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.
This transcript has two sections. Marian Mecham, a teacher and creative writer, edited the original transcript creating a smooth and flowing piece and this constitutes the first section. The second section is the original transcript that coincides with the audio record (taped interview).
SM: So, Marian, I understand that you grew up in Otto, Wyoming. If you could just tell me what year you were born and a little bit about your childhood.

MM: I was born April 27, 1914 to Esther Leona Dalley Winters and Niels E. Winters. I was the fourth of eight children, three boys and five girls. (My oldest brother died in 1984 and my youngest sister in 1996.) My father and his brother, John, brought some sheep from Montpeliar, Idaho, and settled in Otto, Wyoming. Here, they started in the bee business. They owned a lot of bees and harvested a lot of honey.

SM: Did you do a lot of beekeeping?

MM: My oldest brother and older sisters did more than I did. As I grew older I helped some with the extracting. This was in the days when there was no electricity so the machinery was run by gasoline or kerosene motors. The beekeepers made frames, approximately 8 inches wide and 18 inches long. They strung two thin wires the length of the frame and placed a thin layer of wax, called foundation, in the frame. This was held in place by the wires. They then placed several of these frames side by side in the beehive where the bees made beeswax and built little six-sided cells on both sides of the foundation. The bees filled each little cell with honey and capped each one with a thin layer of wax. In order to harvest the honey we would use a large steam-heated knife connected by a tube to a kettle of water heated on a kerosene stove. We would skim off the capping on the little honey cells, first one side, then the other. We then placed the frames into slots around the edge of a big cylindrical extractor. Another machine would cause the extractor to go around really fast. The honey would fly out and settle to the bottom. We then took each frame out and turned it around to get the honey from the other side. My father and uncle would then place the frames into the beehives to be refilled.

SM: How long would it take for the bees to refill them?

MM: I couldn’t tell you that. I didn’t do the gathering. I know the harvesting took them all summer long. When they were working with the bees they had to wear veils. These were a combination of screen and heavy canvas. They had to be well covered or they would get stung. They wore long canvas gloves and used rubber bands around their wrists and ankles to keep the bees out. After draining the honey from the extractor, we poured it into a big tank which held at least 1000 gallons, I would guess. That clover honey was so clear and pretty. I think there was no better honey in the world, especially when it was spread on a slice of Mother’s homemade bread and butter. Honey was an important part of our lives. The honey-house burned down at
one time. This was a real loss to my parents because they didn’t have much to go on anyway.

SM: It was an economic loss I’m sure. Was that the main source of the family income?

MM: My father had a few cows and a few sheep. He always raised a pig or two for family use. But honey was the main cash crop at that time. A little later we moved to a ranch about two miles east of Otto and began to farm too.

I went to elementary school in Otto. I was very shy and had a difficult time adjusting. I found out that the love and kindness that I felt at home was not always present at school or in other places.

SM: No, it is not.

MM: Some classmates, if they wanted a favor, could be so nice.

We very seldom had candy from the store. We sometimes made honey candy. One of my classmates had candy bars almost every day. Her father owned the only grocery store in town. I remember how I looked and longed...

SM: For those candy bars.

MM: One time she was really anxious to get her arithmetic assignment done and asked me if I would help her. She said, “If you will help me I will bring you a candy bar.” That was a great temptation. I wondered if that would be O.K. Would that be cheating? Then I thought if I really explained the problems well to her so she understood them, I would be getting just pay for honest work. So I did. She had her assignment ready for the next day, and, sure enough, she brought the candy bar—a bar with a cherry in the middle and chopped nuts and chocolate on the outside. I remember opening it up and setting it inside my desk. When the teacher wasn’t looking I would duck my head and take a little bite. I can taste it yet. It was so good!

SM: That was a good day.

MM: My mother was a good cook and a good seamstress. She had to make most of our clothes. She knit most of our stockings. It was cold in Wyoming, so she would knit woolen stockings. They were itchy, but they were warm. They were dark green in color. Finally, Mother bought a little knitting machine which made that job easier for her. When we went anywhere in town we would walk. We had no car at that time. I remember our knitted mittens and caps. When it was really cold, we would have to put our mittened hands over our noses to keep our noses from freezing. We always walked to church on Sunday. I loved to go to church. We walked to school too. School was a hard adjustment for me because I was so bashful, but I loved to learn and thrived on the encouragement of my teachers. I liked to be included with my
friends, but sometimes they were not really congenial. This would make me sad. I felt that nearly all of my teachers were my good friends. A few instances, though, have stuck in my memory for almost 80 years. We had big windows in our school room. At noon, on one lovely day some of the girls from our class were sitting in the open windows, enjoying the spring breeze and eating their sack lunches. They were telling me to come and join them. They gave me a hand to help me up into the window. This was acceptance. I was craving that. Suddenly, the teacher came in. She was angry when she saw us sitting in the window. Why, I’m not sure. We weren’t doing anything or anybody any harm. She seemed to center her animosity on me and literally yanked me out of the window. I was really self-conscious and shy anyway, and that incident still lingers in my mind. I think she must have had some personal problems herself which caused her to over-react over this incident.

SM: That always seems to be the case, doesn’t it?

MM: Another teacher seemed to have the idea that if a few students were misbehaving, she would teach the class a lesson by punishing the entire group. This happened sometime later, after our family had moved to the ranch—about two miles east of town. One day a few students would not quiet down so the teacher kept the entire class until after the school bus had gone. I was really distraught! A two-mile walk alone was somewhat frightening.

SM: You had to walk home?

MM: I thought about my father working in the bee yard and went to tell him my woes. He walked home with me. Things weren’t so bad then. I thought after I started to teach school that when somebody misbehaved it should be that person that should be punished—not the entire group.

SM: So you moved to a farm, about what age?

MM: I would have been ten years old.

SM: Did your economic situation in the family change when you moved to the farm?

MM: I never remember of it being very good. Those were depression years. No one was very rich at that time. We were better off than many of our neighbors. Father raised good gardens. We had our own meat, and honey.

SM: Was it a subsistence farm or was it a farm where you sold items?

MM: We raised grain, hay and, later on, Great Northern beans. This was a cash crop and we raised quite a few of those. We children would help to weed them. I remember those long, long
SM: Look up and still the whole row to go!

MM: Our home in town was a two-room frame home. My father had built it, and it was a fairly good home for those days. But our homes on the farm were old log cabins with material called factory (somewhat like heavy muslin) on the walls and on the ceiling, to keep the dust and dirt from sifting down.

SM: Now, is that a big canvas that rolled across the top?

MM: Somewhat like canvas, and it was nailed to the ceiling. I remember one night a salesman came to see my father. (My father was on the school board for years and was constantly visited by salesmen.) It was time for the evening meal. We called it supper. Anyway, Father invited the man to eat with us. Well, in the middle of the meal, the factory on the ceiling gave way. Oh, my!

SM: All that dust and dirt coming down on the table and the food!

MM: And to have this stranger in the middle of it— it was terrible! (Laughter)

SM: Was everybody laughing or was it a bit shocking or stunning?

MM: I don’t think I was laughing. I doubt if anybody was.

SM: Dinner was about over, huh! Or had it been served?

MM: I don’t remember. I know at that point it was definitely over!

SM: Let’s talk about your mother.

MM: Mother grew up in Summit, Iron County, Utah. Her father, James Dalley, had three wives living in Summit. He had a wife in Denmark before he left to come with the immigrants to Utah. He was told that she died. He didn’t know for some time whether or not this was true. He wondered if her parents had told him this because they didn’t want her to come to Utah.

SM: He never saw her again?

MM: No, he didn’t. My mother’s grandparents were greatly persecuted in Denmark because of their religion. The family wanted to come to Utah, but couldn’t afford to come together. They sent the children, one or two at a time; then the parents came. One married daughter chose to
stay in Denmark. One daughter, Johanne Bolette Bertelsen married James Dalley, who had previously emigrated from England and had married Emma Wright after hearing of the death of Sarah Ann Bishton, his first wife.

When my grandmother, Petrine Bertelsen, arrived in Utah, she went to stay with her sister for a time and later, she too married James Dalley. Each wife had a separate home.

SM: How many children were there?

MM: There were forty-four.

SM: How did your mother feel about polygamy in general?

MM: The whole family was deeply religious and what the Prophet said went. Mother said it was hard sometimes because she did not have the close association with her father she would have liked. There were some drawbacks but the family got along fairly well. As I was growing up, Mother always spoke well of her many brothers and sisters. When polygamy was declared illegal in the United States, officers attempted to find heads of polygamist families and imprison them. Mother’s father attempted to hide from them for awhile, but was finally caught and served some time in jail. This was a very difficult time for all of them. Grandpa was obedient and after the church ruled that polygamy should be discontinued, he then lived with just one wife. However, he did divide up his property so that each wife had her share.

My mother, the youngest girl in her family, attended the Branch Normal in Cedar City and trained to be a teacher. Mother had a lovely contralto voice and took music lessons. She was very timid and shy, but did a lot of singing in public. She didn’t seem to feel frightened when she sang, but speaking in public frightened her.

SM: So singing was her way of expressing herself?

MM: She was a good mother and loved beautiful things, but didn’t have many of them in her life. She always wanted a new home. Father did, too. That was one of their goals. Another goal was that their children would have a good education. The home had to wait until all of us had achieved that goal. She finally got her new home, but didn’t live in it long. She had a hip operation and never completely recovered from that.

SM: Could she walk?

MM: She walked some until her later years. By then, she had arthritis so bad that her arms were stiff and almost glued to her side. Even to clean under her arms was a real effort because they were so stiff. But patient, oh my, she was patient! I’m glad they can do more to help people in that condition now.
SM: Was your father's passing away part of the onset of this?

MM: He passed away some time before Mother broke her hip. He died from blood-poisoning after a cow stepped on his foot and it became infected. His death was quite sudden. It was a blow to all of us. I had such wonderful parents!

I want to tell you of some of the happy times in my childhood.

End of Tape 1 Side 1
Begin Tape 1 Side 2

MM: Living on the ranch was fun. We had a big orchard. The blossoms in the spring were so fragrant and were so beautiful. There were birds there—blue-birds, robins, meadow-larks, etc. How I loved to hear them sing! They made us all happy. I'll always remember the tasty strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries (They were a bit sour.), English currants—red ones and yellow ones, and black currants. Have you ever tasted black currants?

SM: I have. Yes, I have tasted black currants.

MM: I really liked those. Later there were apples, plums and cherries—all so delicious! The pond was a fun place too. We liked to watch the ducks swimming and hear the frogs croaking there in the evenings. A canal carried irrigation water from the pond. We would wade in that canal and sometimes mud-crawl. Have you ever mud-crawled?

SM: No, explain that to me.

MM: Well, there isn't much to it. The water was shallow. You just went along like you were swimming, but your hands were doing the walking—pulling you along. I never learned to swim until I took swimming in college. Even then I didn't swim very well.

There were some things that frightened me on the farm. The coyotes howling at night sounded so eerie. One time I almost stepped on a rattlesnake. That shook me up for awhile. There were lots of gnats and mosquitoes during the summer...

Our drinking water tasted terrible. It had lots of iron and salt in it, but we finally got used to it. When we washed our clothes, white things would come out pink. In order to draw water from the pump we had to prime the pump. This we did by pouring water into it, pumping really fast until water would start to flow from the spout.

SM: So you had to keep a little water on hand?
From our home on the ranch, we had to walk about a mile to catch the school bus. In sub-zero weather, my father would hitch up the old work horses to the wagon. Mother would wrap hot bricks in some heavy fabric and place them by our feet to keep us warm, bundle us up in coats and quilts and we would be on our way. This was also the way we went the two miles to church. I still remember the horses, icicles forming on their nostrils. It was so cold. I don’t remember of a winter when my father didn’t have his nose and ears frozen. He had so many things to do—taking care of the farm animals, milking the cows, getting wood, etc. Finally, we did move to a house closer to the road so we didn’t have that long way to the school bus.

I went to high school in Basin. Our bus was a pickup with a canvas top over the back—a little like a pioneer wagon. There was a canvas hung at the back that kept flapping in the wind. There were benches on either side and the exhaust ran along the middle of the floor to keep our feet warm. Wyoming blizzards can come up suddenly. If our Principal saw one coming, he would call our fathers to alert them. We immediately boarded the bus and started for home. Our fathers would meet us with scoop shovels, etc... They knew the snow would drift in almost as fast as they could shovel it out. They knew that if we didn’t have help we would be stranded in the drifts. And it would be cold, so cold! The exhaust didn’t do much to keep us warm. It would sometimes take hours to make the trip. When we got home we would stay there until the storm subsided.

SM: How long would they usually last?

MM: Oh, not more than two or three days. But it was a time I like to remember. Home was always a special place. Even though it was far below what the standards are for homes in this day, it was a good place to be. We had a cook stove in the kitchen and a pot-bellied stove in our living room and burned wood, coal, coke, and sometimes a tarry substance called “junk” that Father would get from an oil refinery because it didn’t cost much. In that cold weather we would hover around the stove trying to keep warm. Often, on those cold winter mornings, the water in the buckets in the kitchen would be frozen—even with a fire in the stove.

SM: It was so cold in the kitchen.

MM: It was really a kind of cozy situation, you know, just to hover over the stove and talk and laugh and study. I liked to study. That was not a problem with me. Because we couldn’t be at school after school hours, I didn’t participate in many extra-curricular activities. I did take debate and enjoyed that. Thought problems in algebra were an interesting challenge to me.

SM: So you would, on your own time, try to figure out the problems?
MM: Yes. And I would be so pleased when my teacher would take note of a special way I had solved a problem. I remember my feelings after particular incident. A classmate had asked me to help her with a problem. I showed her how I had solved it. The next day our teacher asked her to put her solution to that problem on the blackboard. He complimented her on her originality. He said, “Did you do this all yourself?” She said (It was rather hard for her to say it.), “Well, Marian helped me.”

SM: After she had gotten the compliment.

MM: I felt like somebody had stolen my brainchild.

SM: Retrospectively, the teacher probably knew exactly how the problem was solved.

MM: I think so. Anyway, I learned a valuable lesson from that—Don’t take credit for something you did not do. I have learned many lessons. Some have come from unpleasant experiences.

SM: The hard way.

MM: Yes. Well, I graduated from high school as valedictorian. It was not only an honor but a financial blessing, too. A scholarship to the University of Wyoming came with it. I will never forget my mother and father sitting there when I was giving my speech. I don’t remember much about the speech. It probably wasn’t that great. But the look of pride and love on their faces and the tears in their eyes will stay in my mind forever.

SM: Because of the emotion shown.

MM: Upon returning home and Mother made lemon pies, from scratch, to celebrate my graduation. I’m probably getting too personal.

SM: Not at all, this is exactly what we want, your memories and feelings.

MM: I couldn’t go to the University until after Christmas that year. I had two sisters going there and there just wasn’t enough money to stretch, even with the scholarship. I was able to get a job sorting beans at the beanery in Basin. Let me tell you a little about it. I sat in front of a belt that moved toward me and had beans on it. There were boxes on either side of the belt. I picked out the little rocks, bad beans and beans of a different variety and put them in the boxes. I could slow the movement of the belt or stop it, if needed, by using a knee-brake.

SM: The good beans kept going on the belt?

MM: Yes, they would go into a bin below. An inspector would come looking in our bins. If he
found things that shouldn’t be there, he would sling them into our tare boxes. The clatter really put us on guard, reminding us to be more alert. We were near the train tracks and could hear the trains go by all day with their bells and whistles. It seemed as if I were on a train and that I was doing the moving, not the belt. It was a free train ride.

SM: That’s hilarious. You would imagine and fantasize you were on the train while these beans were going by. How many hours did you work everyday?

MM: I think they were eight-hour days. We were paid by the number of bushels we picked. My pay at the end of my first week was $16.00. My last paycheck was $24.74. I must have improved a little. I did some things while I was working that were a real thrill to me. I had my first permanent wave! Those old permanent wave machines pulled my hair and were so hot.

SM: They burned?

MM: Oh yes! But I bore it patiently. Then, I ordered a new dress, trying to get ready for college. When I had my new hair-do and put my new dress on. I think I felt a little like Cinderella going to her coming-out party.

SM: Oh, yeah.

MM: People stared. It was

SM: It was exciting, wasn’t it?

MM: Oh, I was quite thrilled. I don’t think people get quite the pleasure out of things like that now. Now, new dresses and perms are quite common and ordinary.

SM: There have to be some things, but I don’t know what they are offhand.

MM: This was a fun time in my life. I worked as a cook’s helper at a 4-H summer camp one summer. About this time of my life I began dating a little. That was fun. Then, I finally got to the University of Wyoming! How lucky I was to have my sister there to guide me through registration and a lot of other things that were new to me. We lived in a basement room and worked for board and room at Mrs. Holiday’s. Arlene helped me get acquainted with some of the other young people who had similar interests and goals. I liked most of my teachers. Dr. Portenier made psychology interesting to me. She helped me get a job in the college nursery and got me into Psi Chi, a national honorary fraternity. I had always loved to sing so I took several music classes. Then, one of my loves was creative writing. I took a lot of English classes. My teachers were very supportive. I remember getting a paper back with the comment: “Writing is certainly your forte.” I didn’t know what that word F-O-R-T-E meant and went to the dictionary.
(Laughter)

SM: The irony of that, huh?

MM: I remember being a little upset with one comment on a writing. It was: “Did you really write this? I thought, did she think I copied it? I went to ask her about it. She said, “Oh, no, you just took that all wrong. I just meant it was so good!” That helped. And English became a favorite subject too. I had so many favorite subjects.

SM: I am wondering, you said you were really math oriented and I am wondering if there was opportunity for women in fields related to math at that time. It seems that most women went into teaching. Did they push you in that direction?

MM: No, I really made up my own mind. As I said, I had a lot of interests. It was rather difficult to decide just what I wanted to major in. I felt that there were more openings for women in the field of Education at that time.

During my senior year I was thrilled to learn that our church planned to build a new L.D.S. Institute building near the University. Laramie was not a Mormon town. There were very few L.D.S. people there. It was a beautiful building. The peach colored mirrors and the homey fireplace thrilled me. It became my home-away-from-home. Here I helped to plan fun social events. I studied there. I worshiped there in its chapel. I felt comfortable and safe in that place. At the dedication of this lovely place, Mary Ann Burton and I were asked to sing a duet. This was a thrill to me. The Governor of Wyoming and many other dignitaries were in attendance. More thrilling than that, President Heber J. Grant, the president of our church, was there. It was so special to be able to shake his hand.

SM: Proud.

MM: After graduation, I soon had my first teaching position in Chugwater, Wyoming. My salary was $1200. for the year. I taught second grade. I later went into secondary education. I taught many subjects in high school—algebra, geometry, bookkeeping, typing, music, etc. But English was my main subject.

SM: Did you enjoy that?

MM: Yes. I still have a few a few students who write poetry. It gives me a thrill to know that they have that desire to write.

SM: That’s wonderful.
MM: Well, I think I’ve talked enough about me.

SM: Could you tell me about some of the recipes handed down from your mother or father and maybe some of the old cures for illnesses you may remember?

MM: A few recipes come to mind. One was rennet custard. We dissolved a little piece of a rennet tablet, a tablet used in making cheese, in a tablespoon or two of water and added it to some lukewarm milk. In a short while it would set up like a custard. We dipped it into our bowls and sprinkled sugar and nutmeg on it. It tasted really good.

SM: Did you ever use honey to sweeten it?

MM: No, I don’t recall that we did. We had the rennet tablets on hand most of the time because Mother made cheese with them. I don’t know her recipe for that though. One recipe handed down to us by my father was Danish Pancake. He browned pieces of bread on both sides in the frying pan, using either butter or a little bacon grease. He whipped up several eggs, added some milk and salt and pepper and poured it over the bread. He covered this and cooked it very slowly until the egg mixture was set. It was very good. My family still likes it.

SM: Sounds good.

MM: We raised Great Northern beans. We often worked these into our menus. Often, we didn’t have pork to put in the beans, so would just add a little salt and pepper and eat them that way. I even enjoyed a bean sandwich now and then. I just mashed the beans, mixed them with a little salad dressing and spread them on some good homemade bread and butter. That was quite a tasty bite. When I came to Tropic and married Vernal Shakespear, I decided to serve beans for dinner one evening. I neglected to take into consideration the difference in altitude in Tropic and Otto, Wyoming. As Vernal spooned out the beans and put them on his plate, they fell with a clatter. They weren’t done. He looked at them and asked, “Where is the pork?” I told him I hadn’t put any in. I was crestfallen, but I had learned my lesson. Never again did I cook beans without pork. Never again did I serve them half done.

Chicken was a favorite food for us. Of course, at that time you didn’t go to the store and pick up a few packages of cut-up chicken, ready for the frying pan. You went to the barnyard, caught the chicken, cut its head off, plucked off the feathers, singed the bird to remove the hair, scrubbed the chicken clean, cut it open and removed the entrails, then washed it again.

SM: Did you ever do that yourself?

MM: I never did chop their heads off, but I plucked and cleaned many of them. My mother often raised turkeys and chickens to help with the living. When harvest time came, the men would
remove the feathers, but we children would pick out the pin feathers with tweezers, pliers or whatever worked best.

We made our own bread, churned our own butter, bottled lots of fruit and vegetables, dried corn and apples, made a lot of preserves, jelly and jam. We stored potatoes, carrots, onions, squash, cabbage, etc. in our root cellar. When father killed a pig, we would render out the lard to use for shortening. Sometimes bread and milk gravy would be our meal. My son called me one day wanting to know how to make milk gravy. It doesn’t seem to be in the cookbooks of the day. You put either bacon grease, lard, or butter into the frying pan, sprinkle some flour over it and blend it in, browning it slightly. Then, pour in milk, stirring it so it won’t be lumpy. Heat it until it thickens. Salt and pepper it and enjoy.

SM: If you use butter, is there no flavoring of meat?

MM: No, but the butter has a good flavor, too. That gravy is really good on potatoes too.

SM: What did your mother do in case of illnesses? What were some of your home remedies?

MM: Castor oil and Epsom salts were old stand-byes. These were used for stomach problems—indigestion, constipation, etc. Often, the knowledge that either of these was forthcoming would make us feel better right away.

SM: Where did you get these?

MM: They sold them in the grocery stores. For bee stings we used black mud. For colds they sometimes used a little kerosene. It’s a wonder the patient survived that. It was supposed to break the croup. My mother never used it. Mentholatum and Vic’s VapoRub were a must in our home. These were chest rubs to loosen congestion. When we smelled the fumes, we could breathe easier. For sore throats some people gargled with peroxide, salt water, or hot soda water. Sometimes people would put a little liniment in milk for croup. Mustard plasters were a common treatment, too, for congestion. Flax seed, cheese weed and bread and milk poultices were used to draw out infection. They sometimes used them to draw out a sliver. For toothache we put cloves by the bad tooth. For babies’ sore bottoms, corn starch helped. I do want to tell you about a cure for nosebleed. My son had that problem. We could not get the bleeding stopped and took him to Dr. Duggins. He told us to take a thin slice of salty bacon and put it up his nose. It worked. Carbolic salve was great for chapped lips, chapped hands, chapped feet, chapped anything. We would buy it from the Watkins man or Raleigh man—peddlars that came around periodically.

SM: What did it look like?
MM: It looked like a heavy lubricant.

A honey and ginger mixture was a good thing to take for a cough. Some old-timers thought that everyone should have a blood purifier in the spring. My husband’s mother boiled grapefruit rinds and drained the water from that to drink as a blood purifier. It is bitter. I guess the worse it tasted the better it was for you. Some thought Brigham Tea had blood purifying qualities. For earaches, hot-water bottles or heated salt bags on the ear seemed to ease the pain.

Would you like to know what we used to set the waves in our hair?

SM: Yes!

MM: We boiled flax seed in water. We then had a really slimy potion. We dipped our comb into it and combed it into our hair, shaping it as we wanted it. When our hair dried, the wave stayed in pretty well, and the potion combed out.

SM: Were there other little manicuring things the women did?

MM: We had curling irons. They would put them in the chimney of the coal oil or kerosene lamp to heat them. We didn’t have liquid makeup then—just powder, put on with a powder puff.

SM: Did the women shave their legs then?

MM: Maybe some did, but I don’t know of anyone. Have you ever used lye to soften hard water?

SM: I haven’t used it, no.

MM: You use it only for laundry. Heat the water. Shake in some lye. A thick scum comes to the top of the water. Skim this off and the water is much softer. Add soap and you’ll have a good suds. You have to be careful. If you put too much lye in the water it will really irritate and damage your skin. We used to boil the white clothes, then put them into cold blueing water—made blue by swishing little blue balls tied in several layers of cloth through it. The boiling and the blue water made the clothes look whiter.

SM: They don’t have those blue balls any more, do they?

MM: I don’t know that they do. I haven’t seen them in a long time.

SM: Do you think that method worked better than today’s bleach?

MM: I don’t know, but today’s method is much easier.
Communication has come a long, long way. As a child, our family had the old two-party lines with telephones that had a little crank at the side. In order to talk to us, people had to ring six short rings. Each party had a different number of short or long rings, or a combination of both. We were not to listen to other conversations on the phone. "That would be rude," our mother said. Not all mothers taught their children that.

SM: Right. We will need to finish this interview now. I thank you very much.

MM: You are surely welcome.

End of Interview
SM: So, Marian, I understand that you grew up in Otto, Wyoming. If you could just tell me what year you were born and little bit about your childhood.

MM: It was April 27, 1914. My brothers and sisters, I have three brothers, two still living, and there were five girls and four of us are still living. My father had bees, lots of bees, raised honey, he and his brother, so we had quite an interest with helping with the extracting and being careful not to get stung.

SM: Did you do a lot of beekeeping?

MM: As I got older, my older sisters and brother did more than I did. I used to help with the extracting. It was in the days when there was no electricity so the machinery was run by gasoline motors or kerosene motors. I remember that you’d decap the honey comb, it was probably a foot and a half long and about seven inches wide. This is where the bees deposited their honey. Each of the little cells were filled with honey and then they would cap it with a thin wax. So in order to get the honey out you would take this big hot knife, which was attached also to a kerosene stove that had hot water. It was a knife that had a tube leading to the steam so it would be hot. We would take that knife and skim off just as thin as we could, not going any deeper than we had to, to skim off the capping on the little honey cells. You would have to do that on both sides. There was a big cylindrical extractor and you would place these honey comb, after it had been decapped, in the extractor and then another machine would cause it go round and round really fast and the honey would fly out and settle down at the bottom. You would then have to turn them so you could get it out on
the other side and then take them out and they would place them in hives. They were just the length of the honey comb, the honey frame . . .

SM: Was it like a picture frame?

MM: Only it wasn’t quite that big. But anyway, they would replace those empty ones in the hives. You have seen beehives I’m sure, and then they would put those back on the hive and they would refill them again, recap them again and then go through the same process as many times as they would refill them.

SM: How long would it take for the bees to refill them?

MM: I couldn’t tell you for sure. It seems they had at least two times during the summer. But I didn’t do the gathering. When they gather the honey, of course, they had to have veils. I remember my father was clad in the screen to keep out the bees. Then this other material had to tuck down in, he couldn’t leave any cracks or he would get stung, so he would tuck it down in and have to fasten it really firmly. Also, sometimes I don’t think they had rubber bands around their legs to keep them tight. They had the canvas gloves that came up. Then they would wheel these frames in on a wheelbarrow and load them up. They had this big tank that they would put the honey in. They would drain the honey from the extractor, there was a tap at the bottom, and then we would dump the buckets into the big tank which probably held 1000 or so gallons of honey. It was such pretty honey. It was clover honey. I don’t think there is better honey in the world. Especially when mother made homemade bread and we had bread, butter and honey. So that was a big part of our lives. It burned down at one time and it was really quite a loss to my parents because they didn’t have much to go on anyway.

SM: Yeah, it was an economic loss I’m sure. Was that the main source of the family income?
MM: At first, yes, my father had a few cows and a few sheep. Always raised a pig or two for family use. But, it was almost the main cash crop at that time. A little later, we moved to a ranch further out and he started to farm along with the bees. I went to school, the elementary in Otto. I was very shy and it was really hard for me to adjust. I found out that, you know, the love and the kindness that is shown at home is not always a general thing throughout.

SM: No, it is not.

MM: Seemed like I had classmates if they wanted a favor, they could be so nice. (Laughter) Maybe I am getting more in here than I should . . .

SM: No, I love it.

MM: I remember, we hardly ever had candy bought from the store. We made honey candy . . . I remember, this one girl, her father had the only store in town and she had candy bars almost everyday. I remember how I looked and longed . . .

SM: For those candy bars.

MM: I remember, one time she was really anxious to get her arithmetic done, an assignment, and asked me if I would help her. I thought, well. She says, “if you will help me I will bring you a candy bar.” That was great temptation. I thought, well, I wonder if that’s O.K., is that cheating or anything. Then I figured if I really explained it good to her and helped her along with it it would be just pay for work. So I did. And she had her assignment all ready and sure enough she brought the candy bar - it was a cherry bar with a cherry in the middle. Chopped nuts on the outside.

SM: Cherry Blossom or something like that?
MM: I don't remember the blossom part, but anyway it was a cherry bar. But anyway, when she brought it I remember opening it up and setting it inside my desk, we each had these little individual desks, on the paper and when the teacher wasn't looking I would duck my head down and take a little bite. I can almost taste it yet. It was so good. (Laughter)

SM: That was a good day.

MM: My mother was a really good cook, she had to make most of our clothes and she was a good seamstress. She knit most of our stockings. It was cold in Wyoming, so she would knit these woolen stockings, they were itchy, (Laughter) but they were warm. I remember they were kind of a dark green and that was our winter stockings. She finally got a little knitting machine that would help her knit so it was easier for her to do that. When we would go any place in town we would usually have to walk, we didn't have a car at that time. I remember, we would always have mittens and caps. When it was really, really cold, we would have to put our hands over our nose to keep our noses from freezing. (Laughter)

SM: Warm air from your nose to keep your face warm.

MM: We always went to church every Sunday. Sunday School and church and our school was right there in town, too. I had good teachers most of the time, but I remember a few times, and they really stick out in my memory even though it's almost 80 years ago, that sometimes they didn't seem that they were really fair. You know, I like to be included with my friends, and sometimes, like I say, they were not really congenial.

SM: Explain that, what do you remember specifically about that? Was it between sexes, were they not fair between women and men?

MM: The teachers?
Marian Dalley Winters Shakespear Mecham

SM: Yes.

MM: I think that this one particularly, I think that she wasn’t getting along too well in her teaching and felt maybe pressure from the school board and was just a little bit emotionally upset over personal things, that might have been it. I remember, we had big windows and it was in the spring time and some of the girls from the class were sitting in the open windows, just feeling the spring breeze. They were telling me to come and they would give me a hand and help me up. That was acceptance, I was kind of craving that. I remember getting up in the window and then pretty soon the teacher came in. It was at noon and we were eating our sack lunches, we usually took sack lunches, and she was angry to see us sitting in the window. And why, I’m not sure because we weren’t really doing anybody any harm. But she seemed to center her animosity on me and she came and literally yanked me out of the window and I was really self-conscious and shy anyway and that still lingers in my mind.

SM: That always seems to be the case, doesn’t it.

MM: Then, one of the other teachers, she had this idea, I guess, that if one did something bad she would just punish the whole group. That was after we moved to the ranch, up to the farm. So, one day some of them were not behaving like they should, a little noisy or something, and so she kept the class in ‘til the bus had gone and it was two miles from home. I was really distraught.

SM: You had to walk home.

MM: But my father was working in the bee yard and I went over where he was to tell him my woes. So he walked home with me. That wasn’t so bad then. But I thought after I started to teach, that was not a really good way to do. When somebody misbehaves it should be that person that suffers, not the group.
SM: So you moved to a farm, about what age?

MM: Oh let's see, it was, I think I was probably about, I have it here, in 1924, so I would have been about ten years old.

SM: Did your economic situation in the family change when you move to the farm, do you remember?

MM: I never remember of it being really good. It was Depression years. Nobody was very rich at that time. We were better off than a lot of them because my father raised really good gardens and they just took care of us.

SM: Was it a subsistence farm or was it a farm where you sold items?

MM: We raised grain, hay and later on we found raising great northern beans was a cash crop and so we raised quite a few of those. The children would help to weed them. I remember those long rows, terribly long.

SM: Look up and still the whole row to go!

MM: But our homes on the farm - the one in town was just a two-room home, it was a frame home. My father had built it and it was, well, fairly good for those days. But when we got to the farm, the house there was an old log-cabin type house. I remember it had factory on the sides, they called it factory, on the ceiling to keep the dust and dirt from sifting down..

SM: Now, is that a big canvas that rolled across the top?

MM: Kind of a canvas, yes, and it was just nailed right to the ceiling. I remember one night, my father was on the school board for years and so he would get lots of salesman coming to try
to sell stuff. I remember the one night a salesman came, it was about time to eat supper, we called it that, the last meal of the day, so we invited him to eat with us. Well, in the middle of the meal, this factory gave way - Oh My! (Laughter)

SM: All this dust and dirt doing down on the table! - (Laughter)

MM: And to have this stranger - it was terrible! (Laughter)

SM: Was everybody laughing or was it a bit shocking or stunning?

MM: I don’t think I was laughing, I doubt if anybody was. Dusty!

SM: Dinner was about over, huh! Or had it been served?

MM: I don’t remember whether dinner was over, half over, I just remember, anyway . . .

SM: Well, he deserved it, he was a salesman. (Laughter)

MM: Let’s see . . .

SM: Let’s talk about your mother.

MM: Mother? She grew up in Summit, Utah. Her father had three wives living in Utah. He had a wife before he immigrated from Denmark. Her parents claimed that she died. For a long time you didn’t know for sure if it was just that they didn’t want her to come. But I guess, they seemed to think it was true that she did.

SM: He never saw her again?
MM: I don’t think he did. No, I’m sure he didn’t. He married, well I don’t know whether you have seen Rachel Holmstrom yet? She has Parkinsons Disease, but her mother was one of his wives. They had to bring the children in just two or three at a time, or one or two at a time, because they couldn’t afford to send them all at once across the ocean. So when my mother came, she went to stay with her sister who was married to Grandpa Dalley. Maybe they had a design to get her into the family! Anyway, he married her. They had separate homes. My mother would tell us it was really hard sometimes because there was just not that close personal relationship with her father that she would have liked. There were so many children, I guess, he couldn’t get around to all of them.

SM: How many children altogether, do you know?

MM: I think there was forty some altogether. I’ve got it in my histories there. Anyway, ... SM: How did your mother feel about polygamy in general?

MM: My mother, well, the whole family, they were deeply religious and what the prophet said went. Even though it had it’s drawbacks or bad times. At the time polygamy was declared illegal in the United States, they imprisoned the fathers that were in polygamy and so her father, he avoided it for a while and kind of hid out, but finally they caught him and he had to spend some time in jail. It was a hard time for the families. He was obedient and so after polygamy was outlawed and illegal and the Church itself then declared that there be no more and so he lived with just one wife after that. The other wives, I am sure they felt all alone. However, he did divide up his property so that each wife had her share of the property. But, my mother was the youngest girl in the their family and she went to school in Cedar City, I think it was Branch Normal, I’m not just sure on the name of that. Anyway, she took training to be a school teacher. She had a really nice voice and she took music lessons. She could sing and had a rich contralto voice. She too was very timid and shy. She did a lot of singing in public. She didn’t seem to feel the fright in singing but she did in just speaking.
SM: So it was a way she could express herself.

MM: She was a good mother and loved beautiful things but she didn’t have very many of them in her life. She always wanted a new home and father did too, that was one of their goals. It wasn’t until after I had left home and just shortly before my father died that she was able... in fact I don’t think he was alive to really live in that home. I think my brothers helped in the construction and she finally had her home, but she didn’t live there very long. She finally gave it to my brother to live in with his family and they built her a smaller one close by and shortly after that she had a hip operation and didn’t recover like they do nowadays. She was always an invalid pretty much after that.

SM: Could she walk?

MM: She could walk some until later in her years. The way I remember her in the last years of her life, she couldn’t do much walking, she had arthritis so bad that her arms were stiff and just almost glued to her side. I remember in helping to take care of her in her last years how even to clean under her arm, between her arm and her body, was a real effort because she was so stiff. But patient, oh my, she was patient. I’m glad they can do more with people now. If she had exercised and things like that, she had quite a fear of a rest home or anything, but toward the latter part she kind of thought it would be good but we never, we just kind of took turns taking care of her.

SM: Was your father passing away part of the onset of this?

MM: He passed away some time before she had this hip operation. What caused his death, a cow stepped on his foot and he had blood poisoning. So he died quite awhile before my mother did.

SM: So that cow stepped on his foot and caused bleeding and it got infected?
MM: The wound, yes, got infected and he didn’t last very long after that. They did have a hospital in a nearby town at that time but they couldn’t do much for him.

SM: It had already gone into his blood stream?

MM: Yes, they didn’t have all the methods they do now to do that. Then, on the ranch, it was fun. We had lots of fun things. We had a big orchard. That was a favorite spot, you know, the blossoms in the spring were so fragrant. It was such a fun place to play.

End of Tape 1 Side 1
Begin Tape 1 Side 2

MM: There were lots of birds in the orchard and it was just a fun place to be. When the fruit would get ripe we had apples and plums and cherries. It was a little cold to raise peaches and that kind of thing, but, we had plenty of berries and currants and black currants. Have you tasted black currants?

SM: I have, Yes I have tasted black currants.

MM: I used to like those. The pond was a fun place, too. And the canal that carried the irrigation water. We used to wade in the pond, (Laughter)...and mud crawl. I don’t know if you have ever mud crawled or not?

SM: No, explain that to me.

MM: Well, there wasn’t much to it. The water was so shallow you went along like you were swimming but you were touching ground. You are just kind of going around.

SM: Along the canal?
MM: Yeah, (Laughter). I never learned to swim until I went to college and then I didn’t learn very well.

SM: Because the water was never deep enough?

MM: Well, we just never had the facilities for swimming. It was a kind of a desolate place at night. The coyotes would howl. I remember that used to be so mournful and a little scary for us. The water was terrible. It had lots of iron and salt in it and when we washed our clothes it turned the white things pink, there was so much iron in it. We had to pump it, there was a little pump and you had to prime the pump, pour water into it and then . .

SM: Hot water?

MM: No, in the winter time yes, but anyway, you had to keep pouring the water in before you could get the water to come out from underground.

SM: So, you had to keep a little extra water?

MM: Right, we did. From there when we would go to school we would have to walk about a mile to catch the school bus. When it was sub-zero weather, my father would hitch up the old work horses to the wagon, mother would heat some bricks and wrap them in blankets to keep our feet warm and bundle us up and he would take us down to catch the bus. That’s how we would go to church, we would go in the wagon. I still remember the horses, the icicles forming on their nostrils, it would be so cold. My father, I don’t remember of a winter that he didn’t have his nose frozen and his ears because there were so many things he would have to do out of doors in the cold weather, take care of the cows, the horses and the other animals. Finally, we did move down and it was closer to the bus and it came right by the house then. When we went to high school, we had to go about twelve miles, and whenever it would storm, I don’t whether you know much about Wyoming blizzards or not, but, they
would come up rather suddenly and if the principal saw one coming, was aware that it was coming, he would immediately call some of our fathers to meet the school bus because they knew if we didn’t have help we would get stranded in the drifts because they would drift in almost as fast as they could dig it out. So they would come and meet us with scoop shovels and anything they could shovel the snow with. Our school bus was an old pickup and the back had a canvas top over it, (Laughter) sort of like a sheep wagon with a flap on the back that kept flapping in the wind, with benches on either side and the exhaust running along the middle to keep our feet warm.

SM: You could put your feet on it to keep them warm?

MM: But they would burn if you weren’t careful, it was not the best situation. But I remember numerous times of our fathers meeting us and digging us out. It was so cold, so cold. The exhaust didn’t do much to keep us warm.

SM: You would just be sitting so it . . . .

MM: Uh huh. But when we would get home we would be stranded. We would be home until the storm subsided.

SM: How long would they usually last?

MM: Oh, not more than two or three days usually and then we would get to where we could go again. But it was kind of a fun time, once we got home safely, because we just could stay home. Home was always just a special place. I feel bad for people that don’t have homes like that where you just feel comfortable. Even though it was far below what the standards are for homes in this day and age, it was a good place to be. Our heat, we didn’t have central heating of course, so we had one stove in our livingroom and they burned wood and coal. There was another kind of substance, coke, it was a kind of a porous substance and was quite
SM: It was called coke and they burned it?

MM: Yes, and sometimes, there was an oil refinery, they called it junk, it was a real tarry substance and it was cheap and I remember my father having to get some of that to burn too. But we would hover around that stove and if got a little ways away you would freeze. It was cold, you know. I remember, in the kitchen we would have water in buckets, no indoor plumbing and it would freeze the water. Even if we had a fire in the front room . . .

SM: It was so cold in the kitchen.

MM: But, it was kind of a cozy situation, you know, just to hover over the stove and talk and laugh and study. I used to like to study, that was not a problem with me. Being so far away, I didn’t participate in many of the extra curricular activities. I took debate at one time but that was mostly in school. We just had to come home right after school, but it didn’t bother me that much because I was challenged by thought problems and math, I just loved to do that.

SM: So you would, on your own time, try to figure out the problems?

MM: Yes, and I would always be so pleased. The teacher would take note of the special way I had of solving it or something. I remember one time how I felt when one of my classmates had asked me to help with those problems. So I told her how I had solved it and so the next day the teacher called on her to put that problem on the board and she did. He just really complimented her on it for her originality. He said, “did you do this all yourself?” You know, teachers know more that you think they do. But anyway, he was very nice about it. She said, it was kind of hard for her to say, but she said well, Marian helped me.
After she had gotten the compliment.

Then I felt like somebody had stolen my brainchild.

Retrospectively, he probably knew exactly how the problem was solved.

I think so. Anyway, I learned some lessons from that, that you should give credit where it should be. I learned a lot of lessons. Most of them were from things that were not always pleasant.

The hard way.

The hard way. But anyway, I did get to be valedictorian when I graduated from high school. It was not only a financial blessing it was an honor, too. With it came the scholarship to Laramie. I will never forget my mother and father sitting there when I was giving this speech. I don’t remember much about the speech, it probably wasn’t that great. But just looking at them. My father, you very seldom saw him show much emotion as far as tears or anything, so when I saw tears in his eyes, I knew. My mother was more emotional. I will never forget that because it meant so much to them. It was and has been special in my mind forever.

Because of the emotion that was shown.

I remember, we went home and mother made lemon pies from scratch to celebrate my graduation. I’m probably getting too personal here.

Not at all, this is exactly what we want, you memories and feelings.

I couldn’t go to the university that next year. I had two sisters going and there just weren’t
finances to stretch even with the scholarship. So I had to wait until after Christmas. I just missed a quarter. But I was picking beans for a beanery in Basin and I don’t know if you have ever seen anybody pick beans or not, sort beans it what it really amounted to. But I remember we had little belts that were always coming towards us with the beans on it and had tear boxes at the side and we would pick the tear and the bad beans and little rocks and throw them into the little boxes.

SM: And let the good beans keep going on the belt.

MM: Yes, and then they would go into a bin down below. The inspector would come looking in our bins and if he ever found anything that wasn’t supposed to be in there he would sling them in our boxes and there would be a loud clatter. We tried awfully hard not to let anything get by that was not supposed to. But it was near the train tracks and we could hear the trains go by all day, the bells and whistles, so it used to seem to me that I was riding on a train, I was moving instead of the belt. It was almost a free train ride.

SM: That’s hilarious. You would imagine and fantasize you were on the train while these beans were going by. How many hours did you work everyday?

MM: I hardly remember, I think it was probably about an eight hour day. We were paid by the bushel that was picked. Someplace I had how many I had, I guess it’s now here though. It helped with the expenses and we stayed in Basin at that time, my cousins and I, so we didn’t have to drive back and forth so much. My brother was going to school at that time after I graduated, so I would pay the rent to help the family, so I didn’t save a whole lot. I did do some things though that were a real thrill to me. I got a permanent, my first permanent waive.

SM: Oh, really.
MM: And there were those old machines that, lots of heat.

SM: That burned?

MM: Oh, yes, it burned, but I remember, I even ordered, I hadn’t been able to do much ordering throughout my life, but I remember ordering a new dress, too and trying to prepare for college, too. Yeah, and when I had my hair done and those new dresses, it was sort of like a coming out party.

SM: Oh, yeah.

MM: People stared. It was

SM: It was exciting, wasn’t it?

MM: Oh, I was quite thrilled. I don’t think people get quite the pleasure out of things like that now days they’re common and ordinary.

SM: There have to be some things, but I don’t know what they are off hand.

MM: It was kind of a fun time in my live. I worked at the, I helped cook at the 4-H summer camp one summer and about that time I was dating a little bit and that was fun. Then I finally got to the University. My sister was there too, so if she hadn’t been I think it would have been hard. They didn’t have things as well organized when you register. It was quite a lot of paperwork and that. She helped a lot, and then just having her there. I remember, we lived in a basement room. I worked for Mrs. Holiday and her family. I would help with the work that would be to pay for my room and board. But then came the time when Arlene graduated, so I was kind of on my own again. I enjoyed college. It was a challenge and it was certainly, I enjoyed what I was in. I was in elementary education first. Well, until after
I graduated and started to teach and then I went back and got my secondary certificate. I liked, there was a psychology teacher Dr. Portiner (?) that liked me and I liked her and that made psychology really interesting to me. She helped me get a job in the college nursery and got me into psychiatry and, then, music. Anytime I had a chance to take any kind of music, I would do that because I love to sing. They built a new institute, LDS Institute, while I was there in Laramie. Laramie was not a Mormon town at all. There were very few LDS people there and so we were really thrilled when they decided to build an institute building there. It was kind of a home away from home. We felt comfortable. It was a beautiful building with peach colored mirrors in the building. It was this beautiful place and they let us go in there to study and we'd plan dances or programs or whatever. What really thrilled me was one of the girls and I sang a duet at the dedication and the president of our church was there at the dedication and the Governor. They made me feel happy.

SM: Proud.

MM: When I graduated, I started to teach in Chug Water. How much?

SM: I am wondering, you said you were really math oriented and I am wondering if they had much opportunity for really scholarly women, or if most women went into teaching? It sounds like a lot of women went into teaching. Did they push you in that direction?

MM: Well, I don't remember being talked into anything by anybody. Another thing that I really liked was writing, creative writing. I did a lot of that and the teachers were really supportive. I remember once when I got a paper back and it said that the writing is certainly your forte. F-O-R-T-E I didn't know what the word 'forte' meant. I had to go and look at the dictionary. (Laughter)

SM: The irony of that, huh?
MM: I remember being kind of upset with one comment and she said, it was did you really write this? I thought, did she think I copied it?

SM: It is so rude to write that.

MM: So, I went to her and she said, “Oh, no you just took that all wrong. I just mean it was so good.”

SM: Oh, so she was only being sarcastic.

MM: No, it was so good. I guess that was her way of complementing but it sounded a little bit...

SM: Harsh

MM: I really enjoyed that. Of course, later when I started to teach, I went from elementary, then got my secondary and started to teach in high school. English was my main subject, so I got to teach it a little bit.

SM: Did you enjoy that?

MM: Um-hum. I still have a few students that write poetry and it gives me quite a thrill to think they got a little of the desire to write.

SM: Um-hum, that’s wonderful.

MM: Well, I don’t know. I think that I have talked more than enough about me.

SM: Well, can you just tell me a little bit about, I know you gathered some recipes or a little bit about the culture that your mother has passed down, or it could even be your father, but I am
assuming it was your mother that did the cooking in the house and the prepared cures for illness that you may remember. Just, run by what you have there and let’s see if we can...

MM: Well, I had two or three recipes that came to mind. I don’t know, I don’t think that you find them in any recipe books and maybe some people still have them. There was one that was called renett (?) custard. Have you ever heard of renett (?) custard?

SM: How do you spell that?

MM: I am not quite sure. I don’t know whether it’s in the dictionary or not.

SM: We can look it up later.

WM: Renett, or something like that.

SM: Renett custard, we will just write that one out. Okay.

MM: It’s, you made it with the same little tablet that you use in cheese.

SM: Oh, yeah.

MM: My mother used to make cheese a lot, too, but I don’t know her recipe. But Renett custard was really easy to make, but oh we liked it. It was milk, just luke warm milk and then you dissolve that little renett, little piece of renett. Not a whole tablet, usually just a part of one in little bit of water. Some people added sugar, but we liked to sprinkle the sugar on after, and then it would set just like a custard. It would be set up with sugar or nutmeg on it.

SM: Ummm.
Marian Dalley Winters Shakespear Mecham

MM: Pretty good stuff.

SM: Did you ever use honey ever?

MM: No, I don’t recall.

SM: Just sugar and nutmeg?

MM: Used honey in a lot of things. They used to sweeten their fruit with honey during the Depression years when you couldn’t afford sugar. You hardly saw sugar. Another thing I mentioned about Danish pancake.

End of Tape One, Side Two.
Beginning of Tape Two, Side One

SM: Okay, the Danish pancake.

MM: My father would also help my mother when she didn’t feel well and lots of times she would be pregnant and wouldn’t feel well. So he would some times cook Danish pancake for us. What he would do is to slice the bread or used scraps of bread or partial slices, or whatever, and he would put them in the frying pan with either butter or sometimes he would use bacon grease, which was not from the kind of bacon we have now, but from salt pork. He would brown the bread in this butter or this grease on both sides. Then he would whip up eggs, quite a few eggs with a little milk in it and season it with salt and pepper and pour it over the browned bread and then just cook very slowly until it set up. It was good. My family still likes them.

SM: Sounds good.
MM: Then, of course, when you raise great northern beans, that was really, we had lots of beans. Lots of times we didn’t have meat to put with, pork or, so we would have them with out meat. When I first got married, I remember cooking once, and of course the altitude is higher here than it was at home in Otto and I thought I was a really good, pretty good cook for my day.

SM: Sure.

MM: Well, I decided to cook some beans and I didn’t have any bacon so I just cooked some. When he sat down at the table, I brought the beans and they went clatter when I set the plate down. They weren’t done. (Lots of laughter) The altitude difference, you know. They hadn’t fully cooked and he looked at them and says, “where’s the pork?” I said I didn’t put any in. I was kind of crest fallen. After that I usually, he was quite a hand to have plenty of meat on hand, my husband was so...

SM: What was his name?

MM: Vernal Shakespear.

SM: Vernal Shakespear, right.

MM: After that, why he had the pork and he had the well-done beans.

SM: The beans cooked through.

MM: Right. We just made due with what we had. We had homemade noodles. They still have, I am sure you have heard of those and made those. Chicken, chicken was quite a delicacy and we had chicken, quite a lot especially when we had the threshers come to thresh the grain. Of course, at that time, you didn’t go to the store and pick up a few packages of
chicken, you went out and cut the head off of a rooster.

SM: Did you ever do that yourself?

MM: I never did cut the head off, but I plucked a plenty and cleaned them. Cut them and took the insides out and...

SM: The entrails.

MM: Um-hum and scalded them to get the feathers loose and then picked the pin feathers. It's surely simpler now.

SM: Probably.

MM: One of my mother’s sidelines, to help with the living was raising turkeys and then she raised chickens, too. When they would sell those turkeys, we would help with picking pin feathers, a lot, with tweezers and whatever. The men would usually do the big job of pulling most of the feathers but those pin feathers, we got to do that. Churning butter, we always didn’t buy our butter, we churned it. Had dried corn lots of times. Canning, we did a lot of canning, currents, English currents, gooseberries, crab apples, plumbs. Had lots of potatoes, carrots, onions and almost all kinds of vegetables. Oh, and then our shortening, when we would kill a pork, we would render the lard of the pork and that was our shortening. We would either cut it up in small pieces or grind it and brown it until there were cracklings that were brown and then pour it off, drain it and strain the fat part out and that was what we used for baking and stuff like that, frying.

SM: So, it was your homemade lard?

MM: Um-hum and I had mentioned the homemade cheese. We had a recipe that I still like, but
I don't do it very often. It's loaded with cholesterol. It was called cheese fondue and it probably it maybe is in some cookbooks, I don't know. It was mostly, the way I remember it, I don't remember the exact amounts, but it was kind of like bread crumbed up in milk and then cheese, quite a lot of, you know a cup or two of ground up cheese, flavored a little with salt, and an egg so that it set.

SM: And you dipped the bread in?

MM: I just poured it over the bread. The mixture of the egg and the mike and the cheese over the bread and baked it until it was set. My daughter the other day called and said, "I would like to know how you used to make the cheese fondue." I couldn't tell her the exact proportions, but that. Another son called one day and said I want to know how to make milk gravy. I guess it just isn't in the cookbooks.

SM: No.

MM: You can make milk gravy can't you?

SM: No.

MM: Well, you put either bacon grease or butter in your frying pan and sift some flour in and stir it so that it's slightly brown and you just stir steadily, so it won't get too lumpy and pour in the milk and stir it until it's thick and boiling and thickened. That's milk gravy.

SM: So, there's no, if you use only butter there is no flavoring of meat?

MM: There's the good flavor of the butter.

SM: Um-hum.
MM: If you use the bacon, it’s just a little different flavor. It’s the bacon flavor. We had gravy a lot and potatoes.

SM: There was some crazy name that you mentioned before we turned on the tape recorder. It was something like Tommy or something knocks or knobby knocks.

MM: Tommyknockers.

SM: No, you mentioned some kind of recipe that was, that you had though that I had heard of it before and it wasn’t, before I turned on the tape recorder, I can’t remember what it was. I don’t know what it was.

MM: Today?

SM: I think it was a recipe that you had written down that you were thinking of telling. I am not sure.

MM: Well, it doesn’t come to mind. If you find out what then let me know.

SM: What did your mother do in case of illnesses? Do you have recollections of home remedies?

MM: Some, yes. Of course, castor oil.

SM: Where did you get the castor oil?

MM: Epsom salts. Oh, they would sell that in the stores. Those were your, for stomach problems, indigestion or whatever that was for. You would get to feeling better so you wouldn’t have to take it.
SM: Exactly.

MM: For bee stings, black mud. For colds, they had quite the things, sometimes they’d even put a little bit it coal oil or kerosene, a wonder they didn’t kill them.

SM: Where would they apply that?

MM: Well, they would eat it. They would give it to them to eat to kind of break, you know if they had croup or something.

SM: So they would drink a little bit of kerosene or coal oil.

MM: Well, just a little bit in sugar or something I think it was. I don’t remember ever giving that to my kids or taking it, but I know that some of them did that. Mentholatum was a must in the home for your chest.

SM: Now, were did you get that? Did you make your own?

MM: No, we would have to buy it. Stuffed up nose, sniffing hot salt water.

SM: Oh, really?

MM: For chapped lips, carbolic salve. I don’t know, the Watkins man and the Rolley (?) man were two peddlers that came around ever now and then and they always had this carbolic salve and it was used for chapped hands, chapped feet, chapped lips, chapped anything.

SM: What was that made out of, do you know?

MM: I don’t know.
SM: What did it look like?

MM: It was just like a heavy lubricant. Honey and ginger was a good thing to take for a cough. Blood purifiers in the Spring. They always thought that they had to give kids blood purifiers. My first husband’s mother would boil the rinds of the grapefruit. It’s bitter. I guess the worst it tasted, the better it was for you. Let’s see, earaches, hot water bottles by your ear or a salt bag heated. Salt holds the heat pretty well, a lot better than the water. Soda, lots of people took soda for gastronomical upsets or whatever. Oh, you might be interested in knowing how, what we used for hair set.

SM: Yes!

MM: They boiled flax seed.

SM: Flax seed, um-hum.

MM: Have you heard of that?

SM: I have heard of that but don’t really know what it is.

MM: It makes a real slimy stuff

SM: Flax, right. It’s flax seed, is that what you mean?

MM: It’s just called flax seed. I don’t know. Then you just set your hair with it.

SM: Rub it in.

MM: It will comb out pretty good when it is dry.
SM: Did women shave their legs back then?

MM: No. I don’t think, none of my family did.

SM: I was wondering like the little manicuring things done by women, what were the little things that they did, and that’s one of them, the hair setting.

MM: Well, we had curling irons, my older sister used a curling iron. I never did remember using it. A curling iron that you would put in the chimney of the coal oil lamp and it would heat up and.

SM: Curl away. That’s a lot of work, isn’t it?

MM: Oh, the flax seed, they also made a poultice out of it for infection. Or a cheese weed poultice or a bread and milk poultice. If you got a sliver and couldn’t draw it out, they would use those things. Now, this was one that was given to us by a doctor, but I don’t think its generally used nowadays. I had a son that had nose bleeds a lot and it would be hard to stop. He said to take a little strip of salty bacon and stick it up his nose and we tried it and it did it. It did the work.

SM: You just put it right up there and it was salt or something?

MM: It was maybe the lubricant too, you know. I know that sometimes that nose bleed is a result of dryness in your nose.

SM: Right.

MM: This doctor, Duggans, told us to do that and we did and it’s a good thing to know.
SM: It is. That may be usable for sure.

MM: Sore throat, some of them gargle with peroxide, salt water, hot soda water

SM: Peroxide, wow!

MM: Tooth ache, cloves. I think a lot of people still use that. For babies' sore bottoms, corn starch.

SM: Oh, really?

MM: Yeah. Water softener, have you ever used lye?

SM: I haven't used it, no.

MM: It's quite interesting how it works. You heat the water. I don't know that it would work in cold water, but you heat the water and put some of this lye in it. I still have got some lye I think upstairs and it raises to the top. It's a real thick scum that raises to the top and then you skim it off and your water is a lot softer.

SM: Really? Drinkable, too?

MM: No, this is more for laundry and

SM: More like a Downey?

MM: Right. You have to be really careful. I know many times I've had lye eat my skin.

SM: Really?
MM: If you get too much, if you get it too strong. It surely helps to whiten clothes. We used to have to boil the clothes to whiten them and blue the white clothes. Have you ever seen the little blue bottles?

SM: I’ve been told about them. June was telling me about that this morning.

MM: They usually have

SM: They don’t have them any more, do they?

MM: I don’t know that they do. I’ve never seen them.

SM: Do you think it worked better than today’s method of just bleach.

MM: Oh, I don’t suppose better. I don’t suppose better. Today’s ways are a lot easier. Sometimes they put liniment in milk for croup. A little bit of liniment. Mustard plasters, I am sure you have heard of that.

SM: I have come across that.

MM: Brigham tea.

SM: Um-hum.

MM: Communication has come such a long way. The telephones. Ours is six shorts.

SM: Six shorts?

MM: Yeah, that was the ring. Of course, it was always on a party line, so my mother always
taught us that we shouldn’t listen in, but not all mothers taught their kids that.

SM: Right.

MM: So I am sure whatever you said on the telephone was not private. Anything else you can think of?

SM: Well, I think that about covers it. That’s really interesting. Thank you.

MM: Peroxide gargle, I told you that didn’t I? I am sure I have not covered everything.

SM: Well, you never can. Also, if you think of something else, we can always regroup and do it again because I will be in the area. I guess we will finish this interview now. Thank you very much.

MM: Well, you are sure welcome. Feel free to delete wherever necessary.

SM: Not necessary.

End of Interview
Interview Agreement and Deed of Gift

In view of the historical value of this oral history interview and my interest in Utah history, I, Marian Meekham, 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: Oct 14, 1998

Primary Subject: My Life Experiences

Other Topics: A few old recipes; a few household remedies for illnesses, etc.

Number of Tapes: 2

Signature: Marian Meekham
Address: P.O. Box 57
Trufic, UT 84776

Date: April 24, 1999
Phone: 435-679-8461

Photocopy of interview agreement and deed of gift from the Utah Division of State History's Oral History Program.

Preserving and Sharing Utah’s Past for the Present and Future
Utah Division of State History
Oral History Program
Salt Lake City, UT 84101

I am glad to share my interview with anyone who is interested, but would like to retain my rights to this material, to use as I might desire. If you desire to use this material in any publication, would you please write to me for approval. My address is: P.O. Box 67, Tropic, UT 84776.

Thank you

Marian S. Mecham
Marian S. Mecham