

Davis, Melda
2002 Willis
Bryce Valley

Southern Utah Oral History Project

The Southern Utah Oral History Project was started in July of 1998. It began with an interest in preserving the cultural history of small towns in southern Utah that border the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The project was managed by Kent Powell, from the Utah Division of State History, who oversaw the collection of oral histories conducted in Boulder, Escalante, Bryce Valley, Long Valley, Kanab, the Kaibab Paiute Reservation, and Big Water, by Jay Haymond, Suzi Montgomery, Marsha Holland and other volunteers.. Also in cooperation with the state was the Bureau of Land Management and the people of Garfield and Kane counties, with support from the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The goals of the project were first to interview long-time local residents and collect information about the people and the land during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, the interviews were to be transcribed and copies of the transcripts were to be made available to the public at the Utah State Historical Society and at local repositories. Lastly, to build a relationship with state agencies and the local communities and provide a medium for the local communities to express their interest in preserving their own history and culture in the areas that are now included in the GSENM.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to care and share their memories and stories.



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INTERVIEW WITH:	Melda Davis
INTERVIEWER:	Marsha Holland
INTERVIEW NUMBER:	One
DATE OF INTERVIEW:	April 11, 2002
PLACE OF INTERVIEW:	Home of Melda Davis, Tropic, Utah
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW:	Early life in Bryce Valley: Henrieville, Cannonville
TRANSCRIBER	Marsha Holland
DATE:	July 12, 2002

MH: Today is April the ninth.

MD: The ninth, no it is the tenth.

MH: It is April the tenth and I am in Tropic and I am with Melda Davis. Melda, please introduce yourself.

MD: I was Amelda Littlefield, is my real name and I lived in Henrieville for many years. I lived with my grandparents because my father died when I was four months old and mother had to work to support herself and her child and I just couldn't get weaned away from Grandma and Grandpa Willis, who were the ones I lived with.

MH: Your grandpa's name was?

MD: William Patterson Willis. And Grandma's name was Mary Eliza.

MH: And they lived in Henrieville?

MD: They moved up here to Tropic and bought a home. They had a Bed and Breakfast but this big home burned down. There were four bedrooms upstairs and two downstairs.

MH: In Tropic, they had a Bed and Breakfast?

MD: Yes. It was called a hotel. My grandmother was such a wonderful cook. She cooked for these people that stayed there. They wanted more than the breakfast; she was such a good cook. But she just did the breakfast meals.

MH: When did she have the bed and breakfast?

MD: I don't remember the date, but it was in the early '20s

MH: Was it the '20s or '30's?

MD: I was married April the 30th.

MH: OK, what kind of people would come visit at your grandmother's bed and breakfast?

MD: Well there were a lot of the general authorities from Salt Lake.

MH: Yes, they were down to visit the area.

MD: Yes. I remember one time I had five nickels and this one general authority wanted to know if I would trade him my five nickels for a quarter. I said no because I [felt like} I had more money!

MH: You had more coins.

MD: Yes because I had more coins in my hand than one quarter would have been. I did love my mother, so very very much. She remarried when I was four years old. She married a man that had a family with his first wife. I was just so in the way.

MH: Were you the youngest child in that new family?

MD: No, they were all older than I was. There was one girl four years older than I, she is ninety-five now. I just turned ninety.

MH: Well, we never did find out your birthday.

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MD: It is March the seventh. [1912]

MH: Oh, you just had it!

MD: Yes, I just had it. It was wonderful. My children were all here. It was really a wonderful day.

MH: Let's see. I think we left off when your Grandparents had to move back to Henrieville.

MD: Twelve. I was born in 1912. I moved to Tropic with Grandma and Grandpa. When I moved up here, then after this home burned down, they moved to three different homes here in Tropic. And they were going to purchase the one home, but the fellow that bought their home in Henrieville wasn't able to pay for it so they had to move back to Henrieville, so I moved back to Henrieville with them of course.

MH: How old were you then?

MD: Oh, I was about twelve.

MH: Meanwhile between four years old and when your mom was remarried do you mostly live with your grandma?

MD: Yes. Then I spent quite a lot of my time with my mother's sister.

MH: Who was that?

MD: That was the Dacey Shumway. She moved up to what is now called Orem, but at that time it was called Provo Bench. I lived with her quite awhile there. But most of the time I lived with Grandma and Grandpa.

MH: So, you went to school in Henrieville?

MD: Yes.

MH: Do you remember who your school teachers were?

MD: Yes. Virginia Smith. Well, let me tell you something, I just have an eighth grade education.

MH: Well, the school stopped at eighth grade right?

MD: There was a high school in Tropic, but there was only one girl from Henrieville, that was years later, that graduated from high school in Tropic. I didn't ever attend high school.

MH: So, what was it like when you were growing up n Henrieville?

MD: It was very, very, very hard. People had really hard times. All the water they used, for drinking water and for cooking and for laundry was hauled in a barrel. We hauled it from the creek. I remember they had to hook the horse up to what they called a lizard at that time. It had this big huge barrel. I used to take the horse and go down and fill the barrel quite often. In the wintertime this water would freeze and they would have to chip the ice and melt to have drinking water. We always had deep snow. That is what they would do the laundry in, but they had to... The laundry was all done; the scrubbing of the clothes was all done by scrubbing the clothes on a scrub board in a big tub. Then the clothes were put over into another tub, but they would boil the clothes and stir them with stick and then they would get them out and put them in cool water and then they would rinses them and hang them on the line. You had whiter washes than they do now days with the washing machines.

MH: In the wintertime it was...

MD: It was very hard, very hard. They had a very hard time existing really.

MH: Just hanging out your laundry on the line...

MD: Oh, yes. The clothes would freeze. That would whiten everything. They used to hang out beautiful white washes. I remember one time; I grew up with two uncles. One of them called me sister all my life. He introduced me as his sister. The other one was more reserved. I was his niece. I was up to Mother's this one day and he came up. I used to have coal black hair, he said, mother wants your black-topped daughter and your black bottomed tub. (Laughter) So I went to help Grandma then. But I did live with Grandma most of the time because I loved my mother very much, but I was more or less in the way.

MH: It was hard for you to integrate into that family.

MD: It was. It was very hard. I know my stepfather loved his first wife very much, had a big family by her. They lived in Ketchum, Idaho. She was buried in Ketchum, Idaho. He was buried in Joseph. My mother was buried in Henrieville. My father was buried Richfield. But that doesn't make any difference.

MH: Now, I'm not sure if you said your mom's name. What was her name?

MD: Mary Almeda Willis. My father's name was Oscar Lyman Littlefield.

MH: I have head some stories of the Littlefield grave, that one was buried over at Promise Rock. Is that true?

MD: That was my great grandfather. Now, I have heard several stories on this. They say they were taking him to Georgetown for burial. When they got to the creek, there were floods down both creeks so, they buried him there on the southeast corner of Promise Rock, with the promise that they would dig him and put him in the Georgetown cemetery, but he is still there.

MH: Have heard there are other people buried out there.

MD: There are three, he and two others.

MH: Do you remember the names of the others?

MD: I don't. I don't. I never did hear the name of the others. Were they buried before or after your great grandfather?

MD: Now, that I don't know.

MH: The southeast corner of Promise Rock.

MD: The southeast corner of Promise Rock. When the skeleton was found [in 2000], so many thought that it could have been Grandfather, but it wasn't because it was right close to the creek bank. My grandfather was buried, oh, way up by the rock. There are three cedar trees around it. There used to have just wood markers. But there had so many sheep herds that came in there. They had a shearing corral in that area. There were so many sheep herds that they had knocked down the original markers.

MH: Were they marked on cedar trees?

MD: No, they just had wood markers for the graves. My father-in-law knew exactly where he was buried. He was going to take me out and show me and of course procrastination I put off doing it and he did. He was going to show me right where it was. Then there were two others, buried there after Grandfather.

MH: I am interested in those graves sites, because it would be nice to put permanent memorials there. There is a problem out there now, because a private landowner wants to trade for that Promise Rock area. Al Stone, the old mayor there has started campaign with the governor to get the BLM or some other entity to trade it

for other lands. Now it owned by school trust. but to trade it so it always remains public land, not private. Once it becomes private then no one can access it. The idea is for it to become a preserve because of its historical value. There are people buried out there. You are one of the first people I have talked to who actual know one of the people.

MD: It was my great grandfather Littlefield.

MH: Then we can put permanent markers. They did that down in Paria town.

MD: That would be wonderful. I was there just recently with my oldest son. It was very interesting. Oh, it is beautiful country and they have restored it and built a fence around the graves. And they have a monument of ten or twelve of the names of the people buried there. They were mostly the infants, but the others. There were forty-four graves there.

MH: Did you have family that came up the Paria to settle?

MD No, they used to live in Clifton.

Interview is interrupted and started at a later date (July 17, 2002)

End Tape 1, Side A

Begin Tape 2, Side A

MH: Now, we were talking about when you first moved to Cannonville. We left off when you moved back to Henrieville with your grandparents.

MD: They had to move back because the fellow who bought their home in Henrieville was unable to finish paying for it.

MH: Was that nice, because you could see your mom more?

MD: Well, I didn't see her much, not too much. I loved my mother, but I think she was relieved I was with my grandparents, because she knew I was being taken care of and they were so good to me.

MH: You are back in Henrieville and you are back in school there. How old were you then?

MD: I graduated from the eighth grade in Henrieville.

MH: What was it like?

MD: All the classes were together. All the ages in two rooms. The sixth, seventh and eight were in one room, then the Kindergarten and the other grades in the other room.

MH: Do you have any fun or fond memories of school? What did you like to do the most?

MD: Well, I loved the teacher I had, Virginia Smith. She was a wonderful person. I loved her. I graduated from there with her as my teacher. She was a sweet person. She was just like the children. She would get out and play with us. She was a wonderful teacher.

MH: What was your favorite subject in school?

MD: English and geography. I didn't like math.

MH: Tell me about the English class.

MD: We had to read quite a lot of books, mostly about England and foreign countries.

MH: When you had geography did you learn about the world or just the United States?

MD: Just the United States, mostly.

MH: Would you also learn about this area?

MD: Quite a lot.

MH: Would you go on field trips?

MD: Oh, yes. We used to go, it was called Thorly's Pasture at the time. It is called Kodachrome now. We used to over the mountain and over the hills and down into Thorly's Pasture. Although the scenery didn't mean much to us then, we didn't think much about all these things they found when those fellows came and named it Kodachrome. It was fun. We would go up one side and down the other. There is still a trail.

MH: Thorly was...

MD: Thorly Johnson. I remember him quite well. He was about my age. I think he lived in Cannonville the younger part of his life, but he married a Henrieville girl and moved here. Virginia. They built a home here and lived in Henrieville most of the time.

MH: Why do think they named it Thorly's Pasture?

MD: Well, I think he ran cattle in there. I think he owned that part. I'm not definitely sure, but I'm pretty sure he did.

MH: You told me about doing laundry in Henrieville when you were young, hauling water. When did that change and become easier to get water?

MD: The only easy part was they dug a ditch and had a canal that came in Henrieville and we would just pull our barrels up there and fill it there which was easier than going to the creek.

MH: With the lizard?

MD: Yes.

MH: Then how did you meet your husband? What did you do between eighth grade and when you married?

MD: I worked for the Utah Parks Company up at Bryce Canyon. Then we were sent to Grand Canyon to work one fall to help close that place up. But mostly Bryce Canyon, I worked up there after I was married too, for nineteen years.

MH: There was a concessionaire up there, Union Pacific. Was that who you worked for?

MD: Yes. Of course I went down with the good old Union Pacific ship. I didn't go back much after. only one year.

MH: So they were pretty good employers?

MD: Very good. They brought a lot of people from Omaha, Nebraska and different states. We called them pressure help. They were pretty good workers. They had to be disciplined.

MH: They weren't very good citizens then?

MD: We didn't think so. I remember the manager saying he was tired of this pressure help.

MH: He was forced to have this help. Ok, how did you meet your husband?

MD: We used to have dances in the three towns. One in Tropic one week, one Cannonville one week, and then Henrieville one week. That was where I met him.

MH: Who was he?

MD: Sherman Davis. Mother didn't let me go the dances until I was almost sixteen. Then she, she would go with my friends and I. Of course, we were wallflowers.

We just sat over on the sides and watched them dance. We were just kids. One night I saw him coming across the room. I thought, "Oh, he's coming to ask one of us to dance. I hope it is me." And it was. Then he and his friend danced with us and then they would dance with my friends. Then when we would go to those dances we knew they would dance with us, which they did. He was going steady with a girl from Henrieville and I think they were planning on getting married.

But they said it was me that broke them up, but it wasn't me.

MH: Sherman decided you were the girl?

MD: Yes, I think he did. It wasn't my doing. I was accused of it. She was my best friend. She was my best friend the whole time.

MH: Did you become friends again?

MD: Oh, yes.

MH: When you decided to get married, how old were you?

MD: I was nineteen, would have been in March and we were married on April the 29th of April. I was an orphan at that time. Mother had died and my grandparents had died.

MH: How did your mother die?

MD: She had Quick Pneumonia. They had moved at that time from Henrieville to Joseph. I lived quite a bit with my mother's sister. I was up at my Aunt Dice's place. When I came home the road through Joseph which they were building, had a detour around through Monroe. We came into the south end of Joseph. Mother lived on the north end. We had to come on to Henrieville, so I didn't get to see my mother. The next thing I knew, she died on Mother's Day in May.

MH: It took a long time to get word to you that she was ill?

MD: They got word to us fairly soon after she died. We went down with my grandparents. My father was buried in Richfield. Of course my stepfather gave me the choice of where [I wanted] mother buried. I said Richfield. Well, Grandpa said, "Oh, no we can't bury her in Richfield. We have got to have her in Henrieville or I'll never be able to visit her grave." So she was buried in Henrieville, my father in Richfield, my stepfather in Joseph and his first wife in Ketchum, Idaho.

MH: Oh, really spread apart. Are you glad that she was buried in Henrieville?

MD: Well, I think so yes, because Grandpa spent an awful lot of time out there. He would take flowers out there. Mother was kind of a favorite of his.

MH: Did they have other children then?

MD: Yes, my grandmother had eight children?

MH: Any of them still around there?

MD: Well, most of them married and lived away; mother seemed to be Grandpas' favorite. There is that in families.

MH: So, your mothers passed on then was it soon after that your grandparents died?

MD: Mother died on Mother's Day in May and Grandpa died the 15th of March and my grandmother died in October. So, I was an orphan.

MH: Did you have some family or a friend to lean on?

MD: Yes the girl that was going with Sherman, their family treated me wonderfully, filling the void all these deaths brought. I used to go to their place an awfully lot. Her father was my father's best friend. They were very kind to me. After

Grandmother and Grandfather died Sherman ask me to marry him. We had sort of a rocky relationship, off and on. He had asked me to get married before but I always had said no.

MH: So, then you were nineteen when you finally said yes. Where did you get married?

MD: We were married in the Manti Temple.

MH: So, you made that journey. What was that like? How did you get there?

(Laughter)

MD: His parents owned a car and they took us to Monroe. Then we went up with Sherman's sister Lois to the Manti Temple.

MH: So, it was a several day journey?

MD: We went back to Monroe for the night then went on the Cannonville the next day. My mother and father were married in the Manti Temple.

MH: So they took a horse and buggy on the way to get married?

MD: Oh, yes.

MH: Anyway, it sounds like a long bumpy trip. What were the roads like then?

MD: They were graveled roads but they kept them graded. They were pretty good roads.

MH: What about your honeymoon?

MD: Well, let me tell you about my honeymoon. It was spent out to the sheep herd. There aren't too many that can claim that kind of a honeymoon. My husband was working herding sheep. He was herding sheep out under the rim of Bryce Canyon, up Willis Creek. It was beautiful. It was really pretty. I stayed out there

for a week. He would cook all the meals. We had mutton and sourdough biscuits.

It was very nice. I was just a queen.

MH: When did you come in from the sheep herd?

MD: We lived in Henrieville for a while. Then we lived in Cannonville with his folks for quite awhile. His mother was like a second mother to me.

MH: Which Davis was that, which wife?

MD: Mary Annie. The one died in childbirth, it was Laura.

MH: So Mary Annie took on all the kids?

MD: She raised Maud from a baby.

MH: What was her husband's name?

MH: John Henry Davis.

MH: I remember you talked a bit about all the visitors he would have. The Navajo would come through.

MD: Yes, he could speak the Navajo language. In fact, one Indian, Jim Indian requested that when he died, that he was buried in the cemetery like the white people. He (Johnny) did. He put his suit on him and buried him in the Cannonville cemetery.

MH: Was he a Navajo or was he a Piute?

MD: He was a Navajo. Jim Indian.

MH: What was he like?

MD: I don't know, he had already died.

MH: I heard he and Johnny were good friends.

MD: Yes, he was. We took care of Johnny for many years. A good old person, a really wonderful old man. I loved him.

MH: Did he used to tell you stories about the Indians?

MD: Oh, yes. He used to tell us many stories, but I don't think I could remember them to relate them. They thought a lot of him and he did of them too. When he first came into this country, he came in with a big cattle herd, with Kanarra CoOp (Cooperative) it was called. And he brought them down into this area because he said, "The grass was clear up to a horses knees, everywhere." This fellow that was the main owner of this big herd told them, "When you kill a beef for your own use, you kill one for the Indians also." They said if we did that we wouldn't have any trouble with them, which they didn't. They would kill a beef and give it to them.

MH: Their way was so different that what people were used to. Wouldn't they just walk into the houses?

MD: Yes. There was one. Sally Ann they called her. I remember her. She used to have a papoose with her, generally. I remember one time this papoose put me down in a root cellar. She shut the door on me and I was down there for quite a while. I was scared to death. It was my uncles that rescued me, because Sally Ann and the papoose had left at the time. I can remember that. She would just walk in and make herself at home.

MH: They didn't know the white culture at all.

MD: No. She was quite a menace to this area. She would want food. They would give her bread and food that she would take back to her tribe.

MH: They were Navajo or Piute?

\MD: They were Navajo.

MH: They would come up and camp at Johnnies place, right? And trade for horses?

MD: Yes. They would bring blankets and rugs. My stepfather traded quite a lot. They had beautiful Navajo rugs and blankets that he traded horses for. I remember the time they were around the campfire. My sister just younger than I. They were dressed in the Levis, the same as her dad. My sister went over and leaned up against one of them, and hugged his leg and leaned up against him thinking it was our dad. She looked across the fire and saw Dad on the other side. Oh, my goodness. It frightened her to death.

MH: Did she start crying? Poor thing. What was Cannonville like then?

MD: Well, they were about the same. They did have piped water in Cannonville at the time when we first moved here. They did have the piped water, which was quite a change. We bought a little two-room house from his sister and moved it up on the same lot as his father. He gave us a little piece of land and we moved the house up there. It wasn't too long till we had to move in to take care of him (Johnnie). That was the house that I lived in for sixty years.

MH: Did Mary Annie pass away and then you moved in?

MD: Yes. I think what killed her was hardening of the arteries. I remember her legs really should have been amputated.

MH: She didn't have good circulation?

MD: No. I think that is what caused her death. But oh, she was sweet. So was he. Very good people.

MD: Now, Sherman was out sheep herding. How long would he stay out?

MD: There was sometimes when he would stay out two or three weeks. especially in the winter.

MH: Was that his herd or did he work for someone?

MD: No, he worked for John Johnson. Reed's Grandfather.

MD: How many head do you think were in that herd?

MH: Oh, a thousand or more.

MH: So the time you would get to see him was when he came up for shearing. Would you go out to visit?

MD: Well, he would come into town. I didn't go to the herd or shearing corral very much. The shearing corral was down by Promise Rock on the south side. My great grandfather was buried on the northeast corner. Well, it was on the east side. They said there were three cedar trees, not pine trees, cedar trees. There were two other graves there too. But I don't know who they were.

MH: Sherman was out at the herd most of the time and you are mostly by yourself?

MD: Life was kind of hard. Especially when the water froze up and I had to go a block to carry water to use. There was this fellow that keep his tap from freezing up some way. I had no way from keeping mine from freezing up, so I would go a block to get the water. I had three little boys. Oh, my goodness. I would say, "Now you stay right in the house, don't you leave the house and I'll be back as soon as I can." They would wander out in the deep snow.

MH: Who were your boys then?

MD: Lamond, Scherel, and Larry.

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MH: What was the story of the guy who came around selling washing machines?

MD: Blake from Blake Electric came around. I did all my washings on the scrub board. Finally I just bought a Maytag washer. You would have to put the exhaust out through the window. It was nice.

MH: How did you get that here?

MD: Well, I did it on the sly. Sherman was out to the sheep herd. I went to his uncle and said, "I have a chance to buy myself a washer but I don't have a down payment." He said, "I'll give you a down payment." Which he did. Of course we paid it back. He gave me the down payment and I got the washer.

MH: At that point you were probably doing laundry for more than your own family. There was Johnnie and were their other kids still around?

MD: Then Mary was born. the first girl. Then Carol, then four years later Sherron and then five years later Shirley. So it was just like two families.

MH: So it was nice to have the washer?

MD: Oh, yes. You better believe it.

MH: What did Sherman say when you told him.

MD: He said he was going to get me one from Harv Mangum. And I said, "I beat you to the draw." I think the Maytag was a better brand than the one he was going to buy from Harv. I guess it was a good washer, but I felt like Maytag was the best.

MH: Was that a big improvement in your life?

MD: Oh, absolutely. Because I had big washings.

MH: But you still hung everything out.

MD: Yes, on the clothesline.

MH: What other chores do you remember?

MD: Well, while Sherman was to the sheep herd, the one winter, it was real hard. We had three feet of snow. It was about a long in 1936. I had to milk two cows and feed two pigs. I had to go and move this big snow[fall], and take care of that part of that. It was a hard winter.

MH: Was Sherman stuck out with the sheep? Was that around Christmas time?

MD: I remember going up to milk the cows one morning and I said, "Now you three little boys, you stay in the house." Well, you know three little boys...they thought they were going to help mother and that was a hard winter, a hard old time in my life. Then Sherman herded sheep until he got the state road job, then he was home with us all the time. It was better pay and he was home with his family. But we were taking care of Grandpa at the time. He was easy to do for. He craved sugar. All he would want for his evening meal was bread and milk. He would want to put sugar in the bread and milk. They rationed sugar and my family got so they would eat their cereal and everything without sugar so Grandpa could have the sugar. It was better for them. To this day I don't eat sugar on anything. I eat my cereal without sugar. They do have cereal nowadays that is sugar coated.

MH: No kidding. Sherman worked for the County or the State?

MD: He worked for the State Road for thirty-three years, until he died.

MH: So the kids grew up with that.

MD: Lamond grew up and got married to Judy Gay Wilcox. They lived in Panguitch for years, then they moved to Cedar.

MH: So, you get to see them often?

MD: Yes, they came to visit me quite often. Scherel lives in Rexburg, Idaho. He spent all his time as a chef. He wanted to get away from that. He worked with the Utah Parks Company. He said, Mother, I am going to get away from this." But then he went into the service: he was a chef and still is. Cooks big meals for his family.

End Tape 2, Side A

Begin Tape 2, Side B

MH: Now Sherman didn't end up having to go to the war. He was too old right?

MD: He was too old. He thought he would be drafted, but with his family and his age he wasn't.

MH: What was that like around here when a lot of the young men had to go?

MD: I can remember when they called my uncle. It was in 1919. Then they had a terrible epidemic of flu. It was about that time. We had an epidemic in this country too, of influenza.

MH: Did children die from that?

MD: Quite a few.

MH: There was nothing to be done about it then?

MD: No, nothing they could do. Some of the soldiers that had either had it or were immune to it would go and help the families where the mother and father would be down. They would go and help the families. These were the soldiers that had come home. It was quite a bad time.

MH: That was World War I?

MD: Yes.

MH: Then the Depression happened. What do you remember about this area when the Depression hit?

MD: I remember when we were first married; Hoover was issuing wheat to the families. They issued us a hundred pounds. It was nice cleaned wheat. Sherman's father had a coffee mill that we would grind [the wheat in]. We would wash this and toast it in the oven, then we would grind it through that mill and it made awfully good cereal.

MH: There was also a grist mill...

MD: Up in the canyon. I remember that. And the East Fork water would come down and help run it.

MH: Do you remember ever taking grain there?

MD: Yes, but the flour did not make very good bread.

MH: Was it because it wasn't ground enough?

MD: Well, I don't remember what it was, but the bread wasn't too good. I remember the parent's would take the flour sacks and wash them and make underwear out of them. I remember one time Sherman's sister had a pair of these flour sack underwear. It had Bryce's Pride right across the back.

MH: Really, how cute. But I guess you had to use whatever you had.

MD: Oh, we did. People were poor. We had to make do with anything we had. They used the flour sacks for clothing quite a bit. Underwear and tops also.

MH: So, that was The Depression? Do you remember that people moved here because it was easier to live in the country than in the city? Did you see any change in the population?

MD: Not too much. Then the electricity was brought into this country. Oh, it helped us so much. GarKane. I don't remember the year.

MH: But do you remember the day it was turned on?

MD: Oh, that was great. I can remember reading books by the coal oil lamp. I used to read all the time and read to my children by the coal oil lamp. But when they had electrify, how great that was. I think that affected a lot of the eyesight, reading by coal oil lamp.

MH: Yes, it would put a strain on the eyes. And so would you have a couple of coal oil lamps in the house?

MD: We had more than that. Generally, you would have about three. You would take them from room to room.

MH: In the wintertime it was particularly difficult. It would get dark earlier.

MD: Yes, it was difficult. It was kind of hard times.

MH: You have seen a lot of changes in general.

MD: Oh, yes. I have lived from the horse and buggy days to the jet age and man landing on the moon.

MH: And have you been on a jet?

MD: Yes, I went to Alaska. Then when I went on my mission I flew to Kentucky and back.

MH: Let's talk about World War II. You probably had boys in that?

MD: All three of my boys have their names on the plaque (in Tropic). Two of them went to Korea and one of them went to Germany, the youngest went to Germany. Of course that was the mapping up stages in Germany. The War was over, but

there was a lot to be done. In Korea, it was kind of bad. The two oldest boys went to Korea. It just affected Scherel so terribly. I remember him writing home and saying, " Oh, mother, if you can find clothing, send a big bunch of clothing; it would be appreciated."

MH: Because there was a lot of poverty?

MD: Lamond didn't say too much about it but he did tell about them burning the uniforms. There were two or three crates of American uniforms that was in Korea and instead of giving those to the poor people, they put gasoline on them and set them on fire. Scherel said those poor men were standing around just crying.

MH: That is sad.

MD: That is what they did.

MH: Then the boys came back. You must have been happy.

MD: Yes.

MH: Then you said you went on a mission. Where did you go on your mission?

MD: I was sixty-eight when I went on my mission to Kentucky.

MH: Did you go by yourself?

MD: No, there were three other ladies. A Mrs.Dunford, Sister Dunford, and Sister Baker. We went on the same plane on the same day. They were from Salt Lake. Sister Dunford, her husband had the Dunford Bakery. They were going on a mission and he died but she went on one any way as a single sister. She was my last companion, Sister Dunford was.

MH: Were you there for two years?

MD: Eighteen months.

MH: When you came back did you, did you move back to Cannonville?

MD: I lived in Cannonville for sixty years. I suppose you heard of the accident I had. My children didn't want me to stay. I was doing pretty well, but they didn't want me to be alone. I had a daughter in Henrieville and Mary and Reed in Tropic but I was in Cannonville without any of my children. They insisted I sell the property and move up here, which has been nice. I have enjoyed being here with Mary and Reed. They are great people.

MH: Did you have to make your own clothes?

MD: I did quite a lot of sewing. I made a lot of my girls' clothes when they were little. As a matter of fact, Shirley said, "I won't get married if you don't make my wedding dress." Which I did. But I said this dress this dress is being made through tears and sweat and blood. (Laughter) She got a lot of compliments on it, so I guess it was all right. Matter of fact, I have some of the fabric on one of the pillows on my bed.

MH: I was talking about this with someone else, how cheap it was to buy fabric at one time. How would you get your fabric?

MD: The stores generally carried nice fabric. Ada had a lot of real nice fabric all the time. I remember all of Mary's clothes, she would say, "Well, they are having a dance mother. I need a new dress." So I would get the fabric cut to make her a new dress.

MH: What kind of patterns would you use?

MD: Just make them up. I didn't have a pattern. I don't think I could use a pattern.

MH: And I couldn't sew without one. Then fabric was cheap, pretty inexpensive off the bolt but then it became cheaper to just buy the clothes. It wasn't economical to make your clothes anymore.

MD: With Shirley, I made all her dresses.

MH: Except, the one exception was the wedding dress.

MD: Oh, yes. I think it is. We bought the material for the brides maid dresses. Shirley did, she bought all her material. She got it at Christensen's. She bought enough for her bridesmaids. There were four bridesmaids and they made their own dresses. But I had to make her wedding dress. She still has it. She kind of treasures it.

MH: I think a lot of women save their wedding dresses.

Interview interrupted then resumed

MH: Let's talk about Sherman's family.

MD: His grandfather came from Wales. Sherman's father was born there. While his grandfather lived there they had a quartet and sang for Queen Elizabeth. Then when he came to this country his father, when his grandfather was a weaver. He wove the first carpet in the Salt Lake Temple.

MH: He did? That was Johnnies grandfather? So, Johnny was a young man when he came over here?

MD: I'm not sure now. I think he born here. Then he ended up here in Southern Utah. He married sisters. They were good people. I don't remember the father, because I wasn't married then and I don't remember the Hendersons. Of course, Sherman's grandfather was dead at that time too.

MH: The other side was the Henderson`s?

MD: Yes. Aunt Mary Annie and Laura, Laura Jane.

MH: The economy down here was cattle based. Were there other things?

MD: I think for a long while it was sheep. I know Sherman`s father had a big sheep herd for a while. I don`t know what happened there, but I think there was quite a controversy over that.

MH: Was it over allotments or sheep versus cows?

MD: I think... I don`t know what happened. I never did ask questions. I never did know what happened to his herd of sheep. He held his one son accountable, so I don`t know what happened.

MH: Oh, but it was something that happened in the family. Where there a lot of orchards?

MD: Yes, there were quite a few orchards. I remember when we lived in Henrieville, we had a Black Walnut tree and we gathered these walnuts. The shells were awfully hard on them, but we would break them. They weren`t too awfully good to eat but they made just wonderful cake. Black walnut cake. I used to make that quite often.

MH: Was it you who used to collect pine nuts, or someone else?

MD: Oh, we used to go out and gather pinenuts all the time. I remember we would go out and gather, my stepfather gathered a hundred pounds of pinenuts at a time. I don`t remember him selling them; I think we just kept them to eat. Very good.

MH: Black walnuts and pinenuts...

MD: We never did go hungry. We lived on potatoes and gravy and meat.

MH: Potatoes grew well down here?

MD: Yes, that was the staple of our diet.

MH: And everyone had good gardens?

MD: Yes. I can remember that Sherman would raise two gardens. We bought a place across the street from where we lived .in Cannonville. Shirley said he would raise a garden over where we lived for our use and then he raised one across the street to give away. Which he did. There was one fellow in Cannonville who said, "We don't need to raise a garden. Sherman will give us all we need." Which was true. He was very, very generous.

MH: Did Sherman have horses he used for herding or just dogs?

MD: Horses. He had a horse and a dog. We had a team of horses and a wagon. He raised alfalfa on the little farm that we had. I remember one time he took the boys when he was cutting the hay. There was jackrabbit. The cottontails hardly ever had the disease. But the jackrabbits were bad for bubonic plague. Sherman was mowing the hay and he cut the legs off the mother jackrabbit with the mower. They brought the little ones home. Larry was taking care of them. He had a mosquito bite on his head. He scratched the mosquito bite and [then] played with those little rabbits and he got the bubonic plague. That is what the doctor said. We didn't have one in this area; we had to take him to Richfield. That is what they sad it was.

MH: Did doctors ever travel though the area or did you always have to travel to one?

MD: There was finally a doctor that came to Panguitch, a Dr. Bigelow. Before then we always had to go to Richfield if we needed a doctor. They would travel through

the schools. There would be a State doctor, to check on the tonsils, take out the tonsils if they needed too.

MH: Check eyes and hearing too?

MD: Yes. I had diphtheria. They said it did a better job than taking my tonsils out.

MH: What kind of symptoms do you have with diphtheria? Do you remember what it was like?

MD: It was Valentines Day. I was eight years old. I didn't recover from that for three months.

MH: Did it just make you weak?

MD: Oh, my goodness. It made me so I couldn't drink water; it came up through my nose. It made my tonsils ache and the palate. I couldn't talk. I think it was prayer that saved me, the prayers of my parents and grandparents. It is all that saved me.

MH: Were there a lot of traveling sales people through here?

MD: Yes, they called them drummers.

MH: Why was that?

MD: I don't know.

MH: What about medicine. Would you make up remedies from what was around you?

MD: My mother and grandmother used to tell me that when I had diphtheria they had to bring... my one uncle had to ride a horse and meet a fellow around the Pines or Red Canyon to pick up the serum to give me. Then one of my children had diphtheria; Sherron had diphtheria when she was little, about three years old.

MH: Did they have better medicine then?

MD: Oh, very much better then. Of course they had bring the serum, antitoxin, it was called, from Salt Lake. bring it down by airplane. They had the cars parked along the highway there in Panguitch every so often and then they dropped the serum. They had it wrapped in a box and dropped it at the cheese factory there in Panguitch, then brought it down to the hospital and they gave that to her and that is all that saved her life. My goodness, I am telling you all kinds of things.

MH: It is interesting though, because we take for granted what we have now.

MD: I think people do. I know I took my eyesight for granted for so many years. Dr. Snow told me I was going blind, that I had macular degeneration, then they took me down to Dr. Luken and it was cataracts. I had the cataract surgery.

MH: Is it better now?

MD: I got so I couldn't even seen the settings on my stove. I couldn't see to read anything, so I just made up my mind I was going blind. I thought if well, that day it coming, I'll just have to...it is OK now. After I had the one eye done, I went back and had the other one.

MH: Now Melda, think back. Are there any memories, really special things that have happened to you to you in your life, what would you say they were?

MD: I think it was when my children were born. Those were the greatest days of my life.

MH: Who tended those births?

MD: A midwife. Ida Chapman. The when Sherrel and the rest of them were born, it was just people in Cannonville. I was in the hospital with Sherron and Shirley. When Sherron was born I remember when Sherman...I said, "We've got to go,

we've got to go." By the time we got going, I said, "Oh, we'll never make it, we'll never make it." When we stopped in front of the hospital, the old Panguitch hospital, that car just bounced. Those were the happiest days of my life when my children were born.

MH: All right. That is neat. Now the weather here has it really changed?

MD: Yes, it is nothing like it used to be. I never, ever remember a drought as being as bad as this one.

MH: We had a couple days of rain.

MD: It has been nice. But we didn't have the snow last winter. We didn't have any rain this summer. It is a terrible drought. I have had sinus [troubles] worse this year than I have ever had it.

MH: It is dry and dusty. I think your family is awfully lucky to have you around.

MD: Do you think so? They are good to me. They tell me that, too.

MH: Thank you Melda for doing this interview.

MD: Oh, I appreciate you.

End of Interview one, Tape 2, side B

please sign at the *'s and
return

UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT AND DEED OF GIFT

I hereby give to the Utah State Historical Society the tapes and transcriptions of the interview/interviews recorded on Melda Davis and grant the Utah State Historical Society the right to make the tapes and transcriptions available to the public for such educational and research purposes that are in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Society's Utah History Information Center.

NARRATOR Melda Davis
* ADDRESS PO Box 235
Tropic
* SIGNATURE Melda L. Davis
* DATE 10-19-2002

INTERVIEWER Marsha Holland
ADDRESS PO Box 132
Tropic, Utah 84776
SIGNATURE Marsha M Holland
DATE 8-23-02