

JOLLEY, Dale 1998
Video Escalante

THE SOUTHERN UTAH ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

The Southern Utah Oral History Project began in July 1998 as a cooperative effort of the Utah State Historical Society (Division of State History), Garfield and Kane Counties, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The purpose of the project was to document and help preserve the cultural history of small towns in southern Utah--especially those that border the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument--by collecting oral histories from long time residents of the area about the people and the land during the first half of the twentieth century. Suzi Montgomery, Jay Haymond, and Kent Powell of the Utah State Historical Society managed the project, conducted oral history interviews, and trained and supervised local interviewers who participated in the project. They worked in close cooperation with Marietta Eaton and Kathleen Truman of the Bureau of Land Management and local coordinators in Boulder, Bryce Valley, Escalante, Kanab, and Long Valley. Under the direction of the Utah State Historical Society staff, the interviews were transcribed, checked, and edited. Copies of the final transcripts are at the Utah State Historical Society, at offices of the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument, and at local repositories in Kane and Garfield Counties.

Those responsible for the project wish to extend a special thanks to everyone who took the time to participate in sharing their memories and stories.

INTERVIEW WITH: Dale Jolley
INTERVIEWER: Jay Haymond and Suzi Montgomery
VIDEO: Robert Newell
INTERVIEW NUMBER: One
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PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Dale's Barber Shop in Salt Lake City
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: Memories of living in Escalante
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JH: Dale, tell me about growing up in Escalante, how did you get to be in Escalante.

DJ: Well, my mother is from Escalante and my father is from Salt Lake City. But unfortunately my mother died when I was a month old so my grandparents took me down to Escalante to raise me. My grandfather and grandmother was Ernest and Amanda Griffin. My grandfather had a nice, big herd of sheep and several farms and so, growing up with ten uncles and aunts and all these cousins, I had a great life in Escalante. Now I want to tell you something, Jay. The folks in Escalante, if they heard me say 'Escalanté' they'd say, "Well, gee, he's not a member anymore", because everybody called it 'Escalant'. But see, I've become sophisticated (laughs) and one day I was practicing a song over to my neighbors where I like to sing duets, and this fellow said, "Where you from?" I said, "I'm from 'Escalant', Utah." 'Escalant'? he said. He turned out to be an English teacher. "Why, it's not 'Escalant' it's 'Escalanté'. You shouldn't say 'Escalant'. So I've become a little sophisticated now, I say Escalanté. But when I go back home on a vacation, they say, "Dale, you shouldn't say 'Escalanté', it's 'Escalant'."

JH: Yeah, right. (Laughs) They forgive you though, I bet.

DJ: Oh yes, yes, they realize that I've become to the point where I can't say 'Escalant', they don't know who I'm talking about. (Laughs)

JH: Urbanites! Not too many days from now they're going to be down there celebrating Pioneer Day. When you were a young man growing up, what was Pioneer Day celebration like?

DJ: Well, you know, it really has changed quite a bit. Because now they have a parade but when I was a young fellow there they had booths set up and always remember one thing, Jay- that I'll never forget. We had a family in town that was very poor. I won't mention their name of course. They were very poor and so in order to pay off his bill at Leo Munson's store, Leo would set up a target and Loren would put his head through there and then he would sell eggs and about five eggs for a nickel, you could throw eggs at his head and if you hit him you won a prize. Well, Loren, over the years, got so adept at dodging, I don't think anybody ever hit him with an egg. (Laughter) But, anyway, I still remember that and also, you got to remember now, back in those days my grandfather would give me a quarter. And so I would take this quarter and I'd nurse that all day, I could buy a bottle of pop for three cents; I could buy a candy bar for two cents. So, you know, when I got through I usually had change left over. (Laughs) Last me all day, you see. So those are the great days in Escalante, having such a great, great time growing and of course working in the hay fields with all my cousins. That was a great way to live, it was.

JH: Sure. You know, you mentioned working in the hay. Describe what it was like, start at breakfast time.

DJ: Well, we would usually get up very, very early for breakfast. Now, in a farm town, we didn't call it lunch at noon, we called it dinner. So at lunch when we would come back from the hay fields, my grandparents and my aunts would have a great meal fixed for everybody and we would eat because we'd been working all day. Then at night it was

called supper. So that was the meal, we ate very light in the morning and heavy at noon and not too heavy at night. But in hauling hay there was no mechanism, it was all done by hand. Mower was pulled by a team of horses and I remember when the young kids, when you're young of course you've got the job of tromping the hay. And lots of times when they'd throw those piles of hay up on the wagon, sometimes there'd be a blow snake in there you know. And that old blow snake would hiss, you know, you jump off the wagon. So hauling hay with my cousins was actually lots of fun.

JH: Who got you up on a morning like that? Did your grandfather...

DJ: My grandfather would always... My bedroom was upstairs in this great big house we had. My grandfather would always go to the foot of the stairs and yell, "Dale, it's time to get up!" And my job, as I got older, was to build a fire in the kitchen stove. See Jay, when I was that age we had no electricity in the town, we had no water system at all. It was all a well. We'd go out and draw the water up with a bucket. But his job was to get me up and I would start the fire and then I would go out and do the chores. A couple of milk cows, feed the pigs. Just a great farm life, which I really loved.

JH: You know, you fed the pigs, probably from the dinner table, didn't you?

DJ: Well, we fed from the scraps, but also we had an orchard and my grandfather, I can still see him, sitting on the porch, cutting the apples up that he'd pick up off the ground from the trees, cutting them up and putting them in what we called the swill and then going down and dump it in the trough and the old pigs getting up out of the mud, you know, and come over to eat these apples. Now, one thing about this, too, was in the fall when they had to be butchered, why, this was quite an event. Because they built a hole and they put a big barrel of water in there and built a fire around it. So what you do, you get

the pig out of the pen, bring him down to the scaffold, butcher it, kill him (it's a hard thing to say, 'cause I'm tender-hearted) then you'd slosh him back and forth in this big barrel. And you know, they don't... they skin a pig, they don't take the... like any other animal... what I'm trying to say. Anyway they skin him, so they slosh him around where the water is really hot and then you take knives and you scrape it, scrape all the hair off 'till the ole pig's shiny. (Laughs) Shiny and bright. And I remember one time my uncle, he brought the pig down, he put the .22 rifle up between the pig's eyes and he shot him but he didn't kill him and he 'ole pig took off back up to the pen. And I can sure remember my uncle yelling, "Hey, we gotta get him down here! We can't let him get down." Finally we herded the ole pig back down and he collapsed. But, you know, things like this, I... I remember these things as a young kid in Escalante. Great times. But I want to tell you a little story -- I like to tell stories. I want to tell you a story about milking cows. And when I come home from the army, I told my aunt, "I'll go out and milk the cows for you," she said, "You'll never be able to. You been away too long and your hands won't do that anymore." "What?" I said. So I got about maybe half through milking the cow and sure enough I hadn't done it for two years, see. And my hand wouldn't do it any more. But I've got another story I've got to tell you, about killing chickens. My wife and the kids went down to Escalante and my aunt said, "Dale, we've got two old chickens out there that are not laying and I've been saving them for a special event. Would you go out and kill them for me and then skin them and then bring them in and I'll cook them." Now, my three little kids had never seen anything like that so they said, "Dad! Can we go?" I said, "Sure." So we went down to the chicken coop, got them out, went over to the wood pile. I took the axe and, Wham! you know. Of course the old chicken jumps, you know, with no head on. All the kids took off for the house. "Mom! Mom! Dad killed that chicken." Well, that night when my aunt cooked them they wouldn't eat any of it. (Laughter) So she cooked them a hamburger. (Laughs)

JH: What else did you eat? Let's say that dinner that you spoke of that she brought out to the hay hands, what was that? Was that a big meal?

DJ: We used to go into town, Jay, for that. We used to go into town for that. I can never remember her bringing anything out. We used to go into town and they would have everything, potatoes and gravy and roast beef. Now, one thing about Escalante at that time is that it didn't have any refrigeration. So when we butchered a beef, they used to take a grinder of some type and they would grind the meat and then they would go ahead and put it in big two quart bottles. And course the fat come to the top and sealed it and during the wintertime that's what we had, we wanted some roast beef or some beef for dinner. We opened up a big bottle of that. And that's how we ate.

JH: Do you remember how she preserved that? Did she just boil it?

DJ: It was boiled, it was boiled and cooked, really, and then stuffed into the big two quart jars and then of course sealed. And of course the fat comes to the top and helps seal. Yeah, that's what they did, it was cooked and all we had to do was just open up the bottle and eat it. Eat it. But we didn't have any electricity.

JH: Sounds good.

DJ: Oh, it was. We didn't have anything to... You know, we had no stress, really. Life was beautiful. Yeah, it was, it was beautiful.

JH: Let me take you back to a springtime. And there's still a little bit of snow on the ground but in Escalante it's warm and it's Saturday. Tell me what your Saturday's like under those circumstances.

DJ: Well, Saturday, in a farm town, course it's springtime so you're not putting up any hay or anything such as that. But we just sort of did the chores around the yards. There was always something to do, you know. And so actually springtime was not a bad time. Wintertime in a small town, a farm town, is really quite an easy time. It's in the summertime that you work so hard. But from the spring up until fall you work very hard and then in the wintertime it was a fairly good life. In fact, being a barber like I am, one of the things that I really like to do is go up to Charlie's barber shop and just sit in there and listen to all the stories. I remember one time we were in there one fall and Ambrose Shirts said, "Boy, I've got the best watermelon patch you ever seen." All our ears all perked up, see. And that night, as I went up there with my buddies, cousins, to get some watermelons, there was people running in and out of there like a market, you know.

JH: That was just good advertisement.

DJ: Oh, that's right. In fact Thomas Spencer, I remember told Ambrose, "Boy, Ambrose, you shouldn't have said anything." Heck, I think kids were taking squash, everything else. (Laughter) Ah, but anyway, little town, that's great. Great to live in.

JH: The reason that I posed that particular scenario about spring and snow, was that you told me about sitting on the woodpile in the sunshine and just enjoying the sun.

DJ: Oh yes, Oh! We had a big woodpile that faced the east side of ... And so when the springtime would come and all the sun would come out I used to climb up to the top of this woodpile and sit back with my back against the garage, basking in that sun. And the water would be running, you know, the rivulets of water. Oh yeah. I'll never forget that, Jay. Ever.

JH: When the ground was dryer, do you remember hunting arrowheads?

DJ: Oh yes. Now, we had an area just south and east of town called the Herd Corral Hill and this place was just full of arrowheads. You could go out there... I had sacks of arrowheads, great, beautiful arrowheads that I had found and when I come home from the army somebody had taken them, because the house at that time was empty. But, oh yeah, we used to find arrowheads. I often wondered, they had Moquis, the Moqui Indians, what it was, but there was just arrowheads all over. Yeah.

JH: Did you ever dig for them?

DJ: Never did. Never did. We just... right off the surface. Lots of them.

JH: For sure. One other thing that I wanted to make sure that I raised with you, did your grandfather have livestock? Did he have a permit on the range?

DJ: He did, he did. He had a permit; we had a permit for the desert and a permit for the mountain. In fact up near Posey Lake, that's called the Griffin Top and that was named after my grandfather. Now, what happened was, in the spring of the year the sheep would be moved up into the mountains. In the summer. Then in the winter they would trail them all down -- big herds of sheep. That valley at one time had a big sheep herd. They would trail them down to the desert and our sheep area was down around what's called the Hole in the Rock and so forth. That was our winter range. So, yeah, we had range permit, yeah.

JH: Did you hear your grandfather complain about how they got permits to use that land?

DJ: I never did. I never did hear him ever really complain about it because our range land was good, it was a good range land and I don't think my grandfather ever had any trouble with that sort of thing. Everything always seemed to go pretty good. I can remember during the Depression, I was just a little kid, but I can remember my grandfather, he had his money in the First State Bank of Salina, Mr. Crandall was the banker. And he called all those sheep men and cattlemen in and said, "Listen, things are going to be a little tight. If you people will stay with me and not draw your money out I'll be okay." And nobody took any money out and it survived.

JH: That's a great story. I mean that's like a community resource rather than an adversarial relationship.

DJ: That's right, he just said to them, "Look, you guys, if you draw your money out I'm broke." And so they all kept it in there and they never lost a nickel.

JH: You were there when that recovery from the Depression was going on. What other kinds of programs did the government bring in and offer to the people, do you remember?

DJ: Oh, yeah. Well, first of all, during the Depression I was nine, ten years old. During the Depression I remember that people would come to my grandfather and they'd say, "Could we buy a mutton from you?" My grandfather would take them down to the herd, they would pick out a big, fat mutton, he'd butcher it, skin it for them and charge them, oh, maybe, like say, two dollars. And that's how they lived. Now, when the Depression was... When President Roosevelt got in, he put together the WPA and the PWA. And so all those people down in that little town worked on that and they pulled \$30 a month, you know. But they made a living, were able to feed their kids. So all at once they began to come out of it. Course, right after that the second war started, everybody went into service and got jobs. A

lot of people got jobs in war plants throughout the area. Lot of people left Escalante and they stayed on these jobs and lot of them stayed on these jobs until they retired and they moved back and become part of the town. Escalante now is full of retired people who used to live there who left for, say, 20 years, who kept the old family homes but now have moved back and remodeled them. So Escalante's got a lot of retired people.

JH: That sounds like a stable economy.

DJ: It's a stable economy and, course, you know, one thing about it, you know, Jay, down there, if a person's got Social Security or a pension from a job, you can live in Escalante pretty reasonable. And that's what some of these people have found. I mean, they come down, they raise a big garden, they put a milk cow in a barn and some chickens clucking around. They don't need much help from anybody.

JH: I bet they can hardly believe how inexpensive...

DJ: It's a great place to live. It's a great place to live I think.

JH: Do you remember the Civilian Conservation Corps?

DJ: CC's, yeah, oh yeah. We had a camp just east of town where they brought in most of the boys were from the south, Alabama, Georgia and so forth, and they were the ones that built the road from Escalante down through into Boulder. No, not up in the spruce, they built it down through Calf Creek. And I remember as a kid listening to them blast. They would take off in the morning, the CC trucks would come by with the boys in, you know, and pretty soon you could hear the dynamite blasting where they were blasting right down over that rock. And you've been down through there, you know what kind of road that is down

through the Calf Creek area and across the Calf Creek and up the other side. That was all made by CC boys. Yeah, they did, they built a great road.

JH: Where did the road go before? Did you go up Salt Gulch and over the mountain?

DJ: Well, no, they never really had much of a road there. When I was just a young kind the mail was brought in by car into Escalante from Junction and then about once a week there would be Max King, I recall, would ride over with a pack horse and his riding horse, pick up the mail and he would ride back up over Death Hollow, where they have the bridge that goes over there you know. They didn't have a bridge then. They had a trail there and he would bring the mail back over there. So those people in Boulder, they were really isolated. Boy they were. We were, but they were. Boulder always kind of reminded me of Shangri-la. But now, of course, it's become a tourist town, you see. And so when people go now it's Highway 12. So when they leave Bryce Canyon, it used to be that when I was a young feller they'd say, "Where's that dirt road go? Is that just a dirt road?" Yeah, well they wouldn't go on it. But now it's all paved, see, so it's Highway 12, the most scenic drive in Utah. So they drive down through the little towns and Tropic and Cannonville and Henrieville and over to Boulder and down into Wayne County. But you know, I'm going to tell you another story. I hope I'm not taking all your time.

But about four years ago I had a fellow come in my shop, he was just a drop in. And I said to him, "Where you from?" He said, "I'm from the place you've never heard of." "Oh", I said, "try me." He said, "Henrieville, Utah." I said, "Well, you got an eastern accent. You're not from Henrieville." He said, "Well, I am now and I'll tell you how I got there." He said, "I was a very successful electrical contractor in Pennsylvania and I had a severe heart attack. My doctor told me, "You've got to get away from all this or it's going to kill you."'" "Well, he said, I had joined the LDS Church about a year before and we had the two young missionaries over for dinner and I was telling them about my problems. One of those

guys said in his best Southern Utah, "You know what? You ought to go to Henrieville, Utah, my home town." So he said they got talking about it, decided they would. So he sold his fantastic business that he had, his big home, they took and bought an old bus and his wife took her prize possessions and he and his wife and the two kids, boy and girl, they headed for Utah. Got to Salt Lake and went through the temple ground and everything. Then they started out towards Southern Utah and the farther they got his wife says, "You know, I don't think you ought to go any further, this is kind of bad country." And he said, "No, we're going to Henrieville, Utah."

So anyway, they got to Henrieville and of course Henrieville has the little store, little post office about half as big as my barber shop. They drove up, this lady come out and said, "I'll bet you're Brother and Sister Brown from Pennsylvania." "Yeah, we are." "Follow me", she said. So they got in their pickup truck, she got in her pickup truck and they followed her up the dusty road to this house which the brothers and sisters in this little town had cleaned all up for them to stay. And so in the meantime now he says, "We have built a nice home there." He said, "My daughter's a cheerleader, my son plays on the basketball team." And he said, "And I gotta get back now because our neighbors, it's roundup time and we go with him to round up his cattle." And so he said, "I would never live anyplace else now but Henrieville."

JH: He found a home. That's a great story. Escalante has its own list of characters. One that I'd like to hear you tell about is Dinah Christensen. Talk about her, would you please?

DJ: Dinah, her husband, Mar Christensen, was in the service over in Korea in the second war and they got married and come back to Escalante. She evidently had been fairly well off in Korea and sold a lot of property and so forth and they come into Escalante and they built a motel. Moqui Motel, and that's how they made their living. And Dinah, she... Marr, he just kinda went out in the mountains and the deserts and wandered around and she took care of

the bills. She became kind of a fixture in Escalante, you know after... Oh, she's dead now, but she was really a part of the community before she died. Yup.

JH: I remember negotiating with her for a room and she was tough. I mean, if you're going to kid around with her you better know what you were talking about. And I remember her telling me about my father who had been down there on a road job and he'd josh with her, try to get her goat, you know. (Laughter) And she kinda liked it but she didn't want to let on that she liked it. So she was an institution all by herself.

DJ: She was. I really never got to know her too well because when she moved in there I was just moving out and I would see her when I would go home on a vacation. But I really didn't get to know Dinah too well. But she lived there and they had a good life. Yup.

JH: That's a good story. Tell me about the 24th of July celebrations down there now and how you and your family have gone down and enjoyed them.

DJ: Okay. The 24th has changed now because they don't have the booths like they used to. Like I said, they used to have booths, you know, they'd sell hot dogs and hamburgers and like I say, with Loren poking his head through the sheet where they threw eggs at him. They don't have that now, but... For example, three years ago when we were down there, my wife hadn't been to Escalante for years so about five in the morning we heard this explosion BOOM! And my wife said, "What in heck is that?" We were staying in a motel and I said, "That's dynamite, they're setting off dynamite. This is the beginning of the 24th of July." She said, "Why don't they set off fireworks?" "Oh, no, they just set off dynamite. BOOM!" You know, they're not going... Dynamite's not going to hurt anybody. So then about 9:30 or 10:00 they start the parade and 'course they start at the, usually on the east end of Main Street and they come down, and some pretty horses, you know. And the old fire engine

all my old schoolmates, you know, they just took her right in and she now can't wait to go down. But unfortunately her illness, we can't go this year, and it's just killing her. We can't go until we get her better.

JH: Well, thank you very much.

DJ: You're very welcome, Jay. I kind of reminisced here a little bit. So, I just had a great time. I like to tell stories, that's why I'm a barber. (Laughter) I just love to tell stories. So, you're welcome, all of you.

JH: Thank you.