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.
JH: Let's start back, you said, you were born here in Tropic. Tell me about your family life, that is your parents and your brothers and sisters, if you would please.

WO: Well, I was born here in 1911. I don't remember, of course, the day I was born, but soon after. I lived here in Tropic until I was 11 years old. In those days, we only had seven months of school. We had a ranch out south of here about ten miles out what they called Yellow Creek. The family moved out there in the summer time, in the winter we would come back here and go to school. Now I was raised in a family, there was nine of us, four boys and five girls. The family really was eleven. Now I had two sisters that I never did know that died, I think, at five and six. Back in those days, they had diseases that some of the young kids got, especially in the spring of the year that nearly always, there was a few deaths among them. Well, my mother and father buried two sisters a week apart. They died of whooping cough or maybe croup or whatever they called it. That was a sad situation, but I never did know them. But there was nine of us raised up and there were all nine got married and raised families.

Now we got, me and my wife, we have been married 64 years now and we have nine kids, they are all married and got kids, we only have one that still lives here in Tropic. We have had kids in Washington D.C., we have had a kid in the state of Washington, one in Nevada and one in Arizona, and four of them lives in the St. George area. One of them down there is a doctor and our one boy lives up in Ogden, he has been a professor there at Weber State for nearly thirty years. He still teaches there at Weber State. We have raised our family like that. My Dad was called to be the Bishop of the ward of the town of Henrieville and he was Bishop there for ten years. That's where I really grew up and lived, met my wife and got
Then we moved up here when we got kids old enough to go to school. I drove the school bus for ten years from Henrieville to Tropic. When they got old enough our kids had to go to school I wanted to get them up closer to the school. During that time, now the first political job I had I was elected a board member to a town board of Henrieville. Then when we moved up there in 1943, in 1944 the livestock people elected me on the board of the Bureau of Land Management of District 2 out of the Kanab office. I was elected to that board ten, three year terms. I served on that board thirty years. In fact, I was chairman of the board. I was elected in 1944 and in 1974, when they discontinued the board for some time, I was chairman of the board, and I have plaques and stuff in here to show it. In 1950, I was elected Mayor the town here in Tropic. In 1950, I was elected to the Garfield County School Board. In 1950, I was elected on the Garkane Power Board, which is our power company, with the office in Richfield. I served on the school board for twelve years, I served on the Bureau of Land Management board for thirty years and I served on the Garkane Board for twenty-four years. Besides being chairman of the Bureau of Land board, I was president of the board of directors for Garkane Power eight of those years and I was president of the board when the first line got into Grand Canyon Dam.

I helped survey it down there. It was just an old cow trail. I done a lot of it on foot and horseback, helped them survey that line from the Henrieville sub. It was the first line to get to the dam, the Grand Canyon Dam, that was before they ever turned the generators on. We got a cheap block of power from there. It helped us bring power up here into Southern Utah, up into Bryce Valley, Escalante, and all these areas. When we got that cheap block of power we got from the dam it helped us to take power to out of the way places that we could not have otherwise done. We took power into homes of old old people that had never had power in their lives. Today, that cheap block of power is still the thing that keeps - it’s gotten to be a big deal now.
And then on the school board, shortly after I got on the school board, our school building, which is where the park is now, right by our fence, the building burned down. The old big building burned down. Well, we used the church and another old store building and even some buildings in homes, in order to get by with the school. Now Jay Bracken Lee was the governor at the time, he was a great governor. Jay Bracken Lee, I appreciate what he done for the state. He didn’t try to spend money he shouldn’t do. He just didn’t think the school was, I don’t know, he and the school didn’t get along. Well, with the superintendent - now the twelve years I was there I worked for four different superintendents. I helped to get three of them in superintendent. I helped them get principal of our Tropic High School and then I was able to get them into superintendent. I worked for four different superintendents.

With those superintendents, we went up and met with the state legislature, right in the legislature, and we got them to appropriate money, emergency money to build these schools that we were needing. Of course, Bryce Valley was number one, our first priority. This great building was the first one that was built up here. Of course, they have built this new one this year, but we got that building and even governor Jay Bracken Lee, when we got it down and all framed up, he came down and looked at it and he said, well, that building is going to be worth more than the whole country here. (Laughter) I think they estimated it at $250,000 but I think it cost more like $300,000-$400,000 before, but then I’m talking about back in the ‘50s, the early ‘50s. But anyway, we got that building. I took the first shovel full of dirt for that building and I help to acquire the land and everything, and I had a new shovel and we had a ground breaking up there. They gave me the shovel. I should have kept it as a ornament, it was a really nice shovel. But anyway, I took the first shovel full of dirt on that.

Just here a couple of weeks ago, they had a dedication of the new building up here. The superintendent now from at Panguitch, he was there and I sat on the front bench on the stage. That was just a couple of weeks ago, to the side of the superintendent and they mentioned about how I took charge of the meeting back in 1955 when we dedicated the other building.
But I sat there and they had a real good program. They got a real fine new school up here.

And then while I was on the school board, I am kinda proud of this one, I don’t know whether they still do it now, but when they graduate they have the tassel on their hat down on one side and the board member, when they graduate, turns the tassel. Well, I turned the tassel on four of my own kids when they graduated from high school. Now we had seven kids and then we went eight years and our last babies were twins. We got two twins, and that made us nine. Those twins now are 41. One of them is a doctor and he is doing a really good job down in Dixie and the other teaches school in Hurricane. Our oldest daughter, she was a Home Ec teacher and we got two of our daughter-in-laws teaches school and this boy that lives here taught school. The biggest part of our kids have been school teachers, which I think it is very important and just a good job to have. But anyway, on these deals, I have served on all of these boards. Now just year ago, I served for years as Vice President of our irrigation, Tropic and East Fork Irrigation Company here that we handle and spend a lot of money. I told them they were going to appoint me for election again, I told them, well, I was born in 1911 and that was a long time ago, I think you should get somebody younger so I got out of that, but I am still on boards of the grazing deal. It was from 1950 to 1962 that was then I was on the school board and then I was on these other boards, I was attending meetings in Kanab, Utah for BLM, Panguitch for the school system, Kanab, Utah for the Garkane deal and I also represented District 2 up on the state level and I attended meetings up in the federal building up in Salt Lake. There is very few parts of this state that I haven’t been on the grazing part of it. Well, there is a lot of things happen. I was the first fellow, when I was up here in Henrieville, my old neighbor, Elijah Moore. Have you ever heard of Lige Moore? He was my neighbor.

JH: He was one of the first advisors to the BLM on the grazing service.

WO: He was the oldest one to serve and I took his place. I found out they were some big shoes to step into. He wasn’t educated or anything like that but he was a free-hearted fellow. He
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was a neighbor when I was a kid and he was a neighbor after I was married. He was the oldest man to serve on the advisory board and I took his place. But anyway one morning—he lived just across the street from me— he came over one morning and said, "Wallace, you want to see Butch Cassidy?" That was in 1936. I said, "Butch Cassidy has been dead for 40 years, what are you talking about?" "Well, he is over to my place right now in my living room if you want to see him. He says he has come here to see me. I got acquainted when we were young fellows, he has come here to see me and if you want to see him come on over." On the way over, we just crossed the street, he said, "he is going by the name of William Phillips now, but he will accept Butch Cassidy because he knows that I know all about him because I rode with him." But he says, "I don't think he killed people. He's the one that set up the robberies and the holdups and one thing and another, but he wasn't the shooter." Anyway, he was introduced to me as Butch Cassidy and he accepted it. I spent all morning. When we got there, Elijah's wife wasn't living there with him then and he just went on out of the room and left me there with Butch. I didn't ask him a lot of questions. I let him tell me stories. He started out, he got in his first real trouble right here in Panguitch, Utah at a dance. I got stories in here that tells all about that. I have made tapes, I've been interviewed by movie people, I've been interviewed on the radio. I have talked over two radios. I have had it in papers, I've made videos. I've made dozens and dozens and dozens of tapes. In fact, I've got five tapes in there right now I just made to send to California. People are wanting them. I have told the story over the Los Angeles radios. At first, when I started telling it around, everybody thought Butch Cassidy was dead. Well, people actually thought, some of them even called me a dreamer, I just dreamed about it. My brother-in-law that was two years older than me, Ken Golding, he seen Butch when he was there. He was one of Lige Moore's friends, but he wasn't there and got the stories when I did but he told me a story or two that Butch told him. But anyway, this brother-in-law I was telling you about, he died just two years ago. But anyway, Butch told him his story. My mother, I have known this for years, my mother was raised in Hillsdale, Utah, its just a little ghost outfit now, but they at one time had a little meeting house and a little school and one thing and another.
JH: This is just over in Washington County?

WO: No, it's just north of Panguitch, on the river. When she was a young girl, you see my mother would be about 120, 121 if she was alive now. When she was a young girl, they used to get in a wagon or buggy and go down to Panguitch to dance. That was the only recreation they had. The Circleville boys would come up horseback. My mother told us years ago she had danced with Butch Cassidy, that he was a good dancer and all the people liked to dance with him. Well, he got in trouble in Panguitch at a dance. He and another fellow had a fight over a girl and he broke the other fellow's jaw and beat him pretty bad nearly to death. I think there wasn't any shooting but I think he used his gun some for the pounding. I didn't put that on the tape. But anyway when the law came after him he told this old story about how he had come up through Red Canyon and the posse has followed him and he came down and lived with an old fellow on the Diamond Ranch for a while, circled back around and finally got out into eastern Utah, out around Price and up in Wyoming and Colorado some and around.

He told me some stories there that was real interesting. One story that I told on the tape he didn't tell me but I heard it and I know it's true. They tell me about in the turn of the century around in there there was a lot a poverty and depression stuff on and he told about a lot of people lived out on ranches in those days. What some of those little kids, he said, were in real poverty. He said some of those little girls put a quilt down and about the only recreation they had in those days was jacks. Said they played jacks. When they made those robberies, you see, those coal mines up there in Carbon County was owned by eastern concerns and they dealt with gold and they would send the payrolls out in gold. Well, that's where Butch and them made their big rides was holding up those trains and blocking them. But he says he didn't figure he had done anything too wrong because he had always took from the rich and gave to the poor. That was his philosophy all of his life. He says, he would give some of those little girls that were playing jacks, poverty little gals, and he says I would put some $5 gold pieces around them and tell this if you can pick those gold pieces up and still catch
your taw you can have them. He said you would be surprised how they would get those gold pieces and catch their taw.

And then this one widow woman he found out owned a kinda little ranch and home out in Carbon County somewhere, she was a widow. The bank was going to foreclose her and take her home. So Butch went to her and found out how much she owed and he gave her enough gold. He told her, now you have those men come from bank, bring your mortgage, you give them the gold and get your mortgage back. They did. Two men came from the bank, she gave them the gold and got her mortgage back. Now, when the guys left her place, old Butch was waiting out there, held them up and got his gold back. (Laughter) And she had her mortgage.

So many experiences like that. I’ve told that story. At first they didn’t believe it. It was published in papers. The Spectrum that comes out of St. George, they didn’t get it until in the evening. It come out on a Sunday, I’ve got copies of it in there, it come out on a Sunday and about noon I got a call from La Verkin from a fellow by the name of Wayne Wilson. I had never met but I had heard a lot about him because he had helped the governor out and was on the state deal, but he was an old man. He called me, a couple or three years ago. He said, I read your piece in the paper this morning. Your story is a story I have known for years and years but wasn’t allowed to tell it. Now Lula Park Bettinson, Butch’s sister, she wouldn’t tell anybody he was still alive and what he had done or anything or where he was at, well, he says I have read your story in the Spectrum this morning and I know its true. My wife and Lula Bettinson were roommates at school years and years ago. When we would go to Salt Lake we would usually go to Circleville and stay at Lula Bettinson’s place. I have known that story but I wasn’t allowed to tell it and you have told the story.

But anyway, on top of that the National Geographic sent a man here one day. They called me from Flagstaff, AZ and made an appointment and they had heard about me and Butch Cassidy. That was before people even believed that I was telling the truth. They sent a man
here and he got the stories. About nine or ten months after that I got a great big package from the National Geographic there in Washington, D.C. about these stories. This guy wrote, he had Zions and Bryce Canyon and Arches and she sent me all of the materials. Her name was Alberta Jones and she was a senior researcher for National Geographic and she sent me all this stuff and give me a toll free phone number and wanted me to over it and see that the names was all spelled right and everything. I guess she figured I was an educated guy but I only found one little mistake in all that stuff. I called her and told her and she straightened that out. She said, this is a special book we are making mainly for overseas. It is all in color and they want to see what they are coming to when they come to the United States to these parks. They sent me all this stuff and she said, we will send you the first book that comes off. Well, shortly after that here comes one of the prettiest books you have seen done up in the finest shape of cardboard and one thing and another. Opened this beautiful and there was three pages in there, my name is in the index, and there is three pages in there with my stories on and whatnot, boy it is a beautiful book.

I had it about a week and I called this author of it, Scott DeBoney and he had gone back to Flagstaff. I called him and I said, Scott what do you think of your book? Book, have you got that book? And I said, I have had for over a week. He said, I never got one yet. (Laughter) But anyway, I have had that book. I’ve got a son that is a doctor down in St. George that has one in his office and he says that is one of the main books. I was there just the other day and it is one of the main book that patients read when they come in there. I’ve got them for all my kids. My daughter lived only about two blocks from the National Geographic headquarters there in Washington, D.C. and she used to go and get them. I think they would sell them to me a little cheaper because I had helped them. I have placed quite a few books around, but they haven’t found too many here in the United States because they really published them for overseas.

Just a year ago, a woman came from Pine, Colorado, which is a suburb of Denver and their deal is White Design, on their literature, it is White Design. Well, she came here and heard
these stories and wanted me to tell a few stories and then last, oh it was just year ago now, I got a copy from Wild West magazine that is published in Virginia, pretty little magazine. They gave me a copy of this deal that they was going to publish in this magazine, it just come out a year ago. When this magazine come out, there was a fellow, an engineer from down in Arizona, come up here one day and heard about this deal and he come and I told him some of these stories. He found this magazine in Southern California and he just put four of them in a big brown envelope and send them to me. I got a boy that lives in Flagstaff, Arizona. He works in the forest service for 35 years. He was an engineer. He just retired here the last of the year. He found some. Then I have a daughter in Las Vegas and she found some. My boy found one or two up in Salt Lake. Just a beautiful little magazine. They printed that and run that.

It's only been about a month or six weeks ago, I got a call from a fellow from France that was here in Southern Utah. He said, “I’ve heard about you and your Butch Cassidy stuff. I have come clear from France to find out what I can about Butch Cassidy. Me and my wife, could we meet with you?” I said, “yes, I’ll arrange it.” He said, “could you meet with us at 9:00 just like you said in the morning.” Him and his wife come, I would imagine they were in the early 50s. He said, “I’ll tell you my story. I’d heard of Butch Cassidy over there when I was a young fellow and I followed it through.” Then he said, “twenty years ago, I made a trip over here, went to Circleville, Utah and met with Butch Cassidy’s sister Lula Bettinson before she died, she was an old lady, to find out what I could about Butch Cassidy and she wouldn’t tell me. She admitted that she was his sister but she wouldn’t tell me anything. Well, they have sent me to you now and it is recommended that you know something about it.” I brought him and his wife in and they went through that deal, I gave them a tape that I had, in fact I make dozens and dozens of these tapes telling this story. I get mixed up a little bit in a place or two, but anyway he says, “I have waited twenty years now and I have found out.” I said, “well, there is no question about it.” On the tape I said it was shame we didn’t have tapes back in ‘36 but my memory was good and I told the story just as near as Butch told it to me. But, I started it out in the spring of ‘37 or ‘38 but he died in 1936.
After the National Geographic done this deal, I got a letter from a guy in California that was trying to find it all and he told me about the home he bought in California. He told me about working for Poncho Villa. In fact, he had a suitcase of old time hard back pictures that was taken there in Mexico when he helped Poncho Villa out.

An author, Pearl Baker, did you ever hear of her?

JH: You bet.

WO: She died here just a few years ago. She stayed here with us. The first time I knew her was when I was on the school board and we had a little school down to Hyde out on the river. Old Art Chaffin was living there and me and the superintendent would go down to Hyde to check on that school. Well, Pearl Baker was the first school teacher there and she was an ordinary, slim woman who the last time we saw her she could hardly get through that door. She signed a book of the *Wild Bunch* and gave me a book and I gave her stories.

End of Tape One
Side One

Beginning of Tape One
Side Two

WO: Then when the College of Oklahoma sent Dr. Snow and them down to Bolivia to dig Butch Cassidy up, they though he was killed there in Bolivia. Well, me and my brother-in-law, we heard about when they were going to show it on TV and he come up here and we sat and watched them dig that body up here on TV over there in Bolivia. There was a rock cemetery, they had to use picks and shovels and one thing another. They said, between the two of us, they will never find Butch Cassidy there because he is not there. We’d seen him here in 1936. Well, they got those bones clear to the college in Oklahoma, checked them and found out they were not Butch’s bones. They took them back to Bolivia and buried
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them. Well, I was the first guy that knew that Butch was still alive and when I started to tell it, of course, some people believed it and some of them didn’t. Then this guy that I corresponded with from California, Butch told him about this as he got older. I think he got into some holdups in South America but he didn’t tell me anything about South America, only that he got by there pretty good and as he got older he wanted to come to the United States. He said, “I could come back as I got old.” He said, “I bought me a home just north of San Diego, California. It’s a two-storied home and that’s where I am living now and I am living there a peaceful, respectable life.” Well, he had a woman there with him. She was a gray-haired woman, a good looking woman. She came through the room where we was at several times. She never had anything to say nor he never mentioned it. Now, I don’t know if he was his wife or just his woman or what. This fellow from California, I corresponded with him several times, he said he had followed Butch Cassidy’s trail. He said he found his home there in California and all but he had left and gone up into the state of Washington and died up at Spokane, Washington with pneumonia. Well, I found pieces here in the paper where one of his relatives had written and said that was right, he did die up in Spokane. Now, I was the first one to tell that around. Now, Lula Bettinson didn’t want anyone to know where her brother was buried. But anyway, it is a great story. I’ve got a bunch of things. Now things I am a telling you here, I can take you into the den and I can show you, I’ve got a lot of plaques and things in there. I worked for the public there for about fifty years been on these boards and one thing and another. My memory is just as good today. I’ve had my eighty-seventh birthday, I still go down on the range. Yesterday we weighted calves all day and I still work and go and do just about what I want to do. Been married sixty-four years, got nine kids, got thirty grandkids and thirty-four great grandkids. So there are fifty some odd, nearly sixty of us in our family.

Then here two years ago, now we owned some ground up here on the forest, its up on the 8,000 foot elevation. It’s just west of the Bryce Canyon National Park on the east fork of the Sevier River. It’s a kind of a meadow country, but the sides are ponderosa pine and in places there is not enough ponderosa pine as we would like. So two years ago I started
planting ponderosa pine trees. I order them from the Lone Peak Nursery out of Draper and it is operated by the prisoners. I can tell you here those prisoners do a good job. I have got three different bunches from them. They do a good job of raising those trees. They package them good and bring them down. A year ago I planted 600 and that fall there was only six that died out of the 600. But I water them see. I got a little tank here. I will go up and water them some more today. But, this last deal, oh, just a month ago, I got a letter that the Utah State University puts out for their activities over the year and they featured me on the front cover page and the first page of the book told about this deal of raising these ponderosa pine trees. You know, at the rate they are using their trees and burning the trees and one thing and another, one of these days, timber is going to be just as valuable as food. Fiber is necessary. Look at the timber, sometimes they get all this trash made, I wonder how many trees they had to use to get this mail they send out.

But, I have had a long rich life, now I had, in fact I had to go down to get a root canal finished down in St. George here in a day or two and get it finished. I have two dentists, in fact, one of them is one of my boys, working on them, they said they are fixing my teeth to last me until a hundred. I said, that is thirteen more years. I said, just make it ninety-nine, I will stop at ninety-nine. I said I had an old television buddy that made it to a hundred. I said I never did see him, only on television, but he was one of my buddies because I followed him through. That was old George Burns. I said, when they had his birthday, I said old George usually had an answer for all of his questions, on his ninety-ninth birthday they was having a little party for him, they said, George, are you glad to be here? He said, well, when you get ninety-nine you are just glad to be anywhere. (Laughter) That’s the way it is with me. I’m just eighty-seven, but I am just glad to be anywhere.

I enjoy, I get out and go and do what I want to do, go down on the range, my wife gets after me now if I don’t get back before dark. It used to be I would be out til’ 11:00 at night. If I’m not back by 11:00, she’ll send somebody down to see where I am at. But she only had to do that once. I got stuck out there and I was stuck right. That was before they had any
telephones, they got telephones there now, of course, Kodachrome Basin is not too far up from the range. I have gone up there a time or two and called. You get down there, it is sand country. We have 4-wheel drives now. We can get around down there but there was twice I walked up to Kodachrome. One time I met the ranger there at Kodachrome State Park and he says, "oh don’t call and I’ll take you down." It was a new truck, the first time I ever took it out there. Some little mechanism there that went haywire and it wouldn’t start. Then he took me down, towed me a little and got it started. Then I brought it up here to the garage and got it fixed. Another time, it had stormed and made a big mud hole and I drove out in that and I was stuck proper. It was dark. I thought, well I’ll just build me a fire here beside the road, it was way down in no man’s land you know. Made a fire and sat there. Oh, about 10:00 I could see a car coming and it comes down. I used to tell ma, give me till 11:00 and if I’m not back send somebody. Well in the whole fifty years I was down on the range or longer, they only had to come and find me once. I had me a fire and was alright. They come and got me once.

JH: Let me ask you a question about that country down there. Once upon a time there was a mine down there. I have heard lead and I have heard copper. What do you know about that?

WO: I know all about it.

JW: Tell me, please.

WO: Right down on our range there is an old fellow came. He had a ranch down here below Cannonville years and years and years ago. He herded sheep. He took them out on this Rock Spring bench, that is where our ranch is. He says, I was going around kind of a sloping ledge, a lot of rock country. That’s down around the Navajo sand formation. Says, I was going around this ledge and I picked up a rock to throw at the sheep and it was so heavy I could hardly throw it. I said it kinda had a coating of red, kind of a red formation, and he said I took the rock and broke it and found it to be lead and he says I gathered up a bunch
of that. Now this was before the turn of the century. He says, it was so pure they made their bullets out of it. He said this Bill Lee, I tell about him on this tape, this Bill Lee, he was kind of an outlaw. He lived in Antimony but had his sheep down here. He said, so I moved up in Montana and he lived up there for years and years. This was back in the '60s I guess it was. He came back retired and got him a home in Marysvale and he come and got this old man Wiley from Circleville, it was his brother-in-law. They went down on our range and I caught them there, they was camping down there. They had come back to find this lead with horses. But he said it had changed too much since then they said the trails look different and they got roads in now and one thing another and they didn’t find. If you watch, one of these days you will pick up a rock to throw at your cows and it will be that same stuff.

Well, one of those days happened. I was going around this ledge and found this unusual deal. I picked some of that rock and I had over fifty pounds. I had one chunk of lead that weighed eight pounds. I took a sack, sacked that stuff up and brought it in. It tested eighty some-odd percent lead and quite a lot of silver in it. This old fellow lived in Marysvale. When I was going to a meeting down in Richfield one day, I went down to his place and dumped this out on his lawn out in front. Boy, he just went wild. That’s it! That’s it! But I said I don’t know where it come from, it was just laying there. I told him, we can find the source it come from, we will let you in on it.

There’s a guy from New York, several of them, and they was hunting uranium and I told them about this lead out there. They had a drill so they went out and I showed them where I’d got it and they went to Kane County, they went to Kanab and jumped my claim and didn’t put me on it and they drilled down, I don’t know how far, it was just a small drill, and didn’t find it. But anyway, they went back to New York. They had jumped my claim.

We had a fellow come, his name was, ... oh, he come from Vernal. Had an outfit he said read under the ground. My uncle was quite a prospector and we took him out there and he thought there was a big body of ore. In fact, there are some copper pipes that big coming out
of the ground. Quite a lot of copper and lead in them, you can see it's been steam or water that has formed them, they are hard. We had a guy come and he said right here to drill less then 200 feet you'll find a big vein of ore. We had a guy come from over in Green River by the name of Denny and he had a drill rig. He went out there and got down 150 feet and there was so much water coming in and he didn't have any pump or anything and it would take him too long to bale the water out so he quit and went home. He was supposed to have gone down 200 feet but we never found anything. There has been other people come in but I had that over fifty pounds of that ore.

Then this Scott DeBoney, the guy that wrote for National Geographic, called me on the phone after they had published this one book. They wrote me to write another book about the lost mines here in Southern Utah. Can you tell me anything to help me with that book? And I said, “I oughta done, I have hunted in here for 75 years and I can tell you all about that.” I knew all about the Lost Josephine over on the Henry Mountains. Now this boy of mine that lives here now, they are building a mill down, he works with the Kaibab and went out of the lumber business and they are building a mill down to Fredonia where they had the old sawmill to process this ore from the Henry Mountains. They bought that bromide mine. They own that mine over there. They got some mighty rich gold and silver and stuff over there in that mine and they are building that deal down in Arizona to process it. Then I said I know about, they said the Lost Josephine was the richest mine the Spaniards had ever found in this country. Out on this Rock Spring bench where I am telling you about I can find pieces of lead and stuff out there and all over the country. Those people burned the green trees and turned them hard all over where those Spaniards, where they would find these deals and hide them.

Then I said, the biggest mystery we've got and I've been told by a number of people is what they call Gold Jesus, I don't know how many people have heard about it. The Spaniards come over to Mexico and they had found a lot of gold down there. They stole a bunch of gold and got in with some of those Mexicans and got some burrows loaded with gold and
they stole this gold and was going to come up through Utah and I think to Denver somewhere and load it on a train and take it away. But, they had these burrows loaded with gold. They got across the Colorado River and was coming up on the west side of the Colorado River and they got up to where Kanab was just being settled. They got up there and a rider on a horse, you know those burrows travel pretty slow, they had a gold statue of Jesus, a small statue. That’s why they called it Gold Jesus. But a rider come up and caught them and said, those Mexicans have found out you stole that gold and if they catch you they will kill you. They went past Kanab. The story is they was afraid the guys was going to catch them so they buried the gold, stashed it. They went out of the country and turned their burrows loose. Now, when I was even a kid here out here in these valleys in what they call Dry Valley and Butler Valley, there was hundreds of wild burrows all over the country. They figure these burrows were from the Gold Jesus outfit and had turned them loose and that’s where they come from. Anyway, I’ve been told between Kanab, Utah and the Henry Mountains, that just on this side of the river, is where they buried this gold. I’ve told it on tape even. If anybody wanted to prospect and they have instruments now that you can find gold under the ground, if they found that lost Jesus deal it would be a tremendous deal. Then, down here at the old town of Paria, they used, in fact we have run cattle down there for years in that country, but where they took their ditch out. You see, that used to be one of the main towns here in this country, but it is just a livestock deal, all open range all the way around. They was working on their ditch one day, there was a kinda lower elevation, they raised a lot of peaches and watermelons and stuff like that there and a little alfalfa for their horses and milk cows, but anyway, there was no ditch and they found a piece of blue quartz. They could even see the gold in it. A guy found if by the name of Jackson so they call it the Jackson Quartz. At that time, gold was only selling for $16 or $18 per ounce but they said that rock was rich enough that if you brought in a ton of it it would be assayed at $18,000. Of course that was rich for those days. I had an old uncle, oh he died in the ‘60s, I went up prospecting and he’d pan. An old bald-headed fellow, but he liked to pan for gold and he was trying to trace that up the creek. They found another piece or two and the last piece they found came out of Bull Valley Gorge out here, the mouth of it. But anyway, there
was some guys come in that wanted to find, they had heard about finding this rich gold and Jackson Quartz. They got old Jackson and he was up the creek, Box Creek, there about, oh, ten miles above the old town of Paria on May 15. They got old Jackson and wanted him to tell them where he got that rich ore. Well, he couldn’t tell them but they thought he was lying so they got, there was a big tall cedar tree there, it was there for years, just the last few years the floods have caved it all, big tall cedar tree we called the Jackson Tree because those guys took a lariat and put it up over the limbs, put it around old Jackson’s neck and said if he didn’t tell them where it was they were going to hang him there to that tree, they had the rope around his neck. Some cowboys come by and turned him loose, so they called that the Jackson Quartz. Down this old Paria creek, you ever heard about, of course its on the monument now, starts about four miles below Cannonville and goes clean down to old town of Paria, about 30 miles of narrow . . .

JH: This the Cottonwood Road?

WO: No, it’s the Paria.

JH: Paria River.

WO: Paria River. They used to travel it a lot but you can through go through now with a 4-wheel drive. But anyway, there’s a lot of interesting things down at that creek. In the fall of the year, it is beautiful. There are cottonwoods and tamaracks and hack berries and different trees that turn red and yellow and gold. At first down here there is a white formation, then you go into the reds and it is just beautiful when those trees turn. But anyway, it’s a beautiful, there’s a little fellow that lived here in Cannonville, he is dead now. He owned the Molly’s Nipple Ranch. Away from Cannonville, they’d go down the creek. Then they had what called Deer Creek. They’d go up over the hill and over to this ranch, beautiful. You’ve heard about Molly’s and Molly’s Nipple. You can see it from Bryce Canyon. Beautiful meadow and lake there, little lake and one thing another. Well, old Jim Henderson
is his name, he got older and decided he'd sell that ranch. Of course, this has been years and years ago. The fellow from Colorado was interested in it and he come out and he was a sheepman and, Jim says, "well, I'll have to take you down on horseback." And that was fine. They went down the creek and when you first go into the box there, it's not much wider that this house here, maybe not that wide, but tall ledges. They went down this creek, there is a lot of interesting things, little canyons come out, some hieroglyphics, there is one place they call the Baldwin Tree, its an old tree stump that's there that the Indians got after the Baldwins there and one thing another. But anyway, a lot of interesting things down there. Down there just above Deer Creek, there is a big red rock, sits right out there, there is a flood plain, a big red rock sits right out there. You can see the floods goes on both sides of it. From the looks of it, at one time that rock used to be part of the ledge. But anyway, Old Jim he kept telling stories to this Colorado guy and got down to this big rock and said, See that big red rock? That was up the creek there about two miles and a big flood come down about two years ago and brought it down and set it up right here. The old Colorado guy didn't say anything. They started down the creek and Jim turned to the Colorado guy and said, "You didn't believe about that big rock did you?" The Colorado guy says, "hell no, I haven't believed anything you've told me yet!" (Laughter). That's kinda stories that goes on. But anyway, this has been a wild country. A lot of things happen here. Now, I want to take you into there and show you the proof of this stuff. I've got plaques all over the walls. I've even got my picture taken with Frank Moss, you surely remember him.

JH: I remember Frank Moss, Ted Moss.

WO: There's Ed Moss back in his office back in Washington, D.C. That Garkane used to send me back there. Three or four times I went back there to help them get money. We was even back in those years borrow money for 1% or 2% from REA. We went back and worked with the senators and congressman. On top of that, I was thinking about it the other day, I believe thirty-some odd times, I was elected on boards that I had to go out and campaign. I only lost one election in all those years and that one I wanted to lose because I was on these other
boards and I had to get off of that one. One like the advisory board there, I was elected ten three-year terms. I was on the school board, I was elected three four-year terms. On the Garkane Power board I was elected seven four-year terms. On the Tropic and East Fork Irrigation board, gosh I don't know how many times I was elected on that. I served as mayor of the town here, in fact, I have spent a life - now these jobs I am telling you about, they are not big paying jobs. They are just mostly per diem if you had a little expense. There was a lot of it I done on my own, too.

JH: Think of it as public service.

WO: It's public service that I worked on. I have enjoyed it. I hope I have helped a lot of people out in my life.

JH: I think you must have or else they wouldn't keep electing you.

WO: That's right, I was a pleasing them. I have worked, like I said, four different superintendents and then I worked with five different range managers. Now here one of them, he was a kinda an executor, but I worked with him pretty good. One day he asked me, he said, "all these years you have been on this advisory board..." - it was back in the days when they was dividing the range and setting up allotments. I've even been out on the range on some of those places where we had to separate people there to keep them apart from fighting. Even down in the office in Kanab we had to step in - and he said, "all these years that you have been here I have never found anybody that really hated you. How did you do it all these years?" And I said, "well, I found out years ago, some of these people that we've been out on the range with are so mad at each other they wouldn't even talk to each other." I said, "I found out one thing - if there's two people that's so against each other they won't even talk and one thing another, there's a division there or something, I found out if you go right down the middle of the outfit and help him out just a little bit and get them together, just kinda going in between, you help out some of those people that would be upset." In fact, one guy
down to Kanab, oh, he died here eight or ten years ago. Just after he passed away, his wife
called and said his last request for you to be one of the speakers at his funeral, will you come
down. I said, sure I will, I'll be there. Then another guy that had all this trouble, he kinda
had a bad name. I went down to see him. He had heart trouble. He was just in his last week
or two of life, I went down to see him - he lived down in Henrieville - while I was there is
wife said she had to go up to the post office. There was just the two of them living there.
She said will you stay here with him while I am gone and I said, sure, I would like to. After
she left, he was laying on the couch. He got down and rolled off the couch and put his hands
on my knees and he said, Wallace, I'm dying. I won't be here but a very short time. I've
got something I want to tell you. He says, I'll tell you because I know you will never tell
anybody, but I got something I just need to say.

End of tape No. 1 - Side 2

Begin Tape No. 2 - Side 1

JH: This is an interview with Wallace Ott on October 14, 1998 in Tropic. This is tape number
2 and he is recounting his experiences here in Bryce Valley.

WO: There is one thing he told me there that I've told around. The other things I never told my
wife but he just wanted somebody to know. But he says - he had been in court I don't know
how times and his last name was Smith and he compared himself having been in court as
many times as the Prophet Joseph Smith ever been in but, they had him in court so much,
he was shrewd. He told me some things there that during his life time - he had done things
that he knew wasn't just right but he says, I want to tell you something. He says, I have been
accused of a lot of things that I wasn't guilty of and I believed it. He says I have been
accused of a lot of things I wasn't guilty of. No matter how matter times he was in court but
they never did convict him. He was a pretty shrewd.

But anyway, I've had a lot of friends and I still got friends. I like everyone to be my friends.
One guy asked me, he said, in all these public jobs you’ve been in, how is it that most everybody you talk to gives you a good name. I said, well, and when I was elected mayor here I was a write-in and beat two other guys out. They wrote me in and got me in. He said, how can you stand, my brother said - he had been mayor here and he had a lot trouble. He said, when you are in these jobs, people talk about you, they will hate you, they will do this, that and the other. Well, one of these range managers down here, he said I can’t figure it out. He said I don’t think you have an enemy in the world. You’ve been all of these jobs and made all of these decision. I said, well, I don’t pay any attention. My brother says they tell stories and talk about you and I said, James, I’m not worried about stories. I said if it is something like that, if I’m innocent I just let the stories bounce off my back. I don’t worry about them. I just go on about my business. I says, time is the best healing thing in the world if you just take time, be patient, not get mad, don’t try to force people. You know, I want to tell you, Hitler tried to force people and he tried to fulfill Lucifer’s plan. Lucifer wanted to come here and take everybody back. Hitler just tried to do the same thing. Those boys that went over and fought Naziism was the greatest missionaries this country ever sent out. They defeated Lucifer’s plan when they done away with Hitler’s deal! A lot of things has happened.

Now, Tropic is one of the new towns in the deal. It wasn’t settled until May 23, 1893. They had to divert the water over from the east fork of the Sevier. There was very little bit of water down in here. There was one little stream, good clear mountain water. That is what we use for culinary water and to water the lots and one thing and another. It was the only water here in the valley. They brought that water over, they diverted it out of the east fork of the Sevier River. This little town stream, it springs up right in Bryce Canyon National Park. There is an old fellow by the name of John Hatch, Sr. that proved up on it. When they settled the town, they wanted it for culinary and water the lots, that’s back in the 1890s and they went and told John Hatch they wanted to buy that water. The story of it was, he said, he would sell it but he had to have, I believe it was $800 for it. Of course, the town was just barely settled. I don’t believe they even had a town board or organization. But anyway, they
told him they'd buy it but they could only dig up $400 for half of it and they needed time on the rest. When they wrote up the agreement, and its right on the town records here too, it told about buying this water, paid him half down, I think it was $400 left, right in the agreement it said this other $400 is due from the date to the morning of the resurrection. (Laughter) That's how long they give them. But they did get it paid off before the old man died. He was our neighbor up here.

In this piece in the , I told them about another guy. When I was a kid one of the first cabins ever built in this valley was built by the fellow by the name of Wilf Holliday. My dad lived in the top of town and he lived over about two blocks. Now, Wilf got in trouble and they took him to jail. A little cow trouble of some kind. He come from Iowa. Him and his Dad when he was a young fellow drove a bunch of cattle from Iowa clear into Southern Utah. Of course, this ground was open and free then and they was thinking of building up a big cow ranch. He come down in here and built him a cabin, Old Wilf. Then he went down to Marysvale to work in the mines. They opened those mines up and the railroad did come into Marysvale and the only thing from here to there was buggy. He come down there and lived with Butch Cassidy. Anyway, at that time he was Leroy Parker. They lived there and there's Old Wilf got his wife and then he come down here.

When they took Old Wilf up to the pen, there was another fellow that worked there that he just really disliked. He was just a real bad character. This other fellow married a sister to Wilf's wife. While Wilf was up in the pen, this other fellow got Wilf's wife in trouble. When he got out he come down and he told this other fellow, now I'll give you three days to leave. You better leave. Get out of here. I'll wait three days. Well, in the story he went right in Bryce Canyon where we get out water, there's pretty little meadows there and some birch and one thing and another, he waited and this fellow didn't leave. He come down and they was right here in Tropic. He went in his house and he was still in bed and this guy had his gun there with him. He reached for his gun and Old Wilf shot him. They didn't have any law here but in Panguitch they got the law to come over. They said he held his hands out
and says, I've just killed a snake, why don't you take me back to the pen, I just killed a snake.

Then they took him back up to the pen and he served there for a while. He was such a good prisoner that they had one real bad character that had escaped and they said they would turn Wilf out if he would go and hunt him down. Old Wilf went out hunted him down, tracked him down, and brought him back alive. He worked that way for the prison, he was only there a few years. The governor pardoned him. He come back to Tropic and lived here. When I knew him I was just a kid. He was an old man and his wife had got killed. Her folks had took her up to Salt Lake on the train and they had those old trolley street cars. They was riding on the street cars and Wilf's wife and her parents was there with her, got out of the car and it jerked and jerked her under and killed her. Well, he was a lonesome old man. He used to come over and visit with my Dad, I was just a kid. Us kids was a little afraid of him, we had heard he'd killed a man. We didn’t wonder what circumstances and one thing another. Anyway, I've told this story, its in writing in there. I'll tell you what he had done. He would come from Tropic here, told about having his cattle here and he’d stop at the Parker's place cause Butch’s folks, he got real acquainted with them. Butch would even send money with him from Marysvale down to his folks, you know his poverty deal. He said that when Butch went bad like he did Old Wilf he felt real bad about that because he was a bosom friend.

Butch told me about when they left. Of course, they left with horses. Now the last thing this Wild Bunch pulled, and I’ve got pictures of them in there to show it, they went out in Winnemucca, Nevada and robbed the bank there and got on their horses, five of them, and left for Texas and got down to Texas. When they got down to Texas they dressed up in their finest clothes, I've got pictures, two or three of them in there, they sent that picture back to the bank in Winnemucca and thanked them for the contribution. (Laughter) Then Old Butch left and went over to Mexico and run into old Poncho Villa. This old Pearl Baker followed that story down and come and told me I was right about that. He did help old Poncho Villa
But anyway, he got away from them. But one night, the old house the Old Wilf lived in is still there, of course, it has been remodeled and there’s a widower lives there now. He said one night, it was in the winter and it was kinda cool and he heard a rap on the door. He lit his old coal oil light and went to the door and it was Leroy Parker, Butch Cassidy. He said, Wilf, I daren’t come in, I am leaving the country but I just couldn’t go without talking to you, come on outside I want to talk to you a minute. It was in the middle of the night. So he put his jacket on because it was cold and went out and visited with Butch for a while. Then he said, well, I’ve got to get on my horse and leave, we are on our way out. He said Butch grabbed him and gave him a big squeeze, kinda of a ordinary squeeze and said goodbye and got on his horse and left. After he got in the house he felt something funny on his side and he reached in his jacket pocket and he had stuck a bunch of gold pieces in there for him. That’s the last he ever seen of him.

But you know, a lot of these stories and true stories that happened. I’ve even got this piece that has a little a bit about Wilf Holliday that’s in this Wild West magazine. The first deal that ever come out, there is one fellow up town here, he is a retired school teacher, he takes that Wild West magazine. One night he called me on the phone and he said, “say, I was reading this Wild West magazine and there’s a piece in there about the trail of Butch Cassidy. They’ve got your name and said you were born in 1911 and live here in Tropic, Utah and visited with Butch Cassidy when he was going by the name of William Phillips. How did he get your name?” That’s back in Virginia they print that. I said, “I don’t know, I don’t know.” (Laughter) So he got me down in the piece. Well, then the next year here, this woman come from Denver and she writes for this magazine. So I told her some stories and also about Wilf Holliday. The Wild West sent me this piece that was going to be published all that stuffs in it. There’s been a lot of things happen in Southern Utah here. A lot of interesting things. Its been a wild west country here. Old Wilf is buried out here in our cemetery. His wife was buried in Marysvale. When they brought her back from Salt Lake they didn’t have any transportation just buggies.
And I can remember when there was only one car. The first and only car here in Tropic when I was a kid. Owned by a fellow by the name of William Shakespear. I rode on the range with him. Of course, he’s been dead a long time now but I rode on the range with him. He ordered that car from Sears Roebuck or Montgomery Ward and had it shipped to Marysvale. It was a Model T Ford and had is shipped to Marysvale. It took him two days to go from here to Marysvale. They had a camp house in Panguitch. All the freight was brought in with wagons and teams. Well, he got on the buggy and it was taking two days to get to Marysvale. I think he spent a day down there learning how to drive. It was just an old wagon trail. It took him two days to get the car back home. I remember that old car. It only had two forward gears in it, a low and a high. These streets in Tropic was so steep it wouldn’t go up in high so he would have to go in low gear. It made a lot of noise and the horses would chase around and the chickens would run across the street a quacking and flapping their wings. We had an old mare. We lived on the ranch out here and we had an old mare, we called her Puss and she was just scared to death of that car. If we happened to meet it here in town or somewhere, Dad would jump out of the wagon and hold that old mare until the car got by. Then there was another man that lived here and had a ranch out a ways. He said he had a horse that was just scared to death of that car. They drove out the ranch one day and the car come by and he jumped out and held the old horse until it got by. They used to have what they called a spring seat in the wagon and him and his wife was riding in that spring seat. He said, when I was climbing back up in the wagon after the old car went by, I said to my wife, he said, you know they hadn’t not allow those damned things out on the road. (Laughter) Now I never did ride in that car but I watched it quite a bit. I never did get to ride in it but I remembers. It did get out of what they called the dump. In those days it was an old circle road, S-bend and one thing another. It did get out of the dump several times but had to back up cause they had no fuel pumps or anything and when you’d go up a hill the gas pump wouldn’t siphon into the motor and they had to back it to get up the hill.

They had three commissioners in each county. No matter how many people in the county
they had three commissioners. One was in Escalante, one in Tropic and one in Panguitch. The guy from Tropic in the early days, a lot of people when they settled Tropic quit a few people moved from Panguitch over here because of the gardens. They could raise gardens. In Panguitch they have frost every month of the year and they just don’t raise gardens over there. Quite a few of the Panguitch people moved over here where they could raise gardens. There was quite a few of the Shakespears and the Ridings and quite a few people. The road was to terrible that this commissioner here, DOT wasn’t known in those days, tried to get the Commissioner in Panguitch to put up a little money to help improve this road down the hill just a little bit. That commissioner in Panguitch said, “no, I’m not going to help you with money to fix that dump road, (they called it the dump road)- those people moved over to Tropic for climate, now dammit let them climb it.” (Laughter) That’s the way that happened.

When I was a kid, now I remember this, the store and post office was down right in the lower end of town and we lived way up in the upper end of town. If you went to the store and got something heavier than you could carry, you had to take your team and wagon. Now, I lived through those days. Now anyway, one guy, him and his little boy, he took him down to the store and had to get something. He told his little boy, now you sit and watch this team while I am going in the store. While he was gone, the old car came by and scared the horses and they run away, took the wagon. When the man came out he asked his boy, where is the team and wagon. The boy said, the old car come by and the horses got scared and run away. He says, I thought I told you to watch them while I was in there and the kid said, I did watch them til they got out of sight. (Laughter)

JH: Speaking of roads, there was one road in this country that got a little extra attention and there’s a variety of motives for its construction. That was the Cottonwood Road. Do you remember that?

WO: I was the one that helped survey it. I took the newsman and the park superintendent down
there on horseback, it was just a cow trail, some bad men through there. And then, I helped
them survey it to get the power line through there, a lot of it on foot and horseback. We built
that power line before there was any road of any kind through there. It’s a scenic route.
Now I’ll tell you, the scenery through Cottonwood there was so good that years ago there
was a fellow, the head geologist up at the BYU who was named Hansen, and he wanted to
come down and look this country over. He came down here to Tropic and I took him a
horseback, in fact took a bunch of school teachers here, it was in the spring of the year just
before school let out. We took some of the school teachers and George Hansen, he was the
head geologist, I even had a brother go to his class up there. I was just a kid but I went up
and visited one of his classes at BYU. Well, I took him, furnished his horse. We was gone
four days, camped, we had a car go around to the Old Town Paria with our camp, went down
through there. We started here in Tropic a horseback and he told me all of the formations,
he knew them too, and I still know them. We started up here at this old pink limestone that’s
Bryce Canyon, Escalante Peak, and between here and Cannonville, there are two other
formations down here at Cannonville. There’s the Dakota and some other formation, then
when you get down to Cannonville it’s red and he called that the Sommerville. Now I said
they’ve got another name for it but the first fellow that wrote about that formation down
there, they call it Sommerville. There is a few little shale in between and then you go down
on the old Navajo Sand. Down on our range, that’s where we run and its 1300 feet thick, the
old Navajo Sand. It’s a blow in formation - its wavy. Dr. Hansen said maybe it’s millions
of years blowing all that sand. Out under the Navajo is what they call the Windgate. It’s
red. Where they join there, most places some pure spring water comes out. This old box
that runs down through there, you go through the white, then you come into the red and
where they join that’s the Windgate, that’s formed with water. Now they have even found
dinosaur tracks there that came out of that formation. Some of those dinosaur tracks were
made in the mud millions and millions of years ago. Under that Windgate, you find there
at the Old Paria town is what they call the gold hills, kind of a clay formation, beautiful
crimson color, just a small deposit. Right under that is the Shinarump sand. Now that
Shinarump sand is uranium carrier. But there at Paria its only maybe three four feet thick,
the Shinarump sand but we did find some uranium down there and made some claims. But when you get out to Moab then it was thick and that’s where, on TV last night, they showed all that in Moab. I’ve been in old Steen’s house up on the hill and had dinner up there and one thing another. Went on a boat trip down the Colorado when it was just getting dark. Went down the Colorado to lower Moab, built a big fire down there on one of the bends and had a big chicken fry and mutton roast. One of the cooks was kind of a tall guy, just a young guy and got talking to him and he was old Charlie Steen’s son. I didn’t know him. Charlie was kinda short but anyway, he said I just about didn’t make this trip. My wife had a baby today and I had to take her to the hospital. But anyway, we went down on that trip with him. Went down the Colorado and things like that has happened over the days and the years.

I’ve got real friend in California. We make tapes to each other, I’ve only known him maybe five years. His name is Mike Rose. He writes and finds out all the mysteries. You’ve heard about Everett Ruess that disappeared. I was clerking in the store, it was 1934, the year I was married. He come by and he was leading two burrows. I visited with him for quite a while. He was a young guy and he told me what he was going to do. He was going on over to Escalante, of course, that was before Glenn Canyon and there wasn’t any lake or anything. That was one of the most out-of-the-way places and he was going down to spend the winter down on the Escalante Desert and down along the Colorado River. I tried to make a trapper or prospector out of him. I says I don’t of anybody else, he says I am just an adventurer going down there to see the country and write and one thing another. Well, he was only down there about two weeks and he come up missing. It has always been a mystery. They went down hunting and hunting and hunting and everything. I’ve talked to people. I knew several people in Escalante. In fact, I talked to one just a year ago that remembers him real well. But they had the story that he might have swum the river and went over and married a squaw and one thing another. But anyway, this Everett Ruess had a brother in California, it’s been a couple of years ago, but he was up in his 90s but he would still like to find out what happened to Everett Ruess. So this friend of mine, we got onto that story and he made several trips out here and we worked. We went out and talked to people. And then I had a
woman come down a couple of years ago from Salt Lake. Her name was Orr and she videoed me in this den and then went on the porch and was getting all the information she could about this Everett Ruess. She said she would send me a video. But according to this Mike Rose, he knows her too, he says she’s never got it finished yet. But anyway, just between me and you, me and Mike has got that pinned down now to where we think we absolutely know, we’ve got even a confession on that Ruess deal.

JH: So somebody did him in?

WO: You bet. There was foul play. But then there’s another story, last fall, last winter, I got a call from a woman one night. She says, I’ve been calling all around in Southern Utah to find out somebody that knows something about Everett Ruess. It all centered on you. Now, she said, I live in Fallbrook, California but she said she was raised in Blanding, Utah. In 1935, that was a year after Ruess was lost, her Dad run a few cattle out on the Colorado River south of Hite which is just across the river from where Ruess was, only a little bit more north. She said, he come up missing. He was there and his name was Andy DeRooney. He come up missing. They sent a group out. They said the people that come in and reported him ten days after he had been gone, reported that he was missing, they weren’t very good characters. They was also prospecting, that uranium deal was really booming in that country. He was prospecting and he run a few cattle. They tried to make it that he had got drowned and gone down the river. She said, this was just year ago, in fact she come here and sat right there in that chair about a month or so ago, six weeks. She said, we’ve always figured, she said there is one thing I would like to know. She said, if you can remember back, my Dad came up missing in the fall of 1935, what kind of a year was that? Was the river high or low or can you remember. I said, our oldest daughter was born on January 20, 1935 and it was the warmest, pleasantest day I remember in January.

End of Tape Two Side One
Begin Tape Two Side Two

When we heard about that we figured maybe that was our Dad that had gone down the river. He was lost the year after Ruess was lost, just across the river. She said, they finally reported that this skeleton had been a person about six feet tall and she says my Dad was short so it couldn’t have been him. She said, can you tell me, do you think Everett Ruess would have been six feet tall. I said, well, I’m about 5'5" and I had to look up to him. I said, yes, he could have been in the neighborhood of six feet tall. So I sent her a book. Have you ever seen those books on Everett Ruess? All of his pictures and all of his letters he wrote in it.

JH: The one I have seen was done by W.L. Rusho that was the story, Bud Rusho was the one that did that book. That’s the one I know.

WO: Well, I sent this book down to JoAnn and anyway, I got Mike Rose onto the deal. He made two or three trips out there in the San Juan County and checked all those deals and he found out that these two men that reported him missing had been prospecting out there with him was bad characters who had been in jail, in fact even hid out. So, she figures there was foul play with her Dad but when she sit right here, it was about six weeks ago, nice woman. I said, I had an uncle lived in Blanding years and years ago, he was an old man. She said, well who was it and I said his name was Zeek Johnson. Why, she said, when I was a kid he was a churchgoer. I used to see him in church all the time. Zeek Johnson, and he’s your uncle? Yes, I said, he was my mother’s uncle but my mother was as old as him. Now my grandad Johnson was a polygamist. He has two wives and 25 kids. I’ve had about 70 aunts and uncles in my life, all dead now. She says, now that’s interesting to talk to somebody that’s got an uncle named Zeek Johnson. My Dad worked for Zeek Johnson. He run a dude outfit with horses down in the San Juan. Then she went on, now that’s just a little story. You can believe it or not, but anyway we’ve got it in writing. My sister has over here. He said that in the early days of Blanding, he went there and took up a homestead right next to Blanding.
He said there’s a lot of brush there and he said I was out, got me a plow and I was out a plowing in those brush and he said I heard a funny rattling noise back in the plow. I looked back and I had plowed out a skeleton. I would see by the bones they was human bones. I watched a minute and those bones started taking shape and pretty quick the most beautiful little Indian princess stood there. Her hair come on, everything just perfect, she smiled at me and disappeared. He said, I’ve told it in two different temples, I told it in church, I told it to people. He says its just as true as I’m standing here but it’s a hard one to believe. But anyway she started to tell me that story over the phone when we started talking about Uncle Zeek. I said, well, I can tell you the same story. She was, apparently, this Indian, the mother of this princess was apparently joined the Mormon Church and said that when the Indians drove them out of that country, they had a war there right where Blanding was, her daughter, this princess little gal, was killed. The Indians was after them and they didn’t have time to do anything but just kinda bury her in the brush so she said I talked to the general authorities of the Church about it about-how bad I felt that she didn’t get a good burial. They told me if that body was ever disturbed, that little girl would be resurrected. So she said, Uncle Zeek said he watched the resurrection of that little girl.

JH: Amazing story.

WO: We’ve got it in writing over there. All I’ve got is just a story. Uncle Zeek was a very very honorable good man. We can believe it, but it is a hard thing to make a lot of people.

JH: Tell me some more about that Cottonwood Road. You said you helped survey it.

WO: I helped to survey to get the power line down through there. We had to take a caterpillar down there to drag the poles. You know, there was rock and we couldn’t get the poles through there. We had to drag the poles to get them to fit. I was also on the advisory board for the BLM and helped them get the right of way down through there, which they have regretted a thousand times since cause I had one of the range managers I was riding with one
day, this one was on the advisory board. He says, they sure made a mistake letting this power line go down through here. A beautiful place like this and every picture you take has that power line in it. I said, that’s prettiest part of that canyon is that power line now, I helped to get it there. The Utah Power & Light, after we got the right of way, they built a big line right to the side of ours, right through the same deal. Well, then of course, when we got the line and I got to be County Commissioner, I said just build a little road down through there.

There was a fellow, he only lived up here a block from me, Sam Pollack, used to be our County Commissioner, used to be Bishop of the town, used to be Stake President of the Stake, he was a neighbor, I lived up there a block across the street. He had retired, he had been a sheep man, and he offered if we would furnish the equipment, he offered to go down there and help them through and put that road through there free of charge. He went down, Sam Pollack, did all of that work just to help the county out, he was a great guy to help people out. In fact, his family, real nice people, his daughter come and I have made them a tape of Sam Pollack’s life cause I knew him real well and told all about the jobs he had been on. I had been with him. He was a great man. He died when he was 79 and served a second time as County Commissioner. They even got him to come back and be County Commissioner. He went down and put in his time. I don’t know, a couple of months, I guess, taking that road through there, surveying it as good as they could. That’s how that road come.

But this old geologist, George Hansen, we took him down there to Paria town, we went on horses, that was before, there was just an old wagon road into Paria. We rode up Cottonwood Wash and he was so took up. He said, “there is more geology right here in this Wash and he said, I’ve been all over the world. I worked for these oil companies. But anyway, he said I’m going to bring my class down here to see this.” He said, “this shouldn’t be Cottonwood Wash, it should be Temple Wash. It’s pushed up and on its side. He said, this should be Temple Wash and not Cottonwood Wash. I think he took his deal in there but
I was with him. He told me all the formations.

I was with him when he was a great fellow, these school teachers we had down there, was so excited about the Indian country, finding arrowheads. The principal of our school up here, he was a great big guy, he was kinda near-sighted, oh he could see, he wore heavy glasses. We come up to camp there at Molley's Nipple on our way up, real Indian country. A big sand ridge went there and back in those days, they weren't after people for hunting arrowheads. Anyway, he was wanting to find arrowheads so bad. I said, this is a good country. They went up there and they went down and Old George Hansen was sitting there on an old wood pile there by a cabin, he was sitting there and he had his knife. Right where the blades fasten shut, there was a little groove, he had a nice piece of flint. He took his knife and he shaped out almost a perfect arrowhead. I said, George, I said, its getting late and we have got to go on up to Swallow Park tonight and Old Holmes won't leave until he finds an arrowhead. Let me take that and I'll go see if I can put it where he can find it. (Laughter) I took it up and got in front of Old Holmes and accidently dropped it where I figured he would find it and he went right over it and missed it. Of course, he couldn't see as good as I could so I picked it up the second time, dropped it and he found it. Just tickled to death he had found an arrowhead. They he didn't want to go until he found another. (Laughter) I went down and got the second one Hansen made and dropped it. Up there all the way, of course there was about five of those school teachers. He kept rousing all the rest them, "I'm near-sighted, I've got the worst eyes and I'm the only one that's found the arrowheads." Me and Old Hansen are the only two that knew. We went up and camped that night and then the next night they rode over home and we stopped out on Deer Range on kind of a rocky knoll called Cry Knoll and Dr. Hansen picked up a piece of flint, there was quite a lot of flint there. He was chipping it away and made a pretty good looking arrowhead there. We was riding along and he rode up to Old Holmes, Holmes had seen him making this arrowhead. He said to Holmes, would you like this arrowhead I've just chipped up here? Holmes took it and said, "yes I'd like that, but he said, it sure is not as valuable as these two old natives I've got here in my pocket." I worked with Holmes on the school
board for a number of years after that and he finally got to be head of the Snow College up
to Ephraim. All the time, I seen him a good many times before he died, there was never a
word, me and Old George Hansen was the only two people knowed they was not originals.
It just tickled him to death. We didn’t tell any stories or anything, any nontruths, but we
kept the secret that did Old Floyd Holmes a world of good.

But there are just a lot of things like that. Did you ever hear of Old Lucky Severson? Did
you see that tape Highway-Byways? Well, I’ve had people just lately, had dozens of people,
seen it on TV last night. Well, Old Lucky called me from Washington, D.C. where his office
was. He had heard Butch Cassidy and heard I tell stories. He said, we’re going to do a film
in Southern Utah, Highways and Byways and we would like to come and see you. So they
came here one morning. They had five cars, five men and two women. Old Lucky, I took
him in and showed him all this stuff. He said, I want to take you over on the hill and do
some filming. Well, it was a real windy day, it was in late March or in April and they went
out on the knoll. There is a big rock sitting out there and they put the cars trying to break
the wind and Old Lucky and I sat on that rock and I told him stories for about three-quarters
of an hour. But it was so windy the Butch Cassidy stuff didn’t take but Bryce Canyon did,
I’m on there telling them about Bryce Canyon. Over here at the bank and over at Arbys and
over to Cedar there a year ago I met a gal on the street said, “aren’t you Wallace Ott, well
I see you on TV last night.” Here just recently, the Forest Service bought the film and let
BYU show it and only allowed it to play it twice a year. My son down at St. George has
had patients come in and she said, “isn’t Wallace Ott your Dad?” “Yeah.” “Well, I see him
on TV last night.” So my son called the TV, we didn’t get that channel down here unless
you got a dish, and we didn’t have one. He called them and wanted to get the video of that
and they said no they couldn’t and they was only allowed to play it twice a year.

So, there’s a guy from up to Magna called me, I never seen him. His name is David Brown
but I used to be over the buses and limousines for Utah Parks. He said, I was at Bryce, Zions
and Grand Canyon, so I know a few people down there and I want to come down and bring
the family. There would be 20 some odd. He says, I'm retired but I have reservations there at the lodge in Bryce Canyon for the 3rd and 4th of July next year. Well, they come down on the 3rd and the family filled this whole room. They had me telling stories. His mother was here, she was 86 but still able to get around. Well, he told me over the phone, that was before I ever seen him, I told him about this video that Lucky Severson took. He says, I've got a sister, twin sister, we are 60 years old, that lives in Provo and works for Robert Redford up at Sundance. She's quite a goer. I'll have her go down to BYU and see if she can get it. She went down and they wouldn't let her have it. So he called me and he said, I am going down tomorrow and I'll get you that video. He went down and here comes this nice video from BYU. Oh, it's a good one. If all the stuff I had told been on there it would have been great but it take but the last end was good where I sat there with Old Lucky telling this deal. Here, they been a playing it a lot the last few years. The first of January last year, they said they had so many calls for that tape. It tells all about this movie stuff down at Kanab and the Pony Express and all this pioneer stuff and one this another, all this movie stuff.

On this same movie that I'm on, they show Ronald Reagan and all these movie stars that come there to Kanab, they are on the same tape and tell about all their lives. Well, I went down and when they filmed Buffalo Bill I went down and worked for them two weeks and worked and rode in the calvary with them. A guy up here by the name of Jack Chynoweth is still here and we sat on the same rock. They would bring the lunches out to Kanab. We camped there but the movie stars would come back and forth from Kanab. Me and Jack Chynoweth sat on the same rock as Linda Darnell and ate our lunch one day. A famous movie star like Linda Darnell. She was a school teacher in that Buffalo Bill. I worked there for at least two weeks. I was there when they filmed “Green Grass in Wyoming”, why they'd film that down around Johnson, the driest place in the whole world, and all the tourists would come by would wonder why “Green Grass in Wyoming” was filmed here and when they needed the green grass they went up on Cedar Mountain there at the movie ranch where the meadows are. The “Green Grass of Wyoming” was two-thirds of it filmed there around Kanab where they wanted that color of that country I guess. Then they had old Burl
Ives. That’s when he sang that popular song “Jimmy Crack Corn and I Don’t Care”. I was there and heard him play his guitar and sing that. He was big and fat then. He slimmed down quite a bit before he died. Burl Ives got to be pretty famous, you know.

JH: Singing folk songs.

WO: Yes, and that Santa Claus deal when he narrated that and does that singing. He was there and when I’d see him he had a big dog, quite a big dog. At night, he would walk that dog up and down the street. He was quite a character. We seen a lot of those. He and Buffalo Bill it was Maurine O’Hare and... oh, the other name just slipped me now. You know, in that movie, I watched them down there on some of that stuff and they was so many fakes. Some of those western deals was just a one-sided deal. They would go in a pool hall or a beer joint or something and it looked like the real thing. But it was just a one-sided wall, they got some of the old buildings there now. I was down there a year ago in a helicopter and took pictures there. But I was down there when they did that. One thing that was interesting to me, down there at the old Paria town they was making a film and they had the most beautiful well out in front of the old cabins there made out of fancy rock, oh gosh, it stood up about that high. They had the finger crossed and the hand was on the rope going down in the well, when the guy would come to take the picture they would crank that up and pretty soon water would start to dripping off the rope. They would bring a bucket of water up, dump it and put the water back down in. I thought it was funny they could do all that work. After they had kinda moved off their set just a little while, I went over to the well and looked. It was only about from here to the floor deep. The bucket was sitting in there with the rope in the bucket with a little water in. When they would wind that up the water would drip. Everybody’d think they was drinking that water. That’s just how much fake some of those movies are. It’s just unbelievable what they can do. But they make good pictures.

JH: They make them believable.
WO: Yes, they make them believable. I was the first guy, the guy that runs the helicopter up here at Ruby’s Inn was a County Commissioner. Him and his wife come here and they come out here to our porch and wanted to do this. He has bought him a place here now. His wife he had then, they’ve divorced and went back to New York but he’s got him another woman now. I go riding with him. Two years ago on my birthday, he says I want to take you on that big trip. They take us an $1100 trip but I wanted to give you that for your birthday and you can take two people with you. Well, my wife was in St. George so I got my son and his wife that lives down here and we went and got in his helicopter up to Bryce. Of course, I drove with him quite a bit. His wife would say, “there is always room, if you want a ride just get in.” Been over on Bryce a number of times. He got us in his helicopter and went all around Bryce and then he went right down in the Bull Valley Gorge. It a steep, narrow, deep gorge. He went right down in that gorge. It goes down in the old Paria Creek and then on down to the movie town. He took us down there. We stopped and took pictures and then come up the Cottonwood Wash to where Hackberry comes in and then come right through Hackberry. That’s a real scenic outfit. Then right over Kodachrome Basin Park and right over our house here and back to Ruby’s Inn. That was just two years ago. They took me on that trip for my birthday, $1100 birthday trip.

JH: That sounds like a beautiful vista for you.

WO: I’d like to just show you a few things before you go in there.

JH: We haven’t talked about you as a cattleman nor really explored your experience as a member of that advisory committee. I think that is a really significant contribution. I would like to here that some time.

WO: To the beginning of that, in 1944 I was elected to that advisory board and served there for 30 years. Worked with five different range managers, most of them are dead now. I worked on there for 30 years. I helped to set up the allotments, I attended meetings there, I served
on the, well, represented District 2, which was the Kanab office. That takes in all of Kane County and just practically all of Garfield County and a little bit of Washington County.

This new monument they have set up here nearly 1.7 million acres is the country that I was on the advisory board. I don’t believe there is a section in that whole monument that I haven’t been on and helping to divide and set it up. I worked there with them and attended meetings up to Salt Lake in the federal building, got that set up. Now this monument is taking practically all the winter range that we winter on here in this country. You can look at the maps. I have maps of the monument here in the county. They have taken at least two-thirds of Garfield and Kane County and set it up. Another thing that has happened, now I took some fellows over here, years ago, it was in the 1930s, to this coal north of Henrieville. Its called the Davies Coal Mine. Took a fellow by the name of Davies up there and he wanted to get a release on that coal, it is good coal. He went up to Salt Lake and met, it was Jim McKean and George Bywaters was heading that mining coal deal in Salt Lake. We tried to get a lease on that, no, there was a mine down there and people was just a starving trying to sell coal. But we found a school section that joined in that had quite a lot of coal in this big one, there is a 27 foot vein of coal and it’s the kind of coal they want. It’s the least pollutant. Its good in BTUs, they call it number 11 in BTUs but it hasn’t got rosin or oil or anything in. We have burned a lot of it here and very little fumes come out of it and it’s the coal they want. When Clinton took this monument, he tied up all this Kaiparowits coal. When I was County Commissioner, that outfit that was going to build Kaiparowits plant sent an engineer, their head engineer from Phoenix, I was County Commissioner and he invited me and I took the banker with me. We met him down, it was Glen Canyon City then, its Big Water now. We got in that 4-wheel van and took us over up Smokey Mountain,, heads of the creek and Nipple Bench and Large Nipple Bench and all that country and showed us where they drilled. They’d spent millions of dollars finding that coal and they told us how far it was down to the coal. Some of it could even be- you know...

JH: An open pit?
WO: Yeah. Stripped mined. But most of it they would have to go down and they told us how thick the coal was and the quality of it and all. They was going to build this big Kaiparowits plant down here and they was having a big todo over it. Governor Cal Rampton was the governor, I was County Commissioner. He appointed me on a committee with Dixie Leavitt, Dixie was president of the senate, I have been in a meeting with Dixie Leavitt. In fact, I was one of his supporters when he run for governor. He used my name in his campaign, I helped him. Got him almost 90% vote here in Garfield County. Dixie was considered one of my friends. I don’t know Mike personally but if I had to get to him, I would talk to his Dad. He was my friend. (Laughter) He worked on that and had those meetings trying to get that Kaiparowits plant. I’ll tell you, the plants takes a lot of water, they could have used the Colorado River water we are losing, Utah’s got a right for 17% percent of that river and we can’t get it all out. We could use Colorado River water, we could use Utah Coal and built that big power plant and when they put Cecil Andrus in as Secretary of the Interior, they blocked it. The company that was doing all that and had spent millions of dollars quit, just give up. So there we are, we are still losing our water down the Colorado and that coals a settin’ there. This monument, I’ve got the map of it in there. I’ve been talking to the BLM about it and I know every inch of that country. They come around and left a little strip here in town and then they followed the park here and they . . . .

End of Tape Two Side Two
Tape Three Side One

October 14, 1998, in the home of Wallace Ott in Tropic and we are talking about his experience as a member of the BLM Advisory Board. My name is Jay Haymond. Go ahead . . .

WO: This line goes out and takes this country and when it comes down to this Johnson Canyon, its in the red formation, a beautiful place. In fact, my great grandad was buried there in Johnson Canyon. We got down there and we crossed that to the west and made a circle out around, for no other reason, its not monument material, its mostly pinion trees and
sagebrush, but they made this circle on the west side of Johnson Canyon for no other purpose only than to corral that Alton coal field. Now, they took me on a tour of that Alton coal field the same as they did the Smokey Mountain coal and they showed me where they’d drilled and how deep most of that Alton coal could have been stripped if they’d allowed it. But they made this monument and went over there for no other reason than corral that and then they went on down nearly to the Arizona border and then back around over to that Glenn Canyon deal.

JH: So, who’s opposed to the Alton Coal?

WO: Well, the story goes its that Asian outfit that furnished the President a lot of campaign money and that why they locked all that coal up is one of the main reasons. Of course, I don’t think they would allow them to strip that in Utah but it could still be mined from underneath and the reason they wanted that coal, and then they drilled some water wells, they had to go quite deep to get water, and they figured on grinding that coal here at Alton and slurry and made a line and slurry it down in Nevada down by Las Vegas to run their power plants. That was their purpose of that coal. We have had too many environmental people that just won’t allow us to do those things. Now, I’ll tell you another thing, just a couple of years ago, I got a call one day from a guy in Fillmore. Said, “I’m in Fillmore on my way back to Salt Lake City and we got an oil company called Doller Oil.” Ever heard of them?

JH: Never heard of them.

WO: Doller Oil Company. Said, “we got a company there we are building up. Been down to Kanab and we found that you own the mineral rights on some ground between Cannonville, Utah and Kanab, Utah, way out on the Deer Range. There is not a lot of patented ground out in that area.” He says, “we found out you own the mineral rights on about 240 acres of ground out there and we want to lease them.” I said, “I’ve had them leased before and then they had dropped the leases, what are you paying?” “Well, we’ll give you $5 an acre for the
first year, we would like to lease them for at least 10 years. That would give us 10 years to do the drilling." I said, "well, why don't we figure something out." I never did meet Doller in person but I had many a correspondence with him over the phone. They leased my ground out there. And then they had a map of all the other private ground in that area, it wasn't a lot, and they wanted me to get permission to lease on them. I've got the package in there yet that they sent me that I was supposed to work with them. I started talking with some of the heirs, some of the people was dead that owned the leases, I was talking to some of the heirs to get this ground for him.

Another outfit come down with a plane and there was a president of this company and then he had a geologist and then the pilot and then had me get in with them. That's when they struck this oil over at Escalante. They had me get in the front so I could show them where to go. I took over and showed them all the Escalante field and down the Colorado and back around and up by Kanab and right back over home and back. But anyway, this Doller had got this deal. He said that to get an oil dome, they got to be four sides, four blocks. He said its just like a corral, its no good if you have a corral and leave the gate open on one side. That's the way with oil, you have to have four blocks. This country out here, we flew over it, you've got the cockscomb on the east, that's that Cottonwood Wash cockscomb, right up here west of Tropic is the old Poncigunt Fault, runs clear into Arizona and out into, I believe, Emery County, one of the biggest faults in the whole country. Right in between there, you got the big fault on this side, the cockscomb on this side, the north country all tips down, we know there is a block there but we are trying to find a south. Well, they figured they'd found it out this side of Kanab, the found what they considered was a block. So they wanted me to check on this, quite a big area. They said, if we can get a lease on the private ground first and then they were going to lease all the federal ground, mostly federal ground around it. Said, we think if we go deep enough here now they are going to find oil, but we are mostly now after natural gas. They even traced where, if they struck this natural gas, they fault it down, they just recently put that gas down into to St. George - Hurricane area and they traced it from out here where they had put it into the natural gas lines down in Hurricane. They even went so far as to trace that and had it all going and sent me this stuff and Clinton made a monument out of it. Blocked it. Doller has quit and I've got all this material, a big
package, right here to work on. They was going to do some drilling here in this country. So that’s the way we’ve been fooled here. I’ve been do dozens of these wilderness meetings, this environmental deal has just got so rigid, we are just locked up.

I’m an environmentalist in a lot of ways. I believe now, me and my son here went out on our range and spent $30,000 a few years ago doing some receding and put in some check dams to block the erosion and did it all on our own. I believe in taking care of the earth and see to it. I remember when I was just a kid, my Dad got one of the first permits up here on the East Fork. There are still some of that permit in our family. He started out with a hundred head permit up there, that was back in about the turn of the century, 1906 and was when the Forest Service came out with a hundred head permit and that same permit now over the years, of course it’s some of the heirs that owns it, is down to seventeen head. They just kept whittling on it and whittling on it. The permit we’ve got out here, me and my boy, of course on the monument now, I bought range rights out there for over 1400 AUMs. You are acquainted with what an AUM is? (animal unit month)

JH: Yes.

WO: Well that same permit now is 603 AUMs. They’ve just kept cutting down and cutting down. Now I think it was over done. Well I’ve watched this range here, in my days when I was a kid, I started riding a horse when I was 6 years old, helping my Dad run cattle up on, that’s before we knew anything about Bryce Canyon. I rode a horse out on the rim and looked off in Bryce Canyon and was rounding up cows and thought it was pretty. But I had never been anywhere only here and down on the ranch. I though there was Bryce Canyons all over the earth. In fact, I tell that on this tape of Old Lucky Severson’s on that movie. I thought it was pretty. I watched them build that road from Ruby’s Inn up to Bryce Canyon with a team and horses. Those big trees, they’d saw them down with an old cross-cut saw and put powder down in to blow the roots out.

When I got older, I helped my Dad, Ruby’s Inn built a lodge up near the rim, just a log lodge, and I helped my Dad. He’d buy beef from my Dad and we’d go with the wagon, kill a beef and take down there. They didn’t have any power but they had saw dust and ice and stuff and store his meat in. Then he sold out to Union Pacific and went and built Ruby’s Inn.
When they made that into a park, when I got older I knew the first park ranger that was in charge up there. I went up and worked for him. There was a contractor by the name of Bill Taylor from Ogden. I remember this stuff real well. He contracted to build a road from where the lodge is now way out to the point, out to Rainbow Point. I went out and drove truck for him. I hauled some of the first gravel that went out that road and worked on it. This fellow now that runs the horse concession up there now, he’s my cousin, or his mother is my cousin. Paul Mangum, I work with him. He’s owns the concessions in Zions and Bryce Canyon and the North Rim of the Grand Canyon. He has about two hundred head of horses and mules. I go with him. Just a year a go I went down to Grand Canyon, got on a mule with him and rode clear to the bottom of the Grand Canyon. I’d go on a trip with him, he takes these dudes down in Bryce Canyon. They were still doing it til’ the weather closed them out.

I was down on a trip one day and they had about eighteen or twenty dudes and then they had two riders or guides, one in head and one behind. They was having quite a talkative woman on the trip. She just kept asking questions about everything. When you come back, you go down one trail and come back you come down quite a high ridge and it comes down this way and the trail comes down this ridge and you look right off in the bottom of Bryce Canyon, right down there where Wall Street and what not and then there’s some beautiful ponderosa, most of them young ponderosa pines. Going down that ridge, this woman looked down and there was a couple of buildings in the trees. She asked the guide, what’s those buildings down there in the trees? The guide says, why those are summer homes. She says, I didn’t know they would allow them to build summer homes up on the park. The guide says, now you wait til we get down there and see them you will see they are summer homes because summer homes - some are for the men and some are for the women. (Laughter) Got down there and that’s what they were.

Bryce Canyon it has been quite a help to our country. Employed quite a few people, brings a lot of tourists, but where we used to run cattle there, its people now. I rode there and run cattle there before it was ever known to be in a park. On that too, I watched that range deteriorate. Up that East Fork Creek there used to be five or six big herds of sheep up to a 1000 to 1500 head of ewes and lambs on both sides and underneath the browse ridges. Now there is nothing and the cattle is cut away now. But they did over do that range. In my
Dad’s day those old men didn’t know anything about range conservative or control. And I watched those gullies form, the creeks get big, the rivers get big. I watched them deteriorate. Then when I got on the advisory board all those years, I helped with some of that and this range now is coming back. Its far better than it was. I had one of the first permits that was ever issued. We called it Taylor Grazing. An old guy from Colorado, he was either a congressman or a senator, introduced the Taylor Grazing. When I first was on the board it was the Taylor Grazing Act. Now they changed it to BLM, Bureau of Land Management. But I watched this range deteriorate. I watched these rivers floods go down.

Now this Paria River they call it, goes right down below town, goes down and goes into the Colorado River, down to Lees Ferry, about 12 miles below Glenn Canyon River, its one of the big mud contributors to Lake Mead now. My Dad said years ago, when they got all these sheep and all these cattle, these streams got big and muddy and this old Paria River its steep. Then Bryce Canyon formation, there’s not much vegetation on it. They say that erosion is what keeps them in business. That keeps the moist rock washed off and the sights beautiful. Just a sprinkle on that ground up there will make - he said one of the floods that come down a past down here, its steep and washed a big gully down through there and you can hear them roar for miles.

One guy said he was down below town here one day and he heard this big flood a coming. He was a ways away from the creek and he decided to walk over to the creek and watch the flood as it went by. He said, just before he got to the creek, he jumped a couple of coyotes. Of course, they run the other way from people. They run towards the flood and he wondered what would happen when they hit that flood. Said when they come to that flood they just run right across it like it wasn’t there. (Laugher) Well, Dad said people, they thought the story was just a little bit far fetched and they thought it wasn’t good for the kids to hear people that was supposed to be good men tell a story like that. So they had what they called a Kangaroo Court for him. They had him in court for telling stories that wasn’t true. They questioned him and he said yes, those coyotes went right across that flood. They was just about to convict him when another guy rose up and he said, now wait a minute. I was down the creek about a half mile below him and I was watching that flood as it went by. He says I could still see those coyote tracks there where it went by me. (Laughter)
JH: First liar never has a chance.

WO: But anyway, they didn’t convict him. You know, there is a lot of silt that goes down this deal. And then these guys, they used to call, they had a lot of different names for these floods. They called them boosters, stem-winders, trash-lifters, they pick up a lot of trash as they go by you know. They told the story about when they talked about all this trash and silt going down this Colorado River, they said there was colored people one time, after slavery, I tell this story about the colored people, not because I dislike them. I have worked with colored people and I have a lot of respect for some of the colored people. But anyway, they said colored people after the Civil War, the farmers, the land owners would lease some of their land to the colored people and they would farm it for their share. They called it ‘share farming’. There was a bunch of colored people in this one valley a farming and a terrible drought him them. They said it was just a terrible drought. The colored people, like some of other people are kinda religious, so they decided they’d hold a meeting and pray for rain, a storm. We do that here. I remember a number of meetings. It didn’t just cloud up and rain the next day, it might help. Buy anyway, these colored people they decide to hold a meeting and pray for rain. And so they did. The old parson got up and he said, “Oh, Lord, he said, we have a terrible drought here. The crops are burning up and we need some moisture. He says, could you send us some rain? We would like one of those sizzle, saddle-soaking rains if you could send it to us. But he says, if you can’t send us that, we’d even take a trash-lifter.” He says, there was an older lady rose up and said, “Old Parson, please don’t pray for no trash-lifters. I just done ___my son-in-law yesterday. (Laughter)

Tape Three End of Side One

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, WALLACE OTT, 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  
October 14, 1998

Primary Subject  
Life History and interesting events

Other Topics

Number of Tapes 3

Signature  
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