

1 Vernon Spencer

INTERVIEW WITH:	Vernon Spencer
INTERVIEWER:	Marsha Holland
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Tape 1, Side A

MH: I'm in Escalante, Utah on June 14, 2004 and I'm with Vernon Spencer. How are you doing today, Vernon?

VS: Well, not too bad.

MH: Okay, good. Are you going to cut hay today?

VS: I'm not, but he is. I'll go out and show him where to cut it.

MH: Vernon, can you tell me when you were born and where, and a little about the family you were born into.

VS: Well, I was born just a block down on the corner, August 13, 1925, delivered by a mid-wife named Susan Heaps. She delivered Ladawn Porter the same night. I'm a-getting a little older.

MH: And you have a birthday coming up?

VS: Yeah. I had an older sister, Thelma Cottam and then she was the oldest, 3 years. Then Arcola Gates, she lives right there on this corner.

MH: What's her name?

VS: Arcola.

MH: "Arcola?" That's an interesting name.

2 Vernon Spencer

VS: Yah, Dad found it in the mission field. He served a mission in Eastern States; he ran into a lady back there that's named Arcola and he kind of liked it so he convinced Mom that that's what they should call Arcola.

MH: Yes. Arcola.

VS: Yes. She married a local boy. They were in the livestock business. She's still riding horses and so is he. You know Pete Mangum?

MH: Oh, you bet.

VS: Well, he's working for him down in Grand Canyon Park

MH: Who's that? What's his name?

VS: Pratt.

MH: So, is Arcola down there for the summer?

VS: No. She's up here.

MH: She stays, okay.

VS: Yes, she has to feed the horses and the dogs, so she stays here. He comes home oh, about every week for a couple of days, and then he goes back. He's practically raised on a horse. His mother died when he was born. His aunt raised him, Charlie Bailey put him on a horse soon as he could stand up and he's still on 'em. Pete's got mules.

MH: Yeah. They're pretty easy to get along with.

VS: Yeah, he's riding them. Quite a few years later, why, my other sister was born in my Dad's house on the corner. He built that, if you know Earl Roe? He helped his dad build the brick house. We were in my uncle's house down

here

and we moved up there about 1939.

MH: So you were born, well, actually growing in a fairly important time in history, and that was The Depression.

VS: Yeah. We didn't have any money but we didn't know it.

MH: So you must have been about 4 or 5 then?

VS: Yeah.

MH: But the effects lasted quite a long time.

VS: Oh, we got by pretty well. There was four lots: had a house on each corner and oh, front yard, no grass but front yard. Usually a well with no water except what we got out of the irrigation ditch. That's what we done, washed the clothes with and the dishes and whatever.

MH: So it was pretty pure then, the water, or did you let it settle? How did you....?

VS: Yeah, they just....the irrigation ditch run by, so we just dipped it out the ditch and put it in the barrel and settled it. That's what we done. Some of us...Dad had a well but it was always dry in the summer.

MH: Was it a hand-dug well, then?

VS: Yeah. Yeah, it had a pulley, just dropped the bucket down in it, it was about oh, probably 40, maybe 50 feet deep. But it was dug by hand. 'Course, he was a sheep-herd most of the time, so we didn't see much of him.

MH: That was fairly common, then, wasn't it? The sheep herd was the main economy here for a while.

4 Vernon Spencer

VS: There was probably 10,000 sheep in this little valley, and they'd take 'em down to the desert in winter. 'Course, you always had to have somebody with them. They put them on the mountain in summer.

MH: Now, the mountain you're talking about is what mountain?

VS: This one here, the old Escalante Mountain, that's not the name of it, that's what we called it.

MH: Yeah, Escalante Mountain.

VS: That's when the highway went over it. It went from here....you acquainted with the old ghost town of Widtsoe? They'd go over to Widtsoe and we had a ranch on down the valley about eight or nine miles.

MH: Over to Widtsoe?

VS: Yeah. Dad, an uncle-in-law, and a cousin purchased the ranch from church owned ZCMI. That's where he had the sheep. While I was in the service, Mom wrote to me and said he had a chance to sell the sheep, she said, "If you want them, why, he'll keep them until you come home." I answered her fast, "Sell 'em." [Laughter.] I got into cattle and I still have cows, horned Herefords.

MH: They're easier to tend, huh?

VS: Yeah, 'cause they're over there now and I'm over here.

MH: Okay. Could you tell me a little about your parents, your mom's name?

VS: She was a Liston. Her dad lived just across the street from us, their old house is still standing there, and Dad went on his mission while they were married. In fact, Thelma was about one or two years old, maybe three. Dad went to the

eastern States where he picked Arcola's name up. He was probably one of the first ones to go to the Hill Gomorrah. Not in the pageant, but they had a conference. He did some time at Hill Gomorrah [inaud].

MH: And he was gone for two years...?

VS: Yeah. Then he come home and took over the old sheep. Then when Thelma was about four years older than I am, I guess. No, it might be five. We moved into my uncle's house, it was originally a log house, and then we put what we call lean-to's on, so it was a three room house. It had my uncle's two car garage; it had a 1928 Buick touring sedan.

MH: Nice!

VS: He just used that on special occasions, and he had a Chevrolet convertible with a rumble seat, it was about a 1930. He datedparka coat. He come over to Tropic, there was a coat store there.

MH: Yes, there was.

VS: [inaud].....anyway, they[inaud].....and you know, a polygamous fellow come through and talked to her and convinced her to marry him so my uncle got a little upset.

MH: But he didn't get her, huh?

VS: No. He come over to the house and I still remember that, I wasn't very big, but I remember a few words he said. Mom said, "Almy, that woman's been trying to get you to marry her all these years and you wouldn't do it." He said, "Well, I had to get the cattle off the desert." "Well, you had the summer." "Well, I had to

get the hay up in summer.” “Well, you had the fall and the winter.” “Well, I had to get the cattle on the mountain and feed them in the winter.” So he didn’t get around to marrying her.

MH: Did he ever get around to marrying?

VS: No.

MH: He didn’t, huh?

VS: He took care of his mother, my grandmother.

MH: Now, what’s your uncle’s name?

VS: Almy I did most of my riding with him, cow gathering and riding. Dad rode a little bit but usually Uncle Almy’d get up and say, “Well, I’ll take Vern with me and we’ll go down in the gulches.” So that’s where we’d go. Never carried any water or anything, we just went.

MH: Oh, my gosh! Simple times, huh? Did you wish you had some food or water with you sometimes?

VS: Oh, we come out of Coyote Gulch one day, it’s this time of year, June, and it was hot and dry. We didn’t even see a cow, not even a track. I figured well, I’m gonna die, just as well tell him. I said, “I don’t know as I’m gonna make it any further.” He said, “Aww, just hang in there.” We got up on top and he said—my lips were all swollen and my tongue was dangling, he said, “Climb up on that rock and see if you can see any cows.” I climbed up on that old red rock and there was a pot hole: in it was rain water. I don’t know what else was in there but it was water. And I drank it, so that saved me. But he never did drink any

7 Vernon Spencer

water.

MH: Do you think he knew that little pot hole of water was up there?

VS: He had a pretty good idea. He spent his life on these hills. He always kept his horses over here, across the street. He'd take care of his horses, and he took care of his mother, kept the hay and took Orpha down to Richfield to this here rally or fair, called Kow Kount Karnaval. Anyway, they'd be there for a day or so and they'd come back and he'd haul the hay, move cows or whatever they had to do.

MH: So he took a little time off occasionally.

VS: Yeah.

MH: So Sevier Valley, what town would that be in?

VS: It was in the fall, when they had the county fair.

MH: Oh, okay, Sevier.

VS: Yes, Sevier Valley County Fair. That's not what they called it, though.

MH: Yeah, I'm trying to think of what it was.

VS: That was a yearly affair.

MH: Okay, now, your dad - what was his name.

VS: Andrew.

MH: "Andrew." And your mom's name?

VS: Isabell.

MH: "Isabell." Okay. So your dad, Andrew, was out at the herd most of the time that you remember?

VS: Yeah. They called him Andy and he signed his name Andy. [inaud].... During the Depression, he didn't have any money so they borrowed money from Salina Bank. Dad didn't even have a check blank, he wrote a check on an old notebook and they cashed it. He was in pretty solid with them. Gosh, when he got rid of the sheep things changed. He spent a lot of time with the sheep herd, that's why I told him to sell 'em.

MH: What was it like for you at the sheep herd? You must have been out there by yourself quite a bit.

VS: No, I was always with him, once in a while I was alone. We had a tent, about three mules and a Jennie, a jackass. She carried what we called the cupboards, part of the time, and the other mules carried the rest of the camping equipment. We had to move about every three or four days, move camp, so that was a job. But we had lots of mutton and Dad could make good sourdough biscuits so we managed pretty well, and pork and beans and Campbell's Soup, I guess that's what we lived on.

MH: What was the range like then, you know, is it similar to the way it is now as far as grasses and the shrubs and the browse?

VS: Oh, similar. There's so many sheep and cattle up there, so.....vegetation.

MH: Were they mixing at the time; were there sheep and cattle together?

VS: No. We never could put the sheep with cattle. The sheep could eat the greens that were under the ground, the cattle; well they had to above the ground.

MH: They eat 2" under, huh?

9 Vernon Spencer

VS: Well, they could nip. They're like horses, and they could eat pretty close to the ground. Have you been down toward Hole in the Rock?

MH: Yes.

VS: That was the range from here to there.

MH: From Escalante down Hole from both sides?

VS: And up on Escalante Mountain.

MH: And how would you access 50 Mile Mountain, from up here, or out on the desert for grazing?

VS: No. They always brought the sheep off the mountain over to Johns Valley in, oh, about the last of October, they'd trail the sheep down to Big Sage, anyway, down Paria River, and start to grazing there, clear around to what we called the Bench.

MH: So they came around from the other side?

VS: And they got around here, oh, about spring, they'd bring sheep up to the desert and take them over the mountain to Johns Valley. That's where they was at.

MH: Johns Valley. It was kind of like a big circle, then, was it? Is that right? Was it a big swooping circle?

VS: Well, like I say, it started at Big Sage, they always told me about the other place but I can't remember it. Anyway, they made the rounds so they came out in the desert wherever that is, back of the old ranch house.....

MH: In Widtsoe?

VS: Well, down in the valley. One time there was close to 1,000 people, I guess, in

10 Vernon Spencer

the valley in Widtsoe and from Bryce Canyon to Antimony.

MH: It's hard to believe now, huh?

VS: Yes. The men used to come over here and play baseball. They could beat Escalante's men any time.

MH: Really? It was adult men who played?

VS: Yes. Summer activity. We'd play ball, we had no ranch family out here. All the town would turn out and watch them play. Widtsoe brothers could just outplay us. [Laughter.]

MH: Did you get to play on one of the teams?

VS: No, I was just a kid so I just sat there and watch.

MH: Did you ever play baseball? They did have baseball here at the high school.

VS: I played a little softball but no baseball.

MH: How about basketball?

VS: Well, I played once and we went over to Tropic. We were playing in the afternoon and they assigned me to old Dean Winch. I didn't even get my hands on the ball, he kept away from me the whole game. That was my first and last game.

MH: He was quick and small, huh?

VS: Yes. He married Irma Pollack, I believe.

MH: She's still doing okay.

VS: I very seldom see both of them.

MH: Well, actually, Dean passed away almost two years ago in August of cancer. He

11 Vernon Spencer

had leukemia. He went very quickly, like within six months. They think it was related to the downwind syndrome. But Irma is still there, she's still living in Tropic and she's doing okay. She's lonely but, you know, she's doing okay. Her sister is there, May. Mae Chynoweth, Jack's wife.

VS: Oh. I know her.

MH: Yeah, they're both there. And Jack's still ranching.

VS: I [inaud] at one time. That's another story.

MH: Was it just about meeting people?

VS: Well, we were part of what they called Garfield Stake, took in Boulder and Tropic and Escalante, Widtsoe and Antimony, [inaud].....

MH: Was Panguitch in it?

VS: Panguitch and Hatch. And there's another town. See, I'm getting to that age where I can't remember! [Laughter.]

MH: Well, Hillsdale was probably the other?

VS: Could have been. Anyway, because Hatch had sheep. I don't remember which Hatch, but I remember the Hatch sheep herd. But anyway, Dad was in the Stake Presidency so he got acquainted with the people in most towns around here. They had an open air dance hall in Kingston called the Purple Haze, during the summer; there was always two or three of us that would get over there. That's where we spent every Thursday night in the summer.

MH: What was that like? I've seen the Purple Haze.

VS: Have you been there?

MH: Yeah, I've been there. What were those evenings like?

VS: Oh, there was always a little breeze out of the canyons. They always had an orchestra that was passing through, they didn't just [inaud].

MH: And everyone would dance alone below, was it like a cement pad?

VS: Yeah, with a fence around it. Cost 50 cents to get in...[laughter]...We'd get back home early in the morning, and milk the cows and haul hay. We danced all night.

MH: It's the same now, the kids stay out late. They have to get up early.

VS: They don't know how to dance right.

MH: [Laughter.] That's right! They just don't know how to dance, huh?

VS: No.

MH: It's hard to dance to the music that goes on now.

VS: Yeah.

MH: There's no emotion in it, huh!

VS: My mom started me dancing when I was in sixth grade, and I danced with my mother first, then I danced with her sisters. And you always danced twice, called it a "set", and you danced with the cousins [inaud].... 'Course, time you got through all the cousins, why, there weren't many left.

MH: Wise mom, huh?

VS: We had what we called the Old Star Hall and that's where we danced, played basketball and had wrestling matches. I remember old Ira Dern got Bill Hitchcock and Rol Porter. Got him to come down to wrestle; he was the state

13 Vernon Spencer

champion. He come down to wrestle at the Old Star Hall.

MH: What was the man's name? Arv? Adern? The letter "R"?

VS: "T". Anyway, we'd set up an old ring round the Star Hall. I remember old Hitchcock, we called it an 'airplane spin', picked him up on his shoulders and whirled him around and gave him a body slam.

MH: Was that the end?

VS: No. He got up and he got six rounds in. Only cost us a dime to get in. We'd watch 'em.

MH: Did that happen more than once, when you have boxers and wrestlers here?

VS: I don't remember the boxers, I thought we had 'em but I don't remember.

MH: You remember wrestling?

VS: Yeah. Body slam and spin when he spun him on that mat. It'd shake the whole building.

MH: And everyone just groaned....!

VS: The old hall [inaud].....when the North Ward built the South Ward Church, why the North Ward moved into that old church. Of course, The Star Hall had a stage and basketball floor, a couple of dressing rooms but the dressing rooms were just rooms, that's all they had. They just changed clothes in them, that's all. Eventually, they got around to putting a movie in it, they just used the stage, it had a curtain. We watched movies in it.

MH: How much was that?

VS: It was a dime.

MH: A dime? That's good!

VS: Yeah. If you had a dime. If you didn't, why, you'd usually trade three or four eggs for it.

MH: Really? I was going to ask you, so how would you earn a dime?

VS: Oh, well, Mom usually had one around some place, I don't know where she got them but her dad had a little money. He had cattle, and he had sheep, too. Not very many, and he gave her a dowry, \$500, and she put it in Sevier Valley Bank, I believe. Anyway, during the Depression, well, she lost her \$500. And she always claimed old Ed Street stole it. He was the banker. Other than that, she always came up with the money from some place. I don't remember her doing any washing for anybody except herself, and she washed clothes. It wasn't just washing clothes, she had homemade soap and it was [inaud] I had to feed the chickens and horses, and sheep. I don't remember any calves. When she washed clothes, why, she had two year old No. 3 tubs out in the yard. Built a fire under them and put that homemade soap in there, put the clothes in and boiled them, take 'em our, wring 'em out and we had an old Maytag washer, it usually didn't run. When it wouldn't run, she'd have me take it down to...we had an old feller we called Mr. Haney and he'd tinker with it and get it started. It would usually stop in the middle of washing, so she had the old wash board and would scrub with that. Then she'd take them out of the old tubs, put 'em in another tub and scrub 'em. Put 'em in another tub and have the little old round blue balls, called 'bluing', they was supposed to bleach 'em, I guess. And

so she got a tub of water on that, and all the water come out of the ditch. We had plenty of water. When you washed clothes, it was an all-day job.

MH: And would you do that once a week, or a couple of times a week, or ?

VS: Just when we run out of clothes, then she done it.

MH: That's hard work.

VS: Yeah. Usually, when she needed one, she had a lady, Eleanor Grimes [?] was her name, she'd usually come up and help, and they'd wash all day.

MH: So you had three children in the family, right?

VS: Three daughters, three girls, yes.

MH: Okay, I missed one of your girls' names. There was Thelma, then you, then Arcola,

VS: Then Janeal....

MH: Janeal. Yeah, we didn't talk about Janeal.

VS: I didn't know her very well. She was born back when we moved up to the other house, probably around 1939. Give or take a little. I was in high school. I was out on the Levan Desert, then, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. I was a junior in high school and I had my cousin's new 1942 Dodge. It had a radio in it and we were coming across the Levan Desert, and it said the Japanese had just bombed Pearl Harbor. We had a whole carload of seminary teachers and students from the Church and me and the guys, we had been to BYU to a journalism convention we just laughed about that. We'll just take a couple of B-17 bombers over Japan, and blow that island clear out of the sea. About

four and a half years later, I come home from the service. I ended up in Brisbane, Australia. My cousin that was in the '42 Dodge with us was killed in a B-17 about a year later in a Florida training flight.

MH: That is sad. Australia, that's a different climate; it's more humid, though, isn't it?

VS: It's similar to this, 'cept it's reversed, they have summer in the winter and winter in the summer.

MH: What did you do, were you in the army?

VS: I was in the air force. 'Course, it's called Army Air Force. So, I was involved with airplanes.

MH: You'd come in from a flight and you'd maintain them, was there like a.....?

VS: I changed the spark plugs and the oil and made sure everything was working.

Tape 1, Side B

VS: (continued from Side A) I'd do the 25 or 50 hour inspections, so we went through the whole thing. I was on the east coast in Delaware when they decided I should go to Hawaii [inaud].... I didn't end up there [inaud]... But the war was over when [inaud].... They just cleared the barbed wire off the Waikiki Beach so we really lived it up all day except these [inaud]

MH: Yeah - instead of work, huh? Was there still a lot of damage there?

VS: Well, [inaud].... [inaud]..... Not while I was there.

MH: That's a long time to be in the army.

VS: Well, two and a half years. I finished high school and turned 18. Tom Dodds

sent me an invitation to report for induction in Panguitch. That usually happened, couple or three weeks we'd get a notice to report to Fort Douglas in Salt Lake. Ft. Douglas was the induction center.

MH: Did you go up with a buddy? Did you go up with people you knew? Or on your own?

VS: When I went to Ft. Douglas, there were about three or four of us, but I was the only one that went in the Air Force. [inaud]... One of them was sent to Germany, two of them, the other one, I don't know what he did. There's four or five of us.

MH: Were you excited, were you frightened? What did you feel like?

VS: Scared to death. I'd never been away from home without my folks except once, when I was a junior in high school, I guess. We got the hay up and my uncle lived there; he had a boy that was older than me. He gave him \$60 and Dad gave me \$40, he said, "Let's go to Salt Lake and see what's up there." So we got in an old Model A Ford and went to Salt Lake.

MH: Wow!

VS: Escalante people always stayed at the old Wilson Hotel up there, maybe it was the Cullen; it was one or the other. We stayed there. The first morning, why, we come out all cleaned up on the sidewalk, looking at all those buildings and Uncles the old sheep herder come walking down the sidewalk. "What're you kids doing up here?" So we said, "We want to see the sights." He said, "Have you ever heard of Sixth South?" That's where the burlesque shows are, and he

took us in. We come out of there with our eyes opened. We didn't know a thing like that happened. I can still hear him laugh!

MH: He was going to show you the big time.

VS: Yeah, he showed us! We went out to Lagoon and looked around a little bit and I had all I wanted; I wanted to go home. He finally stayed up there; he kept the Model A, too!

MH: How'd you get home? Bus?

VS: Yeah.

MH: Was the train still running?

VS: The what?

MH: The train. To Marysville?

VS: Yeah.

MH: It was still running.

VS: I got on the bus and stayed at the old Junction House, the Junction Hotel. That cost a dollar and a half, too.

MH: Did you get a bath?

VS: No, but I got breakfast.

MH: Well, that's pretty good.

VS: Catch the mail. It was [inaud]..... Driver wasn't....., it was MacIntosh that drove it, and so he'd bring us home for 50 cents. So, I climbed in as he would come home.

MH: Did you come home with any money in your pocket?

VS: I don't remember [laughter]. If I had any, it wasn't much. We saw the sights.

MH: Yeah, that's a big adventure. That's a long way.

VS: Yeah. My cousin, he volunteered for the Air Force I don't know what he did with that Model A Ford. He went to BYU on the service program. He was a co-pilot on a B-17. Last flight before he went overseas in Florida over the Everglades. The plane crashed on take off and killed the whole crew. But he and I dated the same girls all the time, here and even in the service. [Laughter.] She'd go with whoever got there first. His dad had an old '41 Dodge that could outrun Dad's old Chevrolet, so he'd be up there first. Then he wrote to me just before he got killed; I had my shipping orders from Nebraska to go to San Bernardino, California to training school, and he'd been stationed there. Uplands, that's where he got his flying training and he said, "If you get to San Bernardino, why, there's a girl there..." and he told me her name, Carol Pasco. Why don't you see if you can find her, so when I got my first pass, Tuesday night, there was a kid standing outside; he'd been there a while. I said, "Do you know Carol Pasco?" He said, "Oh, yeah, she's sitting over at there." So I walked over to her and said, "Do you know a F Spencer?" "Oh, yeah!" "Well, I'm his cousin." Then I told her he'd been killed the week before. And evidently, they had something going.

MH: She was very sad.

VS: She was a little more serious than I figured.

MH: Now we're doing it all again.

VS: Yeah. She handled it all right. She eventually moved to Salt Lake, in fact, I think she's still there unless she passed away.

MH: Let's talk about, okay, so, you're in the army and then you return. When did you go on your mission, then?

VS: Oh, I went to BYU for a couple of years on the G.I Bill. I was 24 years old.

MH: Yeah, I was going to say you must have been in your twenties by then.

VS: Dad figured I ought to go on a mission. I was dancing every week at the Purple Haze and he wanted me to quit that and go on a mission.

MH: It's unbelievable! What was he thinking? Where did you get to go on your mission?

VS: Indiana and Ohio. Oh, he figured he was doing pretty good. I guess he did, 'cause they stuck the girls over there to the Purple Haze. Oh, he figured he'd kinda get me away. Like he told me, he said, "Now, be careful with that girl, she's waiting for a missionary." Well, we was dancing. He just kinda grinned at me. A couple of months later, why, I was in Indiana. It seemed my grandfather Liston was born in Muncie, Indiana and that was my first time there.

MH: Well, that's interesting. Were you able to track your roots there?

VS: Yeah. In fact, I went from Muncie to Indianapolis and the members of church there gave me some help with the genealogy, and they had a genealogy library. She said, "I can do a little research for you if you want me to. I've got a Liston who should be around here someplace. I'll see if I can find him." She came up with about 200 Liston names, as I remember. There's a story about the Listons,

too. My cousin lived just kitty-corner over here in a brick home and she was a Liston, her dad was. In fact, he was a brother to my grandfather and she heard about Sonny Liston so she wrote to him and said, "I'd like to know your genealogy." Before he wrote back, she found out that he was black. She never did pursue that any more!

MH: A famous guy, but she had never seen his picture. [Laughter]

VS: She did quite a lot of work on the Liston name. I don't know where it is, I've got to find it. I've started looking.

MH: So you made it back after your mission after a couple of years, and what year was that?

VS: Let's see: I got home about 1951, I believe.

MH: When you were at BYU, back up a little bit, what were you studying then? You had a couple of years of study.....

VS: Well, mostly girls.

MH: Latest dance steps, huh?

VS: Yeah. They had two orchestras and they were good. A little dance every Tuesday for a dime in the old Smith Building. There were always two or three girls that we knew; there was a group of us. My cousin lived across the street in this house and there was he, he just got out of the service with [inaud] and we lived together. Ate our own cooking.....that didn't matter, either.

MH: And survived.....

VS: We were all studying girls.

22 Vernon Spencer

MH: [Laughter]

VS: Lewis found his wife there and I found mine.

MH: At BYU?

VS: Um-hm. She was a country girl from Joeseeph

MH: Really! So she was kind of from around here.

VS: ‘Course, I found her before I went on the mission but she said she’d wait for me. Dad said that doesn’t usually happen, but she seemed like a pretty good girl. Maybe she would. And she did.

MH: And who was that?

VS: Her name was Rula Jane Wells.

MH: What was her name?

VS: Rula Jane Wells.

MH: “Rula.” “Rula Jane Wells.”

VS: Over there, they just called her Rula Jane. When she moved over here, why, she was just Rula.

VS: She fit in the family real well.

MH: She liked the outdoors?

VS: She was a good rancher, too.

MH: Good!

VS: Got her on a horse.

MH: So she did some riding with you, not a lot? Oh, she did...

VS: She was a school teacher, taught school for 33 years.

23 Vernon Spencer

MH: Elementary, or high school?

VS: Both.

MH: Both. Yeah, wherever they need you.

VS: She ended up in high school, I guess. No, she didn't. She liked fourth grade best, they were teachable.

MH: Yeah, that's right.

VS: That's the group she liked best. She was teaching school and spent enough time there that I was the one that took care of the girls because there mother was always at school.

MH: So, you had how many girls?

VS: Two.

MH: Two girls.

VS: I wanted a boy but couldn't have one. I wanted to adopt one so we went to the church and put our name on the list and the lady that was taking the information said, "I better tell you now I'll put you on the list but you're about a thousand down." So we decided maybe the State will have an adoption agency, so we went to them. Said we need to adopt a son, they said, "We'll put you on the list but you've already got two girls so there's not much of a chance." [inaud]....

MH: Did the girls enjoy the lifestyle here? Did they do some ranching with you, either of them?

VS: Yeah, they put in to [inaud]... One of them's still here, the other one comes in every chance she gets. She lives up in Mayfield, up around there.

MH: So they spent time on horses.....

VS: Yeah, in fact, the youngest girl, we gave her an old mare that only had one eye, she was a good old mare, she'd never ride with a saddle, she'd only ride bareback. She was a good rider, she and the old mare got along fine. When they built the racetrack up there, she went up and we went to watch her ride the old mare on the racetrack. She made a circle and when the old mare came to the end of the racetrack, she stopped, Camille, she kept going right over the rail. Her mother got quite upset and made sure she wasn't hurt. She just got up and dusted herself off and climbed back on the old mare. The oldest girl didn't ride that much but she helped.

MH: So let's talk about your ranching operation a bit. What's your set up like, your range, how has it changed over time from the beginning...?

VS: It started out with the sheep, and I didn't do much because I was just growing up, and didn't do much with the sheep except in the summer. I was always hauling hay. My grandfather went over and lived in the old house and that is on the ranch and he'd stay over there. I asked him one time, "How come you don't bring Grandma over with you?" and he just said, "She doesn't want to come." So, he'd stay over there alone most of the time and watch the sheep. We didn't have a place for him to stay in when he tracked the sheep. In the summer time, the year I went in the service, why, we went to school six days a week, they was drafting us right out of high school. Soon as we turned 18, why, they sent us that little card. So, we went to school Monday through Saturday. Boy, I guess

that was the year I spent alone. Dad had a bunch of dry sheep and he had me out on the hill with them. I had camp and dog and horse [inaud]..... [inaud]..... and shearing corral where we sheared the sheep was over there. And there were six men that sheared sheep wool. My cousin, James, did it first, then I did and he stayed up in Provo at BYU. RZ Campbell hauled wool clear down to Marysville. My dad took me down there. They used to haul the wool there. My grandfather had the shearing corral there at Avery Wash mouth. It was bigger than the one we had over there, so when we got all the sheep sheared, why, we'd haul the wool down John's Valley and over to Marysville. It was about an eight day trip, over the mountain and down through the valley. It was one of those trips that Dad took me down once. I was standing there with a brand new pair of bib overalls on, watching that old engineer shift the cars around so we could load the wool, and he stopped the engine, "Hey kid, do you want a ride?" and, oh boy! I climbed right on the old engine with him. He shifted cars around and I rode with him. I forgot about the sheep both Dad and his brother watched. He went across the top during the summer, came up underneath the rim with the sheep. That's why he sold the sheep; he sold them while I was in the service. I don't know what or how he did the trading [inaud].... Got into Herefords and still have horned Herefords. Found a Hereford herd in Nevada, not the best, but the only one.

MH: I knew there was going to be a catch!

VS: [Laughter.] And used some of the same range, we didn't go down to Paria River

with them, we just trailed them home, that's what we did. Three day job.

MH: You just did that?

VS: I truck 'em now. Stopped trailing 'em many years ago, quite a few years.

MH: So, up through Paria to where? Where would you trail them up to, about?

VS: The cattle or sheep?

MH: The cattle.

VS: We'd just come up the valley, then come up over the mountain, down this side.

The cows knew where they were going; we didn't have any trouble with them.

It was interesting, we got 'em over here, the green cows and take the cows on

by road and just watch them trail. Then in '48, or '49, there was about three

feet snow down the desert and the cattle didn't have anything to eat so Dad was

down there trying to get 'em out. I was up at BYU and he wrote me a little note

and said, "You better come home and help me get those cows." So I missed the

spring quarter of school up there and I hauled hay from Antimony, hauled all

we could buy over there. [inaud].... had to lift them on and off by hand. We ran

out of hay in Antimony so we went as far as Howe Well, and hauled hay from

there.

MH: Where's that?

VS: It's over by Delta some place, it was quite a trip.

MH: How did you break a trail out there?

VS: It was a county Caterpillar cut a trail down there, then we broke a trail with the

horse to where the cow was to get her out on the road and brought 'em home

and that's what I was hauling hay for, when I had 'em home. We fed them all lunch.

MH: So you brought them up.

VS: We lost quite a few.

MH: That was in '47?

VS: I was too young to remember that year.

MH: We haven't that kind of snow in a while.

VS: Yeah, every 20 years we get it.

MH: Did we get one in '67?

VS: [Laughter] I don't know.

MH: Are we due? Pretty quick!

VS: We got the old cows over to the ranch and the ranch started to produce. But Dad was about 65 or 66, he had asthma. [inaud]..... Always claimed it was all that old sheep dust that bothered him, he told me, "It's probably the last time I'll ride with you." The asthma got to the point where he couldn't be without oxygen. And the oxygen we had then..., there was a garage up there that had welding. He'd go up and get one of his welding tanks and hook his mask onto it.

MH: There's no medicine that could keep those lungs open enough, huh?

VS: If he had any medicine, I don't know what kind it was. [inaud].... ...stopped in two or three times a day for oxygen.

MH: It puts quite a strain on your body when you're having a hard time breathing.

VS: Yeah. He was about 86. Mom lasted until she was 96. She [inaud] ... She'd pull

out the breadboard in the cupboard and I'd fix breakfast for her. I said, "Mom, why don't you eat breakfast at the table?" She said, "I can eat it at the breadboard and look out the kitchen window and see everything outside and still eat breakfast, and when I finish all I have to do is take the dishes off and slide the board back in." She had a clean house.

MH: Didn't have to move around a lot, and she got to see what's going on.

VS: It just got to the point where she couldn't eat.

MH: Let's talk about some of the traditional stuff you do; I mean, I know they always had the holiday here? Was it the Fourth they celebrated here?

VS: Usually, yeah. The Fourth and 24th both, and as time went on, why, we'd go to Boulder and celebrate the Fourth. Boulder would come over here for the 24th. We'd always have a parade there [inaud].... [inaud]..... You always had music. We'd have two or three orchestras.

MH: Really? In the town? I remember you - you were in a play recently, the CCC play, right? You were the dancer, right? Who were you dancing with?

VS: My sister, Arcola.

MH: Really, that was your sister? I went to see the play, you were great.

VS: Yeah, Jerry Roundy did most of the writing.

Roundy's are real talented. In fact, he married a cousin of mine, Cherie Schow I'm related to those people.

MH: There's that name, the Spencers, what's another name here?

VS: Howards, Griffins, Schow,...

29 Vernon Spencer

MH: There's the Twitchells, too.

VS: The what?

MH: The Twitchells.

VS: One of my friends, well, he's almost my age, he went in service almost the same time, his name was Alvin, Alvin Twitchell. We kind of dated the same girls, too, I think. [Laughter.] Anyway, she was a Schow, she was older than me and the Schows, 'course, Grandpa Schow, he's the one planned the old town, that's why it's ...all the streets on north and south and east and west...

MH: The one on the left over here?

VS: On down a block.

MH: Whose house is kitty corner to you, that big brick house?

VS: That was Mort Liston's, it was his daughter that got after Sonny Liston. Then down on the next corner was my grandfather Liston's house. And across the street was Grandpa Schow. He was a polygamist, the bishop too. I don't remember who...his first wife but I remember his second wife, he called her Aunt Mary, she ran the post office down.....She was just always there.

MH: What about Christmas time? How did your family celebrate Christmastime? Were there stockings?

VS: We would go down into the desert and get a pine, a yellow pine tree. We usually wore our stockings...[laughter] didn't have any to spare.

End Tape 1, side B, begin tape 2, side A

30 Vernon Spencer

MH: None to spare, okay.

VS: Well, we'd get around to hanging them up once in a while. The old house had a mantle but the fireplace was closed in, so we hung our stockings on a chair and we got all of our gifts on that chair.

MH: What kind of things did you get? Candy or fruit?

VS: Not much candy because a lot of the stores didn't have any. We had nuts, quite a few of them, but no hard tack candy. In fact, when I was about 10 or 11, I got a bicycle from Montgomery Ward and I still have it.

MH: You do!

VS: Yes.

MH: I'll have to take a look at it.

VS: I just put new tires on it because it didn't have air in it so I couldn't ride it. It was called an old Hawthorne. I remember when we had three rooms in the house, the kitchen, the front room and the bedroom. When I walked out of the bedroom, I saw that bicycle by my chair. So, when I went to college, why, gas was very expensive, it cost 25 cents a gallon. I kept my bicycle up in my room at school. One night when I came out to get on it, it was gone. So, there's four of us living together. Somebody just borrowed the bicycle. We kind of wandered around to see who's got it. We went around a couple of blocks and saw this kid riding it. We took after him and he dropped the bicycle and ran, so we never caught him, but we got the bicycle.

MH: Yeah, thank goodness. No one locked their bikes then?

VS: No. So, I've still got it. Now, where were we?

MH: Oh, I don't know, that was one of the tangents. I think we were just talking about Christmas.

VS: We always had Christmas dinners. Gordon...of course, he's got a house, a granary, outhouse and chicken coop, pig pen and coal bin, wood pile, orchard and a garden. He never did raise potatoes very well but Dad always ended up with a couple of sacks. Maybe he went over to Circleville and got them.

MH: [Laughter] Isn't this called....wasn't this supposed to be called Potato Valley?

VS: Yeah. The potatoes were different. I don't know if there's any left or not, I haven't seen any for a long time. They were good. They didn't eat them like potatoes now, and the vines didn't spread out, they were tall, like a sunflower. You just washed them and sliced them up good. We'd eat them raw. We always had squash pie. Of course, we had a milk cow and a horse or two. The milk cow was usually a Guernsey or a Jersey, so we had whipped cream on squash pie. So, at Christmas time we'd have...what's the name of that other pie...? We had apple. We had the orchard out back. But there was another one.

MH: Mincemeat.

VS: Mincemeat, yes. I don't know where it comes from, but we usually had one of those, so it was special. Potatoes and gravy and noodles, and pie. We had cows so we had milk; we drank water out of the ditch.

MH: Water out of the ditch! What was your favorite meal, since we're talking about food? What was your favorite meal that your mom would make?

VS: Corn bread. We always raised a patch of corn and had a grinder. We shelled the corn and ran it through the grinder and made corn meal. A little syrup and molasses, honey and we'd eat it like cake. Usually it was for supper and so we ate it for the main meal.

MH: I know it was a common thing to have milk and bread. in the evening. Did you have that?

VS: We did. In fact, when we were in the old Stake, Dad was in the Stake Presidency, and we had a Stake conference over here. Spencer Kimball said, "I noticed that Escalante didn't have a General Authority assigned, so I volunteered to come down." Of course, they always stayed with the families, so he and Dad had been in meetings all Saturday and Mom cooked all day, and she had everything cooked. When they came from meetings, it was about 8:00 or 9:00 o'clock at night and she had the table all set and everything fancied up and all that food. I remember when President Kimball walked in the kitchen, and looked at Mom, he said, "Sister Spencer, would it be all right if I had some bread and milk?" Milk and cream with home made bread. Mom looked at the dinner table and looked at him and said, "I think you can." So that's what he had. There was bread, milk and onions and that was supper. If we were lucky enough to have some molasses, why, we'd have bread and butter and molasses and milk and onions.

MH: Getting around town, when you had spare time, what kind of things would you do when you were a young kid, maybe 8 or 10?

VS: What we did for entertainment?

MH: Yes, for fun.

VS: Well, of course, the streets were the way they are now, but not blacktop, so we'd usually build a fire out in the middle of the street and play games. Of course, the kids, there were two or three over here; some were a little bit older. A couple here and a couple there and on down, there were usually 10 or 12 kids around. We just built a fire and we'd roast potatoes and if we were real lucky, we'd roast wieners, but that was very special. Then we'd play games. One of my memories, I don't know how you say it, we called it "Relieval". It was a running...we had the kids in a circle and we had another fire on down the street, and the ones from that fire'd come up and if they could get into the kid that was in there, they'd get a hold of him and drag him out, then they'd relieve him around that corner. But if they got caught, they couldn't get him. Then we played "Run, My Sheep, Run". I don't remember how we played that, but it was out in the street with the fire. During the day, we played marbles. We played marbles for keeps. If you knocked the marble out of the center, why, you'd keep them. And hopscotch, all the little hopscotch patterns, they were all over the town. With the kids that were around, there was always something to do, and we usually did. Not school nights, but Friday night and Saturday night. The boys rode stick horses out of town up the old canyons there. Ride stick horses and smoke cigarettes.

MH: How would you do that?

VS: We'd just take cedar bark off the cedar trees and load it up with paper, usually a Montgomery Ward catalog page, then catch it afire and blow smoke out your ears.

MH: [Laughter] I bet it burned your lungs, too.

VS: Another neighbor, his dad smoked. He come down and said, "I'm going to show you how to smoke a cigar." So, well, we'd learn. This kid over here, he went and got a whoof of that. He went over to what we called the "Plum" bushes which were between the lots. He had a newspaper and he stripped that old cedar post, full length, pulled that cedar bark off it, filled it up with that newspaper and touched it to the fire. Took a big old draft of it and all that dust and smoke, and he coughed for half an hour. That ended the cigar smoking.

MH: One last thing. Let's talk about what you think about this land over time. Has it basically stayed the same; the use of the land around Escalante and your range....what are the major changes that you've seen?

VS: In the fields, around the edge of town and that?

MH: Right.

VS: Here in town, instead of just four houses to the block, why, they've added in between and done away with big orchards and gardens. Outside of town, going up the Alvey Wash, toward the coal mine, my grandfather owned that land, it was just sagebrush. We'd put cows over there to hold them.

Yes, across the Escalante River and of course, you cross the creek by the white rock, down by Turnabout Ranch, that was just three houses In fact,

there's a pond just over the Red Rock, we used to slide down. If you look before you start up to Red Rock hill, you'll see a couple of strips down the rock, those are the old tracks where we used to slide down.

We used to go there with a board and get on the board and ride down there That's what we used it for. Just over the hill, there's a pond and they'd swim in that. Boys, not girls. We swam naked. So, the girls wouldn't go out. We swam in that pond, the Big Ditch, we called it. An irrigation canal now; the water we drank. There was a sand gate up there, where they caught the sand and flused the sand out, it was a pretty good hole and we'd swim up there. Girls would slip up there once in a while. One time, I remember, they came up and there was only one boy that had a swimming suit, so he had him a long willow. He stood out on the bank and said, "Now, if you boys ever poke your heads out of the water, I'll make sure you don't because these girls are coming." So he kept us underwater for quite a while. There was a duck pond up there that would freeze over in the winter. We would go up in the winter to get ice, and then store it in sawdust bins.

VS: And on down the desert, there are fences now. Out on the big flat, there used to be a wild herd of horses; we'd go out and chase them. We tried to catch them but never did. Always good sport though because they could run.

MH: They're all gone now.

VS: Yeah. They'd been from the Alvey Wash up the Big Flat. Out on the range, the horses would be there feeding.

MH: That's why there's still a movement to get them off there, because of the feed is scarce. You're still ranching, aren't you, Vernon?

VS: Yeah. When I get a chance, when I'm not so busy. Up the Alvey Wash, there were about two or three coal mines up there. We hauled coal out of there for houses in town, \$6 a ton. Paid the tuition (for high school). They had a coal-fire furnace in the high school. The coal was owned first by Will Morse then Lavel Twitchell and Lorell Munson owned the other.

Shovel it out into a cart, and a horse drawn cart would pull it out and fill up the chute. Sometimes [they would have to] shovel it in, when they had to. [The horse would] Just come out and dump it down a chute in the wagon. Just a wagon and shovel it out of the wagon into the high school. We had to do that 3 or 4 times a winter starting in the fall.

MH: Are your cows over by Widtsoe, now?

VS: Yeah.

MH: Where are your hayfields?

VS: They're out here at my grandfather's old field. I still own it. We've got 40 acres alfalfa cultivated and grain and oats.

MH: Do you sell any of it, or is it all just for yourself?

VS: I just use it for my cattle.

MH: You've got oats, too?

VS: Oat hay, yes.

MH: Are there still Herefords around?

VS: Oh, yeah. My dad had fields before they got them and my brother-in-law's got them. Oh, we hauled hay all summer long.

MH: How do you think the future looks for ranching?

VS: No, there isn't any future for it.

MH: Just a few of you still ranching here?

VS: There's a few, but not many. The range that we use, 'course, the environmentalists have pretty well closed that down so there isn't maybe cattle on the range, still a few, but not many.

MH: I've heard things that the actual grazing on the range, as long as it's managed, is actually a good thing for the range, because it helps seed and grass propagation and so forth. Have you heard that before?

VS: Yeah, but I didn't believe it.

MH: You didn't believe it?

VS: Yeah, they claim it does a little bit. When the old lady, couple of ladies have an Indian rice basket, does pretty well [collecting seed]. And of course, Brigham tea that the sheep like and it tasted pretty good, too. If you get to see some of the water holes down in the desert we had to drink out of, why, Brigham tea was pretty good.

MH: When you say the desert, what area are you talking about?

VS: From here to Hole-in-the-Rock. That pretty well covers the whole thing. A lot of country.

This time of year, we were always down there getting cattle. We'd go down there; there'd be about 15 riders and 35 or 40 head of horses that we'd use as extra saddle horses. And there were always a few riders that had a jug of what we called Muscatel wine. By that night, they didn't know if we were there or not. The next morning, why, they weren't too anxious to get going.

MH: They just went down for the festivity part? The excitement.....

VS: I don't where the Muscatel wine came from, they probably had it...what do you call it....anyway, there was a store that sold Muscatel wine, so they bought it. 'Course, they were singing and talking quite loud, we'd always get down to what we called Wildcat Well, about 30 miles down the road. They were pretty well filled up with Muscatel wine. There were about five or six of them arguing, yeah, they lived it up. They'd to work next day.

MH: Vernon, during our interview, I want to say "Thank you" to you. You had some really good stories, and I appreciate you telling them.

VS: Well, you haven't heard all of them yet.

MH: I know! But thanks for what you have given.

Tape ends.