

E. SORENSON
1999 Orderville

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: Elbern Sorensen
INTERVIEWER: Suzi Montgomery
INTERVIEW NUMBER: One
DATE OF INTERVIEW: July 25, 1999
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: In Orderville
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: His experiences growing up in Orderville
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SM: Okay, this tape is iffy' but we will start with the questions. I understand Elbern that you were born and raised in Orderville. Starting with your birth-date, could you just tell me a little bit about what it was like to a young boy here and about your family?

ES: Being here as a young boy was, in my estimation, as good a place to be in that situation (as a young boy), being raised in Orderville and on the ranch, which was about twelve miles west of Orderville and every spring after school was out, we, my family would move from Orderville to the ranch to spend the summer time where we had our main income, which was from dairy cattle and range cattle, both. We had horses. My father always had at least eight big draft horses that he used for farming and to pull the vehicles which transported the family back and forth from the ranch to Orderville. It was necessary to spend the winters in Orderville because of me and my brothers and sisters being in school and on Sundays we traveled from that ranch to attend church in Orderville. Most of those years of my growing up, but eventually because of the number of ranches, homesteads in the area of the Big Meadow Creek, which it was called, and is still called that, on the east slope of the Clear Creek Mountain, there was enough ranchers there that the church organized a branch, which was a branch of the Orderville Ward. And then during those years we attended church there and it was something on Sunday to, our ranch being the closet ranch to where the chapel was built, which was right on the Big Meadow Creek, where the diversion dam was, that some of the ranches were privileged to have irrigation water and our ranch was one of those that irrigated about, oh, 100 acres, of mostly alfalfa hay. And on Sunday, Sunday was an interesting day for me, as I mentioned before, our ranch being the closest one to the chapel, we would always get there, most of the time, ahead of the other wagons that would come to church and it was

always fun to see the other wagons come from three or four different directions to attend church there.

SM: Were there roads all the way through surrounding the ranch?

ES: They came from different roads, which lead to this spot where the chapel was built. One came down off of a steep hill and another road came down the canyon where part of the irrigation water came from, from the north, and about four families lived south of us, which was straight south from the chapel and it was something to see, those wagons come from different directions to attend church.

SM: Describe what a wagon looked like back then?

ES: Those wagons were big wooden wheels with spokes. The front wheels were usually smaller than the back wheels and the spokes in the wheels were about three feet long and then the rim of the wheel was wood with an iron outside, which had to be for the wear on the rocks and the roughness of the road in those days. But those wagon wheels was good for a good many miles. They were built very sturdy and lasted a long time. And later some of the ranchers were fortunate to have what they called a "buggy", which was a lighter vehicle. It had springs on it that was much easier to ride than in the wagons. And my father was one of those ranchers that had a buggy and he bred horses that were much smaller than the big draft horses that he used for plowing and for work on these wagons, which sometimes were loaded very heavily.

SM: Interesting.

ES: These buggy's, I'll never forget joy it was to change from riding in a wagon clear to Orderville in this new buggy because it had springs on it, which was more or less a luxury

vehicle. (Laughter) And it was fun to have.

SM: (Laughter) What color was it?

ES: What color was it? It had a white canvas top. You were actually shaded. You could sit inside of that, the seat was situated and in the back of the part that was covered, had a place where smaller children would sit and a place in front where we could kneel in front of the seat and be right close to the horses and it was sometimes an argument between children who got the front seat and who got the back seat.

SM: Some things never change.

ES: Some things never change. That's still the situation in the automobiles today.

SM: Yeah. Was there a model of this buggy? Was there a name? Do you remember?

ES: I don't remember the manufacturer's name, no. I do not, but the wheels on this buggy were very similar to the wagon wheels built, constructed practically the same, only the spokes in the wheels of the buggies were only half as big. Because there wasn't the need for that strong of a wheel because the buggy load was very limited- just for passengers. The wagon was used for example; during the building of the Zion Highway my father had the contract. He was very fortunate because it was in the days of the big Depression, 1929 and '30, when there was no jobs, and the Zion Highway was built during those years and he was a very fortunate rancher to have two years of contract to furnish the fuel, (I call it fuel), to move the yardage of dirt that had to be moved to build the Zion Highway, with horses, horse power. And those years financially was better for my father than a lot of other people in the area because he was able to obtain this contract with the big construction company. The name of the company was Reynolds and Ely Construction Company out of Northern Utah that built the Zion Highway.

SM: When you say fuel, what are you referring to?

ES: Horse power. That's the reason why I call it fuel, because now days the yardage, the earth that's moved now days to build a big highway is Caterpillar diesel power. And in those days it was horsepower.

SM: Okay. (Laughter)

ES: And it was actually the same in way of speaking of how it was powered. And he had that contract to deliver that; he had the first hay baler. It was a stationary baler, it wasn't a baler like you see now days. It had to be set in the field or some place in a permanent spot and the power that made the hay from loose hay to baled hay, was horse power and those horses went around in a circle and caused the mechanism that baled the hay to push the hay into bales. It was quite a piece of machinery.

SM: Did it break down a lot or was it dependable?

ES: Not very often. It was dependable and very sturdy. Built out of heavy- the plunger that actually did the pushing of the bales was made out of heavy steel and the unit that by the horses going around in a circle, there was two great huge rollers that pushed the plunger to create the bale of hay. It took a lot of force. And when that plunger was moving back to create a bale of hay the horses sometimes had to get right down and give it all they had to create that and then the plunger would slide back and then they would start again and the horse would have just about ten steps, they would be relieved of strain, see. And then when the plunger would hit another, start to make another bale, the horses would have to get down and really pull.

SM: And how long would the horses be able to last before you had to give them a break?

ES: They would usually go three to four hours without really stopping. And then they would stop for lunch and the horses would have an hour rest, and then they would be hitched up again and would go constantly for another three or four hours. And they became trained, I can remember dad used to have a certain team of horses, big draft horses that he used on it and they knew what to expect. In other words, if he tried another team of horses that had never been used to bale hay with, it took some time to train them to know what to expect, and he always tried to use the same team that knew what was going on.

SM: Was that a step up from a Derrick?

ES: From what?

SM: The original hay baler, didn't they use a Derrick, this long thin pole that sticks straight up? It's a derrick isn't it? Before the hay baler that your dad got that you were talking about, what did he use?

ES: Oh, a hay pole. He had a... I know what you mean. He would stack the hay; he had a barn to start with, which later on was caved in with heavy snow. On that ranch we used to get as high as five feet of snow in the wintertime, and that caved his barn in and after that barn was destroyed, he just stacked the hay with a hay pole- a huge hay fork would go down and the man on the wagon would stick that fork in and it would be pulled with one horse or a team of horses to raise that big fork full of hay up onto the stack. That's the way the hay was put up for storage, other years, other than the selling it to this road construction company. But the wagons in those days were made so they could be stretched out. Put the back wheels, they had a heavy piece of wood in the center of the wagon that could be stretched out. It was called the "reach", and by talking a bolt out, the wheels could be put twenty feet apart, however long a reach that he had and he had different ones for different types of loading, and to deliver this hay from the ranch to the highway where the Zion Highway was being built, is about six miles over a rough road.

He would stretch that wagon out so that the actual load of hay was about twenty-five feet long and five bales high in one row of bales.

SM: How many horses would pull that?

ES: There was one on the hill on the trip that was fairly close to the ranch that he had to have four horses. He had to take an extra team of horses to make that one hill. And then he'd leave that team of horses there, give them some hay to eat while the other team would take the wagon and go on down the other four miles to deliver the load of hay.

SM: How long would it take to travel that distance?

ES: The way I remember, about four or five hours to make the trip. We could make the trip down and back in one day. If we'd leave early enough in the morning we wouldn't have to come home in any darkness. And this big corral of draft horses that the road construction company used, I can still remember the joy it was as a small boy to go down with my dad or the hired man who went when he didn't go, it was always fun to get close to the large corral where these big horses were kept when they weren't working them. My dad and some of the other ranchers would sell some of the irrigation water and they would run it down a drainage that would pond, and then they built a dike at the road construction camp. They built a big dike there for a pond for these horses to have water to drink. And when we'd get there, I always liked to get there in the evening when they were through moving dirt and building road, those horses were always thirsty and when they'd open the gate, they had to run down a hill, not a steep hill, but a slope to the big pond where the water was stored and it was just like a thundering herd. (Laughter)

SM: Oh wow. How many horses would be running down there?

ES: They must have had at least fifty or sixty head of those huge draft horses. And when they'd open the gate after a hard days work, and let me tell you, they were worked hard to

move all the yardage of earth that needed to be moved. They were ready for a drink of cool water and they'd open that gate and I'll tell you, they didn't waste any time getting down to that drink of water. And that was always fun for me to see that. You know, it was different to see that many. My dad always had a corral full of eight or nine horses, but to see sixty or seventy head turned loose, it was quite a sight. To run to the pond for a drink.

SM: I bet. So that was your father's job was to supply the hay for the horses?

ES: Yes. That was, like I said before, it was during the Depression. I actually didn't witness much of a Depression because on that ranch we always had plenty of food. We raised our own food and then this contract to furnish that, I call it fuel, to power the horses to move the yardage, was a great asset financially to my dad.

SM: How many years did he supply the horsepower?

ES: Two. Two years it took to build the highway from the Mount Carmel Junction to the Zion Tunnel - the road is still being used, almost in the same place that it was then. And it is actually a historical highway and a historical park, Zion Park. That famous Zion Tunnel is known the world over.

SM: Where did much of the labor to build the tunnel come from?

ES: Most of it was local labor from three counties here: Kane County, Washington County - quite a few from Washington County, and Iron County. It helped a lot of people in that many counties in this area to have that work going on when work was so scarce.

SM: And you really didn't feel the crunch of the Depression because of this?

ES: No, not so much in this area and especially my family because my dad had that contract for all that horse power. He had already moved from the buggy that I talked about to a Model T Ford.

SM: Oh really?

ES: At the time of this contract, we had driven a Model T Ford and I always had a hard time with the Model T Ford. There were hills between the ranch and Orderville that that Model T Ford wouldn't navigate. We had to bring a horse, a saddle horse from the ranch and tie that horse at the foot of this hill and that went on for two or three years. Tie that horse at the foot of the hill to help pull that Model T Ford up that one hill. (Laughter)

SM: (Laughter) You were wondering why you'd bother using it. (Laughter)

ES: I thought, I didn't ever say to my dad, I used to think, "I think the buggy is better". (Laughter) Because we had the horses already there without taking an extra horse along.

SM: (Laughter) What year was that Ford, do you remember?

ES: That Ford was a 1926 model. And after having that contract to furnish hay for that Zion Highway, my dad purchased, and I think he paid cash for a 1928 Whipit car, closed in. It had glass windows that rolled up and down. (Laughter) And that was a big jump forward. It would pull that hill that the Model T Ford would not navigate.

SM: So that was called a Wicket?

ES: A Whipit. It was made by the people who build the Jeep now.

SM: Really?

ES: The Overland Jeep. The four-wheel drive Jeep is made by that same company that made the first car they built and that was the Whipit.

SM: And you had one?

ES: He bought one of those after this contract with the Reynolds and Ely Construction Company, he bought a new Whipit and what a joy that was. But I can still remember hearing the words from my dad and mother- it had a light in the dome, a dome light, it had a switch on the doorpost, and that was such a unique thing that I can still those words, "Turn that light off and quit rolling those windows up and down." (Laughter)

SM: And you kids would just be happy doing that?

ES: Right.

SM: How many people could ride in that car?

ES: It was a six passenger. It was a four-door sedan, I remember that, and the whole family rode in it without much problem. My dad and mother had six children.

SM: So did that new form of transportation change how often you would go to Orderville or how often you would go visit people in the family?

ES: Yes it did. There were times that we did come to Orderville more than on Sunday. Before that we always came on Sunday, unless there was sickness or a real problem with animals you know. We'd always come to town on Sunday, except during those years that they had the Orderville Branch- Big Meadow Creek Branch, it was called. It was where all the ranchers attended church, but that was only in the summer months. Because most of that area is so much higher than Orderville the snow got quite deep up there.

SM: Where the local community church was?

ES: Yes, but we did leave livestock there. I can remember that was one of the things we had to do on weekends, is ride horses or go on snowshoes up there to feed livestock in the winter time?

SM: On snowshoes, huh?

ES: Yeah. There were times when we didn't have horses in town. Most of the time we did have horses in town that we could ride up there, but there was a few times I do recall having to go on snowshoes.

SM: So you remember where you got the snowshoes?

ES: No I don't. It was quite common to have them and I don't remember where they came from. I think probably they were locally made. They were made out of rawhide, skins from animals.

SM: The old wooden type?

ES: They'd have a wood frame, I remember that, wood frames and this rawhide was just crisscrossed or woven to make the shoe part.

SM: Like a tennis racquet?

ES: Yeah.

SM: And you'd go up there and feed the livestock in the winter?

ES: Yes, the hay and the corn fodder was stored up there and we'd usually be able to, we had it situated so we could feed enough so it would last them a week, and then we'd have to go again in another week.

SM: And you'd haul the corn fodder up with horses?

ES: No, the corn fodder would be stored there during the summer. We raised lots of corn and hay, both. Before my father acquired a hay baler, the hay was always stacked in- during the years that he had a barn before the snow caved the barn in, it was stored in this big barn and then later after that barn was destroyed by the deep snow, he used a hay pole to stack and store the hay for winter. And we'd feed out of that stack when we'd go up in the wintertime.

End of Tape One, Side One

Begin Tape One, Side Two

...and see here in Orderville its just under 5000(feet) Being on the east slope of the Clear Creek Mountain, see it goes higher and higher on the upper acreage of the ranch.

SM: Talk about your first memories as a young boy up at the ranch. I guess your dad, did he acquire the ranch from family or?

ES: He homesteaded it. He was a homesteader. My grandfather was a homesteader and as his boys, as my father and his oldest brother became old enough and were married, they each homesteaded that area. My grandfather had already started farming acreage up there and had already started irrigating and had filed on the irrigation water on that part of Clear Creek Mountain and as his boys got old enough, they each took home homesteads. In a homestead a young man was able to acquire six hundred forty acres by doing the government requirements. The government required a certain amount and they specified

the amount and the work that had to be done in order to prove and get the deed for a homestead. And many of the areas on the Clear Creek Mountain was all taken eventually by homesteaders and that's what formed the branch of the Orderville ward out in that area, was so many homesteaders.

SM: So your father built that ranch house up there in that picture?

ES: That's the old ranch house right there, yeah.

SM: He built that?

ES: He built that from lumber that was sawed at the, I don't know if you're familiar with all of the names in Zion Park. There's one place in Zion Park that called Cable Mountain, and the reason it was called Cable Mountain is that there was a sawmill up there and to transport that lumber from that sawmill without shooting it down this Cable Mountain, is just what it says it is, there were two large cables that were anchored at the top of the ledge and anchorage at the bottom of the ledge in Zion Canyon, and this sawmill shipped lumber down that cable because there was no way to get lumber with transporting it, I would say, 150 miles to get it into Washington County without going into Zion Park.

SM: That's good stuff to know, that's interesting.

ES: There's a plaque museum in Zion Park that tells the history of that Cable Mountain. Why it was called Cable Mountain and my dad hauled the lumber from that Cable Mountain, which was about in miles would be 18 to 25 miles from where his ranch house is to that mill, over some of the roughest roads you could imagine, because of the roughness of terrain. I can remember going with him one trip to get lumber to build that house with and we had to stay over night, so it was a two-day trip, the terrain was so rough.

SM: So you were already old enough to remember when he built that house?

ES: Yes.

SM: What year were you born?

ES: 1920. And he built that house. They lived in a smaller; the back part of what you see there is the first house. They lived in a tent for oh, I think three summers. A boarded up tent and then they built this small part that you can see in the back there. It was later after the big house was built, they still used that for what they called a "cool house" to keep the milk and the butter and cheese. And that back part of that house was made with an extra thick wooden floor that mother used to keep wet, she had burlap hung at the windows which was wet with water to cool the building enough for hot summer days to keep the milk and the butter and the cheese cool. And then later, after that, my dad got an idea and it was a good one, about a better cooling system, which we had a "snow house". About a 12 x 14 house built with a gable roof, just like those ranch houses, and we'd go up there in March when the snow was four feet deep all around the snow house and we'd just take the windows out and shovel that house clear full of snow, heavy, wet snow. In March, you know, that snow starts to melt some and it creates it so there's big crystals, you know, and we'd shovel that type of snow in that house and by the time school was out and we moved up there, that snow was packed right against the wall, we'd pack it in and tromp it good, tight, fill it clear up to the gable roof and then school you see, would be out in two months and by that time there would be two and one half, two feet, eighteen inches, depending on how warm the spring was, it would be melted back away from the wall, eighteen inches to two feet, and then when the family would move to the ranch for the summer, we'd fill that cavity that melted with sawdust so it would have that much insulation, see. That snow would keep until September, October, until snow fell again. And then the milk and the butter and the cheese were stored in an "ice cave" you might say- right in the snow.

SM: Do did you ever make ice cream?

ES: Made ice cream nearly every day. (Laughter)

SM: (Laughter) Did you really?

ES: Because we milked lots of cows. And that was part of the cash income, was the cream. Shipped the cream to Panguitch, and butter and cheese, to the creamery. The cream would be sent on the mail and it would go north and I can still remember those days of getting cream check from the creamery in Panguitch. That usually bought most of the cash needed items for the family.

SM: Really? So that's basically how you got money, through the dairy cows?

ES: Right. That, from the dairy cows and the stores here in town would usually, the farmers and the ranchers would usually run a bill for a year for items needed from the store, which wasn't too many; shoes and things that, nearly all of our food was produced. But there was some items that had to be purchased and I can always remember, I always liked to be with my dad when he would bring a, he would usually pay his bill with two or more, whatever it took, big steers. And the store people would butcher them and sell, some people purchased, you know, meat from the butcher shop in the stores here in Orderville, from the time every since I can remember.

SM: Is this the Tait store?

ES: Yes, Rena's father. Rena's dad had the store and my dad did more trading with Hans Chamberlain than he did the other store because Hans did more of this butchering animals. My dad could pay his bill with however many steers he needed. And Hans had a man that did his butchering and he'd sell meat, see.

SM: Well that worked out well, that barter system?

ES: It did. That's one reason I have said before; we did not feel so much the Depression as in the big cities because of things of that nature. I always liked to be with dad when he paid Hans Chamberlain for the year's bill for items that had to be purchased. Hans always gave the children that were there candy. (Laughter)

SM: Ah ha. (Laughter) Did he always pay with a steer or did he ever pay with cash?

ES: The years he had a cash income from furnishing the hay to power the horse, the horse power to move the yardage to build the Zion Highway. I'm sure that year he did pay with cash. There were times.

SM: My understanding is that Hans Chamberlain did that barter system up until the Depression and then in the Depression the bank took over the store because he was going under.

ES: Right on. Right

SM: So there was probably no barter system allowed at that point. It was probably with cash only.

ES: Right. I still remember that. Hans' creditors, and I still remember the man that they sent here to run that store. Yeah. Rena's probably told you that.

SM: Right. She remembers that very well.

ES: I remember it. Yeah.

SM: Well, that's interesting. I want to go back to this ranch and talk about your mother a little bit and her role. How many children were in your family?

ES: Six. Six children. She played a financial part because she made and sold cheese and butter, too.

SM: Can you stop for a minute and say your father's full name and your mother's full name?

ES: My father's full name was David Sorensen and my mother's full name was Alta Mahalia Tait Sorensen. And she played a big role in supporting the family through sale of butter. She had a butter wrapper for her butter- "The Big Meadow Creek Ranch Butter". It was written right on the paper. And the market for her butter was not only the stores in town, but there was lots of sheep in this county that trailed passed our ranch up there to go clear as far north as Navajo Lake that's actually closer to Cedar than it is here. But the reason for that, all the sheep men that run sheep on Cedar Mountain trailed to the Arizona Strip for winter. And they trailed right passed that ranch to get to Cedar Mountain and sheep man after sheep man, as they came through, would always take enough butter, they'd take as much as the could put on their pack horses. That ranch where we lived was the end of the trail for the sheep man.

SM: That could actually afford to put weight on.

ES: Well it was the end for the sheep wagon. They had to leave their wagons and go with the packhorse. They went with packhorses from our ranch, on another fifty, sixty miles to their summer range. And that being the case, there was many sheep men who left their what the called their "commissary wagon" that was pulled with the sheep wagon by horses, they usually trailed one behind the other and if they had big enough horses, they could pull both wagons all the way from their winter range to the end of the line to the summer range. And some of those sheep men would leave their wagons there, they'd come back later and pick up the sheep wagon and take it around by Cedar and bring it where there was a road for it to go on. But from that ranch it was just a packhorse until

later in the year, they'd eventually come and get the sheep wagon and take it to Cedar Mountain where they would use it for the herds that were up where they had roads.

SM: Would they take the wagons back up while it was still winter?

ES: No, in the wintertime the wagon went south. In October, see the sheep all left the Cedar Mountain and went to the Arizona Strip, and then they'd pick up the commissary wagon if it was still there in October when they come by, to go south. And mother always, I can still remember some of the sheep men would take enough produce and mother's butter and eggs to load one packhorse. They'd take enough, and it was interesting to me to see how they would pack, how would you think you would pack eggs on a pack horse without breaking them?

SM: Oh boy.

ES: These men who used packhorses always had oats and they would put the eggs right in a sack of oats, and that way the eggs would not get broken.

SM: They would be insulated.

ES: Yep. Insulated and protected from being hit with something that would break the eggs. Yep.

SM: So they had interesting ways of packing things. So now, they took butter and eggs. Did they take any kind of products from the garden?

ES: Cheese. She used to make cheese, butter and then of course the eggs. She'd have those three products that she always, nearly every sheep man would take all that mother had available, usually, into their, first of all it was their "lambing range". They moved far enough to where they owned ranches over there and they'd do their lambing on lower

elevations and then after the lambs were old enough to be docked, then they'd move up close to Navajo Lake where the elevation is eight, nine, ten thousand feet high.

SM: So did she give them any garden products at all?

ES: Sometimes, yes. I do remember. Potatoes, sometimes, dad always had a huge potato cellar on the ranch and nearly always filled the cellar clear full of potatoes that wouldn't be taken away. Every fall that cellar would still be at least half full of potatoes that would be left there for the next spring, see. And the sheep men would always load with potatoes too. And sometimes carrots would be stored in that cellar with the potatoes and whatever vegetables like that were still there after a long cold winter. Of course the cellar was underground and the potatoes wouldn't freeze.

SM: They didn't freeze huh?

ES: No, it had a dirt roof. The cellar was made out of, there was just a pit dug in the ground, then it had kind of a gable roof out of big cedar poles, cedar logs. And cedar logs and then dirt on top of that. Which made it almost like an underground, it was, all underground, but that's the way the roof was made, with cedar poles and then three feet of dirt on top of the poles. We produced a lot of those in this county- cedar poles and posts that are used and sold. A lot of cedar posts are shipped out of here and sold to other areas like Idaho and Wyoming where they don't raise cedar posts for building fences.

SM: Right. So they were used a lot then?

ES: Yeah, and that cellar, oh my gosh, finally after about the time I was sixty-years old, that cellar finally did gave in up there. (Laughter) That's over a hundred years from the time it was built.

SM: Are there still remains of it?

ES: You can still see where it was. The old cedar logs gave way and it just more or less, if someone didn't know what was there, I know what was there so there's still a mark there where I can still remember that old cellar.

SM: Huh. So do you remember eating fresh vegetables up there?

ES: All summer long. That was a must. As soon as we would move from town up there, that was usually mother's job to get the garden going. One of the boys, one of us boys would plow the garden for her. We had a small plow that was usually a one-horse plow that was used for plowing the garden because it was easier to get in a small area close to the house and plow it. And we had horses that were trained that were a cross between my dad raising most of his own horses and he had stallions, Thoroughbred, and Percheron, Clydesdale stallions, to raise his own horses, and he would cross a thoroughbred with a big draft horse like a Clydesdale or a Percheron, to make a smaller work horse, for pulling the buggies and the horses that we used on this one horse plow to plow the garden was always one of these smaller horses.

SM: Did he name them?

ES: Yeah, old Pet and Kit, was two, that was the fastest buggy team that I remember. They were Thoroughbreds. And that's why the Model T Ford wasn't in my estimation, wasn't as good transportation as the buggy. Cause dad had these thoroughbred horses, Kit and Pet, who were my favorite buggy team because they were fast. I used to think, that first Model T Ford, we couldn't make it to town as quickly as we could in that buggy. Those horses would get us here in less than two hours and the wagon of course was three to four hours, but the Model T Ford, it seemed like we were twice as long as the buggy.

(Laughter)

SM: (Laughter) Well it seems like you, from what I gather, you always had a lot of food, really self sufficient out there.

ES: A lot of food, plenty of feed for animals. We always raised lots of hay.

SM: My question then is, it seems like, I don't know, you were specially located for your father to have gotten the contract for the building of the road and then your mother for the sheep herders coming through to give produce to, so that was really good location, economically. Did you ever have a sense of isolation; basically did you ever feel isolated in that location?

ES: A chance to get lonely? No, never. There was always something to do. Always something, if there wasn't something that was normal to be doing, I would usually create it with my own saddle horse and if I ever got the feeling coming on, I'd saddle up my horse and take off somewhere by myself. And between having the company of the horse and the fun it was, always done away with any feeling of that kind (Laughter) through things that I could create myself.

SM: What did you do by yourself or with others for entertainment? What were the things you did?

ES: These other ranches that weren't too far, my uncle's ranch, my dad's oldest brother, was only a mile away and I would go there and another two miles farther from that ranch, us young boys would all get together and ride our horses together and do things that were fun for young boys.

SM: Did you ever have any games that you played on these horses that you remember? Do you recall races, or what did you do?

ES: I remember a few of the times that we didn't get to come to town for the 4th and 24th of July. The ranch kids would nearly always, and sometimes the parents would get together and celebrate the fourth of July in groups together. We'd have a big picnic, and parents would join in fun games with us and it was great. In fact there was times in growing up that I felt like these holidays like the the fourth of July was more fun at the ranch than they were in town because some of the families, there was one or two families that weren't active in the church and to get together on the the fourth of July celebration, we'd see them participate and do things that we had never seen them do, you know, and it was fun.

SM: So there wasn't any problem with hanging out with people outside of the church there?

ES: No, no. No, there was no other, at that time there was no other, see this Orderville was organized by- the people were sent here by Brigham Young, and the United Order was established because of, well for two or three reasons. They were sent to places like the "Muddy Mission", you heard of that? The Muddy Mission, down, going through there as many times as I have, living in California a short few years, and going through there since the, I've wondered how even a rat could survive where they were sent to build a livelihood down close to Las Vegas, north of Las Vegas, about, what's the name of the town there now? Overton? It's not Overton. Glendale, Glendale is very close to where the saints were sent to colonize and make a livelihood and I think it was one of the, I know Brigham Young didn't make hardly any bad decisions, but I think that was one of them that he might have made, to send the saints down in that hot, well so many reasons why it seemed to me. Heat, lack of water and, well anyway, that's where Orderville actually originated from, was the people who came from the Muddy Mission. After a failure there they came up to through Brigham Young's orders to settle Long Valley.

SM: And this seemed like heaven comparatively, even though a lot of people would say this would be a really hard place to start up at all. This wouldn't be easy.

ES: This wouldn't be easy, but compare it from where they came from, and then you can see. Just the fact that the Virgin River was here. There was no water to speak of down in that area close to them.

SM: So I understand just from talking to the people in the community that a lot of these towns in Long Valley had maybe not that good of relations between the towns. Like Orderville stuck with Orderville, Glendale stuck with Glendale, Mt. Carmel Junction stuck with Mt. Carmel Junction. Now did you notice any of that separation between the towns as a youth? What was your relationship with other towns?

ES: Not that much. I was actually born in Mt. Carmel, instead of Orderville because that's where my grandparents both lived and my parents later bought a place in Orderville because of the school being here. The high school being here. They saw the need when they did get a home, other than the ranch; they bought it in Orderville because that's where the high school would be. But as far as there being friction between the towns, I don't remember too much of anything that was any problem at all.

SM: People from Glendale and everywhere would come to Orderville to school, is that right?

ES: And Mt. Carmel would come. Mt. Carmel had, and Glendale too, had up to sixth grade, I think, but high school, yes, they had to come. And the first school bus that transported from Mt. Carmel to the high school...

End of Tape One, Side Two

Begin Tape Two, Side One

SM: We were talking about the school bus and the fact that it was pulled by a team of horses, so it wasn't really a bus, was it?

ES: This horse-drawn school bus that was used there in Long Valley was built similar, after it was obsolete and they got a rubber tired, motor driven school bus, my dad purchased this old wagon, ironed wheel school bus, and that's one reason why I remember more details about it because he used it. And eventually the body of that, he converted that to a camp wagon, or a sheep, something like the sheep men used for living quarters for herding sheep. My dad converted that old school bus body into a metal, rough camp wagon.

SM: Really?

ES: Yes he did. But what I started to say about it was, it was built similar to the buggy that took over the transportation for people, other than freighting, the wagons were still used for freighting because they were made heavy, but the buggy was the transportation vehicle. And this school bus was patterned after that buggy. It had springs. Two big heavier springs, of course because the school bus was about a thirty-passenger school bus and it carried that many students from these various towns to Orderville High School. It was more modern, much more modern of a vehicle than the old wagon, which was the only transportation. But I can still remember that school bus being patterned very similar to the comfortable buggy that took place of the wagon, took place of the old wagons.

SM: You basically have a good memory of the evolution of transportation in this area, really.

ES: I consider myself quite fortunate to have not only seen but used it for my own- having had the privilege of riding in all of these different advanced ways and means of transportation.

SM: Yeah, it's really interesting; there aren't many people who have.

ES: Somebody born like I was in 1920, you see the Model T Ford started in the 20's, and then it went from the Model T Ford to a closed in glass door vehicle and I've got to use all of them. And I feel quite fortunate.

SM: So do you think because of your father's maybe good location, good luck, hard work, that you were financially better off than a lot of people in Orderville and the surrounding areas?

ES: I didn't really think we were at the time. At the time I didn't hardly realize it but as I got older, yes, you're exactly right. My father was a little bit, you might say, better financially off than some others, but I didn't realize it at the time.

SM: You didn't notice it as a kid because everybody was just...

ES: No, everybody, all of my playmates growing up and everything, we just had everything in common, you know. Nobody had any more than anybody else.

SM: Do you remember, I know you're not quite old enough probably to have remembered any need of the Indians in the area? Do you recall anything to do with Native Indians, maybe even people interested in artifacts or arrowheads or anything like that?

ES: I do remember when I was just a kid in grade school, an old Indian that used to come to Orderville and stay right here on this street. Thomas Esplin used to own, there's a big barn, right across here, and his house was on the corner and there was quite a distance between the house and the barn and I can still remember this old Navajo Indian, who I think his wife had probably been dead quite some time. He used to come here and stay all winter and live right here. He'd camp right next to that man's barnyard. I can still remember that.

SM: And was that minded by the community- did Thomas Esplin mind?

ES: No, Thomas Esplin just, I don't know whether, I think was a personal friend, maybe not Thomas so much, but Thomas' father, who was Henry Esplin. In the days of the United

Order, Thomas' father, you see, was one of the men who was in the United Order. He had two wives and I have feeling that this old Indian was a close associate in the early days of Orderville. But he was an older old man when I remember he used to come here and camp.

SM: When you were young?

ES: When I was just a boy. Yes. And I wondered why since then, but I figure it was probably a close association earlier in his life with Brother Henry Esplin. As far as any problems with any Indians, no I don't remember that. I do remember a lot of areas close to Orderville, out on the ranch and other places where Indian camps were definitely- the markings, the arrowheads and the other markings that they left was definitely a campsite that was used year after year by the Indians, before this country was every settled by White people.

SM: Out by the ranch there? By Meadow Creek?

ES: Yeah. In fact, we have an area up there, the higher part of the ranch property is called Indian Bench because of that. A number of arrowheads that have been found there over the years. Especially when I was growing up. My dad used to always keep his eye open for arrowheads. He'd always bring those things home, you know, and being with him a lot of times up on what is named Indian Bench area of the Clear Creek Mountain, it was called that simply because of the number of Indian things that were found there. So they definitely spent quite a lot of time there before people ever settled here. They couldn't help but leave markings that told us where they spent time. See, the Indians used to move from areas just like nowadays. Warmer climates and cooler climates and Navajo Lake was named because that was their July and August area and they'd just move right where the conditions were most comfortable. Where the climate was more suitable for the time of the year. Yeah, that's they way they did. Why not? They simply owned the whole

area. (Laughter) Before we came. Why not go where it's more comfortable. And they did, yeah, they left their marks.

SM: I have one question left. Can you describe Orderville as a kid, coming down in the winter, you know to go to school, describe maybe a morning, what would happen in the morning? You'd go to school and what did Orderville look like? In your best memory?

ES: My dad's mother's house was about as far; there was a few farther, the farthest from the schools as any place. Since then the grade school as been put right next to my...and I've often thought, that'd been nice when I was a kid, to have school that close, but it wasn't. Anyway, the chores on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday mornings, as a young boy, I always had to milk at least three or four cows before I could go to school and then after that was over there was snow to plow or clean, let see about four blocks.

SM: How long would it take you to milk the cows?

ES: If you didn't have some problems, but you had to count on some problems. Some cows were not gentle, they had to be broke to be milked and they had to be tied up, some of them, and if you had cows that were broke and no problem, I could usually have my four milked in about an hour if I was lucky. And those cows that were wild heifers that had to be broke for that kind of a chore to be milked, sometimes it took a month at least to get them so that you could do it very quickly. It took more time.

SM: So you'd milk the cows...

ES: ...milk the cows, take the milk to the house and one of the older boys usually had to run that milk from all ten or eleven cows through a separator to separate the milk from the cream. Take the cream out because the cream is what brought the money and that was all, you just didn't plan on going to school until those things were done. There was too many of those for dad to do and a lot of the times he was up on the ranch- wasn't there in

the winter all the time. He was there a lot of the time, but some of the times he wasn't even home. So it was up to the boys to do those chores. And after the milk was run through the separator, they called it, we usually had calves that were bawling because these milk cows had to be fed this milk in a bucket after it had been separated from the cream, the separator had two spouts, you turned the crank and one spout would be cream and the other one would be milk. And the calves that were still too young to make it without milk. After they go so old, then they'd go on to hay and grain that was raised on the ranch, but prior to that they had to have milk and you had to run and feed those calves out of a bucket before you could go to school and after you got home from school at night. And there was always other animals that had to be fed and if some of this milk had set too long, it would turn to clabber, some of this milk that had been run through the separator, the cheese was made out of whole milk before it went through there, but cheese and butter, the butter was made out of the cream.

SM: The cheese was made before it went through the separator, then it would go to the separator and the butter was made out of the cream?

ES: Out of the cream, yes. But there was never any waste to the milk that came from our cows. If any of it went bad it was feed to the chickens and I can still remember having to give the chickens the clabber, it was called. Of course that was the procedure too that cottage cheese was made out of. After some of the milk, if it was taken care of properly, mother would make cottage cheese out of some of the milk that went sour. And that was a table food that was used almost all the time, and was just as good I'm sure, as any milk product.

SM: And then you'd go to school. What did Orderville look like back then?

ES: The old rock schoolhouse where the grade school was has been torn down years ago of course and the high school has been torn down that I went to high school in. I can still remember when that school was relatively new. I don't remember that much about it

because... it had a date on there, 1923, the high school that I went to. I was three-years-old of course, I didn't remember when it was built, but I still remember the plaque that was on it, 1923. It was a beautiful brick building, very modern for that time, you know, 1923. And it had a large gym. Our high school here always competed with towns like Escalante, and Kanab and Panguitch in basketball.

SM: About what was the population of Orderville back then, do you know?

ES: I don't recall, but I think it was 300. Seems like it was around 300 and then eventually, about the time I got out of high school, it was close to 500.

SM: Well, is there anything else you'd like to mention on this interview that you can think of. We've covered a lot of ground.

ES: I think we've covered as much as I should be entitled to. (Laughter)

SM: Well, that was excellent, all the details and everything. Really a good interview.

ES: I appreciate you coming. I still remember I used to ride my dad's horse home on weekends. He'd go home and spend Saturday and Sunday. One Sunday night when he was due back to work, this horse came without him and he had- he'd usually hide this corn whiskey before he'd get to the ranch, so it would be close to when he took a load of hay, the next day, he'd stop and pick up the corn liquor and take it and market it at the big road camp.

SM: This was his business, basically.

ES: Well that was their business. His father and another old rancher; that was his livelihood.

SM: Who was this, Loren, or what was his name?

ES: Winters. Winters. I can still remember all of his boys.

SM: So they had a moonshine business?

ES: Yeah, moonshine. (Laughter) 'White Mule', they called it. Because mules were a necessary animal in those days and a lot of them were mean to kick and they named that blasted booze that they had, 'White Mule' (laughter) and that's what it went by, and this horse came home with, they used to have, have you ever seen a big two quart fruit jar? That's what was the most available thing for them to take it and sell it in.

SM: And they'd sell it to the guys working on the road.

ES: They'd sell it to the guys on the road camp because they were making money, see, and it made an excellent market for those guys.

SM: So those guys building the Zion Tunnel and the road...

ES: ...yeah, the Zion Highway. But this horse came home one Sunday evening, just before dark and Loren wasn't on the horse, he'd drunk enough of that, that he fell off that horse and laid out all night, he came the next morning and I'll never forget, my dad took the corn whiskey off the horse and hid it. I think my father knew the old ranchers and he knew what they were up to and he didn't turn them in because they had to live to, you know. But it was illegal.

SM: Now was this during prohibition? What year was that?

ES: That was in 1929. See they made it legal in Utah in the early 30's. This was in '29.

SM: And so he hid it for them because he was a friend?

ES: Yeah, he wouldn't turn them in. I know he didn't turn them in. My dad knew the sheriff here in town. He could have, but he still couldn't have told them where the still was. It'd been a hard job for a sheriff to find where they had it located.

SM: Now did they have it near the road construction, you said?

ES: Well, no, it was way back, these two guys' ranches were the closest homesteads to the Zion Park line, which is way this side of the Zion Canyon. There's a lot of rugged terrain between the park line and where you can even look off into Zion Park. And these ranches and the still where they made this was close to, which is the most remote area they could put it and they succeeded in not having it dug out for a long time I know.

SM: Wow. So did they make it until prohibition was removed?

ES: Well, I'm sure they did. This was my only close connection to it at all. And I do remember. My dad took that bottle and a half. I'm sure he knew what had happened. He drank enough that he fell off the horse and laid out and he got there the next morning and I can still remember that guy coming and he called the horse by name, "Old Lemmy". He said, "Did Lemmy have anything tied on the saddle?" You know, "What happened to my White Mule whiskey?" Dad took it off and hid it. (Laughter) Whether he ever gave it to him, I don't know, he probably let him take it and sell it, but that was the market. And later on, no far from where our cabin is now, I found a big two-quart fruit jar. I was cutting wood one day in a patch of thick oak and there I hit something and it was this glass jar. He'd hid one that he never did find to take to market. I've still got the bottle out there. I can show it to you.

SM: I wasn't full was it?

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Elbern Sorensen

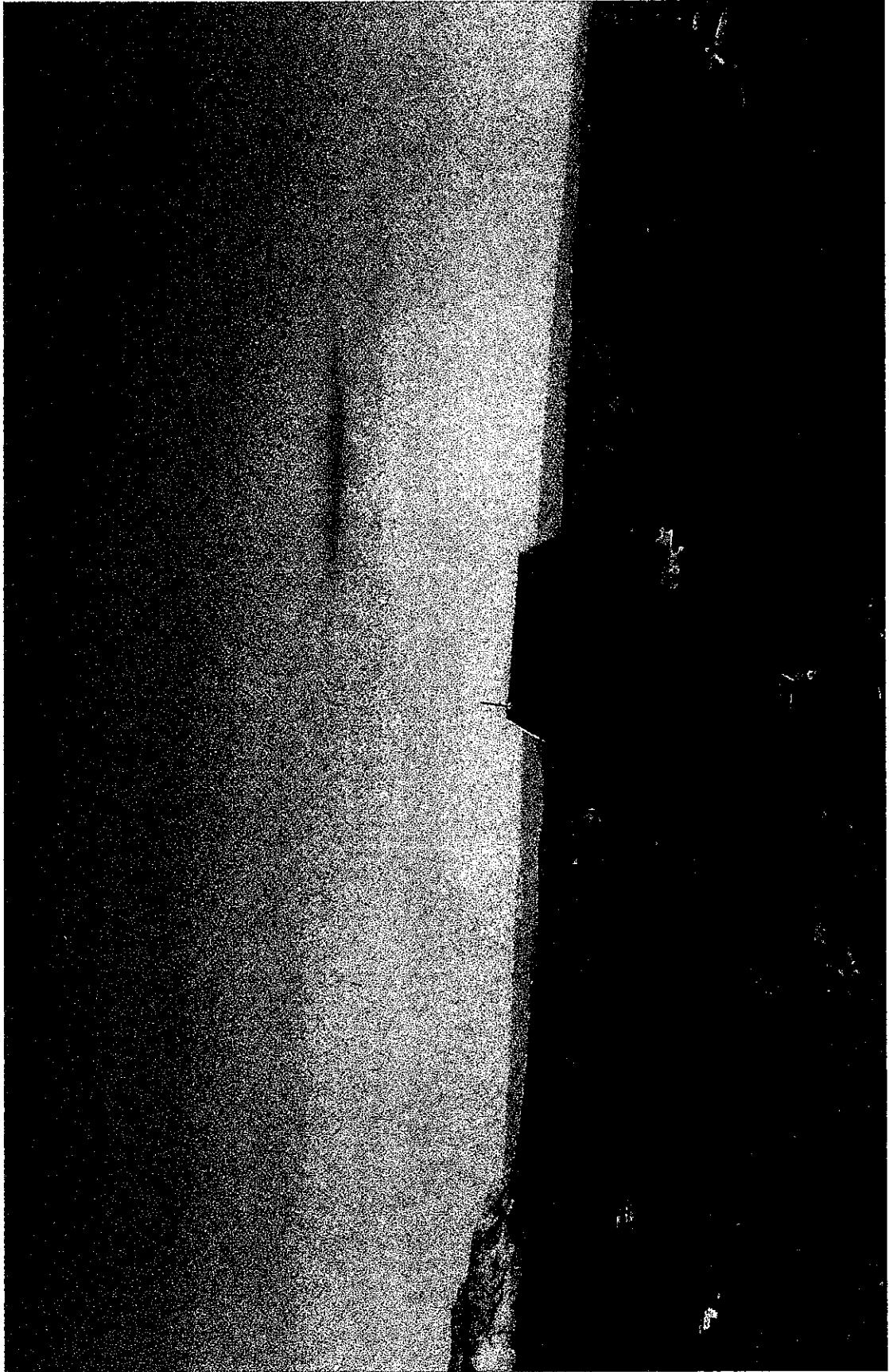
ES: Oh, no, it had evaporated. That stuff would be 90 percent alcohol. White Mule was just clear in color, just the color of alcohol, and you know over the years, that lid would allow that to evaporate out. There was nothing in it, but I knew what it had had in it and where it was hid, it was close to the route where the hay went.

SM: Oh that's funny. Well thanks for the great story.

End of Tape Two, Side One

End of Interview





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Interview Description

Date of Interview July 25, 1999
Primary Subject Homesteading in Big Meadow Creek / Orderville / Building the Zion Highway
Other Topics Evolution of auto transportation / moonshine

Number of Tapes 2
Signature Elbern Sorensen Date July 25, 99
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