

Recollections of George Leonardis (Lee) Bradford by his Grandson Lee Bradford (2011)

My Dad was very proud of Dawson. He shared some stories of him growing up there. First I should tell you about his family: I believe they moved to town in about 1906. My Dad, Lee left in 1943 to move to California. My grandparents were George Leonardis (Lee) Bradford and Bertie Jane Bradford. They had 3 children who died before coming to Dawson, then there was Alvis (who died in the mine, in a coal car accident, when he was 17 in 1910, Claude, Ira, Lee, George Herbert, Harvey Goodman, and Bertie Ruth were the children. Grandma always wore black in respect to her 4 children who passed away. She was in charge of the Eastern Star, for several years. Grandpa was in charge of the Masons and in 1911 was the Grand Chancellor of the Knights of Pythias. He was postmaster from 1908 to 1918.

I don't have an exact date for this, but this must have happened sometime between 1909 and 1913: Dad told me they let his elem entry school out for the afternoon, so the students could join the rest of the town down at the rail road station to witness a new invention coming to town. The train arrived, the box car opened, a ramp was erected and three men rolled a new horseless carriage down the ramp. The men got the car to start, but it only ran about fifty feet then the engine died. The mechanics tried for about an hour to get the engine to start. When their time was up, and they realized they couldn't start the engine, they rolled the car back up the ramp saying they were going to take the horseless carriage on to the next town. When class resumed the topic of discussion was the future of the car. The prevailing feeling throughout the town was the car had no future. It would be only a rich man's toy since you would have to employ a full time live in mechanic just to keep it running. Also the horse and wagon was here to stay. People thought my Grandpa was wrong when he said that the car did have a good future and some day almost all the families in this country would own one car and some of them would own two or more.

When my Dad was 13 he and Uncle Ira joined the Boy Scouts in 1917. The scoutmaster told the boys there would have to get a uniform, but he didn't want their parents to pay for it. He wanted the boys to get a job and pay for their own uniform their selves. This way they would learn the value of a dollar. Since there was no child labor laws then, Dad got a job working under some exposed gears in the coke ovens. He reached up to scratch his head with his right hand, when it was caught in the gears, pulling his arm into the gears all the way up to his shoulder. Uncle Ira immediately put a tourniquet on Dad's arm. Just a few days before, the scoutmaster was telling the scouts at the Monday night meeting about this new procedure. Two men said they would carry Dad to the hospital, since it was only about 2 blocks away. Uncle Ira told them to keep the tourniquet tight. He then ran over to tell Grandpa about the accident. The men were unsure of the effectiveness of the tourniquet and let it dangle, not attempting to keep it tight. Dad had to twist and hold his own tourniquet. When he got to the hospital he kept asking the nurse for something to take the pain away. She said they couldn't give him anything until his father gets there. Dad asked why, she said because he might never see you again. For the next several times when he woke up in the hospital he thought it was night since all was black. Since blood transfusions weren't invented yet. He said he must have lost so much blood, he went temporarily blind. His sight did come back later. All the doctors, except Doc Diver, wanted to

cut his arm off. Doc Diver said he was just reading an article in a medical journal stating a new medical procedure where the arm could be saved and since he was the chief of staff he wanted to try it. His arm showed the marks the gears left, and deformed his hand, but Dad was always thankful to the doctor since he used that arm just as good as any man could. Since he was in bed recovering so long, he had to learn to walk again, he had learn to use his left arm as he once used his right. He would really get mad if anyone would call him crippled, he would say he is not crippled only injured. He always did things that a man with two hands would find difficult. Several years later he was working in the mine, he was drilling holes in the top of the tunnel. His boss told him he couldn't drill those holes since his arm was injured. By the time the boss was finished Dad had 3 more holes drilled. I am glad I won the tile picture of the Coke Ovens at the Dawson Picnic in 2010