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.
GR: My grandfather, William James Brooksby heard the missionaries in Australia and wanted to come to Utah to join the Mormon church. They had ten children. His wife didn't want anything to do with the Mormons but he wanted to come, he definitely said he wanted to come. And so he said, "Well, I'm going anyway!" And he came to America to see if he could have sheep here. And he came up into this area. The missionary who converted him, Dave Stewart, was from Fredonia, Arizona, and so Grandfather said to his wife; "Well, I'm going to go." And so he went to Fredonia where this missionary lived and looked over the area and the area just north of Glendale. The Glendale Canyon is a beautiful canyon, and he decided that was a real good place to have his sheep.

SM: What canyon was that?

GR: That's Glendale, just north of Glendale. If you remember driving through that beautiful area. And so he said this would be a real good place to have sheep. At that time, I don't think they had to buy the land, they just could take it, or maybe just pay a small amount for the land. And so he bought sheep and put them there.

SM: What's his name?

GR: His name was William James Brooksby. So when he found out that he could make a living here he went back to Australia and told his wife, "We're going to America!" She didn't want to come, she definitely did not want to come and she said, "I'm not going to go!" And he said, "Well, I'm taking the kids and we're going!" They had ten children. So his wife, Emma Hobbs Brooksby, decided she had to go with him. So they came to America and they didn't have enough money to go first class so they were down in the hold with the family. At that time my dad, William Brooksby, was nineteen years old and he got a job working on the ship to help with their fare and they came over to America and landed in Vanouver, Washington. Then they came over to Salt Lake City and on down to Fredonia. In Richfield Emma had another baby, so her eleventh child was born there. And it was terrible for her! But grandfather was bringing her whether she wanted to come or not because he was so converted to the Mormon church. He
knew it was true and he wanted to be here with the church and so they came. They came down into Fredonia because that is where the missionary lived who converted him. They built a home there and in the summer time he would put his sheep up north of Glendale on that beautiful grass meadow. I don't know if you noticed coming down, a sign that says the "Brooksby Ranch". That's where they had the ranch. And then in the winter time he would take the sheep out south of Fredonia where the weather was warmer, so that is how they made a living, and in Fredonia is where my mother and dad met. My mother was one of the six daughters of Soren and Caroline Rasmussen Jensen.

SM: Soren Jensen was the one in prison?

GR: (Yes). Soren Jensen was the one who was in prison.

SM: He was in prison for how long?

GR: Six months. And then they were going to put him in prison again for having the two wives, and that is when they fled to Fredonia. And so the Brooksby family and the Jensen family were in Fredonia. At that early time they didn't have a store in Fredonia. There were just nine families living there when my grandparents arrived. Those early settlers had to scrub away the brush and get it ready for living. My grandmother, Caroline Jensen, had a catalog of things that she could buy from somewhere back East and she would order things. She would get pins and needles, buttons, and things like that; and then her husband started to go to Marysvale with his team and wagon and bring things back from the railroad depot. When people in town found out that he was bringing a case of lye and a case of soap and things like that, when they found out he had something they would go and say, "Well, can we buy this?" And they bought it and he made a little profit. They got the things because there was no other place in Fredonia to buy anything. And they were making a little bit extra on it so they decided to start a store. So they started the first store in Fredonia and he would haul the freight from Marysvale, go up to Marysvale with his teams of horses and bring the goods back and they would sell them. They were doing really good, but working very hard!

When my father, William Brooksby, got to Fredonia and his dad was so mean about bringing his mother, he just felt badly about it and he said, "I'm not going to stay here." So he left and went down into Searchlight, Nevada, and worked in the gold mines. He was twenty-six years old when he decided he had to have a wife and so he came back to Fredonia and picked my mother, Emma Jensen. She was only seventeen. So they were married in Fredonia and went back to Searchlight for a while. Later, when her parents were tired of the store and wanted to get out of it my parents took over the store. They moved it up into the main street of Fredonia and that is where I grew up. My parents had the store until my father
died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1937. A few years later mother sold the store and moved to Salt Lake City.

My father was really good at mechanics, any kind of mechanical thing, or anything like that. They had ten children and he built a huge garage so that their sons could have a way of making a living. He sent the oldest boy, Oscar, off to a mechanics school and they had this garage for him. Above the garage they built a very large hall. It had a nice hardwood floor where they held dances and also had a roller skating rink and a movie machine, so we had movies, dances, and roller skating. He bought a beautiful piano. It was the most gorgeous thing—it had ten instruments in it and you could put a nickel in it and it would play a tune. And so he made money that way with the piano, and also had the store.

SM: How did he make money with the piano?

GR: Well, to play the piano you had to put a nickel in the slot and when anyone wanted to skate or dance, they had to play a tune, then another one and another and they made money that way. For special dances an orchestra was hired and people from Fredonia and Kanab enjoyed the dancing. We saw many of the old silent movies there and had great fun skating. I learned to dance, dancing with my father at the age of 11 or 12.

In those years they didn't have refrigerators and the weather was very cold—colder than it is now. And up at Three-Lakes—the ice would be about 12 to 18 inches thick. My father would take his truck and go up to Three Lakes and take saws and saw out the blocks of ice and then haul them down to Fredonia. We had a huge room, or ice house, out in our barn. It was bigger than this room and each winter it was filled with ice. He would put a layer of sawdust, and a layer of ice, a layer of sawdust and a layer of ice and fill the whole room so that in the summer time they could make ice cream to sell in the store.

SM: What an entrepreneur!

GR: He was so smart! And to make the ice cream, instead of turning it by hand, they just had this big ten gallon freezer and Morn would make the ice cream... You're not getting any of this down you want!

SM: Yeah, I am, I'm getting everything down.

GR: ...and so, she would make the ice cream and then put it in this ten gallon freezer and put the ice and rock salt around it and then he had the car hooked up to a belt so that as the car went and the wheels went around it turned the ice cream.

SM: Oh, my gosh!
GR: And so then they would sell the ice cream in the store...

SM: So he would just go into this room where the ice was and...

GR: Yes, where the ice was, and take out a big chunk of ice and take it and...

SM: What would the sawdust do?

GR: The sawdust, just brush it off, or wash it off, it was no problem at all. It was to keep it so that it wouldn't melt so fast. And so that way we had the ice cream. He was really smart and well known in Fredonia.

The only water the people in Fredonia had was water from the Kanab Creek. They built a dam and put irrigation ditches through the town. The people had a barrel by their gate and they would go out and dip this water out of the ditch and put it in the barrel. It was muddy water, and the mud would sink to the bottom and they'd just dip off the top and that was the only way they had to get water. But my dad wanted water in his house and so he put a huge tank up on top of some tall poles, and then he had a cistern. Over in Australia, they had cement cisterns so he built a cistern, a hole in the ground and cemented it all up. The ditch water would run into the cistern and then with the back wheels of the car running it would pump the water up into the huge tank and then it was piped into the house. So we had running water in our house and no one else had that. That was the ditch water, but we didn't drink that; the roof of the house was aluminum. Instead of shingles it was an aluminum roof, so that when it would rain the water would run off the roof into a huge cement cistern out in our farm yard. This was what they did in Australia, and so my Dad got this idea and brought it to Fredonia.

SM: How was he connected with Australia?

GR: Well, his dad and family came from Australia to be close to the Mormon Church. The water from the roof of our house went into the pipe and into the cistern. And so it was rainwater that went into that big cistern, and rainwater was just so good to wash your hair, nice soft rainwater! Then he had a pump that would pump the water from that cistern into our house so we had running water pumped into the house to drink.

SM: How brilliant! Just because there was an aluminum roof that allowed this to happen.

GR: Yes, and if you go to Fredonia you'll see a lot of the homes have aluminum roofs, a lot of them later did that. His parents and all of his brothers and sisters did the same. My dad had so many ideas of everything he could do to make it easier, always looking for a better way to do things.
SM: And he enjoyed that.

GR: He enjoyed it, he was really smart, really did a lot of things. He only lived to be fifty-nine and then he died, but he was really smart! Another thing that the people didn't have at the time was, well, they had this ditch water and it would be full of dirt and so they had a round iron circle out in the yard, let's see, it had three or four legs and then a number three tub would sit on that. And they would build a fire under it. They would fill that tub with water, the ditch water, and put a teaspoon or more of lye in the water. I don't remember how much! But as the water heated, the lye would bring the dirt to the top in a scum. And then you would take a dipper or pie plate and skim off all that scum on the water so then you had clean water to wash with. The lye would separate the dirt. Now, if you let it wait until it boiled, the dirt would all go back into it, so you had to watch and just before it boiled, skim off all that dirt and then you had clean water to wash with.

SM: That's a neat system.

GR: That was neat.

SM: Did you also make soap?

GR: My Mom didn't make soap, they bought it. But after I married I made lots of soap.

SM: Can you remember the process of that?

GR: After I married and we had the hotel, cafe and bakery up in town, I made lots of soap, 'cause there's lots of grease or oil from everything you fry, and when you French fry, that oil gets old and you have to take it out and get some fresh oil. And so we had lots of that and I would take it and put it on the stove. I don't remember the amounts I put in, but I'd dissolve the lye in water and then put it into the grease and cook and stir and as it got hot it would get thick and then I would take it off the stove and pour it into a pan and it would harden, and then you could cut it up in pieces, in blocks.

SM: So it was just lye and grease?

GR: Lye and grease, or oil, was all I used, and water. And it made soap. Oh, I made lots of soap 'cause we has so much grease. And then you could shave it off and you could use it in your washer, and we also used it to wash dishes at the restaurant.

SM: So you're used to not letting things go to waste?
GR: We didn't ever let anything go to waste. My mother's mother, when she would kill a pig, she said she would keep most everything, she would take the head and boil it and take all that meat off of the head and grind it all up and then she'd take the entrails. She said nothing went to waste in the pig. She would take the entrails and put them in some lye water until all the refuse was off, them and it would be just skin, just a thin skin. She would take the meat that she had cooked and put it into those skins and make the sausage. So she did that and made a lot of Danish foods—delicious things my mother said she made.

SM: Was she a good cook?

GR: She was a good cook, a real good cook. She made head cheese. I don't know how she made it and my mother didn't know how she made it, but she said it was so good—they all enjoyed it! She said they saved everything—they didn't throw anything away!

SM: What would a meal be like when you were a little girl? Do you remember?

GR: Well, I'm not the oldest. My mother had to work in the store because my dad really didn't want the store business and she wanted to take it from her mother and father to help them out. Mom told my dad, "If you'll take over the store, I'll work!" She had helped her parents with the store and knew how to do it. So she worked in the store and hired a girl to take care of us. And so our meals, —when you say, what were our meals like, we didn't always have a garden, but we did have a garden occasionally. We had lots of good milk cows and we had plenty of milk to drink and made cottage cheese and we even made cheese. Our parents were so busy in the store, I remember just going to the store and going in and getting a can or two of this and a can or two of that for our meals.

SM: So it was different for you, not the conventional...

GR: It was a lot different because we had the store. We had salmon and I remember having lots of salmon soup and potato soup and things that were really easy to make. And I loved to cook. Most of the girls wanted to work in the store, but I wanted to be in the house. I liked to cook and I liked to be there. Mom told that in her history—she has written a beautiful history and all this is written up by her in more detail. Another thing that my dad got for her was an iron. When she was growing up they had to iron with old fashioned irons? Have you seen them?

SM: Yeah, I just saw one at the DUP (Daughters of Utah Pioneers) building...it needed to be heated on the stove.

GR: That's what they had when she was growing up, and she said they had a tray that just fit over the irons on the stove. She'd have three irons and would take one of
them and put the cover over the others and begin ironing and iron with that one until it was cool, and then take the next one. And she said it was nice when she was growing up, but my dad said that was too hard for her, so he ordered an iron from some company back east. I don't know what brand of an iron it was. I remember watching her use it and it was a gasoline iron. It had a tank that would hold about a cup full of gasoline and a pipe came from the tank and over into the iron. The top of the iron came off and you'd have to pour some alcohol in the bottom of the iron over this pipe. There was a pump that would pump air into the gasoline and when it was warmed up enough she would put the top on it and could iron until the gasoline was gone.

SM: Oh, I've never heard of that.

GR: Haven't ever heard of it? No one else in Fredonia had one. But Mom had so much to do working in the store all day and then going home at night, she was so tired and had to iron. She said one night she was sitting there ironing and needed to fill the iron again. She had to put the alcohol in the iron to prime it. She laid her head down on the table and suddenly the gasoline exploded and blew the iron all to pieces! She said there was no iron there, it was gone! So my dad gathered up all the pieces that were around the room and sent them back—the she was protected more times than one! Dad sent the pieces back to the company and they gave them a new iron. But they said it was a good thing no one was in the room or they would have been killed. And there she was with her head next to the iron. She was in that room, but she was protected, and so many other times she was protected.

SM: What other things happened to her that way?

GR: Her mother had a real bad leg, she had a milk leg when her children were born. I don't understand what a milk leg is, but her leg would swell and they couldn't do anything about it and she had trouble all the time with the milk leg. And so she thought that if she would go to St. George and have a blessing from the Priesthood down in the St. George temple that she would get better. She had, oh so much faith...she knew that it would make her well to have that blessing. My mother was the one who had to do all the chores around the house because they didn't have a boy, they had six girls and no boys. So she was the boy and she had to do the farm work. So they took the—I don't know if they had a cart or what they took, but anyway the two of them went towards St. George and as they got down the road almost to St. George they noticed that a bag of grain had dropped off. And her mother said, "We have to have that grain, you're just going to have to get up on this horse and go back and get the grain, you have to find it!" And she didn't know how in the world she was going to do that, but she left her mother and went back and she said it was a long way and she found the grain laying on the ground, but she didn't know how in the world she was going to get it up on the
horse, because the horse was so tall. She finally got it up onto a ledge that was close by then on to the horse, and got it back to her mother. But she said when she got back to her mother, her mother was just screaming, crying, she thought she had killed her. She said, "I prayed all the time you have been gone!" And she thought it was because she had prayed so hard that her daughter was able to get back safely with the grain. Well, they went on to St. George and Grandmother had the blessing and back home, and sure enough the blessing helped her.

My grandparents were very faithful Latter Day Saints and they had a firm belief in the power of prayer. They had the six girls and they wanted a boy so badly, so they had the Priesthood down at the St. George temple pray for them asking that they could have a boy. They prayed and were assured, "You are going to have a boy!" And on the first of April, 1901, David, their only boy was born to them and as the news spread some ran through the town yelling, "Chris has a boy! Chris has a boy! Many didn't believe it and said, "Oh April Fool!" But sure enough they had this little red headed boy, but he was born quite late and my mom still had to do most of the farm chores.

Another time my mother's life was saved was when my dad decided that he would send and get a pressure cooker for her, and that was something that no one else had that they had seen. So he got the pressure cooker and she was going to bottle some beans. She put the beans in the bottles and put the pressure cooker on the stove and got it up to heat. I don't know if she had read the directions or what she didn't do, but anyway, she set the cooker down on the floor and opened it up and two bottles of beans just blew to the ceiling and blew beans all over the ceiling and all over everything and she wasn't touched with the hot beans or the flying glass. She wasn't hurt, but she learned a lesson there.

SM: In my interviews every...well a lot of the women have an incident with a pressure cooker.

(Laughter)

GR: Have they? (Laughter) Well....

SM: Maybe you've got to figure those things out first!

GR: I don't know, I haven't had any pressure cookers blow up on me, but I've been careful. But another time my mother fell. We had a basement and she started down the stairs and fell to the bottom of the stairs, just rolled, tumbled down. when she got up she was okay. She just was blessed with really good health, and was a very faithful person. She prayed over everything, constantly.

SM: So is there a real lot of spirituality in the house?
A lot of spirituality in the house, yes there was. She felt bad, and in her history she said, "Oh, if I had just stayed home with my children and not gone off to work!" But she worked most of our lives. And then had girls take care of us, but Mom was a really sweet person and on Sunday we would have—you asked what we would have, or what was the best food we had. She did lots of bottling, canning. And the best thing that I remember having, and that was our treat on Sunday. She would take a bottle of peaches, cherries, apricots, pineapple, all kinds of fruits, put them all together in a bowl and then put it in our bowls and put whipped cream on it. And we had lots of whipped cream because we had plenty of cows. And we churned butter—and we had a churn that we could just turn the handle, or crank and it would whip the cream into butter. I don't know if you have seen the old fashioned churns. When Mom was growing up their churn stood up about two feet high and it had a paddle in it that you would just pump up and down, but we loved this one we had and we made lots of butter. (Laughs)

So the one that was smaller and went around and around was much better?

Was much better, much better than that pumping up and down.

It took less time?

Less time and it churned it really good. We'd churn it until it turned to butter and then we would pour the buttermilk out and put the butter in a bowl. Then we took a paddle and paddled it pushing it back and forth pressing all the liquid out, added salt and worked it in, then put it into a little cake on a plate, put little marks along the top to make it pretty and that was your butter.

A little design on top?

A little design on top. It was fun. We also had a one pound mold we could push the butter into and then press the butter out on to a plate and wrap it into parchment paper, if we wanted to sell it. You have never made butter?

I never have, no.

Never made cheese?

No, you know a lot of that tradition is lost to the next generation. It just changed, technology advanced so quickly, but it's important to hear these traditional recipes. What about any kind of sickness? What would happen when you were sick?

Oh, dear me. That was a trial with our family. (It was about 1927) There was a family, the Parkers. They had a big family and we had a big family. And my mother was really good to help everybody. She was always doing things for
everybody. And the Parkers had a big family and Mom had done a lot for them. And so Mrs. Parker one day brought Mom a handkerchief that she had crocheted around--it was a beautiful handkerchief, and she gave it to Mom. And the children all wanted to see it, we took it and played with it and looked at it and we got sick. We found out that Mrs. Parker's older son, Hartley, had come home with scarlet fever and so most of us got sick with scarlet fever. I remember Mom put us all into a room. She hung a sheet over the door and first soaked the sheet in some kind of solution and she would pull that back and come into our room and give us our food and take care of us. There were several of us there in the room in bed. I never remember being sicker than I was with scarlet fever.

SM: Do you remember what it felt like?

GR: How it felt? It was terrible! My eyes hurt and my throat was terribly sore. I was very sick. You broke out first and that was really...

SM: ...with red dots?

GR: Red rash. It was really bad--it was, I don't remember ever being sicker in my life. I called Mom one day and I told her I knew I was going to die and she prayed for me then. But we stayed in this room--we had to stay in this room for six weeks, I think, when we had the disease. Some of the family didn't get it. My sister Edith didn't get it, and my baby sister Marie was just a baby and so they didn't have it. But the rest of us were there in the room. To play with while we were there in the room, we had a hair wig and it was so much fun to play with, to put that wig on and play with it. And I would put it on and look out the window at my sister Edie and show her how cute I looked with this wig on and she wanted it so bad, but she was out there tending the baby. But after we'd had the sickness for, I don't know how long she kept us in there, but anyway, they decided that we were over it now and we could get out. And so they had to fumigate the whole house. So they took us all up into the building where my dad had the roller skating rink and dance hall. We all went up into that building to spend the day while they fumigated. I remember they opened all the books and set them up opened and everything was just laid out so, and then they put this kind of, I don't know, it was sulphur or formaldehyde--I don't know what it was. Anyway, they burned the stuff into the room to kill all the germs. And so we were up in the dance hall for, oh, I don't know how long we were up there, about all day. But all of us could be together then. But the thing that I did that was terrible, I hid this wig in my dress and took it with me so my sister Edie could play with the wig. And after we were all clean and everyone well, here she came down with the scarlet fever!

SM: Yuk! So she had the scarlet fever after that and was quarantined?
GR: Quarantined again, and we had the store and so my dad had to go and stay with his mother again, he couldn't stay with us, and people didn't want to come to the store because we were quarantined, but there was no problem because he wasn't sick with it, it was just the children.

SM: And everybody made it through, though?

GR: Everybody made it through, nobody died, but it was because of my mother's good nursing.

SM: Your family was blessed.

GR: Yes, very blessed!

SM: Do you remember what your mother actually put on the sheet that she hung and, did she do anything for the sore throat?

GR: She hung the sheet over the door to keep the germs from spreading and she would take it down to wet it and I don't know what she put on it, but I know it was always wet. She would take it down and wet it and hang it back up there. I don't know whether it was bleach, or what it was...I just don't know what she put on the sheet, but anyway, it was to keep the germs out from the rest of the house.

SM: Was it more of just waiting it out?

GR: Just waiting it out, and being sick. She had had scarlet fever when she was a child so thank goodness, she could take care of all of us.

SM: Oh, because you don't get it twice.

GR: No. But you asked what kind of things she did, she used to make Brigham tea all the time. Have you ever drunk Brigham tea?

SM: I haven't tried it. I've seen the weed on the roadside.

GR: Oh, well, she would make that and my grandchildren love it. Whenever they come they want Brigham tea. And they put sugar and cream and cinnamon and make it so it's a really good drink, but Mom didn't let us put anything in our tea, no sugar or anything.

SM: I should try it sometime, I've heard a lot about it.
GR: You ought to try. But Mom said it was what kept us healthy was drinking the Brigham tea. And another thing she mixed up for us was sulphur and molasses. Have you ever had sulphur and molasses?

SM: Oh, no.

GR: Haven't you? Oh that was... (laughter).

SM: Are you surprised? (Laughter)

GR: Yes, because that's a good remedy to keep you well. But Mom would take the sulphur and mix in molasses and stir it up and put it in a bowl on the table and we all, whenever we sat to eat, we all had to have a spoonful of sulphur and molasses.

SM: Really! and how would she get the molasses?

GR: Well, molasses you could buy. At that time they had a molasses place down in Hurricane where they made molasses and they'd bring it out here in gallon cans. We had everything 'cause we had the store, we'd have a gallon of molasses and then we had the sulphur in the store. Mom would mix up the sulphur and molasses.

SM: Did it smell like sulphur?

GR: Well, it tasted like sand, 'cause it's gritty. You'd better try some if you haven't tried it. (Laughter)

SM: You're not making it sound very appealing. (Laughter)

GR: I didn't like it, but we laughed at my dad because he'd sit at the table and take it in spoons on his bread and he says, "Oh, my dad used to do this, and my dad would say, for a cake you'd make a layer of dough, and a layer o' lasses, a layer of dough, and a layer o' lasses." 

SM: I wonder if he got that from the Australian vegemite.

GR: I don't know where it came from, but that's what he'd tell us, he says, "It's good for you." And he'd eat it so he would make us think it was good, but it wasn't! But we'd take it, and in the spring, every spring we had to have sulphur and molasses.

SM: So it was a tonic.
GR: I guess it was a tonic. I can't remember any other remedies that she had. There was one remedy for earache someone told her about that was gross! It may have been an Indian remedy, because there were both Navajo and Paiutes that came to the area. Someone told her about this and I suppose she was willing to try anything to help her children when they were hurting! She had my older brothers go out in the hills and kill a rabbit and bring it home, open it up and take the urine from the bladder and put it in the aching ear. I remember her doing that for one of the younger children, but I don't remember if it helped!

SM: Any cold remedies or fever remedies?

GR: She used to make a little cloth bag and put something in it, and I don't remember what she put in it, maybe it was calamus root? but it was a white root of some kind that she shaved off and put it into the little bag, but when we got the croup she would tie that around our neck. I suppose it helped, I don't remember, but I remember wearing it! And she had a very good canker medicine that would cure canker sores in just a day or two! I still make it by mixing together a cup or sugar or honey, 3 teaspoons of powdered alum, 3 teaspoons of powdered sulphur and a teaspoon of powdered green copperas. She gave me a little bottle of the copperas and I still have some. I tried to buy some more green copperas at the drug store and they didn't know what I was talking about.

GR: My brother, Victor, who was two years younger than I, had a little donkey that he just loved to ride and it was the Fourth of July. He came in that morning and he was showing my Mom his Levis. He had some new Levis and they buckled up at the top and he said, "See my Levis? See how I can get 'em off?" And he'd just pull them off really fast and he showed her. And a little while later he went down the road on his donkey and what he had done was put his firecrackers in his pocket and as he bounced around on the donkey, the firecrackers went off. The matches were there and the firecrackers and they went off and they started to just pop, pop, pop, pop. And he didn't remember his pants would come off, he just started to pound and pound it and he pounded that fire into him. The poor little fellow was burned terribly. He was burned so terribly. It was pitiful. And they called Dr. Norris and he came and put him in a bed and they laid him on sheets. The remedy they put on those burns was linseed oil and, oh, what was it, lime! Lime and linseed oil, they stirred that together. And that's what the doctor told them to put on it. And so that poor little fellow laid on the sheet and they put this all over his little body, his - I don't know how he could stand it! I saw him once after it was over and he had deep burns, heavy scars all across his groin.

SM: Oh, the poor guy!
GR: It was terrible, and so that was the treatment. And then when they'd lay that on the burned part for a while and it would get hot and miserable, then they'd have to take that off and put some more on.

SM: Like, remove the gauze. Oooooh!

GR: Remove the gauze and as they removed the gauze off it would pull some of the skin off and he would just scream and cry. And my poor mother had to take care of that and she had to take the sheets and take them off and they had to be washed because they couldn't throw those away--they didn't have the disposable ones, and so she'd take all those sheets out and put them in that boiler in the back yard and boil them in the lye water and then get them out and she had an old-time gasoline washer to put them in. It had a wringer and she would wring them out and hang them on the line to dry. But that little fellow was - oh, so bad for a long, long time. I don't know how she took care of him with every thing else she had to do.

SM: How much younger was your little brother?

GR: The one that got burned? He was two years younger than I. His name is Victor and he was...oh, he grew up to be a wonderful kid. He was talented just like my dad was. He had the mechanical ability to do everything. He was talented with that, and then he went back to Chicago and learned to be a technician for refrigeration. Refrigeration was new-at the time and a good trade-to learn. He learned how to do that, but when the war came along he enlisted in the air service and went overseas as a pilot. He was flying a B-25, a Billy Mitchell bomber, and he was convoying a group of soldiers over to one of the islands and he called on the radio and said that it was stormy; he was going to fly a little lower to see if he could get out of the storm, and they never heard from him again. He ditched into the ocean, I guess.

SM: Really, they never ever found him?

GR: No, they never ever found him--they don't know what ever happened to him. He and his whole crew were gone. So, he's the only one we lost as a young person.

SM: Well, about your life then, you were a little girl growing up and were you close to the girls looking after you, or would they change all the time?

GR: They changed quite often. I wasn't really close to them, I remember them a little bit but not very much. After the children got older and could help in the store, then my Mom could stay home with us more and so my older sister, Isabelle, was four years older than I and my sister, Edith, was two years older. And they loved to go in the store to work. My parents sent my two older brothers to college and then
these two girls were older and they helped in the store. Even the younger ones liked to go in the store and work, but I didn't, I liked housework and being at home.

SM: So, what would you do around the house?

GR: What would I do around the house? I had to do a lot of the work. We had lots of Navajo rugs, our whole living room was carpeted with Navajo rugs.

SM: That's from trading with Navajos?

GR: Yes, trading with the Navajos. Navajos would come to the store for groceries and they would trade the rugs for groceries. We got them pretty cheap. I still have some of those Navajo rugs. They're old, but they are really keepsakes too because that's what we had on our floor and I would have to take all those rugs off the floor and take them out and shake them and then put them back on the floor. At first we just had a few rooms, but then Dad had another part built onto our house so we had a nice new dining room and kitchen, bathroom and two rooms in the basement. We didn't have refrigerators. We could take our milk down into the basement and put it in pans and the cream would come to the top and then we would just skim off the cream and use it for making butter and we made cottage cheese with the milk. What else did you ask, what did I leave out?

SM: You did all those chores...

GR: I did the house work and learned to cook. I helped with the canning. My mom, we used to get so mad at her. The fellows from Hurricane and Toquerville would come with fruit to sell and so they'd bring in bushels of fruit and she would take, oh, she'd have tubs of it sitting in the kitchen. She'd get about five or six bushels of fruit all at once and then we'd have to sit and peel it and bottle it, and oh, we would get so tired and upset with her for getting so much at once and she would say, "We have to get it done." But we did love to open that fruit in the winter. (Laughs) It was so good! And so I've canned fruit all my life and I still do... we still have plenty in our basement now, too, 'cause I do lots of canning.

SM: So then as you grew up you went to school, where did you go?

GR: I went to school to Dixie College in St. George for a year on a scholarship, then I went to LDS Business College in Salt Lake. My sister, Isabelle, also went there. So we both had that skill and my sister, Edith, went on a mission to the East Central States Mission, and then to a beauty school in Phoenix, Arizona. My brother, Oscar, went to Australia on a mission and also to a mechanical school back East somewhere. My brother, Clarence, went to BYU, then to Northern Arizona University in Flagstaff and graduated. He was a teacher in the High School in Flagstaff and he taught there until he... He taught, oh, I don't know how
many years he taught there. He married Dorothy Leitch, who was also a teacher and they lived in Flagstaff and they were living there when he died from heart trouble. My brother, Oscar, who went to the mechanical school worked in the garage and service station, then at the sawmill in Fredonia for a long time and he died of a heart problem. He was hauling wood one day and he said his arm hurt really bad and so they took him up to the hospital to see Dr. Howard Roberts and he said, "Well, get on this treadmill and we'll see how your heart is working." He got on and started to run and died!

SM: Really?

GR: Yes, on the treadmill. So, that was a really bad thing; he shouldn't have put him on a treadmill. He should have tested him some other way. But anyway, he died from that. And my brother, Frank, went to the University of Utah and graduated as a pharmacist. He went overseas as a pilot in WWII. He was flying over Germany, making trips over Germany, when his plane was shot down. He had to bail out and he said when he...

SM: He survived that, huh?

GR: Yes, and he said when he landed he could see some men not far off and he thought he was in Germany. But apparently he was in France, so he got out of that okay. He married Corris Cram from Kanab. After the war they went to California and he worked for Ciba Company until he retired. He still lives in Santa Ana and is the only brother who is still alive. My sisters, Marie and Kathleen went to high school. My mother got awfully tired after my dad died and she just couldn't keep up the store any more so she sold it and moved to Salt Lake City and these two young girls graduated from West High School. They married soon after school and later divorced, and remarried. Marie is living in Mesa, Arizona and Kathie lives in Salt Lake.

SM: What's her last name?

GR: Kathie Rubisch, no, that was her first married name. She is now happily married to Jean McDonough. And so she and her husband live in Salt Lake. He is eighty years old now and she is seventy.

SM: So you lived in this area all your life?

GR: Most of my life. My brother, Oscar, played the saxophone and our only entertainment at that time was dancing. Every weekend they had a dance in Kanab and so he played the saxophone and he would drive to Kanab to play in the dance orchestra. And Edie was two years older than I and she loved to dance and I loved to dance. She was fifteen and I was only thirteen when we started to go
to the dances. We would go with Oscar up to Kanab to the dances and it was so much fun to dance, and one of the first fellows I danced with was Virgil Riggs. He was the best dancer, oh, he was a dream! Do you know how Lawrence Welk danced? Did you ever watch Lawrence Welk dance? That is the way Virgil danced, just smooth, beautiful dancing. I loved to dance with him and so I started to dance with him when I was thirteen and then through the years I dated other fellows, but when my dad died in 1937, I was in school up in Salt Lake at the L.D.S. Business College when they called me and told me that he had died. I came home and stayed home helping mom that summer. And then I started to go with Virgil again and we were married that fall, October 8, 1937. And he still was a beautiful dancer and fun to be with. He worked at the Parry Lodge. He had started working when he was just a kid helping his mom in the kitchen and then he had helped dig a ditch or trench for a sewer line from Guy Chamberlain's Kanab Hotel down to the creek. He helped dig that, and then the people who worked on the range, the cattlemen and sheepmen knew that he could cook pretty well, so they hired him to go out on the range with them and cook for their cattle and sheep camps. So he was a camp cook for a while. Then he went to work helping in the kitchen at the Kanab Hotel and Cafe for Guy Chamberlain. Whit Parry, at Parry Lodge, knew he was a real good cook so he had him come and help cook at Parry Lodge, and he was working there when we got married.

SM: So, did you experience a lot of the "movie scene" that was going on right there?

GR: Oh, Yes! Definitely! We had a lot of that. He worked there at Parry Lodge through.....I'm going to get this bread in the oven here...

SM: Do you remember any funny stories about the movie scene, I mean was it crazy--did it bring a whole influx of strange people to this area? (laughs)

GR: It brought a lot of people to this area and my husband--they had him feed the movies. We had a lunch wagon fixed up so that he could pull it as a trailer and it was fixed up so it had two big, long sides. In the one side we put the cold foods with ice underneath, and in the other side there was a steam table where we could put hot food. It also had a grill where he could fry steaks. He would cook and bake through the night and get all the food ready and then he would put it in this steam table, Then when the movies went out on location he would pull this wagon out there and at lunch time they would just open up the sides and everyone would go along and take their food. He made really good food! Everyone just talked about how good the food was. And we did that for ears and years.

SM: I understand Whit Parry was some kind of gourmet connoisseur.

GR: He was a very, very fussy person about the food, and so he liked Virg because he would cook it just like he wanted it and he always used the very best food. He
always insisted on the very best, and whatever they were fixing, he'd come in and
taste it and see if it was okay. He was really fussy and wanted the best!

SM: And Virgil was the main cook?

GR: He was one of the main cooks and he really was a good cook. And he was also
a good baker— he was one of the best. After he left Parry Lodge he operated the
Kanab Hotel business for twenty years. We were living there in the basement of
the Kanab Hotel and we had the rooms for a while but they got dilapidated, we
didn't keep them up very well. At first we had just the hotel and cafe, but later built
an addition on the side to enlarge the cafe and have a bakery and called it Virge's
Kanab Hotel, Cafe and Bakery. He made the best donuts that... If you ever talk to
anyone about donuts they say that they were the best they'd ever eaten and they
all talk to him now and they say, "Why don't you make some of those good
donuts?" He would buy a special potato flour and make the donuts. He had a big
frying pot that they would cook the donuts in...

SM: They boiled them?

GR: They fried them in a big pot of vegetable oil. He would make the dough and put
it in a little proof box with steam to raise the dough and then bring it out on the
work table and roll and cut it out into the donut circles. He had three long thin
steel poles, about the size of my finger, and he would thread the hot cooked
donuts onto the steel poles and lay them over a big tub of icing and then he would
start dipping the icing up over the donuts. Then when the icing hardened a little
and cooled off he would pull them off and onto a tray and so those hot donuts, oh!
--- they were unreal, so good!

SM: Were you just so proud of him?

GR: Yes, they were just so good, especially when warm, but always good! He sold
them for a nickel a piece. He says, "Wow, I wish I could get the money they get
for baked goods now." (Laughter) And he knew how to make pies, he was the
best pie maker. You can't believe just how fast he could make a pie. He'd take
a ball of dough, quickly roll it out, put it in the pie tin, then the fruit filling, flip the
top crust on it, quickly pressing off the excess crust. When the table was full of
pies he would brush them with an egg wash and put them in the oven to bake.
He worked so very fast and made hundreds of pies. He also made lots of bread,
cookies and cake. He also made many wedding cakes. When we first started the
bakery, Duke Aiken and his wife, Donna, just got married and they asked him for
a wedding cake. We didn't know how to make a wedding cake but we had a
bakery and had to do it. It was back when we were in our little basement kitchen
at home and he brought this cake in and said, "Well, we have to decorate this," so
we both started to put stuff on it to decorate it and he decided that I was doing
better than he was, so he decided I'd better do the decorating. So, he'd bring me the cakes and I did the decorating. And for a long time I didn't know how to make a rose, I got the tips in a tube and had the tips upside down. I made roses, and finally I discovered I had the tip upside down. But I made a wedding cake with it that way and the Burgoynes bought one for their daughter, Donna, and they thought it was beautiful. And the Aikens thought theirs was beautiful. So I got books and read about cake decorating and how to do it. And when I went to Salt Lake I went into one of the bakeries and watched them do it and learned a little more. I made hundreds of wedding cakes and I wish that I had the money they get for them now, too. We'd get about twenty-five dollars. It would take me all night long. I'd start after I put the children to bed and start doing these cakes and it was, oh, I got so tired of making cakes! I'd just sit down and cry and say, "I can't do it, I can't do it, I'm tired!"

SM: It's too much. (Laughter) (But it wasn't funny!)

GR: But we did it. Finally, I just couldn't do it any more and I just about had a nervous breakdown. I just couldn't do it any longer.

SM: The pressure.

GR: The pressure. The pressure of having to do all those cakes, with everything else I was doing—I just couldn't hold up any longer. He'd bring me about six or eight (or more) cakes on Mother's Day and he'd say, "Here, decorate these so we can sell them." And with the children running around, trying to take care of them and decorate the cakes, I just couldn't do it. I also had to do the bookkeeping for the business and that was another headache for me, trying to keep up with it all—It was just—I just practically had a nervous breakdown!

SM: And everyone had to be special, because...

GR: Everyone, everybody, they'd say, "Could you make it a little different?" Could you make it new and different?" And I couldn't make it different!

SM: (Yes,) you don't understand, this isn't even my trade. (Laughter)

GR: It wasn't, I hadn't had any training. And I'm not artistic, I'm not, but we sold an awful lot of cakes.

SM: So that was a good living then, and then you ended up working for the BLM at some point.

GR: Well, I finally just said, "I can't do this any more." I wrote to my family in Mesa and when they got my letter and realized I needed help my sister Marie and husband
flew up in his plane and took Rosa Lee and me back to Mesa with them and got me into a doctor. We lived with them for quite a while. My mother was living there then and we rented an apartment. Virgil brought our boys Ken and Kerry to me and I put them all in school in Mesa. I was under doctor's care but felt much better away from that business. I had the younger children with me and they were in school and I was able to work a little. I just couldn't go any more in that business and I repeatedly told my husband I couldn't. Finally he said, "We are going to get rid of the business and you won't have to do another thing if you will just come back!" We did miss him terribly. So we finally came back to Kanab, June, 1968, and bought this house in 1970. So we got out of that business and moved here. I took a test and passed it at the BLM. I could write shorthand and passed as a GS-4 and it was a real good job and it was sooooo wonderful to be working there!

SM: Such a relief! (Laughter).

GR: Such a relief! So wonderful! And I worked there for nineteen years. Earlier, while we still had the business I had worked part-time for LeRoy Judd in his insurance business and later also worked part-time for Mr. Carl Potter in the Welfare Office until that office was moved to St. George. I enjoyed working in that office too.

SM: What was your job at BLM?

GR: I took dictation from the Area Manager, Fred Howard. I typed his correspondence and also typed for all the other men working there and I was the Records Manager.

SM: What was going on then--what year was it that you worked for the BLM?


SM: And what was going on with the BLM--how much control did they have in the area back then. Was it a bunch of ranchers that were running the BLM?

GR: A lot of ranchers and cattlemen had BLM grazing permits for use of the land, we sold firewood, Christmas trees and rock permits and managed the hikes through the beautiful Paria Canyon. One thing that happened while I was there was the problems they had out at Big Water. Alex Joseph and some of those guys went in there and were just going to take over and live on that land. They had all their trailers in there, and kept moving in more, everybody was just moving in and beginning to live there and it was BLM land and they...

SM: They were squatting on that public land?
GR: Yes, and I remember the BLM men went out there and told them to get off. They didn't, so they went out and hocked on to several trailers and pulled those trailers up to the BLM yard. I felt sorry for those poor people because I remember a lot of their books laying scattered around out in the yard. They just took those trailers and moved them. It was really bad, but apparently they shouldn't have been there, so they moved them off! I really enjoyed working at BLM and seeing the changes that came while I was there. When I first started to work we had to type these long projects and sometimes ten copies of each using carbon paper and when you made a mistake you had to go back through all the copies to correct them. We eventually had an old ink copy machine and we would turn the handle and run the copies, and we made hectograph copies with that jelly-like material. It was all messy, the copies weren't good and we were pretty happy when the better copy machines came out. And we were very happy when they brought in the MAG CARD typewriters so we could type and it was recorded on the celluloid cards. If we made mistakes or wanted to add more in certain places it was easily done.

SM: That was the big new piece of technology?

GR: Yes, we could put the little black celluloid card into the typewriter, type into it, correct our mistakes, save it all for future use, and do everything!

SM: Do you think there was a really strong sense of community back then, compared to now?

GR: Oh, I think so, I think the church did a lot for us, you know, we were active in the church and so that was a big thing. I've never been one to work here in the town city offices, only doing the typing at the State Welfare Office, but I never wanted to be one of the leaders like Karen Alvey. (Laughs) She loves being at the top, and I admire her for that, but I've never had that desire. I like to sit back and just do my own thing.

SM: You've always liked working in a house.

GR: I always loved working in the house!

SM: I can smell the bread baking now.

GR: Can you smell it now? (Laughs)

SM: It smells great!

GR: It's coming up too, isn't it. It's popping up there. I have some cookies started. I have a little grandson I pick up at noon and take care of him. My daughter Rosa Lee lives right next door to us. When she was growing up, I used to tell the
children, "Oh, you just have to get an education, 'cause that's the most important thing!" So we sent Rosa Lee to college, to BYU and the first year she was there she met this tall, handsome Kurt Vreeken and she came home that summer and said, "Mom, I want to get married!" And I said, "No, you're not going to get married! You are not! And I said, "You have to get your education first. You have to graduate from college and then you can get married!. And when that year was over she would have the same story, "I want to get married!" She went to summer school to hurry it up a little, but I insisted that she graduate. And she did and also worked and taught school a year, and then she married Kurt.

SM: That's great! Does she thank you now?

GR: She thanks me over and over, you know why? She has seven children and her husband got leukemia and he would not go and have the chemotherapy. He went all over for different treatments. He would go and get blood--he would get so low he couldn't go and they would give him a blood transfusion. And then he heard of a place in Idaho where he could go and get treatment and he went there and it didn't help. Then he heard of one down in San Bernadino, an oxygen treatment and it was a sure cure, so he went down there. His mother went with him and on the third treatment his liver and kidneys quit working. And so they called Rosa Lee and told her that he was dying and if they wanted to see him alive they had better hurry down there.

A good fellow Kurt had worked for in Provo, Richard, "Zeek" Zimmerman, paid to rent a nice van in St. George and she drove her children to St. George and they went in the rented van and drove to San Bernadino, but by the time they got there Kurt was too far gone to talk to them. The L.D.S. bishop found a good Mormon family who took Rosa Lee and family into their home. Kurt's brothers, Chris and Keith came, and two other good friends Kurt had worked for in California, Roy Fritz and Rick Prescott came. They were sure Kurt was going to get better, but when they realized he wasn't, Roy came with his motor home and took Kurt out of the hospital, along with his brothers, Rosa Lee and her little Kevin and they left for Kanab. Kurt passed away before they arrived home. A very sweet lady here in town, Donna Casebolt, flew to San Bernadino and brought the children home. It was a very sad time for all of us, but many good people here in town helped get through it all and saw that the family had a good Christmas--he passed away December 7, 1997. Rosa Lee is now working down at the High School over the Ed-Net Computer College Courses and her oldest daughter, Sara, is at UVSC in Provo, Utah. This is her first year there and the next girl, Amie is a Junior in High School, then there are James, Luke, Mark, Chelsea and 3 year old Kevin. I pick him up from the baby sitter at noon and keep him until she gets home at 3 p.m. And so Rosa Lee has thanked me over and over that she did graduate from college.
SM: It's allowed her to stay in this area.

GR: It has allowed her to stay in this area. We took our savings and built a house next to us; she lives in the white house next door west of us. So with our help and the help of many good people in this town she gets along. I know it is hard for her to keep up with being mother and father to her brood, but at least she has a home and no house payments and she is right here where we can help her and she helps us!

SM: So you still...are you still active in the community, do you feel like kids are feeling a sense of community growing up?

GR: Oh, they love it--they love it here! She taught her children at home, just home school, until Kurt passed away and then she decided she had to put them in public school, and so... But they're tops, this little Amie didn't ever have school until she was in seventh grade and she is a 4.0 student, she does really well. And Sara up in college is a 4.0 student. They are all very intelligent children--they are! Their dad was really intelligent. He was too smart for his own good (Laughs) He made millions and didn't pay his taxes on it and they picked him up and put him in prison for two years for not paying taxes. And he gave them everything he had, thinking that would help, gave all the money he had, but they still didn't let him out on it. But he was an intelligent person and the children are picking up on his talents--they are all very intelligent, and Rosa Lee is smart too. She is doing very well with her school work and they like her.

SM: So you think Kanab is in a pretty good state right now?

GR: I think it is a good place and Rosa Lee says there are a few in school that are a bad influence, but most of them, the LDS kids, and those from other churches who are really good kids. She thinks it's a beautiful place to have her family. It is--it is really a good place! I can't see anything wrong with Kanab now...I used to want to get out of here, but I am happy to be here now because my husband, he's been sick, he can't walk now. I had to put him in a rest home--he had a little stroke in October, 1998, and he couldn't walk or stand so I had to put him in the home for a couple of months, but now he can stand and walk a little with a walker. I have to dress him and take care of him. He eats good but can't walk and he's kind of....I don't know whether he's (referring to Jay interviewing Virgil) getting anything from him or not, 'cause Virgil is not very talkative!

SM: I'm sure they are doing all right. You seem really strong and healthy.

GR: Oh, I've been healthy, I've had just really good health.

SM: Now, what year were you born?
GR: April 15, 1917, the same year this house was built. This house was built by Billy Mackelprang and he and Hazel had about 13 children who lived in this house and I don't know where they all slept, only three bedrooms! They must have slept in...

SM: Right beside each other!

GR: .... well, one or two on both ends of the bed, I think they did, because they had that many children. Billy was a cattleman in this area.

SM: You were born in Fredonia, though?

GR: I was born in Fredonia and Virgil was born in Kanab.

SM: Were you born with a midwife or...

GR: Well, I guess it was a midwife--it was a nurse who came to the hose. Dr. Urban Norris was the doctor and he used to come when we had our sicknesses. He did come for the birth of my two younger sisters and I remember when they were born, 1926 and 1928, but the other times I think mom just had a midwife.

SM: Yes, that's how it was back then, no medicine.

GR: That's how it was, no medicine, it really was. I worked for Dr. George R. Aiken too. After we were married a couple of years my husband got really sick with appendicitis and he'd just keep having problems and we finally decided we had to have him operated on, but we didn't have any money. So we took him to Dr. Aiken's hospital and he operated and took the appendix out and that was one hundred-fifty dollars we owed him for the deal and we didn't have the money. So I went to work for the doctor and worked in the hospital office and paid off that hundred-fifty dollars. (Laughter) I was typing and taking care of the office to get that hundred-fifty dollars and then after I got that, by then I was pregnant with my first child and so I paid for that too--it cost sixty-five dollars to have that first baby.

SM: So then you owed him again. (Laughs)

GR: Well I didn't owe him again, I knew I was pregnant, so I worked for him until I had all that bill paid, the appendix and the baby.

SM: That's a good way to pay the doctor, huh?

GR: I think Dr. Aiken was happy about that--he was able to build the first hospital in Kanab with the help of people who owed him for his services. We were all happy to have that hospital! It was small, an operating room, a delivery room and about nine beds and the doctor and his family lived in a wing of the hospital They were
very good to work for and I ate lunch with them each day. It was pleasant work for me.

SM: Do you think the quality of life has changed, I mean, obviously it changes, but do you think it was better then or now—it’s easier, but is it better? As far as quality goes, would you prefer it now or then?

GR: Oh, I prefer it now. I like to have electricity, the television, refrigerator, microwave oven, the stove, and I don’t have to put wood in the stove! —so many conveniences! When we were first married I had to wash out on the board, we just had a tub and rubbing board and washed the clothes that way on a wash board. We didn’t have a sewing machine. The first thing I wanted was a sewing machine so I washed clothes for a long time on a scrubbing board. I wanted to sew before I got the washing machine. So, we’ve had everything that we needed and we didn’t have a home when we first got married. We bought a lot for two hundred dollars across the street from his folks for two hundred dollars, yes! But we didn’t have a house. We made a one-room apartment in his parents home and they helped us that way, no rent to pay!

SM: How big was the lot?

GR: It was big...it’s there by the Brandon Motel, it’s on the south of that. After we bought the lot, Virg went out and measured off for our house, I think 24’x36, and he started digging a hole and dug down as far as he could with just a pick and shovel. After all the dirt was out he went up north of town and quarried the rocks out of the hillside. He would cut the rocks up in squares, bring them down to our lot and he layered up that whole place. He had some men come from Hurricane to lay up the rock blocks. One man started laying it up with mud, but then he had two men come from Hurricane and they laid it up with cement. He had a good carpenter come and help finish our basement home and it was nice. They put wood floors throughout and we had a living room, kitchen, bedroom, bath, hallway, furnace and fruit rooms. There was a back and front stairway and nice windows, a very comfortable nice new home and that was our home in 1938 and 1939. We were in World War II in 1940 and men his age were being drafted So we went to Salt Lake, thinking that if he got a job for the government he wouldn’t have to be taken into the service. My Mom loaned us money for a down payment on a home and he got a job in a government supply place. Our little daughter, Vicky Lynn, was born in September 1943 and in December Virg was drafted into the army. He was first sent to Fort Douglas, then to California. (Another sad time for me—I cried many tears!) And we really missed him terribly! We had to give up our new home. They let him have a short furlough to come and move me and the two children back to Kanab to live in our little basement home.
Virg was soon sent overseas, first to New Caledonia, then to the Philippines and he cooked mostly in the Officer's Mess and at Replacement Depots. I lived in our little basement house and tried to take care of those two little ones and plant and raise a garden by myself, and it was tough! And I know on this one day I was washing the clothes in the washer and had the two tubs with a little rinse water in each tub. I had just finished and had a few clothes and socks to hang out on the line and my little boy, Michael who was three, came running in and wanted to play in that water and then the little girl, Vicky Lynn, woke up and she was just a year old. And so I put them in the water and not thinking, I was just out of it, I know I was off in a daze to be so very stupid! I went out to hang these socks on the line and when I came back I said, "Where's Vicky?" "Oh, she's down here in the water!" And I just went berserk, I went over and picked her up and hurried across the street to Virgil's mother's house and we laid her on the floor and tried to give her artificial respiration. They called the doctor and he gave her a shot of some kind and worked with her, but she was gone. And it was terrible—it was horrible! We tried to get in touch with Virg, but he was overseas, and they couldn't find him—he didn't know anything about it until weeks later!

SM: That's got to be the saddest thing that's ever happened in your life.

GR: Well, it was one of the saddest. And so, my mother came immediately from Salt Lake. She had moved to Salt Lake and she came and helped me and we got through the funeral and the burial and then I couldn't stand to live here any longer, I said, "I just can't stay here!" So she took me to Salt Lake and I lived with her in the White Cottage, the home on 2nd East just off South Temple, (the home President Grant built for his mother.) My mother had bought it and was renting out the many rooms. We lived there with her and some of my sisters. I got a job working for Dr. Herbert Wilkinson in his medical practice. We gave electronic treatments to his patients. I put Michael in a nursery and my sisters helped me with him.

SM: That was more tolerable?

GR: Much better than staying in Kanab—I couldn't stand that! Later I took a Civil Service test and passed it and got a job with the Veterans Administration. And so I had a nice job there. I was taking dictation and writing up histories from Mary Childs and Helen Lowe. They would go out and visit with different people and get the history, and then come to the office and tell me about it and I took it down in shorthand and then typed up the histories.

SM: Well, that's sort of like what I'm doing.

GR: And so I was typing up the histories—do you have to type them?
SM: I have people to type it, yeah.

GR: Oh, do you. I had to type it. I worked there until he came home from the service.

SM: How long was he there?

GR: He was two years. So, in January 1946 he came home. And I wanted to stay in Salt Lake but he wanted to come back to Kanab. Whit Parry just insisted he had to come down to Kanab and help him because they had a movie company coming. So Virgil took Michael and came to Kanab and worked and I stayed up there. But he finally said, "I've got to stay here and work for Whit Parry!"

SM: Gotta' work for Whit Parry in Kanab.

GR: Gotta' work for Whit Parry in Kanab, so I did come back here.

SM: Was that really a tough thing for you to come then?

GR: It was a tough thing, I didn't want to do it, I didn't want to come back. But...

SM: But it was your destiny.

GR: But he was my husband, I loved him, and it was good to have him back again! So I quit my job and came to Kanab. Later he opened a little Snack Bar and Bakery on Main street, but he wanted more than that and then he was able to get into the hotel. We first lived in the basement of the hotel and then later moved into the house south of the hotel. The big trucks would back into the business to deliver goods and produce. One morning I was home taking care of my baby, Kerry, and I heard Tommy call "Mom!" and I ran out the door and he was lying in the alleyway; the big Rocky Mountain Produce truck had backed right over him and he was bleeding. We called the doctor and he came quickly and took him up to the hospital and they put him in the hospital. They put him on a kind of sling that held him up above the bed, traction. He lived two days and died, and that was rough too!

SM: Oh, my gosh, I bet.

GR. It was really rough, it was. But...

SM: It's amazing that he could yell, "Mom."

GR: He did, and the two little boys, Larry was two years older than he. Tommy was just five and Larry was seven, and they had been told to stay away from the trucks, but this one was backing up and they ran and caught hold of it and then
I guess they remembered they were not supposed to be doing that, so Larry jumped off and Tommy tried to get off and fell! So we have lost two of our children, but we have the other five, and 26 grandchildren!

SM: (Yes), I guess that's life isn't it?

GR: (Yes). You're not married?

SM: Not yet.

GR: Not yet? (Laughter) Do you have a boyfriend?

SM: (Yes), I'll marry him. (Laughter).

GR: You will? Oh, that's great. I hope you get along god.

SM: Yes, we do, we're best friends.

GR: That's great. How old are you?

SM: I'm twenty-nine.

GR: Are you? You're twenty-nine?

SM: So, yeah, we're marrying a little later these days, but that's okay.

GR: That's okay, it is okay.

SM: I got my schooling finished and I've got this job - which is really fun - and so you know, we've got to get more established and then marry, it's sort of a secondary thing now, it seems.

GR: It is and it's good.

SM: And then children a little later.

GR: That's good. Don't wait too long. But be sure and have some. (Laughter)

SM: I definitely want to.

GR: That's the joy of your life. When I think about it now I think, what if we didn't have any children. If we didn't have Rosa Lee next door, if we didn't have any of the others, what would we do?
SM: It would be empty, wouldn't it?

GR: I'd be empty. You've got to have.

SM: It's nice to hear how positive you are about accepting change and seeing things grow and change, it doesn't seem to bother you. You seem to think that's a natural progression, I guess.

GR: It is. It's a beautiful place to live here, too. Our house is old and funny, but it's comfortable. It is comfortable and it's ours, we paid for it so we don't have to worry about house payments. All I have to worry about is a husband who can't walk--dress him, bathe him and take care of him.

SM: That's a lot of work.

GR: It is a lot of work, but he's good-natured, he doesn't give me any trouble. He woke up in the night last night having nightmares--he walked over to the door and he started to yell at the neighbor next door. (Laughter) "Lester, Lester!" And I said, "What are you doing, honey?" He says, "He's got my car keys and I've got to go to Fredonia!" (Laughter)

SM: That's so funny! That's funny. Well, I'm going to end this interview here, so thanks, Gladys, you were a really good interview, you really shared a lot of good stories so thank you very much.

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, Gladys Brooks Riggs, 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 March 5/99.

Primary Subject Her life experiences growing up in Fredonia and her time in Kanab & sec.

Other Topics __________________________________________________________

Number of Tapes 2

Signature Gladys Brooks Riggs Date March 5/99.

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