

K. WINTCH 1998
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BCNP

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: Kent Wintch
INTERVIEWER: Jay Haymond
DATE OF INTERVIEW: September 17, 1998
PLACE OF INTERVIEW: At his home in Tropic, Utah
SUBJECT OF INTERVIEW: Tropic, Utah
TRANSCRIBER: Vectra Solutions/JN

JH: First of all, tell me a little bit about the family into which you were born. It was here in Tropic you say. And what can you tell me about your father and mother?

KW: My grandfather came to this country from Switzerland and was later sent to live in Manti by Brigham Young. My father was born there. He was the youngest of his family. He later left Manti and accepted a job as a schoolteacher. This was back in around 1919. He met my mother, Hannah Hope Ott, who had come up from down in Hurricane area, a place called Duncan. They had moved here and built an old home here in 1905-- it's remodeled and still stands. He taught school here a year and a half and then -- well he taught longer than that, but in the year and a half after he was here he courted my mother and they were married in 1921. And then I came along in 1922, November 15. Although I was born here, my father, when I was four or five years old, was assigned to teach school in Henrieville, Utah and that's where I went to school for two years, the first and second grades.

We lived on a farm near Henrieville. I have fond memories of living with the snakes (laughter) and prairie dogs and growing corn or whatever we could in the summer. My father taught school in the winter. Later we did live in Henrieville for a little while and

that old house still stands, I still see it occasionally. We then moved back up to Tropic. At that time my mother's father was called to be the bishop of Henrieville. So they moved out of the old home and we moved in and that is where I grew up.

My father branched out in other activities and still taught school. He had a little mercantile shop. It's not there any more. He sold a few groceries and other staples. He did that on the side and still taught school. We survived the Depression in 1929 to '37. Father bought the old Ott home and we lived there quite comfortably for many years.

I can remember when we didn't have electricity, nor inside plumbing. It was a difficult time. I do remember my mother making soap with lye and pig fat. It was my job to build a fire and keep it, often stirring the mixture. It was an all day job. We may even get to go back to that someday. (Laughter from both parties)

My father was industrious. Money was short and land was cheap. He was able to purchase considerable land in and around Tropic. I do remember when I was sixteen years old and I wanted to go to work up to Bryce. Bryce needed my help, but my parents wouldn't let me go. And of course I had a big complaint about that. (Laughter) As I reflect on that, it was the best course for my development. I did work with Father. He purchased the main store down on main street that was called the Tropic Cash Store, it was my job to clerk. I did this for many years and helped on the farm. I have many

memories of working on the farm; driving the truck, hauling hay, etc. Those days we cut hay with an old mower and then raked, piled and picked it up with a pitchfork, loaded the truck and later threw it in the barn or stacked it. I do remember a lot of sweaty days.

I attended school for two years in Henrieville, first and second grade, and then came here to Tropic where I graduated from high school.

JH: Was it Tropic High School then?

KW: It was Tropic High School then. The building was down where the park is. It was an old building; I can remember it pretty well. It was heated with pot-bellied stoves. In the winters it used to really snow here, three feet and more. Often snow would cover the fences, we didn't have to open the gate because you could walk right over it. (Laughs) I usually had to get up in the morning and milk the cows, we had three of them, and it was my job to get the cows milked early in the morning. My brother usually had to feed the chickens and pigs. The memory I have about that is that when I milked the cows I'd always squirt it on my pants and didn't have time to change them and get to school on time. We had to run down to school. It was cold and it would freeze my pant legs. Then when I'd stand around the hot stove to get warm, my pants would thaw out and create a really bad smell (laughs). Farm country, it certainly was.

JH: Is there some way, some phrase or sentiment that would characterize Tropic as a community. Or even Henrieville as a community. Do you have any short answer for that question?

KW: I'm not sure that I do. You know, the entertainment in those days was -- they didn't have any modern things, without electricity you didn't do a lot of things. That didn't come until later, 1935 or '36. For entertainment, they had a social hall and the church provided a lot of entertainment. The old dance hall--those were the big occasions.

JH: Well used dance hall?

KW: Well used dance hall. I learned to play the trombone and we had a small orchestra. We had a great time. (Laughs) As I reflect back on that, I think that's better than TV.

JH: The pictures are better.

KW: The pictures were better. (Chuckles) You know that was good entertainment. As young children growing up we had games to play and we did certain little things that we shouldn't have done, like stealing chickens and going off in the wilds here and cooking them.

JH: What did you call that?

KW: Everybody had chickens. They were necessary for survival. As young kids, we would sneak into the coop and take a couple of chickens and go clean and cook them along with a few potatoes. We had all kinds of night games. The church was predominant in our activities. The town wasn't even incorporated in those days. It was just a community where we all knew each other. I don't know all the people in town anymore. But I did then- I knew every one.

JH: Was there much difference in the population then and now?

KW: No, even then there were around 500 people living here and today it might even be approaching 600 and no doubt it will get bigger. So we only had one ward of the church here, but with 500 people, eventually, they'll make two wards and then it will continue to grow. We did have cars and trucks. They were cheap in those days, compared to now. I remember my dad bought a new Plymouth sedan for \$700. It was a fancy car in those days. (Laughs) I learned to drive at twelve years old. In 1937 Father purchased a pickup truck. We had a milk run. A lot of people had dairies here as a source of income. My dad always looked for opportunities to get ahead. There was a creamery over in Panguitch and some people here milked their cows and put it in cans. The problem was getting it to the creamery; so my father purchased a small pickup to haul the milk. Now

they do it in big tankers, (Chuckles) but that's what we did in those days.

The people didn't have much money. Some of them worked at Bryce but there was not the activity at Bryce there is now. A few had a job up there. I had my first job there when I was seventeen.

JH: It was kind of a passive approach to tourism, wasn't it?

KW: Yes. There really wasn't much tourism here then. Actually the road was all gravel--there was no pavement back in the 30s. My first job at Bryce, I worked as a laborer. I made fifty cents an hour. I had more money than anybody in town my age. (Laughter)

JH: Status!

KW: Status, yes it was. I kind of liked that. I graduated from high school here and went to college in St. George; it was called the Dixie Junior College. I was there two years and graduated in business. I thought I'd like to be a businessman. I'd had some experience in the store. It was a difficult to have a store business because people didn't have income except maybe in the fall when they'd sell their calves or when they'd sell their wool and their lambs. And then the farmers, whenever they could sell their crops, and a few apples were sold and things like that.

But it was difficult to run a store business like that because we had to do it on credit. We were pretty well extended. The trouble was, the reason I couldn't do that any more, was

that the people would say, "Well, you know, I'll pay you, in the fall" and when they got their money there were other things they needed worse, emergencies always, and so that wasn't a good way to do business.

Betty and I were married in 1942, and I went to the war six months later. My first assignment was in Camp Barkley, Texas. I was there for a year and a half. Betty came down to Abilene, Texas to be with me.

JH: Were you in the Navy?

KW: I was in the Army. I was supposed to be in the medical corps. I was sent to Camp Barclay, Texas--a medical training center. I was supposed to be a medic. However, they didn't train me in that. Since I'd had business experience they put me in an office situation to keep track of records. They decided I was good in that type of work so they gave me a job in the mail department. The mail was very important to the Army. I was sent to the South Seas in the Pacific.

I landed in New Caledonia and was assigned to a post office in Noumea, New Caledonia. Much of the Army mail came in from Australia and San Francisco to thousands of soldiers. This is where I discovered that there were so many people in the United States that were illiterate. (Laughs) To get the mail to all those soldiers was a difficult task. The Army had rented a big building there in New Caledonia and we'd work at night because it was easier. I had a big table about like this, oh, 6x6, and because my last name started with "W" I chose to take the W's so I had several trays of 3x5 cards with each soldier's name on, and everyone of them was a "W". I probably had 5,000 names or more.

As the soldiers would move, keeping track of them was difficult. The Army would send us notice and we would post the new location on the card. New addresses like Company A, 37th Regiment or even the 96th Division. I was a huge task to get the mail to the soldiers.

JH: Did they send you a card or did you fill out a new card when they moved?

KW: No, what they did was they sent a list to the supervisor, a Captain [in the post office]. He would instruct us to make the changes. We would write the new address on the card such as "Killed in Action" "Returned to States" or "In the Hospital". This was the method used to keep track of them. That was my job for a year and a half. As I sat there hour after hour processing each item of mail and hoping that I could direct it to the individual, it was here that I discovered that so many Americans were illiterate. At that time, so much of the writing in the mail items were not legible except for the APO number, that I often couldn't determine if the surname began with a "W," so I would direct it to another station. Much of the time it would be a guess to determine the address of a soldier.

One thing I do remember is the volume of mail that came in to one post office. Warehouses were full of shiploads of packages and first class mail pouches stacked to the ceiling. Many of them were broken, leaking fluids, or mashed, etc. It was a tough job but we did the best we could. The soldiers wanted their mail and we did our best to get it to them. It has been said that the moral of the Army was kept going on the mail from home.

JH: Right, they'd talk about food and they could talk about good weather, but it was the mail that made the difference.

KW: Come 1945, the war moved north to the Phillipines. Our post office, titled the 13th Base Post Office, was called to move to the small island of Beak, located two degrees off the equator. This small island was a haven for mosquitoes. All were required to medicate with Atrabrine prior to going to this island. I became very ill while taking Atrabrine and was continued to the hospital in New Caledonia. It took the most part of two weeks to ~~get well and adjust to taking the medication without consequences. In the meantime, the~~ post office moved to the island. I was left with orders to take the first available transportation to join the post office. Air transportation was limited and the Navy base had no ships going my way.

Finally I did catch a plane going north to Guadal Canal. I stayed there a couple of days and then caught another plane ride to Finchhaven, New Guinea. Travel out from there was very limited. Many days I sat in the air depot waiting for a ride north. I became acquainted with the fellow who handled the mail for this area. I shall never forget the incident that happened there.

My postal friend had made arrangements for me to fly out the next morning on a P-38 going to Beak. These planes would hold only 3 people. We were to leave at 6:30 in the morning. My postal friend and I had difficulty getting to the airport the next morning. We arrived on the dot of 6:30, only to see the plane taking off. I was disappointed for the moment, but later that day we learned that the P-38 crashed in the jungle in New Guinea.

I did eventually make it to Beak. I suffered from the mosquitoes and hot, hot weather. I was so glad when the war ended and I was able to leave the rock island of Beak and come home. Such was my Army experience.

JH: Where did they muster you out?

KW: I was drafted into the U.S. Army in June of 1943. I was inducted into the Army at Fort Douglas, Utah and was shipped to Camp Barkley, Texas, near Abilene, a city of around 30,000 people. With 130,000 soldiers just 25 miles away, Abilene was a mess on weekends.

JH: Well, did they give you some more training then?

KW: Yes, they gave me training in clerical work. I was assigned to a regimental office. They said, "We'll try you out here." My job was to post changes to each soldier's personnel record, such as training, medical records, work experiences, etc. Each Regimental Office had an assigned mailman to handle and distribute the mail to the various companies in the regiment. After I had been in the Regimental Office for a couple of months the mailman was transferred. They offered me the job and I was delighted to accept. This experience would serve me well for my post office assignment in the South Pacific Seas.

It was November 1944--I was on the U.S.S. Harry Taylor, a large troop ship. There were 3,500 of us on the ship. The memory will remain with me always, as we sailed under the Golden Gate Bridge, leaving San Francisco on our way to New Caledonia

At New Caledonia I was assigned to the 6th Replacement Depot. All would be assigned to an Army unit somewhere in the South Seas. It was six weeks before I was assigned to a unit. Many of the soldiers that I came over with had been reassigned and killed in action before I was reassigned. Fortunately, I was assigned to the 13th Base Post Office and remained in that unit until I came home in 1946.

JH: Well, this experience in the post office provided you with a good deal of, what I think it was a launching pad.

KW: Oh yes, it gave me an insight on how I should prepare for the future.

~~JH: What did you do when you got out?~~

KW: I had always wanted to be a merchant. I had many hours of experience in my father's Tropic Cash Store. My father was willing to sell it to Betty and me. It was sort of a family arrangement. Betty and I put all our resources into the business. Both of us worked hard and did quite well. We did build up the business to add a commercial fertilizer source for the farmers, a larger line of groceries, dry goods and a meat counter.

End Side one, Tape one

Begin Side two, Tape one

JH: You were saying that the store business was good to you but it was hard to get the pay for some of the farmers who bought fertilizer.

KW: Fertilizer and other things, yes.

JH: So what did you do?

KW: We built up the store into a pretty good business. My dad felt like he'd like to have it back. He was getting older and he felt like he could do it now. He had retired from

education. So, Betty and I decided that it was time to get out of here anyway, it was sort of a family affair. And I had always wanted to work at Bryce Canyon. They needed somebody to keep the records and the books in the park office. But it was Civil Service and you had to be on a list. I remember the ranger in charge was a man named John Lewis and he was quite a character. (Laughs) The clerk that he had moved, so he asked for a list of the eligibles from the post office in St. George. He got this list and there was nobody on there that he wanted.

Finally my cousin who worked up there, he said, "Why don't you come up and talk to John?" So I went up to talk to him. I said, "John, I think I'd like to change jobs." And he said, "Well, I'll give you a try but I can't hire you." Then I said, "Well, I still got the store, so I tell you what I'll do, I'll work a week or so for nothing and just see how I do." After the week he liked my work and said, "Somehow we gotta' get you on." It wasn't very much pay, it was a Grade 3 in the Civil Service category then, \$2,900 a year. But that was pretty good in the 40's--wasn't too bad. You could survive and even buy you a car. (Laughter)

He did get a list with names on and there was one that he had to select. It was late fall and the guy came over to start on the job. So he came and interviewed with John and John said, "Well, this is the job. There's not all that much book work to do, so everybody that works here has to do...when the snow gets five feet deep and you have to shovel snow (Laughter) and then this little house is not very big and if you've got a family, it won't be big enough for you but that's what's available." (Laughter) He was right on that. And they just didn't hit it off and the guy went home and wrote a letter back and he said, "I don't want the job." So then John called me up and says, "It's yours, you come up and I'll get you cleared. See, Bryce was under Zions National Park then, the superintendent was in Zions. So he cleared it with the office down in Zions. So that's when I went to

work.

JH: He was a horse trader.

KW: Yes, he was a horse trader. (Laughter) But he gave us a pretty nice little home up there. It still stands. I worked there for...I went there in 1952 and I left later in 1953. I went to Zion, they kinda' said, "Well, we'll use you down here." So, I went there as a project clerk. I worked in Zion until 1955. I then found out about an opening in Grand Canyon so I applied for that and I got that job to work on the North Rim of the Grand Canyon as their clerk. I did all that in the summer and went to the South Rim in the winter to help out in the personnel office. And then it came time, about 1956, when Bryce Canyon was being separated from Zion and having its own superintendent. And I wanted to come back. I knew the man that was going to be the superintendent up there so I wrote him a letter and said, "I'd sure like to get that job." I told him my experiences. And then he said, "I'll see what we can do." The Regional Office was in Santa Fe, New Mexico and as soon as he got the job he wrote down and asked them if they'd put me on the list. And they did and so he hired me. So we came back to Bryce Canyon and stayed another five years, until 1963.

Then came an opportunity to go to Colorado. They offered me a personnel officer job in Rocky Mountain National Park in Colorado.

JH: That was kind of a plumb, huh?

KW: Yes, that was a plumb, it was a big park; it still is. I learned a lot, how hire and employ people under Civil Service law. It's still quite a big deal. So I got a lot of experience, learned a lot by going to Denver to their big offices and learning all about it. And then I

made good friends in the Regional Office- sometimes I guess if you make good friends you can do better for yourself. (Laughs) So at that time they decided to make a National Park out of the Canyonlands in Moab. And, oh, I thought I'd like to go there and my daughter lived there then. No, she didn't but she did later. But I sure wanted to go to Moab and get back to Utah. They were selecting the people to manage this park and so I wrote to my friend in Santa Fe, I told him that I'd sure like to be among the charter group that goes into start up this new National Park and be the Administrative Officer.

He knew me really well and he knew that I wanted to go. He said that he'd do what he could to help me, which he did, and I got the job. So we stayed there. That was a big job, starting a new National Park and trying to exist on agency reserves. There was no appropriated money. It was a big area. There was very little equipment, and I was searching for surplus Army stuff, anything we could get. We finally got it on track.

JH: What did you do, did you just go out and shake the mesquite brush and find the money? How do you do that?

KW: No, we used agency reserves. See, when the Congress appropriated money to the Department of the Interior and then as an item to the National Park Service, they made the park but they didn't give it any money. And the Park Service would get a lot of money and then they distributed it to the parks, based on what each park would submit as their needs. You know, you have so many personnel at a certain grade that you had pay them. With the budget, that was my job all the time, preparing these budgets. I would make up the budget and send it into the region and they would consolidate it on a regional basis and send to the National Park Service in Washington. And they in turn would consolidate it all for the National Park Service, send it to Interior Department and that Interior Department would send it to the budget committee for the whole US. So that was

the process. But in each budget there was a little reserve. The Park Service would reserve money in case of a big fire, or in case of a disaster somewhere, flood or other certain emergencies.

We put ourselves in that category to get that money and they did give us a couple hundred thousand dollars but with a whole crew, you've got to figure out how you're going to pay them. ~~Those funds could be used up in no time.~~

But it was a hard job getting that off it's feet. And I stayed there until 1966. In June of 1966, my good friend in Santa Fe had moved to Assistant Superintendent to Yellowstone so he called me one day and said, "There's an opening here as procurement and probably management officer, and we want you to take it." I said, "I'll take it. You get me on the list and I'll accept it." So they did.

JH: Was that the Grand Daddy of them all?

KW: Yes, there are two million acres there. Of course there are bigger ones in Alaska now but there weren't then. But anyway, I went there. This is a pretty good grade- I think it was a grade 12- that's pretty high. And so we stayed there six years, that's where most of my family grew. And we liked Yellowstone. We spent six years there and it was very good.

JH: Where were the headquarters that you located your family?

KW: We lived in Mammoth Hot Springs in a nice house. The kids went to school in Gardner, Montana. It was really a wonderful experience. I liked Yellowstone. Things were reasonable, like you could get the license for your car for ten dollars. You get the license for the car in Montana for ten dollars because it was the cheapest, but you had to pay your

taxes to the State of Wyoming. Your address is Wyoming.

And I remember we decided to go to Canada on a little vacation. We had just moved up from Utah, we had license plates from Utah. Yellowstone was made a National Park before there were any states, you didn't belong to a state so it didn't matter what license plate you had. So as long as we'd keep buying Utah plates that would be fine. We decided to take a little vacation up into Canada and we had a little pickup with a camper on top. We got in all right because you can just drive right in to Canada. But then when we went to come back in, they said, "You have to check out." And, you know, he said, "What's your address?"

KW: And I said, "Yellowstone Park, Wyoming." "And why was that?" "We live in Wyoming." I said, "How come you got Utah plates on?" "Well, we lived in Utah." (Laughs) And then he says, "Let me see your driver's license." I then showed him my Utah driver's license. (Laughter) Round and around. And finally he says, "Nobody could do all that, so go ahead." (Laughter) We were glad to get through. So we got back into the United States.

JH: Oh dear, that's a good story. You're a universal citizen is what that really meant.

KW: That's what it really meant. Have you ever been to Yellowstone? It's a nice place to live or it was when we lived there.

JH: Our cousin lives in Island Park now.

KW: We used to drive through Island Park all the time.

JH: Yeah, he thinks that's heaven on Earth.

KW: It's a beautiful place.

JH: He has a friend that moved up from...well I guess, I'm trying to think of the little town west of Ogden, and it may have been Roy or Syracuse. Or maybe it was Farr West, that's where it was.

KW: Is it Farr West?

JH: Yeah. Anyway, this guy had a sprinkler or water irrigation system business and he'd come and install sprinklers -- round sprinklers. So he retired, sold that business and moved up there. But he never got out of the business of working on people's lawns. You know how some of us are, habitual workers. Anyway, he has this four-car garage now and all this equipment and he goes out and pushes everybody's snow. So here's my cousin associated with this friend and it's a wonderful community, he says. It's really great.

KW: Well, you know, Yellowstone is really pristine. And you can see nature in the raw. One spring, before they'd opened the roads to West Yellowstone, it took big plows and big snow blowers. I was the Procurement and Property Management officer and it was my job to make up the contracts to buy all kinds of equipment that can cost hundreds of thousands of dollars- like those big snow blowers that are six feet high. Anyway, they'd just plowed out the road and they hadn't opened it yet- there were big banks of snow on each side of the road. The chief of maintenance came and got me one day and said, "I need to go out and look at this, I wish you'd go with me." So I said, "I'd like to go out to West Yellowstone."

It was easy to get to Madison Junction. At Madison Junction, there are quite a lot of hot pots. At these thermal areas the snow would melt and the green grass would show through. It was a good place for elk to winter.

As we were driving by, I just have this picture in my mind of a high bank of snow, we ~~looked down and saw this one elk running by with her tongue hanging out.~~ The chief of maintenance said, "There's something after that elk. Maybe a grizzly's after it." So we decided we'd watch. There were several elk in there. Finally we saw the grizzly. There was a grizzly mother and two cubs another, about a yearling. The bears had stationed themselves to keep the elk running. I shall never forget seeing the mother bear raise up and slap the tired elk into the Madison River. Then she just pounced out with both paws and held that elk under there until it drowned. And I can still see in my mind, whirling water around that elk. And then she pulled it out onto the bank and here come the two cubs and that yearling. And the old mother slapped that yearling. I guess that was the signal to go up and sit guard, because it left and then watched and lay there under a tree. And then we watched this mother and the two cubs tear into this elk. It was so interesting to us that we stayed there and watched. I guess that they finally must have gotten full because then she tapped the cubs and they went up and then down came the other one.

JH: So they had a signal system, huh?

KW: They had a signal system. They really did. Nature in the raw.

JH: That is amazing. How long did you last in Yellowstone? Did you tell me that...?

KW: Six years.

JH: Six years. And then where?

KW: We left Yellowstone. I had always wanted to be an administrative officer. It was called Administrative Assistant at Bryce. And I was Administrative Officer at Canyonlands. I had always wanted to be in one of the bigger parks. An opportunity came that allowed me to go to Montrose, Colorado, in a group office situation as Administrative Officer. It was time for us to get out of Yellowstone anyway. The children needed a bigger and better high school. An opportunity came to for a job in Montrose, Colorado, as an Administrative Officer, so I applied for it and was selected. We moved to Montrose in the fall of 1972. The NPS park office in Montrose administered three NPS areas. There was the Black Canyon National Monument near Montrose. In Gunnison, Colorado there was the Curecanti National Recreation Area that had three big dams: Blue Lake, Morrow Point, and Crystal were all on the Gunnison River. The Bureau of Reclamation managed the dams, but then the recreation part was up to the Park Service. We had interpreters and rangers and maintenance. It was a pretty big operation there and still is. We also had the Colorado National Monument down by Grand Junction, Colorado. The supervising of these three NDS areas brought many management and operational experiences.

We were in Montrose for three years and then left because they abolished the practice of group offices. The government seems to do that. They do something, try it and it doesn't work too well and the next guy says, "Well, this'll work better," so they change it. The office was abolished so we had to find another area. I had all kinds of offers. One was to Philadelphia, and another to Denver. I didn't want any of them. (Laughs) Finally there came an opportunity- the Administrative Officer in Glacier National Park retired. It was

a job to dream about. It was a grade 13 level job. I got my name on the list of eligibles and was selected.

Glacier was a beautiful place. We stayed there for another three years...lots of water-lots of water. Our youngest son was just high school age then and he loved catching salmon. Using a snag hook he could snag thirty and catch his limit. Many people would try to snag them without success. My son, Rhett, developed a knack to snagging those fish.

The fish came up from the Flathead Lake in the fall to spawn in the clear stream of Glacier National Park. People in this area enjoy the salmon fun. The fish are very tasty as long as they have silver skin. They do come up to spawn then die. Many people catch them. They can them, smoke them, freeze them or eat them fresh. My son would catch a limit of 30 fish twice per week until his mother announced that she had had her limit!

The fish were a food source for Grizzly bears, so the fishermen had to be cautious. Another interesting matter regarding the salmon was the collection of numerous eagles coming to the area for a food source. There was a small, clear river, maybe three miles long, coming out of Lake MacDonald and joining the East Fork of the Flathead River. Along this short river I have counted as many as 300 eagles.

We lived in West Glacier, Montana, had a nice home. I liked my job. It was a good one. Even so, we longed to return to Utah. My daughter Pam was in Moab and we decided if we could, we would return to Moab, Utah. The Administrative at Canyonlands, Arches and Natural Bridges, decided to retire, and I thought, "Well this is great. I'm not far away from retirement. I almost have thirty years in. All I need to be is be 56 years old and then I can retire without any problems."

The Administrative Officer was retiring and I knew him personally, so I ask him if the

superintendent there had any idea who he was going to look for, and he says, "No, I don't think he has." And I said, "Well, I'd like to move down there." The grade was a grade lower than I was, the job in Glacier was a 13 and the Canyonlands job was up to a 12 then. But I said, "That's okay, I want to go anyway. I need a free ride for my furniture to get back to Utah." (Laughter) So I was able to get my name on the list and, I'll be darned, that superintendent selected me, we moved back to Utah to the Canyonlands and lived in Moab for another two years and then we decided to retire and go back home to Tropic. I already owned this land. We had bought it when we were in Yellowstone. My dad said, "I want you to have this little piece of land," he said, "I won't charge you much." I think I paid him \$2,500 for twelve acres.

JH: That's a good price!

KW: It was. You can get a lot more than that for it now. We had the land and we were back in Utah. I was 56 years old and had thirty-some years of government service and one year of sick leave to my credit so it turned to be a pretty good retirement.

JH: Was it the land that made you decide specifically to come back to Tropic?

KW: Not really...this was where we grew up and my folks were still alive and they needed some care.

End of Side two, Tape one

Beginning Side one, Tape two

JH: Your parents needed a little help and...

KW: Yes, they were anxious for us to come back. So we decided we would. You know, it was a kind of sad thing- it just got the point that all of our three older children were married and our youngest son was on a mission. Betty and I were all by ourselves. Prior to this, all the traveling I did alone because she couldn't go. Betty had to stay and take care of the children. Now that we could go together we were going to retire so it wasn't very fair to her. But we discussed it and we decided that it would be the thing for us to do- retire and do something else. And so we did in June of 1979. Next year it'll be twenty years since I retired. This home was a CAP home and we planned it ourselves. And then in June I came over from Moab and was with the builder who put the frame up. Then my brother-in-law and I finished the home. From that point I have improved it where I could.

JH: So, you were a carpenter then.

KW: Well, not much of a carpenter. My brother-in-law is a carpenter, but I helped him and I still was able to do a few things.

JH: I'm trying to remember a CAP home. Was it a manufactured structure that they brought in?

KW: Well, it was the pieces that they brought in. The buyer contracted for the basement and foundation according to the plans. For a CAP home they bring in the materials and then employ one carpenter who would put it together—the shell with the doors, the windows, the roof, all except the shingles. Included in the price of the home were all of the materials and appliances. The owner then proceeded to finish the home inside and out.

JH: That's quite a savings.

KW: Yes, it really was a big savings. They'd furnish all the materials--what they did was fix it so it'd be up and windows and doors in, they'd lock it and give you the key and say, "You finish it." And so we did. We put the shingles on, the floors in and did all the sheetrock and insulation. It isn't done yet but it's still in the making.

JH: ~~Tell me what you've done with your retirement. You said twenty years.~~

KW: Well, we decided we needed some other work to do and so... I'm trying to remember which one was first. I worked for the Garfield County- they were hard up for a building inspector. I didn't know much about it but I did it anyway. And so I worked for them for two or three years. Next I was a charter member of the Bryce Canyon Natural History Association from its beginning in 1961. In 1988 they needed some help. It kept growing. When it was first chartered there was only one permanent employee and then they hired a seasonal worker to sell the books, cards and things like that. It kept growing until they needed more. I was voted back on the board of directors. Then after I got working on it I could see that they needed more help so I decided that maybe I should get a paying job. The board of directors set up a part time Executive Director. I told them, "I won't work full time, I'm retired." I worked as a part time Executive Director and built up the business. Later, we hired more people, a publication specialist and purchasing agent. They sell thousands of dollars worth of just books, postcards, tapes, postcards, etc.

JH: There's a little profit in that, isn't there.

KW: Yes, there's quite a profit.

JH: And so that's for the purpose of perpetuating the association?

KW: Yes. The Bryce Canyon Natural History Association chartered in 1961. It was a non-government operation established to sell books, post cards, posters, pictures, tapes and videos to the visiting public. It was a non-profit organization that would provide funds to Bryce Canyon that weren't readily available from government appropriated funds, such as research, resource protection and in some cases help with building emergency need. It served a good purpose for the benefit of Bryce Canyon National Park. I was privileged to be its first Executive Director on a part-time basis, beginning in 1996. I served there until 1998, at which time business had grown sufficiently enough to employ a full-time Executive Director. I am still affiliated with the association as an Emeritus Board member.

JH: Well those sound like very productive retirement years. Do you feel satisfied with that kind of a role- seemed to me like that's critical need?

KW: It is. I thought it was just wonderful. And now I guess I'm at a point where I should coast the rest of my life. (Laughter)

JH: Well, I've got a deal for you, if you want something else to do. (Laughter)

End of Side one, Tape two

End of Interview

Utah State Historical Society
Oral History Program

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

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knowingly and voluntarily permit the Utah State Historical Society full use of

~~this information for whatever purposes they may have, in return for which I~~

will receive a typed copy of the interview.

Interview Description

Date of interview September 17, 1998

Primary Subject Early life, Education, growing up
experiences.

Other topics Employment experiences

Retirement Activities

Number of tapes 2

Kent J. Wintch

narrator's name

date _____