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Escalante 2001

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: Stan Liston
INTERVIEWER: Jay Haymond
INTERVIEW NUMBER: One of One
DATE OF INTERVIEW: June 1, 2001
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: His home in Escalante, Utah
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: His experiences in the livestock
business
TRANSCRIBER: Vectra Solutions/LA
DATE: August 12, 2001

JH: We've already gone over some of your beginning, some of the places that you lived and some of the people that you were associated with in growing up, so let's talk about that first year when you got back from BYU and your uncle had said to you that you needed to come back and take care of your stock. He was talking about you as well as himself when he was telling you to come back and tend to business wasn't he?

SL: Yes.

JH: Why don't you talk about that relationship with your uncle and tell what you remember about him.

SL: Well I lived with him over here with him and his mother, grandma, and when I come back, he had got the cattle, but he, when my dad married this second wife, you know, and then he died, well she wanted me and my sister to come and live with her, well I didn't have no occasion to want to live with her, he'd only been married a couple of months to her and I didn't even hardly know the woman, so I come right up here and started living with my uncle and an aunt of mine took my sister and raised her, so I come up here and lived with him and then of course I went up to BYU and thought maybe I was going to college, but it turned out that I couldn't go to college because he told me to come down here and take care of them cows. What he had done, he had a lawyer, if it hadn't of been for him, this woman would have took everything, we'd of had nothing but the shirt on our backs, she was that kind of a woman, you know, she was mad because we didn't come

them up like that. I know one experience that I remember now, we'd go down and get them calves at the Cedar Washes and bring them up to this corral, we was driving them cattle along there and you've got these little tiny calves, you know, following, you don't see one of yours there, you look at it awful close because when you get in the corral, because that's where they brand the calves, well hell, you wouldn't even know if they was in there, they'd be all mixed up, you know, so what a lot of us, well, most of us would do, we just spot a cow and a calf going along there and just take the old rope down and chase them, slow down that calf and jump off and push a mark on him, everybody had their own ear mark, you know, and then when we got to the corral, that calf, put him in there and fatten him, he's yours, so that was just part of taking care of cattle, that was essential. Then we always had one man there that sprayed them, you know, sprayed them in the corral, sprayed them all, done that job, and then we run them through the big long chute there and there was about four different corrals there. They had swing gates there where the cows would come down through there and they had the old "squeezer", you know, he jerked it down, well, that was my job. Some times them guys would say, "now if you miss this one or you miss that one, you'll have to go get a case of beer". (Laughter) And I had too, I bought some beer. But this Jaime Gates, old guy, he stood right in there and he looked right up through that chute and he could tell every cow that come through there. He'd call out the name and then the old guy there would get the tag all ready and put it in the cow's ear and then Jaime was right there and then he'd swing this gate this way and go into the North Creek corral and he'd swing this one up in the Upper Valley corral and . . . then he'd go down into the Pine Creek outfit and every place had their place too. But he called them right there and let them go through them corrals. Then these was North Creek guys, they only had a little ways to go. We was going up River Valley and sometimes late at night why we'd go up through there, real late getting up there. But this one particular time we went up through there and we had to go up over, out of the canyon there and up through a ridge there, a mesa, kind of a base there with pinion pines trees, sticks and rocks, we'd drive them over there and this trail dropped off into what we called

life, but he didn't go to church. He didn't take to religion. He was an LDS member, you know, but he just, most all that family was, they was all good people, man but they just didn't take too much stock in church. (Laughter)

JH: Yeah, that's an interesting phenomenon isn't it? So he dies and he's your mentor, maybe even like your father in a way...

SL: ...yes, he was, yeah...

JH: ...so now what do you do?

SL: Well after he died I took, he had a will you know, but I had lived with him. I'd lived with him for all those several years there and dealt with the Commercial Bank down in Richfield there and he had a lawyer there, the same lawyer that saved me getting some of the cattle, and he had it all fixed up for, me, I got the big end of it, he divided up some of the cattle and some of the permit with his nephews, you know, that's the one's he liked, was his nephews and nieces. His brothers and sisters didn't get hardly anything. (Laughter) My kids you know, got little dabs and the nieces and my sister got some; he just scattered it out, that was money, that was what was in his will, but I got his farm up here and I got his permit and I got three fourths of his cattle, you know, and the rest of the cattle were given here and there, but anyway it come along and everything went fine and I just took over then and started living down in that house down there, still own this house down here, but when he died he give me this house, so I moved up here then.

JH: Were you married by then?

SL: Yes, I was married to my first wife, yes.

building the herd up and kept building the herd up until I had a pretty good bunch of cattle. Now is this something like what you want to hear?

JH: That's fine. I wanted you to talk about horses.

SL: Oh, the horses, yes. Okay, this horse, this sorrel horse, I told them, "I'm going down there and I'm telling them that's my horse". So I went down to her and told her, "Now listen, them other horses, but this sorrel horse is mine and I want him", and she said, "Oh, you can have the horse". And so I brought him up, he was a saddle horse, you know, and then I had some other good horses, but I bred from him and got a horse called Coconino Joe, horse that had been bought out of Arizona, his dad, and raised, that's the one my wife rode all the time, was so good you know, so smart. And then I had, well to start out with horses, I know when I was a kid there that I always wanted a bicycle, all the kids had bicycles, so I went and asked my dad and what did he do? He had an old horse that he'd used quite a lot you know, an old horse, Old Ty, and he gave him to me, that was, you know, he was smart though. He know'd he'd get some work out of me. (Laughter)

JH: Yeah, right. (Laughter)

SL: So I started to riding horses right then and he was smart about getting me a bicycle, but I've always remembered that and another thing, me and Almie, they used to have lots of race meets around the country, you know, and this one particular time we went down to Richfield and we claimed a mare down there, you know, you've heard of claiming them in the races? And we claimed a mare down there, a Marshall from Minersville and his boys had put this mare in there, Jessie Note and to claim in the race and we claimed her and brought her home. His dad, Mr. Marshall was madder than a son of a gun because his sons had done it you know, because that's, he said they shouldn't have done that

going down, we could see three or four head there and they must have heard us and they took a running up over the hill, so we got out there and them guys jumped off and said we can go up there and chase them and you go over and open the gate, the corral gate, so I said okay, but I'd never paid much attention, just got him out there, out of the truck, and by golly, they had caught them and here they come down the God damned trail and I had to hurry, so I jumped on him and took off and he started to buck, man, oh, he went up and I stayed on for about three jumps there and lost a stirrup, I was right by a big bank there and he throwed me right off on the bank, right on my back out in the sand, didn't hurt me, and I looked up and there he was, standing right there where he throwed me off, looking down at me. (Laughter)

JH: Yeah, what are you doing there? (Laughter)

SL: But he was so good to ride, you could just be going along or trailing or riding along the road or something and he had two or three gears, you could just shift him from one gear to another and when you had him going pretty good, the guy next to you, he wanted to trot to keep up with you (laughter) and I had a buddy of mine, or a cousin, for two or three years there, I wanted some low Joe horse and he couldn't walk a lick and he was the only one that could walk and so he was making me trot all the time, so when I got this good horse, boy I made him trot. (Laughter) I never did run him. (Laughter) Yeah, a lot of fun.

JH: Well you know, speaking about trading, sometimes there is an outfit that would come through the country, we'd think of as a horse trader, was there anybody like that?

SL: Oh they had horse traders come in here all the time and they always camped right up here above town, right up in here and guys would take horses up and trade horses with them, that's what they would do, yeah. I know this one, dad got one for me, you know, a kid horse you know, but that old cuss was crippled in the front leg after we got him and

JH: Well let's talk a bit about, I'm trying to watch my machine and make sure it doesn't run out of tape, let's talk about some of your favorite dogs. You've already mentioned the little, was it a black one?

SL: A little black one, yeah, a little black short haired dog, yeah.

JH: And Jan mentioned the one that you had when you guys got married. What about in between, did you always have a dog?

SL: Yes, always had a dog. Yeah. I remember, I was over to Beaver to the races one time, me and, I had a buddy with me, and after the races we went down to his place and he said, "My God", he'd forget a saddle or bridle or something you know, and he says, "Let's go back up and get them right now before somebody walks away with them". So when we went up there, by God, here was one of those little Boston Bull Dogs there (laughter), well, I don't know what made me do it, but I brought it home and I know one day it was laying on the couch and me and Almie was living here then, laying on the couch and it was kind of aggravated and that cuss grabbed up and hooked me right on the middle of the lip, put anyway, my sister's husband's folks, she was crazy for a dog, so I give him, called him Old Dick, and give him to her, hell she liked him, she hauled him in the car with her all the time and she was just as happy as Old Dick. (Laughter) Then there's of course other dogs, Almie, he had a black dog, man he was a good dog, but he was a mean dog, you know. I know around home here sometimes a guy would come here to read the meter, he scared him so bad that we had to come out and hold him while they guy read the meter. (Laughter)

End of Tape One, Side One

Begin Tape One, Side Two

SL: Well, horses, we trained them just by experience, you know, like putting them in the corral when they're, some horses will take to it and some horses don't so you can't do anything with them. I had one horse I thought I could do that with and a fellow from Richfield sent him in for me to finish breaking him and learn him a little bit. I couldn't learn him nothing because instead of him paying attention, he was looking right up in the sky all the time and some just horses just did not adapt to it or something.

JH: Do you think it's native intelligence?

SL: Well, I don't know. I think it could be a lot in breed too, you know. Quarter horses are for cattle and that of course race horses are for racing and the breed of the horse is the butt of it. Of course it's a lot in the guy too. Some guys are awful mean to horses, they ain't got no patience with them, you know, they're mean and they whip them and they don't take the time to be friendly and a horse does something right, then pet him, give him a little pet on his neck or some place and I think they know that, if you're treating them good.

JH: And they respond accordingly.

SL: Yeah, but this being mean to them just makes them worse, makes them worse, makes a horse worse.

JH: When Jan was talking about getting on your horse and doing a job, that horse had been trained to do a job no matter who was on it, it sounds like?

SL: Yeah, yeah. My daughter got on him one day and had another girl got on a horse and they went up in this country up just this side of Alvey Wash right over here above town, and they run on to a little bunch of cattle while they was right there, well that damned old

at the last, you know, when the BLM took over, the hired people went down there and they shot them and killed them all, got rid of them on the range. Yeah.

JH: What about training a dog? I heard you talk about your favorite dogs. What did you do to make them understand what you wanted them to do? You said you just waved your hand and they went ahead and...

SL: ...my arms, a lot of dogs don't know where they belong, they might belong out to the side, you know, there. When they go along with the cattle and if you're driving cows and calves, man alive, if the cows sees a dog out there, they won't do nothing but just beller and come around and fight, you know, and you can't drive cattle that way, if you do, you have an awful hard time. So the main purpose is to try to get that dog to stay back here behind you and if he gets out, just take a rope down or something and kind of let him know that he don't belong out there, tell him to come back here behind, right behind your horse and stay there until you tell him he can go out and do something.

JH: Pretty soon they understand?

SL: Yeah, they understand then.

JH: Well, now you say you take rope, do you take the rope and kind of hit him with it?

SL: Well, no, I never did hit the dog, but I kind of acted like I was going to. I might have hit once, but they knew that's what it was for. I always had the end of a rope down there and I done a little cussing too. (Laughter) "Get back there where you belong, you -----". Some guys had dogs that they wouldn't do nothing. They'd just drive you crazy. I remember this one dog that my cousin had. That damn dog was out to the side there all the time, couldn't make him stay back there. He wasn't worth two bits.

SL: Well, what comes to mind with the BLM, I always liked the life, you can't beat that life, it's one of the, and I'm happy doing it, but the thing that irritated me the worst, where they send these little school boys down from up north with a book in their hand and come down here and tell us how to take care of these cattle and how to run them and trespasses and trouble like that, that was the thing that was a thorn, in fact the BLM was a bad word in this country. It seemed like we always got along with the Forest Service pretty good, but the BLM, we had lots of trouble with the BLM. We'd go down there some springs and gather them cattle, it's a big range, there's lots of drops and hollers and washes, we'd get them, did all we could, you had, you know, to bring them up here to the tag corral and just as soon as we got them took care of we'd go back. But we had a certain date, you know, maybe we didn't get to one or two of them or something like that, well them cusses would trespass us for them cattle, that's what would bother me too, when we was working our heads off.

JH: Do you think that they were operating by the way they understood the rules rather than really understanding the way the livestock men were trying to operate?

SL: Well, we had so long to get them all, but we couldn't get them off that quick, you know, and bring them up here and like that. Now I worked, we had an advisory board here in our country and I was on that board for about fifteen years down here, twelve, fifteen years, and we used to go down there, I was representing this district right here and all around here, down into Kanab and meet there, and they had, I guess you could call him a supervisor, but he was, out on the street he was a pretty good guy, but by godfrey, when he got inside behind that desk he was a mean son of a gun, if I had my say so, he was mean. He used to be an old sergeant in the Army or something (laughter) and I seen so many sad sights comes in there where people come in there to, they'd have hearings, you know, and that guy, I got so, just terrible, take those permits away from them and all that

old permits, there were lots of people depend on that little permit, you know, with a little bunch of cattle, that was their living, you know, and they was raising their families and everything and it was just kind of a sad place. That was a sad job, I thought, because I'd see them come in there, you know, and even after they left, you knew damn well they was going drop the axe on them anyway, after you'd heard their story.

JH: Yeah, that's sad. The Forest Service, you say, is different. I wonder what made them different? Is there some sort of a philosophy that...

SL: ...well, one thing I know about the Forest Service and I know up here where I run my cattle, they took and divided it off into pastures, the range, and you'd go in one pasture, you know, and one of them rested, in three pastures, you'd use two pastures during that summer and then when one rested and then kind of move around and go in there and they was awful good about re-seeding it too, you know, they done a lot of good seeding up there, right across from the ranch, what they call "Liston Flat", that's a beautiful seeding where we could bring our cattle in, you know, when we got ready to gather them in the fall, you know, and no problems, no problems and when they had that one drought that one year, it was a drought and everything, no feed, we had to take our cattle all off and some of us, I know me and my uncle, took our cattle up around Fayette, up in there, to a guy up there and he sheltered them for us, then we brought them back and a lot of guys done that and just had to go out. That was a tough year, you know, there was nothing up there for them to eat, you know. But as far as hating them or anything, you're not supposed to have that word "hate" in your mind anyway, but we didn't like it, what the BLM was doing sometimes. The Forest Service, they was always willing to cooperate with you and, well we had some good men too that come in, they didn't have an advisory board or anything, they just done it themselves and told you that you had to do this and that. We always, our country up there, we had our ranches right there and our range out on there and at a certain time you went out and got them and brought them and set them

expense which we didn't need.

JH: We haven't talked much about the cows as a breed. Did you favor one breed over another?

SL: Oh man, Herefords. When I went out of business I had one of the best Hereford, I run about 300 head, of course that dropped down, but I always went out to the auction, bull auction sales and Salina had one there and sometimes Richfield, always paid a good price and brought good bulls home, herefords. Towards the last there, I'll tell you another good breed that, I didn't have very many of them, but they were a good breed, was the Angus cattle, you know, and you get your cross between the Angus and hereford and you'd get a black calf with a blacker and face and man, them guys at the auction, they did like them, just buy them so quick. Same way with these hereford calves. I loved the hereford cow. They just seemed like they done better in the winter time, out here in the winter time, you know, they just adapted to it and take care of themselves and get out and rustle. There was some feed way out there, they'd go out and get it, they wouldn't set around some place and starve like a lot of breeds does. I never did go into the exotic breeds at all, I just stayed with the hereford, that's when I quit.

JH: What problems was there that you had to contend with when you used hereford brand? Was there any particular problem that you dealt with health wise or sort of personality wise?

SL: No, we had troubles, we had "black leg", you know, they called it, that "black leg", we had to vaccinate for that and then there was this, we had where they got that, what do you call that? Biscuit Disease, seemed like that popped up every once in a while in their health problems. But that black leg was the worst. We always had to vaccinate for that. We always had to carry a needle with you and every time you saw a calf die, you always

them like that, you know, but where they lived around close to them and where you could take them to them, they'd usually doctor them for something, whatever was wrong. All kinds of ailments.

JH: There's the idea of de-horning that would improve your stock. How did you treat that little challenge?

SL: Well, we put them in a chute to have to do that, to de-horn them, or if it was a big calf, you'd throw him down and de-horn. We had kind of a pincher outfit that you put on and pushed it down and squeezed together and knocked the horns off. But take that horn off and it leaves a hole in there, lots of time a fly will get in there and leave maggots in there, you know, what we'd do when they had it, was get some of this sheep dip, you know, they called it, and clean them out and pour that down there and it cleaned that right out and made them come out, it cleared it, that's they way I handled them, like that. A lot of them's got big horns, we sawed them off, you know, but them in the chute and then sawed them off. We'd always stick a toilet paper in the hole or something so a gad damn fly wouldn't go down there. Took care of that. I know other people never done that, but that's what we done, pack that hole off so an old fly wouldn't go down there and lay his eggs. (Laughter)

JH: Was there anything special about the castration operation that you...?

SL: Well, I, yes, I'll tell you this. For years I, a lot of them used a knife, when they was smaller calves, but I got, most of the time they'd do it and then they'd have to drive them a long way and something the calves would have a hard time driving, they'd get so sore, but I got me one of these little machines, you know, that has a little rubber on it, you know, and I put that on mine all the time, there's several guys done that way too. It's a little old machine, a little old cheerio. (Laughter) I got to tell this, a little girl up there

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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. Stan Liston
please print or type your name

knowingly and voluntarily donate to the Utah Division of State History the audio tapes, any transcription, as well as any and all copyrights and other rights, title and interest that might exist. I also permit the Utah Division of State History full use of this document for whatever purposes they may have.

Interview Description

Date of Interview June 1/01

Primary Subject Cattle Ranching in Escalante.

Other Topics _____

Number of Tapes 1 mini DV / 1 cassette

X Signature Stanley Liston

Date June 1/01

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