get the kids to school, why they had their own school up there. And the Walkers shared in the school and sometimes why the Walkers would house and take care of the teacher. If there were more of the Walker kids in the school, or if there were more of the Kossler kids, why the Kosslers would take care of whoever was the teacher. But it was a very intimate sort of an arrangement. And I guess some of the one of the schools maybe is still around, or at least it was a number of years ago, it was just a small school put together, but that's where they taught all nine grades. But it was pretty, pretty tough living up there in those remote places at that time. I don't know that I have much more to say the Barbara Kossler wrote, a number of articles which are published in the Boulder Camera. And these

document a few of the items I think that I talked about. And the Kossler family was always a very well and well respected family in that part of the country. So I think that's all I have.

Nancy Lawthers 16:22

Well, that was a very interesting story, I must say. Can you remember anything else about what you ate that night? Besides the steak?

Larry Burt 16:34

No. No, that was really about all that was very, very adequate dinner and Mrs. Kossler, who was a fairly young lady at the time, why she did almost all the cooking and, and just served us up a very good meal. Mr. Kossler, I should say, was a very strong man, not large, but very strong, with very dark black hair, and eyes quite penetrating. And Jack was just as friendly as he could be. He never knew a stranger. But in his later years, he talked rather loudly. And I never had understood that until I got to thinking about the fact that he had worked with dynamiting so much. And some of that blasting, obviously had affected his hearing. So to compensate for that, why he talked rather loudly.

Nancy Lawthers 16:37

Oh, yeah, I can see.

Larry Burt 17:17

And then this is after Jack passed away. And I don't remember what year that was. Why Mrs. Kossler moved from the main ranch house to a house that was right close to the Kossler Lake, and was just just to the the kind of the northwest of Kossler Lake. And that house was fixed up for her. But I hadn't seen, I didn't see her for years and don't remember much about her.

Nancy Lawthers 18:20

You may or may not have noticed up there that night. But did they have just oil lamps? kerosene lamps, or did they have electricity from the power plant?

Larry Burt 18:34

I do not recall. Now it's possible that they had just kerosene lamps, although, of course in that area why there was the electricity and and it could have been that they had some electricity by that time. So but I don't recall.

Nancy Lawthers 18:52

You don't know. I wouldn't expect that you would if you were great to remember about the steak.

Larry Burt 18:59

Yeah. I was mainly because Jack had sort of made a point to the folks that he didn't want me talking about that.

Nancy Lawthers 19:11

Oh, dear, well, I hope that they, I'm sure they got the car back down.

Larry Burt 19:15

I'm sure they did. But I don't remember how.

Nancy Lawthers 19:18

So how did you get down?

Larry Burt 19:20

Well, I think someone from Denver came up for us and took us back.

Nancy Lawthers 19:26

I see.

Larry Burt 19:26

But transportation in those days was a little bit iffy, see, that was around 20, 1924. Yes. And especially after you got up into the mountains why. It was difficult traveling in the wintertime. And they didn't scrape roads very much.

Nancy Lawthers 19:47

Did they roll them at all for sleds?

Larry Burt 19:52

I don't remember that they did.

Nancy Lawthers 19:55

But But Jack Kossler did use a sled during the winter

Larry Burt 19:59

He used a sled to get around and, and to do the things that he had to do, but I don't think they came down to Boulder very frequently in the wintertime. I think they provisioned up in the fall and only made occasional trips down, down to Boulder. And basically, because of the difficulty in traveling,

Nancy Lawthers 20:21

was Magnolia still in existence?

Larry Burt 20:24

Yeah there was a town of Magnolia. And see, this had been a an important town when they built the gravity line. And that was one of the places where they made some of the concrete pipe for the gravity line. And there were stores and provision places for the the mines as well as for this construction work. I don't remember much about Magnolia, except that you, you get to it by going to El Vado, which is just above the power plant up Boulder Canyon, and then you turn and go up some steep roads to Magnolia.

Nancy Lawthers 21:11

Yes, very steep. I've been there. But there is not much there. Here. I wondered if you remembered any stories that your father may have told about Caribou, going up to Caribou?

Larry Burt 21:27

Well, the story, I do recall. And I may have mentioned this before, but it had to do with a mine problem up there. And this is after dad was living in Denver. And he was asked to go to this mine which is up above Caribou in order to find out what was wrong with a particular 50 horsepower motor that ran all of the mill equipment. And he had to travel by train to go up to above, and I don't remember the station above Mount Altar, I guess. There was another station up there. And then they he was met with a sled. And they took this sled and went on way back into the mountains up to the mill site, which was deep under the snow. And he worked on this motor and found that in rebabbitting the motor, why they had changed the position of the rotor within the armature of the motor and the motor would lock up. And after he discovered the problem, why they were able to correct it and so forth. Now, the only other thing I can remember about Caribou is when I was in school, several of us went up to the town of Caribou and went skiing. And on the south side of the town, there was a beautiful bank of snow. And this was before some of the skiing areas like Winter Park, and Vail and all that we're really going. And so we would ski on this nice snowbank in what was the old town of Caribou but it was pretty well gone and I don't believe anyone lived there at that time.

Nancy Lawthers 23:40

Would you go back and just explain rebabbitting what it is

Larry Burt 23:46

All right. A motor has to have, like other equipment, has to have two bearings one on either side of the shaft and the rotating part of the motor or the rotor, then is connected to the shaft and the shaft then rides in the two bearings. Now the bearings in those days were made of babbitt, and babbitt is an alloy of lead and tin and I think copper and maybe some zinc and so forth, but it's a somewhat soft material, but it allows the shaft to ride on a surface which has oil then between the shaft then and this surface, the oil forms just a little sheet and protects both the shaft from wearing and the babbitt from wearing but it is this, the bearings and the position the shaft so that it can turn and turn fairly rapid speed.

Nancy Lawthers 25:12

I see. Otherwise it will seize up.

Larry Burt 25:15

It'll seize up. Yeah. I couldn't think of that word.

Nancy Lawthers 25:21

I don't know anything about it. And you were in engineer for public service at the Valmont powerplant.

Larry Burt 25:30

Yeah, I joined the public service for right after I got out of college, and started in the engineering department down in Denver. And this was in the mechanical engineering department that had charge of the building of power plants to steam plants especially. And I worked in Denver, then in engineering for about six months, and then was set up to Valmont Plant to be a, what you'd call a test engineer, or an engineer that worked on meters and control equipment and efficiency tests and so forth. And of the Valmont plant was our biggest power plant at that time. And was very, very important. As this was just the very beginning of the the war effort. And the plant was a big supplier for the power for some of the munitions plants and the arsenal and so forth that were in the area.

Nancy Lawthers 26:40

Oh, did it supply Rocky Flats?

Larry Burt 26:42

Rocky Flats and the

Nancy Lawthers 26:47

Rocky Mountain Arsenal?

Larry Burt 26:48

Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Denver, which was making some sort of gases and things like that?

Nancy Lawthers 26:56

Things you don't want to know about? The did the power plant have the two stacks?

Larry Burt 27:07

Yes, it had two stacks at that time, wait a minute, or it had one stack and was getting the second stack? As I recall. Let me see. The first unit went in 1924. And the second unit went in in 1936. And I guess that's when the second stack went in in 1936. And then in about 1940 why another unit where the end but it used the same stacks. But since then, why in the 1960s, Why then the third stack went in and a fifth turbine unit but they they don't run the old side of the plant anymore. That's all decommissioned so the part that I worked on is, is all museum pieces now.

Nancy Lawthers 28:11

Yes, it did it have big wheels and big turbines.

Larry Burt 28:16

Yeah, it had fairly large turbines. And they were kind of state of the art type of equipment. Because 1924 was at a time when boilers were just going from, might say, hand fired and stoker fired to pulverized coal. And the Valmont Plant was one of the very early pulverized coal plants. Now the coal was brought in from mines in the area, basically in Boulder County brought in mostly by rail, although a few by trucks, and then this coal was taken to the top of a building and and then run down through some mills, which pulverized the coal to that the feeling of face

powder. And then it was blown from there into some bins that were above the boilers and then fed from these bins into streams of air that blew this into the boilers and the coal ignited just about like a gas. And so it was a very new concept, but it worked very well because it was quite controllable and and produced a very hot flame. But the boilers were the, actually a type that was converted in design from old stoker types of boilers. And this plant operated by to 350 pounds pressure, which was fairly high in those days. And steam temperatures about 650 to 700 degrees Fahrenheit. So that was quite a bit for those days.

Nancy Lawthers 30:20

Yes. Do you remember the names or any of the mines that supplied that plant?

Larry Burt 30:27

Well, a few of them. There was the Black Diamond Mine, and which was up in Louisville? Oh, I'm then the Crown Mine, which is over close to where the Home Depot and Eagle Hardware and some of those places are in Louisville. And gosh, I just don't think I remember the other names. There were many of them around

Nancy Lawthers 31:03

I just thought you might have remembered some of them. Yeah. Right. All right. Well, if you have any more stories, I'll be glad to take them down.

Larry Burt 31:16

I think that pretty much covers most of everything that I felt that I needed to talk about.

Nancy Lawthers 31:26

Well, that was extremely interesting,

Larry Burt 31:29

as I say, why the Kosslers are a very, very interesting family. And I would hope that there has been more documented than what Barbara has written about because she's, she's talks more about the Walkers, and she doesn't say very much about her own family. She's a little bit modest. And I would hope that someone has talked about the Kossler family,

Nancy Lawthers 31:58

but you added a little tidbit of it.

Larry Burt 32:00

Yes.

Nancy Lawthers 32:01

Yes.

Larry Burt 32:02

I hope I've done them proud anyway,

Nancy Lawthers 32:04

I think you did. I think you did. All right. Well, thank you, Larry, very much.

Larry Burt 32:10

You're most welcome.

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