

Southern Utah Oral History Project

The Southern Utah Oral History Project was started in July of 1998. It began with an interest in preserving the cultural history of small towns in southern Utah that border the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The project was managed by Kent Powell, from the Utah Division of State History, who oversaw the collection of oral histories conducted in Boulder, Escalante, Bryce Valley, Long Valley, Kanab, the Kaibab Paiute Reservation, and Big Water, by Jay Haymond and Suzi Montgomery. Also in cooperation with the state was the Bureau of Land Management and the people of Garfield and Kane counties, with support from the Grand Staircase-Escalante National Monument. The goals of the project were first to interview long-time local residents and collect information about the people and the land during the first half of the twentieth century. In addition, the interviews were to be transcribed and copies of the transcripts were to be made available to the public at the Utah State Historical Society and at local repositories. Lastly, to build a relationship with state agencies and the local communities and provide a medium for the local communities to express their interest in preserving their own history and culture in the areas that are now included in the GSENM.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to care and share their memories and stories.

Interview with Elaine Roundy

Interview with: Elaine Roundy
Interviewer: Jay Haymond
Interview number: 1 of 1
Date of interview: 4 December 1997
Place of interview: Halls Store
Subject of interview: Livestock Industry
Transcriber: Lisa Beck.
Date: August 1, 1998
Tape No.: 0001
Side No.: A

Jay: Tell me about your first memories as a resident here in Boulder. Your family name was what before you were married?

Elaine: Coombs.

Jay: Tell me about that family. A little about your first memories, and what you remember.

Elaine: I came from a family of fifteen children; I was the middle child. We lived on a small farm where my father was a farmer, he also had cattle. My father was kind of a jack-of-all-trades. He was a mechanic; he ran a small store; he did freighting for the people who lived here; he was the local blacksmith; plus the farming and the cattle. Then, it was sometime when I was eight or nine years old, he owned a saw mill and sawed lumber which he took out to Richfield and other towns to sell.

Jay: Did he sell it locally?

Elaine: Yes, there was probably two or three homes locally in Boulder using the lumber products. The home I now live in was built during the war years. It was all built out of the lumber that my father milled. They even made the shingles. I had an uncle who came in from Teasdale and he was the one who did the shingles. I really don't remember how old I was when I had my first memories. I remember when we were children at home we didn't go much to play with other children. We were our own best friends, my sister and I, we stayed pretty close to home. I remember I loved to go up to the sawmill with my older sister,

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she went up to cook for the mill hands. We used to play in the icy cold water, and it was icy cold.

Jay: There's a stream coming off the mountain?

Elaine: Yes, off the mountain. It came down a big flume that was made and fell over on the big wheel.

Jay: So it was an overshot arrangement?

Elaine: Then the wheel would turn and power the saws and the planer. When we were very little we used to do all kinds of things. We had to weed the garden, and carry the wood, my mother used wood to heat the cooking stove as well as the stove that heated the house. We always planted a big garden, my mother usually took care of the smaller things like the peas and the carrots and all of that and my father took care of the potatoes and the corn and those things. We all learned how to work. We all had to work.

Jay: So you are talking about learning how to work around the house. Do you remember any special chore that you had?

Elaine: I remember when we were really small children we had to carry all of the wood in the wintertime. The snow was different, the seasons were different then, we had so much snow. My father, or my brothers, would chop the wood and we would have to bring it in on the sleighs or we would have to carry it in on a wagon. That was a nightly chore. We had to bring the cedar wood for the cook stove and the pine for the heater in the wintertime. Bringing wood, even in the summer time, was always a chore because we had to have it for the cook stove.

Jay: And the cook stove was in the kitchen?

Elaine: Yes, and so that was also the way we heated the kitchen, the cook stove. We had an outdoor privy, but once a week the old tin tub was brought in and put in front of the kitchen stove and that was where we bathed. So it served purposes other than just cooking.

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We didn't have indoor water, there was a small irrigation ditch by the side of the house with a flume. There was what we would call "a reservoir," on the side of the cook stove where water was heated for doing dishes or bathing. As soon as the dishes were done, that had to be filled up again, the tea kettles had to be filled up again, and the bucket that we drank from. Everything had to be replenished.

Jay: So you drank water out of the ditch?

Elaine: Oh yes, we drank water out of the ditch, everybody did here, it was just something we did. In the wintertime it would get cold and that water would freeze up and we would have to carry water from a nearby creek which was quite a way from the house. Water ran in the creek year around, without freezing over.

Jay: No power of course?

Elaine: No power. It was a nightly thing to watch my mother take the kerosene lamps out and clean the chimneys just before it got dark. Now when the power goes off I can't imagine how we ever read or studied and did all the things we did at night with just two kerosene lamps. I guess it's just when you grow up with something and you don't have anything to compare it to then you see it as normal. We had a real happy family life. When we were older and got out into the world and saw how the "other half lived" you might say, we had never realized we were poor. We must have been extremely poor as far as material things were, we certainly weren't poor in other ways. Although there were a lot of us, there was always food and clothes to wear and a warm place to come to. To me, that's what lacking in so many homes. Even though we have all of the modern conveniences that you can imagine, love and a sense of family is lacking.

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Jay: You know you mentioned not having any light at night with which to study, or read. What did you read?

Elaine: We were a great family of readers, we were all taught by example. My folks did a lot of reading after a hard days work; it was relaxing. It was always a newspaper and books.

Jay: Did they have libraries?

Elaine: Not in the town but in our house. There was always books- that was something that every child got at Christmas time. A lot of times we didn't get anything else but we always got a book of some kind.

Jay: Boy, fifteen books at Christmas time was a lot.

Elaine: Well, we weren't all fifteen at one time. One of my younger brothers doesn't remember my older brother very well. He went into the service when he was nineteen years old. Two of my brothers were gone, one was in the navy and one in the army, and then my younger brothers and one sister were born around that time. So they didn't really remember my oldest brother. Then he got married when he got out of the navy, so he never really came home. But we always read, I remember that we always had a newspaper. The newspaper you could subscribed to and it came with your mail. Then we always had the radio. We loved listening to the radio. That was the first thing that we always heard my father do when he got up in the morning. He always built a fire and turned on the radio to listen to the stock news.

Jay: What station did he listen to?

Elaine: I can't even remember, although we got good radio reception. They were old battery radios, but they had good radio reception. At night we listened to Fibber Magee and Molly, and Amos and Andy, and the Whistler, all of those old shows. We all went to school in the little building which is now the town hall- four grades in one room and four grades in another. That is where we spent our

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wintertime, in school. At recess we played jacks using marbles, we played mumble peg with pocketknives, [*she laughs*] and paper dolls, we didn't have paper dolls like now, we cut them out of a catalog. When the catalogs were not any good for that year, we would cut the paper dolls out. We played paper dolls a lot, my sisters and I.

For holidays, especially Christmas, we always stayed home. For Thanksgiving we would alternately go up to Aunt Hazel's and Uncle Frances Lyman's home, then the following year they would come to our home. Two large, happy families enjoying each other's company. It was a great time.

Jay: I was just thinking about when the electricity came into the community. Would that not be about 1935?

Elaine: I was probably fifteen years old when we got electricity; I was in high school. It was after the house was built that I now live in. It was built during the war years.

Jay: So say something like 1950?

Elaine: Well, you're really giving me away.

Jay: Really pinning you down huh?

Elaine: Well let's see, I was born in 1931 and so that would be forty-six, 1946. I'm sure it was the summer I was fifteen or sixteen years old that it was brought here. I remember that winter when my father came out to Bicknell to bring us home for the Christmas holidays. It was something that we had never seen before, Christmas lights, electric lights on Christmas trees in Boulder.

Jay: Where did you go in Boulder when you were beyond eighth grade? Did you go to Escalante?

Elaine: No, when I was old enough to go to high school, there were no buses running anywhere. If you went to high school it was your parents decision where you

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went. We had a lot of relatives in the Bicknell, Teasdale area in Wayne County. That's where we went.

Jay: Sure.

Elaine: We boarded with relatives. In two years there were all of us three sisters. One year we boarded in the basement of this relatives home, one year we lived in two rooms of a private home in Bicknell. Most of the time we lived with a relative, my mother's sisters or father's sister in that area.

Jay: So you grew accustomed to electricity up there?

Elaine: Oh yes.

Jay: So when you came home, talk about the adaptations that you made with electricity now available.

Elaine: We didn't have a lot of appliances. My mother until the day she died didn't have an electric stove. When my husband and I moved back here, we had lived in the Kearns area for ten years, we bought the family home and for the first year or so after we moved into the home I still used the wood stove because there was no electric outlet for an electric stove. My mother felt that she got along with it for all those years she didn't need it. It was the same way with the refrigerator. My father finally just brought a refrigerator home. She just kept saying she didn't need one. They certainly don't make them that way any more. I still have that old refrigerator and it still works! Freezes some of the food sometimes. I use it to store carrots, and apples after harvest. It was not really hard to get used to electricity and then go back to the other- that was called "being home." A lot of the people had gas lanterns and the lanterns always gave off more light. But we did our homework, we read, we did everything we had to do because you didn't have anything to compare the dim lights of the lamps with electricity.

Jay: You mentioned that the refrigerator was new to the family when your father finally just brought it in.

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Elaine: Yes.

Jay: And what was the pattern of doing things with food that needed to be kept cool, meat let's say. What did you do with it?

Elaine: In the wintertime when there was meat it could always be hung out and kept cold. And we used a lot of venison. There wasn't a lot of laws that said you couldn't, and nobody killed deer for pleasure. It was when you needed the venison, then you were down in your field and shot one. In the summer time, and I don't remember the years or anything like that. They had what they called "a beef trust." All of the men that belonged to this trust, once a year they would supply a beef and it would be butchered by who ever they hired to do it. It was kept track of who got which cuts out of each beef so nobody got the same thing each time. I really don't remember- it seems that was done after the electricity came here, but only in the summer and fall months. We always had meat. We had a room down under the house, a basement room that was cool all the time. I remember that's where the bacon and the hams were after they were salted. They were hung down there to cure. I really don't remember about the refrigeration. I know that the milk was always cooled in the ditch where we got the drinking water.

Jay: So the live water kept it cool.

Elaine: Oh yes. I really don't remember about the meat. I remember in the fall when they butchered the pigs, and they did their own bacon and ham, and sausage. My mother and dad did all of that. I remember my father killing deer occasionally but I don't remember if it was done in the summer time. It's possible it was canned because she canned a lot of things. We canned the fruit and the vegetables. So it's possible she did the same thing. We always had chickens for eggs and meat.

Jay: She canned chicken too?

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Elaine: Some of the time.

Jay: Did you can beef?

Elaine: Yes, I remember using the pressure canner.

Jay: And maybe venison too?

Elaine: Yes, venison too. And it's strange I do a lot of things the same way my mother used to do [*she laughs*]. I don't waste anything. I boil the bones and use the stock, even though I have a lot of modern things. I still do things the same way my mother did; the process is still good.

Jay: How did you meet your husband?

Elaine: Oh [*she laughs shyly*]. We use to have a great 4th of July celebration here in Boulder. In this lot here along the fences, we used to have a rodeo corral. The first thing in the morning would be a program, and then there would be a parade. They would have a rodeo in the afternoon. I had been chosen that year to be the rodeo queen and I was taking my horse home. He and some friends had followed me down the road; he wasn't too impressed with my horsemanship [*she laughs*].

Jay: [*he laughs*] Was that a dodge to get a-- [*tape becomes unintelligible*].

Elaine: I think so. He was from Escalante.

Jay: Was he truly a cowboy or was he a wanna be?

Elaine: No, he was a cowboy, raised on a farm/ranch in Escalante. They had cattle and a farm, like most of the people around here. When I met him he had been in the service, been home, been up to the BYU, so he wasn't really doing a lot of cowboying at the time.

Jay: What was he studying to do or be?

Elaine: He wanted to be a coach, a basketball coach, but he didn't stay long enough. The money ran out and so he worked at Geneva Steel, in Orem. He worked there two years then returned home. He and his brother established a

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drycleaners in Escalante, and that's what they were doing when I met him. But then he was a real horseman. His dad raised and trained racehorses.

Jay: Well that's been a big thing. What did you think you would have liked to do most while your husband was a coach and a dry cleaner and that sort of thing?

Elaine: He never became a coach. I was a homemaker- our first baby was born when we lived in Escalante after we were first married. Then Uvon's brother left and he couldn't run the cleaners by himself, so it was closed. We moved to Salt Lake City. We lived in Salt Lake City for a year and then we bought a house and moved out to Kearns. Uvon's occupation was carpet laying. By the time we moved back down here we had five children. Two more were born here.

Jay: You have lived here ever since?

Elaine: Yes, we bought the family home from my father as well as five acres of land. Raised our family here. I have been a widow for twenty-one years.

Jay: Oh, I see, I see.

Elaine: Uvon worked for the Garkane Power Association. The plant is up here in Boulder. His occupation up there in Salt Lake was a carpet layer, he came down here and laid carpet on the side as a second job.

Jay: I'm not very well acquainted with the business of a power supply company, but I presume that's its machinery and that sort of thing.

Elaine: The power plant ran three large water driven turbine generators.

Jay: Was he the machinery tenders?

Elaine: They had three machine operators and they ran three different shifts and their responsibility was to keep track of the water flow, keep the building clean, keep a log of the storage ponds and allotted water for irrigation. Before you leave you ought to go up and look at the Garkane Power plant. The building, and inside, it looks exactly like it did then. However, it's almost all run by computers now.

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Jay: They don't have three shifts any more?

Elaine: Yes, they do have three shifts of operators, they just keep track of it all on computers and there is another extended plant down on the creek also. But they don't have to do all the things they used to do, check the substation and the water and then they had to go up on the mountain and see if the water was going in and out like it should. There was a lot more manual labor then to what it is now.

Jay: When you talk about being a mother for all those years, that's a definition, more or less, what you make of it. How do you define your role as a mother?

Elaine: Well, I was a mother that stayed at home, and I cooked and cleaned and nurtured children and took care of my husband. In fact I didn't work away from home until, I guess it was two years before my husband died, then I was trained to be an assistant Postmaster. And then I probably did that for four years and then the post office here became a community post office, which is a branch of the Escalante post office. Then it was put out on bids, however when I did it, I was appointed by the postmaster- back then. It was a fourth class post office then it was put out on bids and it depended on what you bid, and I didn't get it. Then I started working here at the store after my husband died. I remember I started out working for \$2.00 an hour.

Jay: Oh my!

Elaine: [*she laughs*] But I was glad for that.

Jay: What I was headed for when I asked for your definition of a parent and mother.

End side 1, Begin Side 2

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Jay: By the time you were raising your children they needed more teaching about things that were different than the things that you learned from your parents, let's say. And I was going to ask you a question, where did you turn for information to help your children? What was the backup, let's say, of information? Did you have a favorite source, one source? Did you turn to literature from a particular group, a newspaper let's say? How did you manage?

Elaine: That's a hard question. A lot of it came from my church. The organization for the women had classes on motherhood and homemaking and that was a great source. Not only in this ward, but in the stake, which is comprised of several wards. It was something that you learned from other women who were having the same type of experience. And of course I said I was a great reader, I read a lot. I read in different magazines. I used a source that I felt that I needed. It wasn't too hard at first, but as my children got into high school then the challenges were greater. Then things started to change in these small communities. The same problems that were in city schools came into these smaller communities and started infiltrating the lives of the children, then it was harder. It seems like it came from the church sources, and friends, and neighbors, and family.

Jay: So the community does help raise the children?

Elaine: Oh, I think so. So many of our children were of the same age, they went to school together. When my children were old enough to go to school there was the bus. The bus went back and forth to Escalante in their high school years. They played ball and they were cheerleaders and they rode the bus together and they had an organization in the church for the young people, it was just involvement in community and church. And then you relied on the Lord a lot, I did, just simply. When things were just more than you could handle you had to go some place for inspiration and guidance.

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Jay: You are talking about The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints?

Elaine: Yes.

Jay: With a lay leadership, that meant part of the time you were involved in the organizations that provided leadership, is that true?

Elaine: Most of my children's growing up years, my husband was the bishop here. And that may not have been a good thing, I don't know. He was gone quite a bit. Things were different then. The church soon learned that parents were taken away from their families by so many meetings, and so they consolidated the meetings so there were not so many of them. I have always kept a journal. And reading back in those old journals it amazes me how much time we spent on the road between here and Escalante. For church work, school, for activities, it seems like we were on the road most of the time. You live in a place like this you have to accept what there is there.

Jay: Does that mean Escalante was a stake center?

Elaine: At that time it was. When I grew up as a child here, the stake center was at Circleville.

Jay: Circleville?

Elaine: Circleville. And so it was a long way to go.

Jay: What happened to Panguitch?

Elaine: Well there was a Panguitch stake, when they made the Escalante Utah stake they divided Boulder and Escalante off of the stake that went to Circleville, and Tropic, and Henrieville, and Cannonville off of the one that went to Panguitch and made the one that went to Escalante Utah Stake.

Jay: That is a hard break.

Elaine: Yea, so you traveled a lot.

Jay: Wow.

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Elaine: I've always been involved in one of the organizations, Primary, Sunday school, Relief Society, I've done them all. That was a part of what everybody did. It was a small ward; there were a lot of things that had to be done by a few people.

Jay: When you talk about cowboys. I think I heard you say your husband wasn't really a cowboy- he sort of grew up in the environment.

Elaine: His father owned a lot of cattle- him and his brothers mostly trained the racehorses.

Jay: We were talking about the role of the church and how you were a parent at the time. There is also a socialization process that goes along with any kind of, and may I assume that the church helped you, where ever you were in that respect?

Elaine: Almost anything that was in a social aspect was in connection with the church. At night in the winter time the people would get together for parties, dances, and plays. There were always Christmas and Thanksgiving celebrations, Easter and May Day in the spring.

Jay: Were your children performers?

Elaine: My girls are singers. They all, or three, of them learned to play the piano. Four of them played guitar. My husband was a great singer and he couldn't read a note of music. His family was like that. They played the piano, but they didn't read music. They sang harmony and my children learned to sing harmony from their father. We all liked music- it was a great part of our lives. I remember my father when we were children, I don't remember how old I was, he brought home a piano. It was a used player piano, with a dozen or so rolls, and oh that was great! We learned to sing the songs to the music to that piano.

Jay: I'll say. Recognize the advantage.

Elaine: I had three sisters that could really play the piano, and the rest of us could play a little, enough to play the hymns out of the songbook. They continued to go on to the McKune School of Music in Salt Lake, and really learned to play the

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piano. There was never quite enough money to give lessons to everyone. So the ones who were the most ambitious, I guess, took advantage of that.

Jay: Well in the interest of time, maybe we better close this interview down. I was going to ask you about your diaries, however, you wrote your diaries for your families benefit I would assume. Do you have a family historian or a member of the family, sort of a caretaker of the family records or that sort of a thing?

Elaine: My oldest daughter, she also keeps a journal, she sort of prods us along with the genealogy. I have two other children that keep real good journals. My one daughter, before she died she said she was going to burn hers, I said then your not writing the right kind of journal. A journal is something you write that you don't care who reads it. To me, it's been an advantage for a family down the line, to know certain dates and times, to have for reference, to look back. It's been a great advantage that way to keep track of dates and important things that have happened.

Jay: Well, often when we run across people who keep a dairy, oral history is not really necessary. Not only is it superfluous, but may even be a waste of money to transcribe.

Elaine: A lady, who lived here a long time ago, wrote a book. It was published and it went on sale. Her material came mostly from a journal she kept.

Jay: Suwhala?

Elaine: No, Nathella Woolsey Griffin - or Griffin Woolsey? Her granddaughter asked me when I was going to write mine, and I said I wasn't. I wrote my journal for my children, if they wanted to read it that was fine. But I wasn't going to publish my life story.

Jay: Well, I think a diary is much more intimate because the information the interviewer extracts is a bit contrived and the intimacy of a spontaneous entry in a diary is precious.

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Elaine: A lot of people wonder, why is it important? To me, writing a journal or a diary, if you write about something that is happening to you right now, if in five years from now you were to write about that very same thing it wouldn't be the same. The relief society asked me to look through my journal back twenty-five years, tell a little bit about it in a meeting we had on journals. As I read I came to the part when my husband died. If I was writing that down now, it wouldn't have been the same. The pain, the loss, and everything. It would not be the same written years after the fact. That to me is important, that you write things down as they are happening because the feeling and the thought is there at the moment. Maybe that's why I write, I don't know.

Jay: Good for you. Thank you very much for spending the time and sharing.

Elaine: You probably got more history from someone else.

Jay: You did pretty well, we may have even attracted you some customers.

Elaine: Well, usually in Boulder the mail comes about 11:30 and that is the community gathering place. When the mail is being sorted the people get together and do other things, the customers have probably been down at the post office.

End of interview

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Interview Agreement and Deed of Gift

In view of the historical value of this oral history interview and my interest in Utah history,

I, ELAINE C. Rowley
please print or type your name

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

Interview Description

Date of Interview December 4, 1997

Primary Subject Growing up - Experiences in Boulder

Other Topics _____

Number of Tapes _____

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