

INTERVIEW WITH: Arnold Alvey
INTERVIEWER: Marsha Holland, SUOHP
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This interview represents one of five interviews taken in the summer of 2007 as part of an effort by Escalante residents, Envision Escalante, and the Southern Utah Oral History Project to collect and make a record of the unique stories and lifestyle of the Escalante area.

Recording made with a Sony DAT recorder. Audio wave files of recordings are available through the Southern Utah Oral History Project.

AA: My name is Arnold M. Alvey and I was born December 23rd, 1928, to Samuel James Alvey. He was born July the 24th 1888. My mother was Shariah Haws Alvey and she was born April 25th, 1890. She was born in Thurber, Wayne County, now Bicknell. My dad was born here in Escalante.

MH: Was your father one of the first people to be born here?

AA: No, I don't know about that, whether he was the first. I imagine close to one of the first.

MH: How did your parents come into this country?

AA: It was my grandparents; my dad's dad and three other brothers that came here from England and settled in Escalante. One of them left and went back into Idaho. Granddad and one other brother stayed here, one in the Richfield area.

MH: What was the business that they got into?

AA: Ranching and cow business. They were in the whole area; they run the cattle on the desert in the winter and up on the Forest Service in the summer time. That was before the Taylor Grazing the Forest Service went in.

MH: Do you remember that transition or anyone talking about when the Taylor Grazing Act came in?

AA: Yes, well, it was OK, I guess. My dad and brothers, that were older than I, were to get the amount of cattle they owned on the range that they wanted. They had to go to Kanab to get it done. We also used what they call "The Top of Collets" out here. My Uncle Dee Haws, he was on the Board. He came to my dad and said, "Now, James, you don't need to go to that meeting, I'll see that you get that range out there. Don't worry about it." Well, he went to Kanab and got the range alright, but it was for himself and shoved us down into what we call "Collets".

MH: Collets is rough country.

AA: Yeah, but that was how that originated. I tried to get Dad to protest it, but he said, "Aw, let him go. He is your mother's brother and I am not going to say nothing." And he didn't. We didn't get the cow range that we should have had, that we had been using over the years. He never had used it. He went on there one winter with a bunch of sheep, he and Vic Cottam. That was the only time he had ever used it.

MH: Wasn't the Haws family from over near Boulder.

AA: Both Escalante and Boulder. My Grandpa Haws owned a ranch over where Turn About is now and he owned a grocery store down here in the middle of town; the building is still there. He also owned the bank here in Escalante. My wife, Deon, read a book here the other day that said all the banks in 1923 went broke but the Escalante bank. That was my Grandpa Haws'. Grandpa Haws owned this house, bought it in 19 and 8. It was built for a hotel, but he bought it, according to my mother, before it was finished, so it was never used for a hotel. In this book, it

3 Arnold Alvey-1

says it was a hotel called the Eagle Hotel. Not according to my mother, so I don't know that when my mother was eighteen years old when my Grandpa bought it, and lived here with him, that she ought not to know. My mother used it as a boarding house; there weren't too many places to stay. When the one or two places would fill up, they would call Mother to take them. Mother took in a lot of guys who were working around here.

MH: Who would be filling up the hotel rooms?

AA: Different people who would come into the valley. This was as far as they could go, more or less. They could go onto Boulder, but a lot of it was horseback or buggy. I guess there were big cow buyers come through. There were four or five stores down here and I imagine they came in for the store business and would bring stuff in. There was quite a lot of business around here for stores.

MH: You spent quite a bit of our time on the range?

AA: When we started to school, me and my brother Rayl, when the snow was deep, Dad used to let us take and ride a horse to school. Then we would tie the bridle reins around his neck and let him go back home. Then Dad would come down to the school when school was out and pick us up at night. As soon as we got old enough so that both of us was in school, and when Dad was on the range with the cattle in the winter when there was a lot of snow, the big end of the time, by then my brother Emmorn had gotten married so he was either working someplace or on the range with Dad, so me and Rayl had to feed. We would come home, saddle our horses, and go to the fields and feed anywhere from one hundred to one

hundred fifty head of cattle and thirty or forty head of horses, every night after school.

We would come back and help Mother milk the cows and take care of the horses and cows and pigs that were to our place. That was me and my younger brother, two years younger than I. We had to do all those chores and we did that for years. It was a lot of responsibility, but I didn't think nothing of it, we just had to do it. When the other kids was out playing and doing different things me and Rayl were taking care of cattle. Then, on the weekends we would have to go out here in these draws and check on the cattle that was out there; usually had a lot of calves out there, wieners. We would go out there on the weekends and check those cattle. If we didn't get it all done on Saturday, we had to go back Sunday. Going to church wasn't in our vocabulary. We had more to do than a lot of the other kids that could go to church; we didn't get to do those things.

MH: Tell me about your brothers.

AA: The oldest was Frank, but he was killed on a horse over to Boulder. A horse stepped in a hole and fell and killed him just a day or two before he turned twenty-one. He kept telling Mother, "I never will live to be twenty-one." She said, "Frank, get that out of your head." But he didn't.

I had another brother Ariel that was married right after he got off his mission and then he had his family to support. Smith, he always had hay fever so bad that he couldn't help us with the farming, because he used to get hay fever so bad he couldn't see, and get stuffed up so bad. I had another brother, just younger than Smith, who when he was eight years old. The basketball team was going out over

that mountain to play basketball; they went up to the neighbors' place to pick up one or two of the basketball players. My brother and Smith, and another boy that lived across the street, Bud Woolsey, they got on the back of the car, but nobody knew it. They thought they would stop downtown and would jump off and go on to school. Well, they didn't. They just went on out of town and my younger brother was eight and panicked and jumped off down there in front of the stores and it killed him. He lived a day or two. That was my brother Millard. Smith and Bud stayed on the car and when they got up above town, one of the ball players looked back said, "Ashe (Allen), I believe you have somebody on the back of your car." He stopped and Bud and Smith were hanging onto the back of his car and so he turned around and came back to town. Millard was out there in the middle of the street; broke his neck. They got him to Salina, but he never did gain consciousness.

MH: Oh, gosh. Tragic. That is quite a few brothers. Then there was you and who else?

AA: Rayl. He lacked a week of being two years younger than me. He was born on the 16th of December and I was born the 23rd two years later. I had a sister Minnie and Wanda and Leda. Leda had a twin sister that died at birth. There was eleven of us. Leda died with a sickness in the 19 and 36. Most were all growed up and gone. Smith, he was next to me, Millard was in-between Smith and I, but Smith was eight years older than I was, so he was out of high school, got him a job and went up to Oregon and Washington on some of those big dams they was building. That just left me and my brother. We had to help Dad with the farming.

MH: Let us talk about the ranching part of your life.

AA: We gathered cattle. During the war, they would let us out of school in April, and I would go for Wilson's down on the Fifty-Mile Mountain and I wouldn't get back until the middle of June. I would go down here to gather our cattle. Always with our cattle, I would also ride for Bailey's and some of them. Bailey's was awful good to pay but you had to make it understood with them before you went how much you was to get. If you didn't have it understood what your pay was, then you had to take show tickets. They owned the show house. They would make you take show tickets and they would jurisdiction that. I went to the show one night Gail Bailey's wife, Reva, my first cousin, she said, "Arnold, you have about enough left for a half of a show ticket." I thought, "Well, that is OK, she is my first cousin, and everything will be alright." I said, "Well, I will go in and watch the first half, then." I had no idea she would chase me off. When she thought the show was about half over, she come down through the aisle and said, "Arnold, you'll have leave now, the show is about half over." (Laughter) I got up and went and sat on the ditch bank and waited for my friend, Wayne Bailey, that lived over here in the house where Katherine and Frank live now.

MH: Do you remember the show you only saw half of? (Laughter)

AA: No, I would of, though, if I had got to watch it all. (Laughter)

MH: The theater was kind of a big thing here, the movie theater?

AA: They used to hold them in the old Star Hall at first. Then Katherine can probably tell you that her dad went down to the CCC camp and showed movies. He would hold them on different nights at the old Star Hall. He built this show house. It was a big treat for all of us. I think the tickets were either a dime or twenty cents. But I

knew I only had a half of one coming, and how I don't know. Reva done the books.

MH: Tell me what it was like out on the range, the wildest range area that you went into to?

AA: We went on the Fifty and it would depend on the group and the cattle and the time of year where you went to gather these cattle from June until first or middle of July we gathered the cattle on the desert. Wilson's would gather their cattle from the middle of April till the first of June to get on the Fifty Mile Mountain, pushing them up there and mark and brand the calves. We had to do the same on this desert. When I first went, why, we had to go clear into Hole in the Rock to start to gatherin' with packs since there weren't any roads. We would get into Hole in the Rock and start back this way and pushing all the cattle back this way until we got them down here to Ten Mile, then there would be an outfit up here, some cowboys up on this end that would go to Ten Mile every other day and get a bunch and take them to the tagging corral and mark and brand the calves. We always had the calves all marked by the time they got there. We would rope all those calves out in the open so that they would know whose they was. I would rope one hundred, one hundred-fifty calves every day out on the range. That was where I learned to rope, roping calves on the range. We would ear mark them.

MH: You must have had a good horse.

AA: I had a lot of good horses then, lots of good horses. No favorite, they was all good. Maybe, I had one that was a little more favorite.

MH: How would you get your horses? How would you choose your horse?

AA: We had our horses; we would run them in a ramada all right. They knew their horses and we knew our horses. You would just ride the horse when its turn come. We would have four or five or six horses apiece then we would ride one today, then knew which one tomorrow. My brother Emmorn, he was a cowboy, I'll tell you. We was down to Twenty Mile and Almie Liston, he was a good roper, awful good roper. They got to bragging on Almie one day. I guess I was eight or nine years old. Emmorn told some of them there, "I bet you a yearling heifer that Arnold can out rope him." They bet a yearling heifer and we took a bunch of cattle up in a flat, then they would cut a calf out and drove it down a hundred or two hundred yards away from the cows, then he would rope one and I would rope one. He missed his thirteenth calf and I roped mine.

MH: Wow, a real duel.

AA: It was a lot fun.

MH: I have heard stories of some guys setting up a makeshift rodeo, did you ever do that on the range?

AA: We used to have a few rodeos. We used to have a little fun alright, it seemed like we were always so damned dirty and tired that we didn't. There was no place to bathe or clean up and you wore the same clothes day in and day out for a month or two at a time, you didn't feel like doing too much. It was a long day.

MH: Would you describe your day?

AA: You would get up early in the morning; someone would go get the horses. They were always hobbled out and someone would have to go get the horses while the others would fix breakfast. We would bring the horses back and put the nose

sacks on them and grain them all, have breakfast, and saddle up. Some of the fellers that was kind of the bosses, they weren't, but they were, they would outline where we went today and where we didn't. We would head out and start to gatherin' cattle then meet with them someplace. Then we would either run them up agin' a bank or in a wash or someplace that there was enough of us we could hold them up. Some of us, that was better ropers, would rope the calves and earmarked them.

MH: Any good cooks in your camp?

AA: They was all good cooks. It didn't matter, seemed like they all pitched in and done it. One guy would make the bread. Blake Robison, he went one or two years and he make the bread. He was the bread maker, but he would get right on the table tarp, right on his hind end and mix the bread. The other guys would have to take care of the oven, cooking it on the open fire. Hymie Gates, my neighbor, he was down there one spring with us for awhile. He came back up to help tag the cattle up on this end. Some of guys said to Hymie, "I thought you were going to stay down there, until they brought the cattle and came up?" "My hell", he said, "Me and old Alden, (Alden Moses), we had to come to rest." They said, "Why did you have to come up to rest for?" He said, "We have down there running bread ovens for Blake." (Laughter) Blake made the bread, but he never baked it, he didn't do nothing, only just make it, everyone else did the work. Comical.

MH: When you would go up into the high country, would you come across more wildlife, say bear bothering your camp?

AA: There were no bears then, maybe one or two. They didn't bother us. There were a few cougar, but you never did see them. We would be up there a month or two at a time in the fall gathering cattle. Bud Gates, Hugh Bailey and some of us would go on the mountain up here in the fall to gather the cattle off, and the cowboys down here would go up in the canyons and gather them up and bring them to town. We would push them off in these canyons up here. We never did see any bear or stuff like that.

MH: So, there wasn't much to bother the cows or calves?

AA: Once in a while you would see where a bear had killed a calf, but no.

MH: What about rustlers?

AA: They just hung them and let it go. (Laughter)

MH: How about suspecting there was rustling?

AA: Well, we are not going to get into that. A lot of this rustling wasn't because someone was hungry; it was just that someone was just damned mean. There wasn't as much of it as people would pretend there was, I don't think and I was on the range day in and day out from the time I was ten or twelve years old during the war and from there on. There were some that got a lot of blame; the ones that was doing the blaming, was the ones that was doing it. We knew who was doing it and who wasn't. Them days there was a lot of wild cattle in the country, when I was younger. There were a lot of cowboys catching a lot of them wild cattle and taking them. But I felt like they had as much right to them as somebody else, because even their mothers were long-eared, with no marks of any kind on them. One feller made the comment that some of these cowmen, "If you aren't going to

mark and brand your cattle, I will.” A lot of these cattle would get off in different places that we wouldn’t get in the spring and the cow would get a little wild, she would take her calf and head out, and you would never catch up with them, maybe for a year or two. She would have a big long eared heifer or bull, weaned, and as soon as it was weaned you didn’t know for sure whose it was. You could guess, but you couldn’t prove nothing.

This valley was full of cowboys. This valley had more good cowboys in it, I believe, than any other place on earth. There wasn’t a cowboy here that couldn’t get on a horse and rope a calf in nothing flat. You could always tell a good cowboy from his outfit. All these men around here saddled their horses, saddles looked nice, they might have been old saddles, but looked nice; they put them on a horse nice. Some of these places, these boys just throws them on and these old guys, they don’t have any more pride than an old bridle that our boys wouldn’t have even thought of using.

MH: It was more a lifestyle here, a way of living.

AA: Yes, it was. Our men took pride in everything they done. They were farming and everything, they took pride in what they done. Our valley was full of people that had a lot of pride.

MH: This country where you have been a cowboy for all your life, it is very wild and rugged. Small narrow canyons, and being in that country a few times I imagine myself looking for a cow out there and think how did they do it, how did they keep track of everything?

AA: It isn't hard. You check tracks especially around the watering holes if there are any cattle, then you go from there. It was a good life. We would have to take our packs, three or five packs a piece. The packs would be on horses. We never did have any mules. Some of the guys had a mule or two. Now, when I rode for Wilson's, all of their pack outfits were mules, but they had probably a hundred and fifty head of horses and mules on the Fifty Mile Mountain and what we call Grand Bench. They had plenty of mules all the time and they would bring in some of those mules in the fall and break them over the winter and break them to pack, so that was what we used. We had about a dozen of them.

MH: The length of time you would be out would be two months or so?

AA: During the war when I would go with Wilsons, we would leave here the fifteenth of April and it would be right close to the fifteenth of June time we would get back. Then I would have to go down to this desert to gather these cattle.

MH: In a few months, did your mom recognize you when you would come back in?

AA: I just got uglier.(Laughter)

MH: When you are a teenager, you can grow pretty fast.

AA: I didn't ever grow. I was a little feller, never very big. Me and Lenza got off down in Rock Crek, we had been gone about ten or twelve days, I guess, and we went down around what they call Last Chance. But we had forgot and left all of our horseshoes on the Fifty, for the saddle horses. We went around and down Last Chance and out, when we got back into Lower Rock Crek, why, Lenza said, "Arnold, while you are riding Dry Rock Crek and Middle Rock Crek, I'll go up to the lake and get the horseshoes." It was quite a long ways to the lake and

back, probably twenty, twenty-five. It was what we called The Lake, dammed off a holler and a pasture and flat spot and made a lake for a watering hole, called The Lake. He said, "Don't never come a huntin' me." I was about thirteen. He tied the old red mule up and when I woke up that morning he was gone. He was gone all that next day, all the next night, all the next day, all the next night. I was getting nervous. Just as I come out of Middle Rock Crek one night, here he come on the old mule. He had been gone for three days and nights. I said, "Where in the hell have you been?"

Well, before he left, he had gone and then come back in three or four hours. I asked him, "What's the matter?"

"Oh, I got up there a ways and this old fartin' mule fell off a big bank with me. (Laughter) He tied the old mule up and went to bed and when I woke up the next morning he was gone. He was gone all that time and I asked, "Where have you been?"

He said, "I got up on the side of the mountain there and I got a little sleepy so just tied the old mule up and crawled up under a rock went to sleep and I just never woke up." For two or three days and nights. I believed him, because I knew him. He didn't know how long he had been gone or nothing, he just knew he had been gone. (Laughter) He was the best feller in the world to be out with, he took everything in stride. Sometimes, we had to kill a lot of calves, or we had some calves that had run up on a high ledge, three or four hundred feet off. The cattle were all down in the bottom, and them calves all jumped off the ledge and it killed them all. We would lose a bunch of horses or something; he just took

everything in stride. He never blamed Arnold, he didn't blame himself, it was just one of those things, really good to be out with, good company. He was always quite jovial. Lenza Wilson. I enjoyed a goin' with him.

When we got to packing salt up on to the Fifty Mile Mountain, we would have about ten or twelve packs that we would go on the mountain to Willow tank and get salt, and if he had something else to do, some water holes to clean out, then I would have to go alone to get the salt and I would be all day and half the night going off the mountain. Some of those old lumps of salt were bigger than I was trying to get them on those packs. Those old mules had been off and on that mountain for so long, you could head them one way and they would go, you didn't ever have to worry about them. You could put all that salt on them and head them up the trail and they would go right back to where you wanted them to. If you had some salt licks you had to scatter to, we had certain places where we had to leave the salt, them old mules, or once in a while a horse or two in the bunch, they seemed like they knew right where you wanted to go. They would go to those old salt licks and stop and wait for you to come and get that salt off from them. (Laughter) They were in a hurry to get that salt off of them.

I went with Leo Wilson on one trip. He had a little filly that he said was his boys. He put a pack on her, put too much on her, I tried to talk him out of it, but anyway, we got up on the side of the mountain. One of the old mules turned around on the trail and bumped her and knocked her off and she fell, fell three or

four hundred feet off and over them ledges and down through there. He went off over the sides there to go down to her. When she hit the first time, the pack broke away from her and all that was left on her was a pack saddle. He went clearin' off down there and when he come back he had a little handful of rings in his hand. I said, "Was she dead?" Of course she was dead the first time she hit, you know. He looked so serious. He said, "Deader than a son of a bitch." (laughter) It was a dangerous area. There was a lot of accidents, cattle fall off them ledges, horses. 'Specially if they would get a little tired and they would switch around in the trail. The trail was pretty narrow anyway, why, if you ever bumped a horse, he was so tired, why, they just went over the side. This filly, that day, was a' bouncing I bet a lot of times, thirty feet in the air, end over end, down that mountain.

MH: That is a wild adventure, but it sounds commonplace.

AA: It was where the cattle was, where they run, and you had to do what you had to do.

MH: When we first moved here, it was when the drought had been bad one or two years, several years after the Monument had been designated, but the drought had been a couple of years by then. The BLM requested the cows be brought off the Fifty, maybe August, too soon for them to come off. But, the cattle are off doing their thing and are not used to coming out until it turns cold.

AA: Well, in my notion, the government people should have used a little reason with them. It was all right to tell them they had to start to get their cattle off, but do it in the time of it, but they tried to tell them they couldn't bring them off 'n to the Bench, things like that. Those cattle down there, if they could have started them

off the mountain, let them on to Bench, on to desert, then gather them up, but they were told they couldn't do that. Well, it was a project that was uncalled for, the cowboys just couldn't do something in the way they wanted them to do it. They could have moved them a little sooner, but they told them they couldn't push them off the mountain on to the Bench or on to the desert. They had to hang on to them, and in a way, it wasn't feasible to do that because it would have cost them more than the cattle was worth; to do it they way they wanted them to do it. I always felt like they had a motive in mind that they wanted to get rid of them, that was what they used, put the restrictions on them and they couldn't abide by it.

MH: One of my ranching friends from the Bryce Valley said, those cattle won't come off the Fifty until those cows are ready to come off the Fifty.

AA: Well, they could have done it, they would have had a heck of a job, but they wouldn't let them go anyplace, wanted them to hang onto them. If they had started the cattle off of that mountain, they would have had to have half a dozen to a dozen cowboys on that bench to have held them up, because those cattle would go off there a million miles an hour and they wouldn't have stopped until they hit the desert. They would have went. This is something that the government people didn't realize, they wasn't dealing with just anything.

MH: My point in bringing it up is that it is a unique area.

AA: It is different than any area in the whole United States for moving cattle, it was different. I just think they had it in their mind to erupt the whole thing and get rid of them and they done it.

MH: Wasn't there another time, maybe around the Depression, when they got rid of a bunch of cattle. Do you remember that?

AA: They didn't really get rid of them, like [with] my Dad, they came here. And I don't know if they done it to deplete the cattle or whether they done it to try and help the rancher, we was just kids alright. They give us five dollars a head. We had to dispose of them. They killed hundreds of head of cattle around here; the government gave them five dollars a head. There was no place to sell them. They claimed they had tuberculosis or something, but they didn't. They condemned them. We picked out the ones that wasn't as good a cattle, and they would come and count them.

MH: Was that a situation of too many cattle out on the range?

AA: They was just trying to help the people from starving to death, to give them a few dollars. They said the cattle had tuberculosis, if they did, they all did. We just picked out certain ones that we disposed of, so I know that it was a hoax. I always felt like it was, well, five dollars a head was a pretty good price then, and I felt they was trying to help the people. They was trying to have something to show for it, deplete their herd of cattle for so much money. My dad let them have all six or eight; he got a twenty-five or thirty dollar check. In them days that was quite a bit of money.

MH: You started off learning the trade from your dad?

AA: Dad and brothers. My dad stayed with the cattle in the winter, never hardly came to town. On the weekend, if he run into another sheepherder, usually there were other sheepherder people coming up and down the desert, he go out to where the

sheep herder guys where. They had an old jalopy coming back and forth from the sheep herd and he would give them a note of the supplies that he would need. On the weekend, I would put pack on a horse, or two packs, depending on what he wanted, then I would take it and go to where he was, leave it, and stay all night with him and come back on Sunday so I could be to school Monday. It could be down twenty, thirty miles, a good days ride. I would stay all night with him and leave the stuff and come back for school Monday.

I have had a lot of experiences. When I would go on the range with my brother Emmorn, he never got out of my sight. I was just a little feller. From the time I was four or five years old, every place Emmorn went, I went. Didn't make a damned where it was, we would go on the mountain to scatter rock salt or chase wild cattle, I was right with him. I went everyplace he went. One time he was going chasing wild horses, he and Claron Barney and Rodney Barker and a few of them. I was about five I think. I said, "Let me go with you."

He said, "Well, I'd let you go, but your horse isn't shod." I went in and told Mother. I said, "Mother, I could go chasing wild horses with Emmorn and them tomorrow, but my horse isn't shod." So, I went to the corral and got the horse and brought him over to the shed; 'twix me and her we shod him. (Laughter) The next morning when they come up the street to chase wild horses, why, I was out in the middle of the street. I had my horse saddled and I had my lunch tied on, my water jug and I was ready to go. They couldn't tell me I couldn't go, they had to take me.

MH: That is so great you mother helped you shoe the horse. Wonderful.

AA: Mother helped me shoe my horse.

MH: What a neat lady.

AA: She was. She was one in a million. It didn't matter what I done, she stuck up for me. Course I was the cowboy in the outfit after Emmorn died. He died when I was fourteen, fifteen. I was setting out here in the corral, September the 5th, 19 and 43, I believe. My brother-in-law, they owned the store down here, he came up here and told us Emmorn had just died. I never started school that year until after the first of the year because I had cattle and all to take care of. I couldn't go to school. My uncle Rol Porter was one of the teachers. He told Mother, "Now, don't send that boy to school until after the first of the year. You keep him and let him take care of the cattle, let him come to school. But, don't start him." It was the first morning of school when Emmorn died, so I just never went to school until after the first of the year that year. I didn't have to make no school up, because I hadn't started. Uncle Rol said, if I started then I would have to do all that back work, so I started with a clean slate.

It was quite a life. Seems like we used to get a lot of snow in the winter times, thing like that. My brother Emmorn lived up here in the house after my grandpa died. I didn't remember him. He died when I was two. Emmorn bought a home where VerGene lives. He lives in the home my brother used to own. We didn't move up here until 1940.

MH: How did yon meet Deon?

AA: She was born and raised here in Escalante. When I was home on furlough in the Army, we just became chummy with one another, then one thing lead to another and after I got out of the service that fall, fall of '52, then we got married in December on my birthday. It was us two and Frank and Katherine [Coleman]. We went to Richfield and had a double wedding.

MH: When you were in the war, you were eighteen?

AA: Before then, when I got older and got out of high school, I left one summer when I was twenty, twenty-one. Me and Donald Griffin went up into Oregon and Washington and back into Wyoming rodeoing. Then we worked for the Forest Service in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, one whole summer, rodeoed and worked for them up in that country. I calf roped in Pendleton, Oregon, and different places and he rode bareback horses. We had quite a time everyplace we went. If there was a rodeo, we got into it.

MH: How did you Escalante boys do, make some money?

AA: Yes, yes, we done real good. Of course, in those days there wasn't money to be made. A lot of the places, your entrance fees were only ten dollars, some would be higher. Once in a while you would hit a place where the entrance fee would be fifty, sixty dollars and we really liked that because the higher the entrance fee was the more money you could make. We were good enough at it that, we didn't win all the time, but we kept afloat. He would either bring in a good check or I would. We kept a-ticking. I roped in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and Larimie, Wyoming, and Cheyenne and all them places, hit all them big shows. Some of them I won, some I didn't, I could most generally place, get a check, keep us a

goin'. You team up with some guys, you get some traveling partners and somebody will pick up a check. You might think you are going to get hungry, but somebody will make a good lick and you make it OK.

They have got so much money in it now days, and I am sure it is a lot different than it was in [my time]. We was just doing it for sport, now days they are doing it for a living. I think it is super. It is a tough sport; it is a grind if you are trying to make a living. For us, it was just sport.

MH: If you were doing roping, did you also haul your own horse?

AA: A lot of the times, but if I didn't have a horse, then I would inquire around to the other cowboys as to whose horse was one of the better horses. They would let you know who they felt like, and let you rope on their horse, for a percent. You could pick up a horse if you didn't have your own horse. A lot of times I had my own horse, but a lot of times I didn't. When I was in the Army, I didn't have my own horse. I roped a lot and they would never charge me to rope on their horse because I was a soldier boy. They would say, "No, no, you are a soldier boy, so we aren't charging you."

MH: Where were you stationed in the Army?

AA: Out to Colorado Springs, Colorado. There was rodeos out there everyplace, just like it was in Jackson Hole, Wyoming. Some of those little towns had a rodeo every week. Then, in Wilson, Wyoming, just out of Jackson Hole, they rodeoed every Wednesday night. We could go there and pick up a nice check, once a week. Donald would ride bareback and I roped calves, and we just done alright.

MH: Sounds like a good time.

AA: We had a lot of good times. A bunch of cowboys there from up to Vernal, too. A lot of those cowboys would come and stay right there, for the purse money. They would stay all summer right there to Jackson Hole for the purse money that they was a winning, and they was living on what they won.

MH: What kind of accommodations would you have?

AA: We worked for the Forest Service and we lived in tents, but the Forest Service provided all of our meals. We run pack strings during the day for the Forest Service, doing trail work and when we had our horses to took care of for the night, then we head to one of these rodeos. It was just perfect. We had the life. It was a lot of fun.

MH: When they were doing some of the road work, out into the backcountry of the low desert, were you in on that?

AA: No. I did go out and shoot the Burr Trail up, when they was doing it. I went over to Minersville and worked for Mendenhal a little bit, when Smith, my brother, was over there. Doyle Cottam was the superintendent there for a month or two, but that was never my cup of tea. It and these oil wells.

MH: The oil wells created quite a boom here in Escalante.

AA: I just wasn't cut out for that, I was a cowboy. I wasn't happy doing anything else. After I got married, I went out and done line work for a few years and come back here and worked for Garkane for ten years. When we were first married, me and my wife run a restaurant for a few years, the restaurant above town here where the Griffin service station was, where the photo shop is now. After that, we traveled

doing line work, worked for Provo City Power and different ones, but just never got too far away from here. Our hearts were both here, it just seemed like every time we turned around we were going home.

MH: Were you on the road when you started your family?

AA: We had a couple of our kids here. Raylene was born while I was doing line work. Janeen was born in '53 and Denise was born in '57, and Raylene was born in '59. I done line work out for a number of years and then I came back and went to work for Garkane and worked for them in the sixties and I quit and went to training horses.

I had hay swather down here, September 1, 1970, that fell on my leg and mashed my leg and I was on crutches for quite a number of years. After I got the pins under me, well, I went to drinking before I hurt my leg. I was good at it, I did quite a lot of drinking, and I was consistent.

After I got this leg mashed, they took me to Veteran's Hospital and I was up there a couple of months, to get my leg better. In the process they cured me of my drinking. How I don't know, but I have never had a drink of nothing since. That was in 1972. That was Friday the 13th, it has always been my unlucky day. That was the day my mother died, Friday the 13th. That was the day I quit drinking was Friday the 13th. (Chuckles)

MH: You ended up training horses.

AA: In '76 I started training horses, permanent. I had broke colts and that all my life. I roped horses, but I went into training horses permanent in '76 pretty near to 2000. I trained horses for all them years. I had horses come from all over the western

United States. I finally got so well known that I could call, when I could handle a new horse or two, I could make a phone call and get some more. People would wait for me. When I give it up and quit, I never had ten dollars left on the books. I got every dollar that people owed me. This one gal that interviewed me said, “What do you lay it to?”

I said, “Honesty. I felt like I had done the people a good job. I didn’t overcharge them, did a good job. I was honest with them and they were honest with me.”

Never had any money left on the books.

I always had a good stallion or two and I bred enough outside mares that I paid for or all my hay and grain that I fed the other horses, so when I got a check on my colts, it was pretty well all profit.

MH: You ended up with just girls.

AA: Just girls, three girls. I spent most of my time with brothers. My sisters were older and married and gone. The one sister down here owned the grocery store, Minnie and Billy Davis. They built the store on the south side of the street where Gene Griffin had his barber shop. Then they got the store across the street that Brent has now. They got that from Leo Munson.

Short break for phone call.

AA: We moved up here in 1976. We raised our family behind the service station. We had a little home down there. We bought it after we had been married about a year, raised our family in that little two bedroom house. This one little old house we had out here, used to be across the street where Katherine has that trailer, there was no running water, no nothing in it, but when we were first married, Deon and

I lived over there in it. I was telling my second daughter, Denise, one day, “Me and your mother lived over in that little house when we were first married without any running water, no bathroom or nothing.”

She said, “Oh, Dad, you didn’t either.” (laughter) She didn’t even believe us.

MH: We made it through the time where you raised your kids.

AA: In 19 and 54 they started the Escalante Riding Club. Arthur McNelly, Twila’s husband, was the one that got it started. We started that in 1954, he was president, and I was vice president, it went that way for ten twelve years. He was president; I was vice president all that time. We had one of the best riding clubs that money can buy. When we would go to district meets, regional and state meets up in Salt Lake, Escalante would win 99% of the trophies. We was cowboys and we had a lot of good horses. I was in the riding club for thirty- seven years. After Arthur died, I was president for about twelve or thirteen years. Twila, over here, and Judy Brooks was my two main, and of course my wife, was my two main stays. Them two hung with Arnold, no matter what Arnold done, they was with me. This ole’ Twilla was just out of this world, and so was Judy. We made it work. We had some good members and done a lot of good works with the town and up to the rodeo grounds. When I took over, I started to get professional rodeos in here. I had a professional outfit out of Colorado come in here every year. We had some top notch rodeos here.

MH: I heard they are trying to get the riding club going again?

AA: Well, they never will. There isn’t that much interest now. It is just a different world today. Them days, we were all horseback, all of us people was horseback,

had a lot of good horses. Whatever we done, we done horseback. It is a different world today and no body wants to take any of their time to donate nothing, so it will never work, it will work a little bit. It will never blossom and be like it was.

MH: A time gone past. Well, it sounded like a lot of fun. Twila told me some about the club, the horse races. She must have been unique too.

AA: She was; she was extraordinary. They would see us a comin' and say, "There comes the Vigilantes from Escalante."

MH: You guys meant business.

AA: You bet we meant business. We meant business. We would win the trophies.

MH: Would you practice?

AA: Aw, we would never get serious at it, we were just good. Let me put it that way, all of us cowboys was good, we didn't need practice to beat the others. If we had got in and practiced, there would have been no contest, none what so ever. We was just that much better than all these other clubs. They were not the cowboys we was.

We would have the horse races, different distances, 1/8 of a mile, 1/4 of a mile, 3/8th of a mile, 1/2 mile in the horse race. Then in the relay race, we won the relay race, there would be four of us running a 1/4 of a mile each with the club. We won that for years and years and years, no body could even touch us because we were the cowboys. A lot of times we didn't have the best horses, but we were the best riders. We would pass a baton, and we never practiced, we just done it.

Then there was barrel racing and pole bending, dozens of different events. We didn't have any bucking stock, but we would do some calf roping, team roping.

MH: It sounds like you have had an excellent life.

AA: It was an excellent life. We lived it to the fullest.

MH: I know you haven't told me a bunch of your best stories.

AA: No, there is just so much to tell, it is too much. I would like to be able to tell it as I grew up, in chronological order.

MH: Ok, we can do that. Let's talk again.

End of interview 1