

Ray Gardner 1998
Boulder

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 and Suzi Montgomery. 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.

INTERVIEW WITH: Ray Gardner
INTERVIEWER: Jay Haymond
INTERVIEW NUMBER: One of One
DATE OF INTERVIEW: August 27, 1998
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Mr. Gardner's Home, "Down the Draw"
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: Growing up in Boulder
TRANSCRIBER: Vectra Solutions/Janet
DATE: November 13, 1998

JH: Tell me what your first memory in Boulder is. You were born here?

RG: No, I moved to Boulder when I was, I think nine years old, from Beryl, Utah, out there west of Cedar. As I recall my first memory of Boulder was...we came to Boulder and this ranch that my parents bought, it had a...the Peterson place...it had an old, well the home on it, it was quite old and run down and I think my first recollection of Boulder was going through that old home. That was situated where my parents' new home is now. But as I recall that's my first recollection is looking out and going through that old home.

JH: You said it was run down, was it abandoned, it must have been abandoned.

RG: Yes, it had been abandoned for, oh, quite a few years. It looked like it was a nice home and a pretty home but it had a lot of mice in it, rats and I think for a time my parents considered trying to renovate it but they decided that it would probably be more work than just tearing it down and building a new home. So that's what they did.

JH: When you were nine and you came here to Boulder, what sort of a friendship group did you find? Were there boys and girls your age that you got acquainted with?

RG: Yes, there were a few actually that were the same age and in the same grade in school. Three other boys my age and, oh, about that many girls as well. And so for Boulder at that time, it was a larger group that was all the same age and we moved up partway through the school year and so, starting school I immediately became acquainted with the

kids my age and other ages on the school bus, riding to school. So I quickly became acquainted with other kids my age.

JH: What different did you find the children in the community from Beryl?

RG: Not a whole lot different. I think it was really very much the same in that most of the kids I new in Beryl, they were -- like myself their parents were farmers, ranchers and they were acquainted with that type of life style, as were most of the kids that I met when I moved here to Boulder. And so it was...I didn't notice a whole lot of difference, however, it was my first move and so there were certainly some adjustments. But as far as the kids go, I think they were pretty much the same.

JH: Could you attribute what you observed and felt totally to the rural character of both communities?

RG: Yes, I think so. I would say with both communities that rural feeling, I think it reflected in the friends I had and in the kinds of things I did growing up. I think it was because of that ruralness, but it kind of led to the up bringing that I had I guess.

JH: Your parents liked the rural life I guess?

RG: Yes, in Beryl my dad had quite a large farm and quite a few cattle as well. But I think he wanted to be more of a cowboy than a farmer and so that's why he made the move to Boulder and my mom, she's from Boulder, Boulder/Salt Gulch, and so he was acquainted with the area, well they both were, and I think they were quite excited about, you know, making the change and coming to Boulder and living the Boulder life.

JH: You've gone away and moved back for your own reasons, but you've described a motive

that maybe has some deep roots. I've heard it articulated to a greater or lesser degree in other people about wanting to return to Boulder because of the Boulder way of life. Can you describe that, as you've come to know it.

RG: Well, for me the Boulder way of life, and I suppose it's probably a little bit different for everyone, but I enjoy the scenery foremost, I enjoy the peace and quiet that is here for the most part and, you know, I'm glad to be able to get back to an environment where I'm able to help my dad with some farm work and help him with the cattle. Growing up I remember I was quite anxious to leave. Maybe I moved too many sprinklers, I don't know, but I was very anxious. I didn't think I would ever return. I really didn't think there was anything that Boulder had to offer me. But after being away for a few years, I left I guess about '89 and I came back, oh, about six months ago, so about nine years, more or less. In that time I had the chance to see a few different places and live in a few different places and I came to realize that Boulder's a very unique place and I feel it offers a unique life style. So when the opportunity presented itself to move back, I felt like it was the right thing. I don't think that I would have been able to move back to Boulder in any other capacity, other than working for the county as a Deputy Sheriff. I enjoy...I still enjoy doing farm work and ranch work, but I don't think I could make a go of it financially. So this way I'm able to help my dad with what he does but also I do have a regular paycheck, which is nice. It is.

JH: Kind of reassuring.

RG: It is. There's not too many jobs in Boulder that do offer a regular paycheck with full benefits, and so I do feel very fortunate to be able to come back to Boulder and do what I'm doing.

JH: I bet. Let's go back to moving in at age nine and then the next little while. What was it like? You went to school over in Escalante, rode over and back by bus every day. What's the social life like on the bus?

RG: (Chuckles) The social life on the bus. It, as you can imagine making that trip every day, it got rather boring. Oftentimes in the morning I might nap a little on the way to school and possibly catch up on a little bit of homework that didn't get done the night before. But for the most part I would visit with other kids if there was something to visit about or some new event to discuss or... we'd tease each other a lot. I remember doing that, you know, and other kids my age that, you know, they would probably say that I was probably one of the worst. But I think that was mainly because of boredom on the bus. I remember sitting there just looking out the window going over and back and I really thought that I had memorized every part of the roadway and all of the canyons and scenery that could be seen from the roadway going back and forth. And so we would talk a lot, tease each other a lot. Sometimes get rowdy but not too bad, I don't think.

Sometimes one of the kids would bring a stereo on the bus, we'd listen to some music and I remember the last couple of buses the county had, it had a stereo on it with speakers that went all the way back and so sometimes we were at least able to listen to some music. I remember some of the kids, they would get carsick. I remember a few (laughs) kids that, you know, the bus had to stop for them or the bus didn't stop in time for them and they might throw up on the bus. And that was always a bad experience. Whenever that would happen all the windows would come down and the kids would crowd the window for some fresh air. But it didn't happen too often, maybe several times a year. But that was enough.

And you know, as far as making that trip every day, I always thought, or at least hoped,

that maybe the bus would break down or something would happen and we wouldn't be able to make it to school, but I don't recall that ever happening. A couple times during the winter months, when it had snowed the night before and before the roads would be cleared, we thought that perhaps the bus wouldn't make it over due to the snow, but I don't think that ever happened either. We always made it to school and more often than not a few minutes early. But the bus, for me, at least coming back from school, it provided some time to kind of unwind and to kind of reflect on my day and think about what I was going to do when I got home. And even again maybe do a little bit of homework while there were some other kids in my class to kind of get some ideas or some help from. And so, while that forty-five minutes or fifty minutes, or whatever it took each day each way on the bus, while it often was boring, it did provide some quiet time, if I chose, to reflect on the day or to kind of prepare myself for the day if I wasn't already. But you know, it also provided some time to get well acquainted and quite close to some of the other kids.

JH: Did you feel good about consulting with this peer group on your studies, were they helpful or did the teasing kind of...

RG: Well, (pause) there were several that were quite helpful and several that really weren't because maybe they were in the same situation that I was. But, several of the students that were from Boulder were what I still consider to be the best students in the class, very dedicated to their schoolwork and very, very bright. And so to these several students I was able to get at least some suggestions on how to do an assignment or what was expected from this assignment.

JH: Did you ever offer help to anyone?

RG: You know I'd like to think that I did, but...I think I did, yeah. I think more than doing it or showing them how it was to be done, I think I was probably more inclined to tell them how I think it would probably...what the requirements were and how I would probably go about doing it. But, yeah, I think I was pretty good about helping most the time.

JH: Sometimes growing up in a rural situation, the... I guess we'd call the group, the neighboring kids would form a bond. I don't know if there was any discrimination when you got to Escalante or not. Lot of those families tie in. But there would be more than camaraderie; there would be a sense of protection if that were needed. Did you ever experience any of that?

RG: Well, I think I always felt more comfortable around the Boulder kids and I think that's because I was more familiar with what they did after school and their family situation and their life style in general. I always felt like the Boulder kids were more genuine. So, yes, in a sense I did have a greater respect and trust for the Boulder kids and I could simply relate to them better than I could the other kids in Escalante.

JH: I've heard others refer to- I want to say their experience in Boulder, as being in a big family. In other words, the willingness to work with neighbors. It sounds like an ideal neighborhood relationship, even more than a community. Boulder's not that big of a population, so it's reasonably within reach to do that sort of thing. What were the institutions that provided- was there a church experience? Was there a local community organization or just simply the Boulder environment that led to that?

RG: I remember when I moved to Boulder the 4H program was going quite strongly. The kids made things out of ceramic molds quite a bit, up at the old school house, the town hall. And that seemed to kind of, in the years following, it just seemed to kind of dwindle and people

lost interest in it. Also, the scouting program, at times it seemed to be well organized and the scouts were going somewhere in it. Other times it didn't seem like we did a whole lot. We had a good time together, oftentimes we'd meet together up at the church house and have maybe a little bit of scouting and then a good basketball game. And we had a good time. I remember doing a few hikes with the scouts, several camp-outs. And then there were a few activities with the church as well. I remember one in particular, a youth conference, that was held down at Dance Hall Rock, down the Hole-in-the-Rock road, and that was a lot of fun. But besides those organizations I can just remember doing things with the other boys my age. Several of us had motorcycles or three- or four-wheelers and we'd go on, we'd find an old Jeep road that went someplace and we'd go on a long ride someplace. Or sometimes we'd go hunt rabbits together or something like that. But as I recall, most of my experiences with other youth in Boulder, it was around something semi-adventurous -- camping or a hike or a motorcycle ride or maybe some fishing or hiking to someplace and going swimming in a pond or a lake someplace. That was pretty popular in the summer months. Even to go to this swimming hole on the canal as it comes out of Boulder Creek, that was...we could go there during the summer months and quite often someone else would show up and there'd be a few kids there swimming.

I didn't do a whole lot of that. It seemed like in the summer my dad kept me pretty busy changing the water and the farm work -- putting up the hay and whatever needed to be done in that sense. But those organizations that I mentioned, the scouts, the 4H, any church activities, they all did provide something for the kids to do. But most of the other kids, they also had quite a few obligations at home and so it wasn't real often that we got together for one of these activities. I think we always stayed pretty busy with the helping at home.

JH: Did you ever go back to Beryl to see friends or family, or did you ever miss those relationships.

RG: You know I did, I did have several close friends out there and I did go back once in a while but I guess as time went by I kept less track of what was going on with the friends that I knew out there. But yes, I did miss it. But as far as things to do outside, you know, for a nine- or ten-year-old boy, I think there were quite a few more things to do here in Boulder than out there -- with friends or alone. I think I had a lot more fun here just because outdoor-wise there were a lot more things to do. So, I adjusted.

JH: In my mind I was thinking of the Escalante Desert [in Iron County] versus Boulder proper.

RG: Well, there were still a lot of rabbits out there to shoot I guess. Perhaps, well probably more than here, but you didn't have the fishing or the mountains nearby nor the streams and the lakes like you can enjoy here. So that's...I recall noticing that right off.

JH: What's different from a farming standpoint, I wonder how that would compare or contrast. Are there better farms out in the desert there?

RG: Yes. A lot of nice big farms out there. You know Boulder's a unique place and a pretty place but it's really not an ideal farming environment. Too many rocks, too many hills. Down here it's quite sandy. We use quite a bit of fertilizer to get the same results that we were able to get in Beryl, and it's a much smaller scale here than out there, of course. But I think it's harder here to farm than out there. I think it's probably harder here than a lot of places, probably most places, just because of the things I mentioned. A lot of rocks in the soil, a lot of odd-shaped farms that are that way because of mountains and gullies and things that make the ground so that it can't be reasonably farmed. So, I think farming in Boulder, I think it's pretty tough. I think you have to be pretty dedicated and really want to make it work to have very much success.

JH: Right, that's my observation too. The way a young man usually grows up...I was thinking about sports programs. Did you get involved in the sports program when you moved over here.

RG: Yes, with the basketball there in Escalante. I was one of the taller kids in my class and so I was pretty much expected to be on the basketball team.

End Side One, Tape One

Begin Side Two, Tape One

RG: Freshman year and sophomore. When the kids, when we had our driver's license we would often car pool. But when nobody was able to drive then one of the parents of the players would come over and get us. But, you know, I think it was, at least for my parents in their situation, it was a bit of a sacrifice for me to be involved with this because I was not able to help with the chores in the evening with what needed to be done. But basketball was the only sport that I was involved in and they also had baseball but that cut into the summer quite a bit and I wasn't interested enough in baseball and had a lot to do helping my dad so I didn't get involved with the baseball. Seems like several of the kids from Boulder did, but I didn't and my parents usually made an effort to come to the home games there in Escalante. Most of the games elsewhere they weren't able to make it to. I felt like they supported me pretty well in coming to the home games. And there were three or four of us -- well maybe even five -- from Boulder that were on the basketball team. And so Boulder made a pretty good contribution to Escalante's basketball team and number-wise and talent-wise, I felt like. But, you know, at the time it seemed quite competitive and I guess that was kind of the mind set that was expected of us, to be quite competitive.

I remember going to a basketball game a couple of years after graduation from high school and I didn't really have near as much interest in it. I didn't even care that much who won. But at the time I remember it was quite competitive, you know, with other teams. But in retrospect I realize that now it really wasn't that important, whether we won or lost. (Spoken reflectively.)

But it was fun (brightly). But it was hard too. I usually had homework at night and I would get home after basketball practice and usually about that time we would eat our evening meal and then I'd work on whatever homework I could get done and then go to bed and do it all the next day. But it did provide some additional interaction with other kids and the coaches that helped out and things like that. It was fun, but looking back, I don't think it was as important as I thought it was then.

JH: Perspectives change, don't they?

RG: They do, yeah.

JH: So you graduated from high school. What were your plans for further education or work or ..?

RG: Well, I knew that I wanted to go to college. I was not sure what kind of career I wanted, but I did feel like I needed to get a college education. I have four older brothers and they all graduated from college and have each done quite well in their own vocation. And so I guess in a sense I felt somewhat of a responsibility or maybe some pressure from the rest of the family that I needed to go to college as well and see what I could make of myself, so to speak. But upon graduating from high school I worked the summer at Bryce Canyon, up at the Lodge. I didn't make very much money. I worked the graveyard shift as night security,

but it was my...I think I was kind of independent and I was glad to kind of be out on my own and find out for myself some of my own parameters some of the limits for myself, other than just taking my parents' word for it. But college was something that I had planned on from at least a few years before graduation, although I wasn't sure what I wanted to do. But I was certain that college was in my future.

JH: When we talked before briefly, I think during that conversation you said that you'd taken law enforcement classes at Weber State.

RG: Yes, well this was Police Academy through Weber State that was taught at Dixie College-- kind of an extension program. However, I did graduate from Southern Utah University with a four-year degree in Criminal Justice. And so between the classes for Criminal Justice and the Police Academy, I got quite a bit of instruction on that. But you know, as far as doing something in law enforcement, I didn't know that I would be interested in something like that until the LDS mission that I was serving was drawing to a close in France. I went to France, and it was drawing to a close I remember seeing quite often the gendarme -- those are the motorcycle cops in France, (chuckles) and I remember seeing them quite often and I thought that that looked like something that would be kind of fun, something different. And so I guess that was the first time that I started to consider maybe something in law enforcement. And when I returned I went back to SUU and I started taking some Criminal Justice classes, just kind of to see if it was something that would interest me, and as it turned out it did. And so I graduated in that and then went through the Police Academy.

JH: In your present work, do you find the things that you learned in both -- I think of them as two different institutions, do you?

RG: Yes, I do.

JH: Do you find practical application for those principles that you learned in those two situations?

RG: I do, I think more so I find practical applications that I learned in the Police Academy, I think of Police Academy as the practical application and the degree in Criminal Justice is more the theory of the judicial system and the bigger picture, so to speak. However, there are, you know I find myself in situations or faced with concerns or problems that I don't think was ever discussed in Police Academy, or at least not the extent that I feel that I can draw from that experience. Sometimes it seems like things are not always black and white, there's some gray areas, and (laughs) sometimes I'm not always sure what the best solution would be. Especially here in Boulder, I don't have a partner, I'm pretty much my own boss and I pretty much call the shots. But I try to, if it's something very serious, try to call somebody that may be able to give some assistance.

JH: Larry Davis?

RG: Yes, Larry, and you know, also the Sheriff in Panguitch or maybe one of the other deputies or, if it's something legal, even the County Attorney. I feel like maybe I'm better safe than sorry and so I'll seek some advise if it's something very serious.

JH: Yeah. I was reading in the paper about the last little brouhaha here in town, wondering if you had occasion to referee that situation. If you had precedence discussed in your classes for instance, between two citizens that apparently had some difference of opinion.

RG: Yes, I am familiar with that situation, and you know that's one of the things that the Police Academy doesn't prepare you for adequately on something like that, where it's more of a

civil dispute than anything. All they really tell you to do is tell the people that are feuding that...to avoid a confrontation and to get some legal counsel. But I find that people here in Boulder, now that there is a deputy in Boulder, would like me to solve all of their disputes with their neighbors, (both parties laugh) and drag me into something that I really don't want to be a part of and really don't have any business being a part of. And so I find myself advising people sometimes to either try to work it out with each other or, if they don't feel like they can do that to their satisfaction, to get some kind of legal counsel, and that's really all I can do in a civil situation. I don't know what some of the citizens of Boulder have done up to this point of me being here. I suppose they went without for the most part and one way or another they were able to settle their disputes and go on with life. And I'd like them to be able to continue to do so without my intervening any more than I need to.

JH: I wondered, I sort of sensed that going on. In the past sometimes the people, the parties who have difficulty, would go to some authority figure, even the bishop. But where there's actually a civil servant, you become the next person to consult. Do they choose you over the bishop? Or are we talking about people who wouldn't resort to the bishop under other circumstances as well?

RG: I think for the most part in the experience I've had thus far in this capacity in Boulder, most of these people would not resort to going to the bishop, mainly because Boulder has become more diversified than what I remember growing up and so many of these people, they're either not a member of the LDS Church or at least they're not active to the point that they feel like they can go to the bishop with their concerns. But I think the bishop probably would be a good place to start with some of these things, assuming that these people do have a good enough relationship with the bishop that they feel like they could do so, or they have the desire to do so. I think that that's probably how some of these things were taken care of in the past and I think it would be fine if we were able to kind of continue with that

somewhat. But sometimes I kind of feel like the people would see me as some sort of a in the same...kind of a bishop figure and, again, sometimes things are always black and white, or at least they don't always appear to me as such. So sometimes I think I make the decision that's maybe the most correct, maybe not completely correct but the information that I have, may be hopefully the best choice, but I don't know if it always is or not. I don't know.

JH: I'm not sure if there is such a thing as being totally correct. I wonder if that's a part of the human condition.

One of the things that strikes me about Boulder is the transition that it's going through. There's a social change, an economic change, and therefore a political change that's taking place that's quite significant and I think that always leads to, if not unrest, a little bit of anxiety on people's part. And so they may be susceptible to minor things that they might otherwise be able to deal with. Do you see anything in that?

RG: (Sigh) I do. Whereas, for the most part, the residents of Boulder have livestock, there's only a few ranches left in Boulder and so I think where it used to be somebody's cattle got through a fence and got on someone else's property, it was understood or at least tolerated much more than that same thing happening today because I think that a lot of the people that have moved into Boulder, they don't have that same background, that same understanding that sometimes those things just happen, it's just part of the rural atmosphere. And so I think some of them do get kind of upset and uptight when somebody's cows get on their property or maybe they're annoyed by cattle drives with a herd of cattle going by their house or maybe the noise or commotion from maybe putting up the hay in a field that's next to a house of a new resident. And so I think there's much less tolerance these days for things that you would typically find in a rural community than even as little back as ten years ago.

I remember growing up in Boulder, there were still quite a few people in the community that were involved in agriculture and so the neighbors could relate with each other as far as livestock getting out or somebody's dog wandering someplace where it didn't belong or those types of things. But I see, (laughs) as a deputy I see some people in Boulder are getting quite uptight over those same things that even ten years ago were almost commonplace. And nobody seemed to get too uptight about it. I do see a change -- a big change -- as far as the tolerance to those things.

JH: It's painful in some way to see these changes go on and we talked earlier about the comfort of a family relationship that existed in a small town. And I hear tell that that's diminishing or it's certainly changing.

RG: It is. And I think again from what I see, it's because there's such a wide range of interests and life styles in Boulder that people don't, in the first place that friendship doesn't exist and that need doesn't exist to help each other out if need be because it's moving away from a farming/ranching community where the need exists to help out to make things work. An example of that, I remember branding calves. I remember we would get some help from the other ranchers and when it was time for them to brand we would help them. Also, as far as farm work, cutting hay and putting up hay, if somebody's equipment broke down they would borrow someone else's so they could get their crop up. And people were...they always seemed very willing to lend their equipment or their services so that could be done.

But since we're moving away from a farming/ranching community, there's not very many people that might need to rely on their neighbor, or their neighbor's equipment or something from their neighbor to be able to continue with their livelihood. I see it as more of an independent community, or at least the members are more independent because it's a lot of retirees that, they have money and so they're able to hire whatever help or services they need

and the other occupations, it's moving away from as much physical labor and that's mostly involved with farming and ranching and so I think people are able to be more independent like that. But I'm not sure that it's always a good thing because I think neighbors that help each other and work with each other were neighbors that get along with each other and they're not having these disputes that I sometimes find myself in the middle of now. And so I think that's kind of unfortunate because I think if they had to depend on each other when something happened and a crisis arose, I think they'd be more united and much less prone to some of this senseless bickering (laughs) that I see going on.

JH: In that article that I read they mentioned a cross burning and small rifle fire. I suppose that there's a law against that, probably a state law. What's the first move? Do you have to go on the evidence when you investigate that kind of thing?

RG: Yes, the party that had the cross burned, they were doing the shooting, and...

JH: They didn't mind admitting that I guess.

RG: No, they admitted that. But they...well they felt like that regardless of the lack of any evidence, they felt like this neighbor that they had been feuding with was responsible for this cross burning. But there's absolutely no evidence to support that and unless I'm able to gather enough evidence that the County Attorney feels comfortable to charge somebody with a crime, enough evidence so that he feels like he would be successful in court proving that they were in fact responsible, then it's really -- unless you can prove it -- it's not a good idea to charge somebody with it because then, when you can't prove it, then it kind of opens yourself up to some litigation. It's a way to police the police, so to speak.

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UTAH DIVISION OF STATE HISTORY

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Interview Agreement and Deed of Gift

In view of the historical value of this oral history interview and my interest in Utah history,

I, Ray Gardner
please print or type your name

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Interview Description

Date of Interview August 27, 1998

Primary Subject His life in Boulder & work as a sheriff

Other Topics _____

Number of Tapes 1

Signature Ray Gardner

Date 6-17-02

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