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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, Suzi Montgomery, Marsha Holland and other volunteers.. 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.

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INTERVIEW WITH: Thomas Ephraim Richards
INTERVIEWER: Helma Haas, daughter
INTERVIEW NUMBER: one
DATE OF INTERVIEW: February 1979
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: House of Helma Haas, Tropic, Utah
Richard's home
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: Cattle ranching, Butch Cassidy, early life in Bryce
Valley, Lee's Ferry
TRANSCRIBER: Marsha Holland
DATE: May 9, 2002

TR: We went down in House Rock Valley; we brought back a bunch of horses from California. They had four or five outlaws in them. One of them was a pretty horse, a big bay horse. Little Tim tried to ride him, but he threw him off. He got on him again and we hitched the buck straps on and got a hold of the buck straps and told them to turn him loose. And then he threw him again. Earl Willis crawled under the fence and struck at him and broke one of his spurs. Shucked his spur and broke it. So we was building fence and Moody come and wanted to know if we could get that horse to work him. I took him and started to work him. He was dragging logs. You just used one horse to drag logs with. Drag them along the fence where we put them up. So I had to walk all the time. The other people they had horses and they ride them too. Drag the logs in and then they would ride back out for the other log. I had to walk. Pretty soon I got him so I could turn him loose and he would drag his logs just as good as the other horses. Drug them right in. I had to lead him back. One day I decided here is a nice little place, and see if I could ride him. I got on him and he looked up through the blind bridle and saw me and just threw his head down and made one big long

jump and stopped. I talked to him and got his head up and set there a minute and [he] finally looked back at me again. Then he went down with his head and whirled around and made two big jumps. I yelled 'whoa' at him. He stopped and I talked to him and got his head up again. Finally he looked back at me and just started to wag his ears and walked off with me. After that I could ride that horse anyplace. Vinnie came down and said, "Ah, that kid riding that horse?" "Yes he is riding him, everywhere." They called the horse Bullets too. People couldn't believe it. "You get down had have dinner with them. You get to have the day off." Bullets [a person with the same name as the horse] went down and had dinner with us and watched me ride that horse. After dinner, he just went with me wherever. I went after four or five logs then he had to go. He went back down to camp said "Wait 'til you see Bullets. I couldn't believe my own eyes," he said. "That kid riding that horse everywhere". He couldn't believe it he said.

HH: How old were you?

TR: I can't remember how old I was then. I wasn't very old.

HH: Was that before you were married?

TR: Yes, oh, yes. Long before I was married. I don't remember how old.

HH: Tell about why you started to carry the mail.

TR: In Escalante, I and my father went down on the Fifty Mile, helping to get the cattle off that part. Then they wanted a fence and corral built. We stayed there and helped build the corral. Snow still up on the summit. You could look off on both sides and saw snow. One night we decided to come home. We went off in the Escalante Desert and came into somebody's sheep camp, with a couple of

fellows. We had to stay there with them that night. Next day we came home and it snowed on us that night, then it snowed on us that day. We got off the desert. We got home and Grandpa came in with the mail sick, he was awful sick. It snowed all night and we had a lot of snow the next morning. I went with the mail later. My father though was splitting logs. My father hit out, hit that wedge and it flew up and hit him in the face. Swelled his eye shut. So I went with the mail. I carried the mail five months that year from Escalante to the top of the hill.

HH: Tell about the time the horse went down with you.

TR: Grandpa had an old mare and she get to feeding her and she felt so good we turned her out to water, and couldn't get her in. He said, "You can't ride her." Next day I rode her with the mail and when I got about half way, down she went. She just started to sweat all at once and down she went. So, I put my mailbag on my shoulder and went on. Met Uncle Henry at the top of the hill and he had two mail sacks. I couldn't carry them so he had to go back with me. He went back to Escalante with me. Put the mail sacks [on the Uncle's horse] and take turns. One of us would ride and the other one walk. Went back and met Uncle John and Uncle Will. They had left Escalante and had come to see why I was so late. They were down to where the mare had gone down trying to get her back up. [He continued on towards the cabin that lay in between Henrieville and Escalante]

HH: That is where you took your over shoes off didn't you?

TR: Yes, I got up to the house [cabin] and I took my overshoes off and stepped where the horses stepped. The wind had blown the snow 'til you couldn't see. I stepped in there and oh, it made it hard walking. Wish I had my overshoes.

HH: Tell about the time you lived in Yellow Creek and mother was driving the team.
You went back to get some apricots.

TR: We got some apricots and was going back and she took the line to drive back and I went back [in the wagon] to get some apricots. She hit the horses and hit a big chuckhole and out I went. When she looked back there I was sitting in the road with a hand full of apricots.

HH: She couldn't hardly see you through the dust. {Laughter}

TR: Butch Cassidy, he was born down here in Circleville. Lived there. He got to be a real outlaw. One day he left his place and came up to Panguitch with a packhorse. Cameron and Foy, two old bald headed fellows seen him. They decided to follow him and catch him and have him arrested. He started up Red Canyon and looked back and he could see these fellows following him. He got up there on the point and tied his horses up. He got up on this point and let the two bald headed fellows get up pretty close and he shot right between them. My father he carried the mail {Thomas Richards] and he always stopped and had dinner at a certain place. While he was having dinner old Butch Cassidy came to his camp. He told about these fellows following him. He got up on this ledge and when they got pretty close he shot right between them. Well those old fellows spurred their horses. They just turned and went back kicking up. Butch started to eat then he would just keel over laughing. It was the most comical thing he had ever saw, those two old fellows a-trying to get him out of there. They didn't have any
- business trying to follow Butch Cassidy, shoot, those old guys they couldn't keep

up with him. {Thomas Ephraim was present during this meeting with Butch and his father.}

HH: Tell about when they used to hold races up at Panguitch Lake, the day they shot the Indian.

TR: You mean Panguitch Lake? They used to go up there for the Twenty-Fourth of July for the horse races. One day they was running races and this Indian knew my father and come by the camp and started to talk to him. Come up while they was racing and we heard a shot. Pretty soon somebody came down and told us they shot that Indian.

HH: Just because he was an Indian?

TR: Just because he was an Indian I guess. My father said he was a good Indian.

HH: Tell about the first time you took Mother out.

TR: The first time I took Mother I came up to Tropic and the Tropic guys here said let's go to Henrieville to the dance. I haven't got no team, but I have a buggy and a harness down here to carry the mail so I couldn't take the horses right then. So my Uncle's horse was big horse, a workhorse and was bit balky. They couldn't break him. I just had a little mare. She had never been worked. He hooked them up and they did everything to try and get him started. He bowed his neck and away he went. I didn't know anybody here in Tropic. They said they would make me acquainted with the prettiest girl in Tropic. He took me over to her house to make me acquainted with her. Your mother wanted to do something so she excused herself. She went by herself...said she'd be back in a minute. They asked if I had asked her yet and I said no. I went back over and said did you

know me before I went to Wyoming? No, I didn't. I went to Cannonville once and they was running races and my girlfriend she said I'll show you the prettiest guy in our country, the swellest guy. She pointed you out to me. You had just run the horse through on a race. You took your hat off and I thought what a pretty lot of black hair you had. I asked you to go with me the dance. He asked one of her friends and said, "I gotta ask two girls to go" We went and got in the buggy and went to Henrieville to the dance. Down between Henrieville and Cannonville the sand was deep and we couldn't cross the bottom we just sat there and talked. We got tired of pulling on his neck and hit him and made him mad and away he went running with us and then he walked. We just sat there and talked and finally we got tired of standing in the cold. By the time we got to Tropic the sun was shining. All night with a balky horse. We went together after that and we was married in a few years.

Long time ago the feed got awful poor in House Rock Valley. We had to ship some cattle to Mexico. Had a ranch down there. We gathered the cattle, 1700 head and drove then to Flagstaff. When we got there a fellow said, "We get a ticket here on a passenger train. It is all down hill for a certain ways and feel it'd be alright. We got our cattle loaded and headed down to the passenger train and got on the train. There were three of us. You see I was going to ship with them. A fellow, he got cigars and gave me one and I smoked it. He was ornery guy, he always wanted me to be a smoking when we was getting cattle to be like one of them. I wouldn't smoke. But I smoked this cigar and I was just getting it smoked when this fellow comes through again with cigars, give me one, and I

smoked that. All this guy did was talk. He said, "We got them a going our way now." I got the cigars and smoked about half of that one and turned sick. Everything started to whirl around and came down onto me and I kind of roused up until I was sick. I got up and I just grabbed one seat then the other and hit the back of the car and in the restroom. And wasn't I a sick kitty.. Somebody tried to come and tried to get in but I had the door locked. In a little bit somebody else tried to come in. I thought by gosh, I couldn't keep this place locked up. I've got to get outta here. so I opened the door and staggered out, laid down by where the cars stick together and oh, I was sick! Gee! Laid down awhile and got so I could raise up onto my hand and the conductor came through. "Oh, you get inside!", he said, "We can't stand this. You can't ride out here. You get inside. " I just keeled over and started to reel again. I couldn't vomit any more. Everything was gone out of me. He went off. In a little while I got so I could set up again. I set up and held my head on my hand and thought, well, I better get inside or he'll be back after me again. I got up and opened the door and just as soon as I opened the door I was sick from the smoking. I lay back down. Layed there and got feeling pretty good. I thought hey, I wish I could get back up in that other car. The conductor came back through. "What is the matter with you?" He says, "Got too much to drink?" That is what he thought that I was, drunk. I said no and I told him what happened, that I smoked these cigars. He just keeled over and kicked up his jiggers and laughed. He said you are the whitest man I ever saw. You don't have a bit of color in your face. You look just like a piece of chalk. I said well I can't go back in there to ride and I can't even get through there. He said, "I'll have a

stop down here a ways and I'll come and get you." So when they stopped he came and got me and took me up in the other car. He was just a killin' himself a laughing all the time. He said you are the whitest man I ever seen in my life, just like a piece of chalk. I went up and got in the other car and rode up there. We changed cars and they couldn't smoke in the car where I was. I wouldn't stand for smoking anyway when I showed the ticket.

HH: You made the rest of the trip alright then?

TR: We got down to the cattle, and unloaded them, started home. They rode in the smoker and I rode in the other cart. I couldn't even go back in there. Once I opened the door and looked in and I was sick. (laughter) I had all the smoke I wanted.

HH: Where were you taking the cattle?

TR: Into Mexico. Taking down to the line then we left them.

HH: How many of you went?

TR: Three of us, three of us went with the cattle.

HH: Can you remember who it was?

TR: I can't remember the one fellows name. Earl. Willis, a cousin and this guy, I forgot the name. He was an ornery guy. He just wanted me to smoke. He just wouldn't let me alone. Just asked me all the time, to smoke. And everything he could to get me too.

HH: Is that the last time you smoked?

TR: The last time I smoked. I can't ride in the back in the smoker. The last time I was on a train, I couldn't go back there. Just opened the door for just a minute and I get the shivers.

HH: I'll be darned. Did you ride horses very far on that cattle drive or where they mostly on the train?

TR: We rode horses, yes! We drove those cattle to Flagstaff from House Rock Valley.

HH: For heavens sake. How many days?

TR: About four weeks anyway.

HH: There was more on the drive than just the three of you, wasn't there?

TR: Oh, yes, yes. There was a whole bunch of us on the drive. A big bunch of us.

HH: What did you have to worry about? There wasn't Indians to worry about then?

TR: It was kind of flap with Mexico then. We couldn't cross the line. We just went and unloaded the cattle at the line, they told not to go over the line into Mexico. That was the last of my smoking. (at Lee's Ferry) The Indians they'd come over there and stay there all night. Going on a trip, they would just cook the meal all night long. Cook something then eat it, then another one would cook something and eat it and another one would cook something and eat it and they just cooked all night long. They said when they went on a trip like that, they would eat like that and they need not eat when they were on the trip. Come out up in this country and around, and they didn't have anything to eat. They would just eat it right there and it would have to last.

HH: They would pick up a dirty can to cook in too didn't they?

TR: Yes they would pick up an old dirty can and cook in it, one we would use for waste can. They didn't need anything to cook in.

HH: This is when you and Mama and, and you had Nile, was Maxine born yet? (This is when the family was living at Lee's Ferry at Shady Dell)

TR: I don't think so.

HH: And Earl and Leah and they had Earline at Lee's Ferry (This was the other family that lived in the same home and ran the ranch with the Richards). What was the Indian's name that carried the mail? Can you remember?

TR: Dan. It was Dan that carried the mail all the time.

HH: Tell about him eating fruit.

TR: He would come over and bring the mail once a month and he sure liked to stay there [at the ranch] Nyle, we had him a Jumping Jack [baby device]. And he went back and told all the Indian fellows about Nyle and his jumping jack. Oh, he loved to watch him, and Nyle would show off for him. He would kick up his heels

HH: Well, when he ate fruit he just threw the cores in the house, didn't he?

TR: He would eat his apple and throw the core. He was dirty. Course he had all the Indians guys come over and see Nile.

HH: How many wives did he have?

TR: He had two. He had more kids than he had chickens. (Laughter)

HH: This tape was made February 1979. Dad is eighty-nine years old on January the 26th of 1979.

Helma continued on this tape with a memory of the last big winter, 1979, that the Bryce Valley had as well as some family activities during that winter. Thomas passed away on July 24th of 1982.

HH: The Weeping Willow tree was cut down February the fifteenth 1979. We had about twelve feet of it left. I hope it will grow back. The kids have all had so much fun in it through the years. It has been such a bad winter this winter that the snow broke some of the big limbs off. The worst one that they have had in thirty-eight years. That is a long time and wouldn't you know it would happen this year. The snow has been up over the fences, and big drifts. The cattlemen have lost quite a few of their cattle and they are still battling to save them. Dad is quite happy to see the big tree down. I'm sure he had been worried about it for a few years. But it wasn't rotten at all, so any luck at all maybe it will grow back for us. I don't think it will be as pretty as it once was, even if it does. Lewie had been out working hours and hours sawing and cutting wood and there is still hours and hours of work left out there. Maybe he will soon get it done, I hope. I don't suppose we will need to make any changes that we hated to make worse than the tree on this place. It started to snow on November 2nd and after that it has laid on the ground until now. Today is February the 28th. And it looks like we have got enough snow for another two or three months. It is really stacked up. We have had to take it off the roofs twice this winter. And in all my life I can never

remember seeing snow shoveled off roofs. There was some damage done to houses where they didn't get it off in time here in town. The banquet room at Ruby's Inn caved in and did Two hundred and fifty thousand dollars worth of damage up there. We have really had a winter. But in spite of it we have been able to get the mail every morning, which seems so important to Dad. And I think Lewie feels like his shovel is glued right to his hand, so it had really been a chore to keep the roads open. Some mornings he had to shovel a path to get back in [the house], it was snowing so fast he could hardly make it. Most morning it was his job to take Dad and Merle after the mail. I couldn't make it. But in spit of the winter we have enjoyed out days in Tropic here so far. Dad seems to be doing real good so that helps. We have also had company this winter. Dad enjoys seeing the little kids and I am glad they were able to come and see him. Richard, Cine, and boys, Elaine and Jim, Sharon and Leonard and baby and Paula and her two kids. He does enjoy and have the children come, and so do we. That helped to pass away a lot of the winter. We had Christmas tree and he seemed to really enjoy Christmas and so did we. Jim and Elaine were here at Christmas morning and we did have a nice Christmas. Cine, Rich and boys come between New Year's and Christmas. We went sleigh riding out by the ranch and the little boys could get on their sleighs and go for a long ways right down the road. And then Rich would take his little three wheel bike and go down and pull then back up. They really had a ball. They built a bon fire. Oh, they played for three days there. In fact, the day they left. They stayed and did some extra playing and took some pictures and had a lot of fun out in the snow. Lewie and I went with them

but it was too cold for Daddy to go out like that. Anyway they had a ball sleigh riding and so did the older folks. I tried going down once and Louie went down, I don't know how many times. He, Mike and, Cine, they had a ball. I didn't have overshoes on so I couldn't help gather the wood but they would go out through the deep snow and bring back wood over by the road and build a pretty good-sized fire. The only thing we lacked was weenies to have a regular picnic. So the boys do have fun in the wintertime here. The last time they came it was mud. I don't know how much fun they had, but they went out and rode their bikes and came back covered from head to toe with mud. It was really thick. In fact Mike was top to bottom in mud. Gary met a little friend named Travis, so he and Travis spent lots of time playing in the snow. I couldn't believe how long those two little boys played.

End of Tape

Helma please sign
for your dad & yourself

UTAH STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEW AGREEMENT AND DEED OF GIFT

I hereby give to the Utah State Historical Society the tapes and transcriptions of the interview/interviews recorded on February 1979 and grant the Utah State Historical Society the right to make the tapes and transcriptions available to the public for such educational and research purposes that are in accordance with the policies and procedures of the Society's Utah History Information Center.

NARRATOR Richard Thomas (deceased)

ADDRESS _____

Tropic, UT

& SIGNATURE Helma Haas

DATE _____

INTERVIEWER Helma Haas

ADDRESS * 20 Boy St

Tropic, Utah

& SIGNATURE Helma Haas

DATE 10-17-02