

1 Marietta Eaton

INTERVIEW WITH:	Marietta Eaton
INTERVIEWER:	Marsha Holland
INTERVIEW NUMBER:	one
DATE OF INTERVIEW:	February 26, 2008
PLACE OF INTERVIEW:	Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument Headquarters, Kanab, Utah
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW:	Southern Utah Oral History Project history,
TRANSCRIBER:	Marsha Holland
DATE:	September 2010

MH: It is February 26, 2008. I am in Kanab, Utah, with Marietta Eaton. We are at the Headquarters for the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. Marietta, would you start off by giving your full name, date and place of birth, and a bit about the family you were born in to?

ME: Marietta Adeline Eaton. Born November 7, 1951 in Albuquerque, New Mexico. My mom is a descendent of the Wetherills, who are somewhat famous relative to Southwest archaeology. My dad is from Texas farmers. He was a welder and a contractor, my mom was a housewife, anything but a normal existence. I grew up in New Mexico.

I liked growing up in Farmington, New Mexico near the Animas River, tagging along with my brother and sister who are older than I. They hated it but I loved it when I got to go play with them and be a little brat. We camped a lot with my grandparents, and spent a lot of summers in the Jemez Mountain in New Mexico and then spent time in the winters in Mexico with my grandparents which are always really fond memories. We stayed in San Blas, Nayarit. It is on the Pacific Coast 200 miles south of Mazatlan.

MH: So, you were a bi-lingual family then?

ME: My grandfather's first language was actually Navajo. He had a Navajo nursemaid at Chaco Canyon. His second language was English and I not sure how he came upon Spanish, but Spanish became his preferred language although he was an Anglo. I think he

actually thought in Spanish and translated into English. He was born in Mancos, Colorado at his grandparent's house but his mother and father were running a trading post at Chaco and doing the excavations there. He was born in 1898.

MH: What an interesting history. When you left high school, what would you say your main interests were?

ME: Having fun, driving my California Special Mustang, being a spoiled teenage girl. It really took me many years to decide what I was going to make my career. I had a long, long educational history and finally got a Bachelor degree in Archaeology in 1983. I ended up spending some time in Boston, and while I was in Boston and really missing the Southwest I got more in touch with my roots and that I had an important heritage. To me, I didn't get that growing up.

The Wetherills were held in poor esteem by the Park Service. I thought, well, I want to change that perspective, because I can't believe my family is that horrible, so I really got connected by going to the university library at Yale, The Peabody Library, Harvard and some of those places, where I looked for material that was relevant to my family and information on people they had been associated with. I came back out west and I got really interested in trying to shed some different light on their history. Knowing that they had been much maligned for their archaeology, I thought that I needed to understand archaeology so that I could address those issues. I ended up going down the archaeological road, talking myself into the first job I had without any experience, just a couple of anthropology classes. I got a job for the Forest Service in California based on my heritage and the fact that probably no one else applied for the job. Coming back to Arizona, and again talking myself into a job on the Kaibab National Forest, I worked

there eleven years. And then I went to work for the Coconino National Forest and worked in Sedona, Beaver Creek, and the Flagstaff area which was an interesting, challenging opportunity in light of the “Vortex Capital of the Universe” being in Sedona. When this job came up for the Monument...when the Monument was designated, I remember thinking, “Oh, my gosh, that is fabulous.” I was so excited. I never thought I would come back to the north side of the Grand Canyon. The job was flown. My old boss sent me an announcement and it sat on my desk for a couple of weeks then I decided I would apply and here I am. I have been here since 1997, so eleven years. The designation was in 1996.

MH: How were things when you arrived here, between '96 and '99?

ME: It was already BLM land, so all that happened was it had another designation layered on top of it. It was an unusual circumstance because it was the first monument that BLM was ever slated to manage. It was a totally different paradigm for BLM which has been a difficult shift. It is in transition.

They pulled together twenty people and it was a diverse mix of people. There were people who had been with BLM, there were people who had been with the Forest Service like myself, people from the Park Service, people from the private sector and there were five State of Utah employees that were part of that team, and full on members of the team, which was a completely different shift in thinking about how to do business.

The majority of those staff were in the group I was managing which was the Planning Lead for the Cultural and Earth Sciences, at that time was Geology, Paleontology, Hydrology, Soils, Lands, History, Archaeology. A diverse mix of people; twenty people

pulled together and seven of us in that group. We were sequestered in a basement in a business office in Cedar City. That was our focus for two years; a budget of 6.4 million dollars a year, twenty people to do nothing but focus on planning this monument, which is unheard of in any agency. I don't think anyone has done it like that before. We did finish the plan in two years and nobody quit, or died during the process, or killed each other. There was a little stomping-off but I think overall that really eclectic mix and those very different perspectives was really phenomenal experience to be involved in. Then to have the people come from the State who had their own interests, the interest of the State at heart and really trying to weigh those interests with the national interests and the very local community interests. Having said that, being in Cedar City was difficult being removed from those communities that were most affected by the designation of the Monument.

There was controversy, there were a lot of mixed feelings, and there were bad feelings and fear on people's part. They didn't know this was a new animal in terms of BLM, a monument in this country that pretty much no one had paid any attention to, that a lot of people would just look at it as a God forsaken piece of landscape. You had people who had totally advocated for it, people who hated it, every perspective, and every emotion associated with it. There was a lot of controversy generated by the press.

From a personal standpoint I think I had two incidents that were uncomfortable or where I felt threatened or people were personally attacking me. So, looking back on that history of eleven years in the Monument; yes, I understand the controversy, a battle of values,

but it has never been a personal thing and people have always been civilized and polite and courteous. That is the part that people don't really realize that there was a softer side to the a lot things going on, that was a result of reaching out and making connections, building relationships with people, making ourselves accessible to anybody and everybody who wanted to talk to us. Then, trying to find a different way to do business, so that we were getting meaningful responses from people.

That is how we came up with the... a plan We did a lot of scoping meetings and we started out with a Visions Kit. A Visions Kit was a way to try to help people focus their comments in a meaningful way so that we were getting substantial comments that then we could hopefully address. That was met with mixed results.

MH: Was that method of scoping been implemented before?

ME: The method of scoping had not been used before that I am aware of.

MH: As far as reaching out and bridging into the community, there have been several interesting projects initiated by the Monument. I believe you, in particular, initiated a really interesting cultural project. Would you like to describe that and how you came about the idea?

ME: Well, what has become known as the Southern Utah Oral History Project, it was something [that came about] because of my background as an archaeologist and a student of culture as number one and then having my own history and the history of my family bringing me to where I am, I just felt personally that a lot of the animosity that people were reading about in the press and the fear people were feeling, that may be a bridge to start talking to people about who they were and what their values were.

From my personal standpoint people felt... betrayed, is not too strong of a word, in terms of how the designation of the Monument occurred. They didn't have a venue to talk to anybody about, number one, or how they felt. [The Project] (which) was not the mechanism for that, but it was the mechanism for us to reach out and start to understand different people's values and their concerns and really learn about the landscape. We knew we had a monument with fabulous values and fantastic resources. All of us, pretty much, on the planning team were not from here. We were foreigners in a sense coming to this place and trying to understand it. So many times you would get people overlaying their vision of what they think someone else thinks. A good example is the mythology of the cowboy and Indian, the movie mythology and what people's psyche is tuned to.

I think a lot of people would come here and maybe understand that there is a certain culture here, certain values that are part of that, but may not understand why people hold those values and what those values are, and why those values are so dear to them.

It was my sincere interest at the time to give people a venue where I thought they might feel like they were being listened to and let them tell us what they wanted to tell us and focus, not so much on the controversy, but focus on the landscape and the changes over time and gather these primary historic documents as people were aging and passing away, just right before our own eyes.

I came up with this idea, put it out there to the Monument staff, and we started plugging money into doing this project. It was one of the first projects we started on the Monument and now it has been ten years that this has been in place. We can continue as long as we

have the money and the support to do it. I think this project has a long life ahead of it.

The products, as a result of the relationship with the Division of State History, which was a phenomenal piece of luck to be able to come together with that particular entity, to work with people Jay Haymond, who is renowned as an oral historian nationally, and Kent Powell, whose administration and vision has really kept the project alive, Suzi Montgomery, who worked with Jay, conducting the oral histories and now Marsha Holland, here, sitting with me. It was like a confluence of things happening that resulted in this taking on a life its own. So, it is like I had a little seed of an idea and I facilitated it happening and now it is just going gang-busters.

MH: Your background is science, but there is an aspect of social science that is included in science...could you talk about that social science side?

ME: I am a social scientist and I find it really interesting certainly as an anthropologist and an archaeologist, but also in terms of that whole dimension when we talk about science I think a lot of people think chemistry, physics, the hard sciences. If you are not from that arena, it may be intimidating for people, held up over here as a thing that smart people do and the rest of us can just read about it. One thing about that I learned is that in my mind, anybody who asked the question and seeks the answer is a scientist; regardless of [whether] it is about rocks or about people. We all are scientists. I want the science to be more broadly accessible. I think that social science is one way to give it that, because that is how you figure out what is important to people and help them understand things better by using those social sciences, and then to address people's expectations and see if you are meeting those, achieving those goals. The whole aspect of how people have behaved on the landscape overtime, whether it is today or the deep prehistoric past is why we are

here today managing this monument because of the social aspect of it and the fact that we are people using the land, out there on it, and wanting to make a connection with it. There are almost as many reasons for wanting to make that connection, as there are people who are wanting to experience it, but more than experiencing it, having a piece of it. The people who live here, it is their backyard, it is their place where they are comfortable, the home of their psyche of who they are. The people who come to visit for the solitude and the beauty, it is almost a kind of spiritual home for them. So, you have these two very different groups of people, but in a sense their desires, their goals, and this connection to this landscape seem to me to have much in common.

MH: It is ethnographic orientation for the people here and visiting, especially on a spiritual level.

ME: Then there is social aspect that interests me from the standpoint of managing the land. You can go out there and make every decision you want to about physically what you want to do on the landscape, but in order to make that and get the support for that decision you have to bring it down to the common social denominator and have to appeal to people's interests and their concern for the landscape. Otherwise that project is meaningless.

MH: As a subject, you feel like it is valuable to other people, in true experience is there a great interest in finding out about the specific culture of the people who live here? Tiny question...

ME: I think for us to be successful in our long term mission for this place we have a big constituency, a big group of supporters, that don't live here. For those people we have already achieved what makes them satisfied with this place being designated as a

monument. For the people who live here and who are adjusting to a change in a paradigm of how they have always considered this landscape to be, it will take some time. These are the people, the ones who are continuing to make a living off the land, we need to spend some time getting to understand them better so we are not coming in and layering another layer of bureaucracy on top of something they feel emotional about. To me looking at these oral histories is one way to do that. I could come in as another person from New Jersey, Minnesota and having access to these histories, if I were a manager, to read through and start to get a sense of how people feel. I could be a better manager by understanding their perspective. It wouldn't mean I agree with their perspective or that I would advocate necessarily for their perspective, but it is about understanding that they have very strong connections and attachments that I may not have to this place.

MH: It does give you a greater depth of knowledge.

ME: And perspective, and the scope. And the completeness of the collection itself; you have women, you have men, some Paiutes, a Hopi, not just one demographic. Plus, I think, you can look at the diversity of backgrounds of these people and look at a community from Long Valley for example, and compare that to a really new community in Big Water. The difference of what those people's backgrounds are and how that affects their perspective. I think during these oral histories, once people are comfortable and really get rolling in them you start to really see and hear. The great thing about having the voices, as you do, is to really hear people's passion for the landscape and their own pride in their life. One thing that I found interesting, and I don't know, you may have a different perspective, I was always of the impression, because of the genealogical connection through the Mormon Church, that there would be piles of histories laying around peoples'

houses for the plucking. What I have seen, is that people do have their genealogies, that is pretty straight forward and is where they have come from, from a strong pioneer lineage if you are from Utah, it is really important. But, they did not have these oral histories. I was surprised at that.

I would hope, at any rate, that one little piece of what this project might have done is given people pride in their history is and their history has incredible value. By being able to capture it like this is just ...I don't know where else you see such a well-rounded program. It gets back to that relationship of the people and the parts and especially you pulling together, not just the oral histories that we have gathered, but the oral histories from Bryce, and the adjoining area. So, now it has become a regional resource.

MH: So glad you said that, it was what I was digging for...to validate their unique life in this landscape. When I come out of an interview, I can feel the person feels special explaining washing the dishes in the manner they did, and the difficulty in which they lived is validated, it is valuable. That has become a key part for me, an emotional attachment to the project, all of a sudden the person who wore burlap shoes during the wintertime and struggled in life for a greater cause, it feels like it was important and they are adding something to the enduring culture of the area. It is incredible, it is something you can feel.

ME: I bet, which is something I miss being at this level of the project, not having that close of a connection to the people.

MH: But you can vicariously enjoy it...

ME: I do. Regarding the oral history that I personally find fascinating; I will pick up a history which is really a broad summary done with someone's color palette. When you hear these oral histories, it is like it is that person's perspective and almost the minute detail that you won't find in books, about a person's existence day to day. I find it absolutely fascinating, because that tells me the detail of how that person had to live and what the difficulties were. I am thinking of Ada Spencer in Long Valley and how she talked about their garden and having to keep the coyotes out of the watermelons, we don't even think about that as an issue. It doesn't enter into our minds if we haven't experienced that. For her to share that is that little snapshot of life, the tiny little things are very very powerful.

MH: And then it is gone. Let's talk a bit about the rewards of the project. You spoke a little about that for yourself. But more generally what do you think the rewards of this project have been?

ME: I think the amount of information that has been gathered in ten years time, and the fact that not only are these transcribed, they are in located in places where people can have access to them. We will work more to get the technology so there are even more accessible than they are. A lot of projects I have seen have not been so consistent about completing each of the interviews. Now we are over two hundred interviews, I would like to see a program that has done any better. It is phenomenal the scope and the quality of the product that is there.

The exposure from this project and how much this has been used in terms of our discussion nationwide about the value of the Monument, it is always one of the projects we are proud to highlight, because of the success of it. It is all that high level bureaucratic stuff and on top of that we need to start using these documents as we are going out and proposing projects on the ground. People are talking in these documents about the landscape and we can learn a lot of things from them that we can't go back and we can't recreate what it looked like fifty or sixty, seventy years ago. It is beyond our scope to do that. But, we can look at what people had to say about it. There is a lot to be learned spending some time doing that.

Some of the other smaller projects, within the project; a few years back the Division of State History did a project with the kids from Cannonville. They came down to Paria and were down there with Charlie Francisco and Don Mangum and the whole crew from State History. They set up this program in advance and had the students do some oral histories with their own family members so they understood the history and then they came down and had these stations set up. You would do a different activity at each station. I remember watching these children after being primed and knowing about oral history and being told about the importance of it, that they way they were looking at these two elderly gentlemen was a new found respect. Not just for them as the men that they are, but for them as a part of history and as a part of those children's history. There is no value you can put on that kind of experience, so, from the standpoint of the communities you would hope for something like that.

The presentations that have been part of symposia and part of our lecture series which is more important because that touches people in our communities here. That became a more tangible thing for them. To sit around and be at a presentation or give a presentation and see the dialog that ensued; people talking to each other and how excited they were and how it was just like back in the day before you had TV. You can see that whole art and passionate conversation when people get together and it really was a great sense of community, especially when those things happened in Cannonville; a little place where the intent of [the BLM Visitor Center in] Cannonville was like an oasis, a home in the desert where you could feel comfortable. It really brought that out. People's stories brought that alive, they made that happen.

All of that interpretation now that was used for the Cannonville [BLM Visitor Station] is based on a lot of those oral histories and now the Highway 12 stuff, to see that being used in that project. It is just like every year there is another angle that we can look at these oral histories and take something away from them.

MH: We are able to go a little bit deeper. A history evokes, oral history, cultural history, evokes a certain interest in a visitor.

ME: Don't you think part of it is because with history we can all relate as individuals. It is close enough to us and, for Euro-Americans anyway, that is our culture. Sometimes for pre-history it is harder for people if that is not part of your lineage or part of your training or your particular interest, but we all, whether we are Native American or Euro-American

or whatever, we still have a certain connection to history. That is a hook that you can then pull people in and get them to think about other things. I also think that life is so complicated now and we are so techno-knowledgeable that we are losing a lot of the closeness of communities, the connections, even being able to write letters. I think people are harkening to a simpler time, almost like escapism, to look at this historic period of time and think about what it would have been like to live there. I remember when I was a child, I thought, "That would be so hard." Now I think life would be [better], so much simpler in so many ways.

MH: My experience is that anyone who has engaged in the oral history project, any aspect, they feel they have been embraced whether it be a local citizen who has participated, or a visitor who has spent some time listening to the voices. They are embraced and they are connected.

ME: Because it is person talking to them; when they hear that voice it is as though they are the interviewer and they are there with them at that moment, the inflection, the famous southern Utah number of dialects. It is not captured any other way. Sometimes it is so moving, it almost brings you to tears when you hear the passion or excitement in someone's voice when they are talking about something really wonderful when they were young or something very scary that happened to them. The written word just doesn't give you that.

MH: It is like you are in on a secret and the value of that for a visitor, it forever engages them in this landscape.

ME: I don't know a place that does it in quite a personable and personal way. When you are sitting back watching people in Cannonville, they come in and take the tapes and sit on

the couch or on the rocking chair, pretty soon I expect them to start whistling or whittling...it is like time travel. There you are really encouraging them to do that.

I have VIP tours which I like to end in Cannonville, because if you end them up there and finish your talk and say, "Oh, by the way, listen to this." They don't want to leave, they want to continue to listen, they want to hear. It is almost universal as an experience with the people I have been with. I can talk myself blue in the face, all day long, about every fabulous resource and everything I ever knew about it, but when they hear it from someone's own mouth, the clincher.

MH: What are your plans for the future?

ME: Oh, my gosh! To go find money so we can keep this project going, and really promote this project on a more national level, and see if are ways for other units to kind of use this as the model, develop a more national oral history program, so people have this from all different areas of the country.

MH: We were lucky with the time the project started; we had access to turn of the century residents, which is out of our grasp now. It was a crucial time to document. Sometimes I feel we are reaching another crucial time. Do you feel that might be true?

ME: Absolutely, it is the next generation. I remember when we started these histories and we had a year and a half, and it wasn't until then that we lost someone who we had gathered an oral history from. Now, every time that happens, even though I don't know these people individually, but because I have read the majority of these histories, I feel like I have lost a friend. It is bittersweet, but points to why this is a valuable project and an important undertaking. Once that person is gone and their perspective is gone, it is never

to be recreated anywhere, you can't go back and make it up, you can't go back and rebuild it, and there is no faking it. Then it becomes fiction.

What we have is a person's history, it may be partly their own fiction in terms of what they remember, and how we all embellish our stories, but even that is a part of the story itself and part of the value of passing those down. Being able to, the fact that families can have access to this and the fact that now when people call you and ask you for something, and they can go on the web. It is whole generations of families. We have made that tie now, in my mind, between the genealogy part and the oral history part. I think we have helped those people feel more pride and I hope that they know that we are proud of them too. It is our collective, not just as a country, but as a monument and this place, and what is going to happen for generations to come. Now we are in the next generation, that is the generation where the CCCs, all the Great Depression and the other big changes, and the War. All the influences of all of that...

MH: ...how the use of the land change, it did change.

ME: Then there will be the next generation, where people will have enough perspective to really talk about the designation of the Monument and how that affected them more objectively. What are the things that have changed as a result, the expectations versus the reality? To have the history and then be able to continue that project, it is a living thing. The people pass away unfortunately, but the histories keep being made every day. Imagine when we look back, before we pass away, fifty years.

17 Marietta Eaton

MH: Marietta, I would like to say good luck, because I know you are moving on, and there are a lot of people who are glad you had your little idea, that turned into an eight to ten year project of such value. If you ever come up with any more ideas like that, let us know.

ME: I will keep you in my thoughts.

MH: Thanks.

ME: It has been my pleasure.

End of interview. 47 minutes.