

Maxine Newell

This interview was conducted on March 4, 2003, by Jean McDowell of the Dan O’Laurie Canyon Country Museum and Grand County Historical Preservation Commission. She interviewed Maxine at her home in Moab. Also present was Maxine’s friend, George Andersen.

Q (Jean): Let’s see Maxine, you have told about growing up in Dove Creek and about your father

A (Maxine): Yes, and at the end of this we had moved to Monticello

Q: Now who is “we”?

A: My family.

Q: Oh, the family. How old were you then?

A: Oh, I was there as a sophomore in high school when we moved to Monticello.

Then from there on we were mostly in Utah.

Q: So, when did you meet your husband?

A: After the war. Oddly enough, I met him at the Hole ‘n the Rock.

Q: Really. When the original people were there?

A: I went down there with my brother-in-law except he was just a school friend and he wasn't my brother-in-law. And they used to have a dance hall there and a beer parlor.

Q: In the Hole 'n the Rock?

A: Yeah.

Q: In the Rock:

A: Right. And it was about the only place to go on Sunday. So we drove from Monticello down to the Hole 'n the Rock and Hub was there and I met him. He had just gotten back from the war. He was a Captain and he was in uniform and he was handsome.

Q: Was he a sort of native, I mean did he...

A: Native. He was born in Moab.

Q: In Moab?

A: He had been in Europe for four years. He was in the war. He had just been home a few days when I met him down there. So, we finally got better acquainted and got married.

Q: So that was shortly after the war?

A: Uh-huh. During the war I was gone most of those years too.

Q: What did you do then?

A: Well, I went to Washington, D. C. first. And I worked in the State Department.

Q: Goodness. What were you doing there?

A: Secretary. They called us “government girls.” And they recruited girls, you know, to help out.

Q: How did you happen to go to Washington?

A: I took Civil Service and passed it and, oddly enough, I got word that I had been accepted and I would be working in the State Department and I was to send them my birth certificate and I didn't have one. I was born in New Mexico and I had jaundice and I guess they thought I wasn't going to make it. But they never recorded my birth. And, so, I wasn't going to get into Civil Service.

Q: You didn't have a birth certificate.

A: No. But my dad knew the name of somebody in Sedan(?), New Mexico who remembered my birth and they have, I don't know what they call them now, but they make birth certificates for people. They are delayed birth certificates and I had to get one of those. So I got the job. I had been working for the Farm Security Administration. I quit college to take the job at \$85.00 a month. In Washington, D.C., I made \$120.00. I thought I had it made. In Washington, I was a charter member of the stage door canteen.

Q: After the fact.

A: Yeah. Anyway, I stayed in Washington a couple of years and then I transferred to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada and I worked on the Alaska Highway Project up there.

Q: How did you happen to get transferred to Edmonton?

A: Oh, gosh you know, during the war you could apply for a job and go anywhere and it was just tempting to move for the travel, you know. And my girlfriend heard about these jobs on the Alaska Highway. We thought it would be kind of a ball to go. So we applied and we got to go.

Q: So you were stationed in Edmonton?

A: Yes. Uh huh. And she went on up to Fairbanks but they got tired of buying plane tickets for all of these “government girls” and froze us in our jobs so I got stuck in Edmonton.

Q: That’s a pretty big town, isn’t it?

A: It is now. It was about 100,000 then and really sprawled out.

Q: Did you go on up to Alaska?

A: I got as far as Norman Wells. My office. I was working in Public Relations there and my office sent me to Norman Wells. That is in Northwest Territory and I was supposed to do a story on the Canol Project. I brought you a book to look at. And it was an oil project they had during the war. And while I was up there, Harry Truman, President Harry Truman, was a Senator then. He went to the Canol Project and recommended it be

closed and they shut it down. So my office called me and told me to come on home. No use doing a story. So I had to wait for a ride on a military C-47 to get home. It was full of GI's so I rode in the co-pilot's seat. The pilot let me fly the plane for awhile.

Q: What was the name of the Project?

A: Canada Oil.

Q: You weren't working for Canada though

A: No

Q: You were still with our State Department?

A: No, U.S. Corps of Engineers, War Department. At that time there were almost as many Americans in Edmonton as there were Canadians. Because that was the headquarters for the Highway and so that is where all of the offices were and alot of military there, you know. It was N.W., Service Command.

Q: So then you came back to Moab? Not to Dove Creek?

A: No. I went down to Seattle and I worked there for a little while and then I went on to San Francisco and I worked for the Corps of Engineers in San Francisco until after the war. I was there on V-J Day. That was a great experience.

Q: Wow. In San Francisco?

A: You have seen those pictures and things, I'm sure they almost ... you know there was

a mob. We weren't downtown. It was happy mob or it would have been dangerous but they were so excited the war was over and of course, San Francisco was full of servicemen, sailors and well, that comes later.

Q: Oh that's right. We had the Manhattan Project going on.

A: Right. That was while I was in San Francisco. It's in the story there. Anyway, we went downtown and at one time they picked a street car up and carried it over and set it on the sidewalk and that ... I never saw anything like it. And San Francisco harbor, I don't know how many ships must have been in there ... hundreds... it was the most exciting thing to see, you know. All of the boys on ships waiting to get ashore , waving

Q: Is that where the famous picture of the sailor with the girl?

A: Yeah. The sailor kissing the girl and one of the girls in a fountain. Yeah, that's where it was.

Q; Well, what made you come back on the farm, so to speak?

A: I never could stay away from home too long and when I started to school, I didn't particularly want to go to college. That wasn't the thing I wanted to do and my dad took me over and enrolled me in Ross Business College.

Q: Where is that?

A: In Grand Junction. I outlived it. And I stayed six months and I came home. He let me stay three months and then back he took me so I stayed another six months. Then I went to Western States College.

Q: It sounds like you have already been in the business world with the job. What could you have learned?

A: No, but I was out of high school when I first got out. Anyway, that's what I did. I always had to come back home. I just got homesick. Then I quit the government and came home. And I worked for an attorney there until I met Hub.

Q: In Monticello?

A: Yes.

G (George): Maxine missed some points talking about the State Department.

Q: Oh yes, what is that?

G: She worked on the Gripsholm Affair. That was the exchange of the American diplomats and the German and Japanese diplomats. The Gripsholm was a Swedish ship that brought the Americans back. Then there were two ships. I can't tell you the name of them that brought the Japanese and Germans back to Japan and Germany. And she has that book downstairs. It's called the name of the book is Gripsholm Affair.

Q: Is it Grips?

A: No, the name of the book is Exchange Ship.

Q: But is that how you spell it? Gripsholm. I've seen that.

G: What was I going to say about it now.....?

Q: She was working for the State Department?

G: But it has the signature in the book of everybody she worked with.

Q: Ah-hah.

G: Well, you know the diplomats.

A: The reason I have that is when I left the State Department, to go to Canada, they gave me a farewell party and that was the gift. This book. So all of the they were mostly foreign service officers and I was working in the special division. And they all went to the party and they signed this..... autographed this book. And the only name I ever ran into since was, I think it was Clattenburger, I've forgotten for sure. But his name was on Grace Kelly's wedding list. I saw his name. He went on. I guess he had gone back into foreign service but they had called them all home during the war.

Q: But they called them home when there was going to be war. They exchanged their personnel?

A: They brought them mostly back to the State Department to sit it out you know until they could

Q: So George asked you about uranium? I mean, were you involved in the Manhattan Project?

A: No. It's a weird kind of story.

G: It's a funny story.

Q: A funny story? I like funny stories.

A: I came home on vacation one time and my uncle, Fendol Sitton, owned the Radium 7. Until Charlie Steen's, it was the biggest uranium producer in the United States, and he owned that. So he took me down there one day and took me on a tour of the mine. And when after the tour he gave me a chunk of uranium -- oh maybe -- a four inch chunk of just pure yellow high-grade and told me he didn't know exactly what they were doing with that -- but the government was doing something with it up in Hanford. He said, "I think they are using it in jet planes."

Q: In jet planes?

A: Well, he had no idea how close to the story he had come. He didn't know about the atom bomb, of course. So, I started working for the Corps of Engineers and we typed a lot of letters to Hanford. And we would have somebody stand behind us. They would take the original and the carbon and burn the carbon. It was that secret you know. And, finally, one day I said this is the silliest thing there ever was...

Q: Why did you make the carbon if you were going to burn it?

A: Well, somebody could have copied it, you know, and so

Q: I know. But why did you have a carbon

A: Well, they had an original and a carbon copy they took with them. But it was the

carbon paper they burned.

Q: Oh. I see. The paper . . . the carbon was burned.

A: Yes. The actual carbon .

Q: Ahhh.

A: Anyway, I said this was really silly. I know what's up there. And I told them what my uncle had told me. And they said, "You know, I think the Chief might be interested in that" so they marched me into the Chief's office and I tell him my little story and he says, "You know what? Why don't you just bring that little piece of uranium down here tomorrow and show it to us." I said, "Fine," you know.

Q: So you had it with you in Washington?

A: No. I had it in San Francisco. So the next day I stuck it in my pocket. I started to work. I was in Public Relations ...

Q: Oh, that was with the Corps of Engineers?

A: Every morning I would stop and pick up the morning paper on the way to work. And the headline was about the atom bomb exploding in Hiroshima. Well, I just went weak-kneed. I might have gone to Leavenworth, you know.

Q: What was the name of your uncle's mine?

A: The Radium 7.

Q: The Radium 7. Where was this?

G: Right on top of

A: Between Dove Creek and Slick Rock.

Q: Oh yeah.

A: No, it was between Dove Creek and Slickrock.

Q: Oh. Sort of like the _____ mine

A: Yeah. Down that way. I don't know if I could even go there now. I suppose I could find it.

G: Well, go on with this little piece of rock...

Q: So what happened?

A: Well, that was the end of the story anyway. At last, I got there. Everybody was just interested in this uranium, you know, and they wanted to know how it worked and I said, "Well, I think you drop it in a glass of water....." and I just lost my audience. Everybody had read the story and they just disappeared.

G: I thought that would be funny.

Q: Yeah. I think that's great.

A: Anyway, I had no idea I was that close to a national secret. Neither did my uncle, you know. But he sold a lot of ore and he knew that they were skimming off the uranium and that it was going to Hanford and so he just put two and two together.

Q: That's when they were reworking the vanadium piles?

A: Yeah. Right.

Q: Oh my. Well, that is exciting.

G: Then the market turned around again.

Q: What's happening?

G: It was all red and now it is green again.

A: Anyway, that was

Q: So you got married because of meeting in the Hole 'n the Rock . Then did you move to Moab?

A: No. My husband was the resident engineer on the new Green River Bridge. I guess you heard about the old bridge collapsing when a truck hit it.

Q: Oh no. But we have a picture of the construction of the new Green River Bridge.

A: That was back in 1945, I guess. Right after the war.

Q: A truck hit the bridge and...

A: Half of it went down into the river and so it went on. It went on for about two weeks and they couldn't get that bridge repaired. There were hundreds of cars marooned in Green River and no way to get to Salt Lake except to go up through Wyoming.

Q: Oh, sure.

A: And go across, you know. And so they sent my husband. He just got in the Department, in the State Road Department...

Q: So he was an engineer?

A: Uh huh. And they sent him down there and, of course, he fixed a lot of Bailey Bridges, and things, during the war but he ran into this group of steel workers from Chicago. And there were about 40 of them and they were marooned in Green River waiting for the bridge to open, and he hired them. And put them to work and they had that bridge repaired in a matter of days, you know.

Q: Oh great. Did you say, backing up, did you say a truck.... was it too heavy?

A: It snagged it. It just fell in the river and took the bridge with it as I recall. So they had to resurrect that bridge and put it back together, you know.

Q: Lucky your husband had the training of building bridges and so forth and that the steel workers happened to be there.

A: Yes. It all just worked out. Half of the things that happen are luck, aren't they?

Q: Well. It's impressive when they get the job done in such a quick time instead of having a feasibility report and this that and the other thing.

A: Anyway, after that when they started to build the new bridge they gave the Resident Engineer job to Hub. So we moved there when we got married and lived there for a couple of years.

Q: And then?

A: Then we had Janie. Hub decided to quit the State and go into private business and the first private business he worked as a mining engineer for my Uncle in Radium 7 and we moved back to Dove Creek.

Q: Back to Dove Creek?

A: Right. We lived there a couple of years and then we moved back to Moab and Hub got the job of Resident Engineer on the Moab Bridge.

Q: Oh, so he was in on building the Moab bridge?

A: He actually built, or was engineer on three major bridges at that time. The Green River, the Mexican Hat and Moab.

Q: Mexican Hat? Oh. So you have been in Moab ever since?

A: Yeah. We made our home and...

Q: You had the one daughter?

A: Yes, just the one daughter.

Q: And then you went to work for the Monument Service?

A: No, I worked for the Times Independent for six years.

Q: Oh, you did?

A: As a reporter.

Q: So was Sam Taylor there or Bish?

A: Yes. I worked for him. Bish, too.

Q: So Sam Taylor was there?

A: Uh huh.

Q: Well, when was Juanita Spencer there? It seems she was there for a brief time while Sam was gone or something.

A: He was in the Legislature. And it was her husband who worked, he edited the paper. He was temporary editor when Sam was in the Legislature.

Q: Oh, so it was Beverly Spencer.

A: Yeah. But I didn't work under him. I worked under Sam.

G: What about Bish?

A: Bish was there. At that time he had a stroke and he wasn't active but he was always there. He was a really great person.

Q: He showed up for work every day?

A: He did the old-time news. They let him. ... that was his job, you know. He liked to do that.

Q: So you were a reporter for them. Then did you go to work for the Park Service?

A: Then I heard about there was an opening in the Park Service and I transferred. Mostly for money, you know. I loved working for the paper but it didn't pay very well and I had some government service to my credit anyway so I just transferred into...

Q: The Park Service, being government, you had so many years for...

A: So I just picked up where I left. So I stayed until I got my 20 years.

Q: Thinking of recently, you and Terby wrote a book but before that you wrote the book about Charlie Steen. You are always writing something.

A: Yeah. I wrote that. Well, the first one I wrote was a little book on Wolfe cabin, you know. And that one belongs to the Park because I wrote it on Park time.

Q: So they are getting the proceeds from it?

A: Yeah. I don't own any of that. And then I wrote the Charlie Steen story.

Q: Well, you seem to be a friend of the Steen family.

A: Oh yeah. We were friends all of the time they lived here. M.L.'s sister, Tera, was a special friend. And she introduced us to Charlie and M.L.. Charlie happens to have the same birthday as I do. He is the same age and we have the same birthday. So we got acquainted because of a birthday party one year. And we just always knew them.

Q: So, what was he like?

A: Charlie? Oh, he was an amiable person. Always busy. The first time we met him it was at a..... we used to have these parties in Moab during the boom years. House parties were the thing. That was the way you entertained yourself, you know. And so a friend of our had this house party and it always consisted of some drinks and some hors d'oeuvres and a game. We played charades. So that night, this friend invited Charlie and ML, she had known them in Texas. And we met them and it was a Halloween Party. They came in costume. They came all dressed up in Mexican costumes and Tera (that was her sister) and her husband. That was M.L.'s sister. And Charlie was at first busy, he got a phone and he would go sit in a corner and he would talk to New York or he would talk to London, or somewhere and finally he came in and got involved in the charades game and at 2:00 in the morning he was figuring out new ways to play charades.

Q: Well, I think of a house party for staying all night? Did you stay all night?

A: No. No. It was just at somebody's house. You would go and have a good evening instead of going to a club or something. You'd go to houses.

Q: Well, now was that at the same time you were working for the Park?

A: No, at that time. I wasn't working at all. At that time, I hadn't even gone to work at the *Times* yet. I didn't go to work for a while. I think Janie was in the seventh grade before I went back to work.

Q: So then

A: I'm getting old you know. I don't know. I mix up the dates. They all blend together..

Q: So then what about Wilson. Bates Wilson. Did you work under him?

A: Yes. He's the one that really hired me when I first went into the Park Service.

Q: So what was he like?

A: Well, we had known him for a long time...

Q: No, as a friend.

A: We moved to Monticello. At one time Moab, after.... what happened.....maybe the uranium. Maybe when the price of uranium went down and the uranium business went to

pot and there wasn't enough business here to live on, so we moved to Monticello and Hub was a Road Engineer up there. And, of course, we had known Bates here anyway and one night when we were up there he came to our house after, he had a meeting there, he was trying to get Canyonlands people interested in establishing a National Park.

Q: Well, I guess he practically was the father of Canyonlands or as far as the Park.

A: But it was still just in the talking stage at that time. And he brought his group he came with and they came down to our house in Monticello. And then when we came back to Moab, I worked for the Times for six years and then I went to work.. Bates hired me to work for the Park.

G: I'd like to stick my nose in.

Q: What's that?

G: I'd like to stick my nose in here. You mentioned Bates Wilson.

Q: I never met him

G: Well, today his daughter comes up here every time the class gets together. Janie's class has got about 11 girls that come here.

Q: Oh yeah?

G: Charlie Steen's two sons, burning up telephone. Just now the mother of Bates Wilson's daughter and two of Charlie Steen's boys, you know

A: Well, not really.

Q: Robin Wilson, the mother of the daughter?

A: No. Bates had two daughters before

Q: Oh, I didn't know the other daughter. I've just ... cause the one is sort of young.... oh, she was just the daughter of Robin

A: The little girl, you know.

Q: Oh.

A: And, in fact, that's where I wrote the little Cabin story. I wrote the story and gave it to Bates' wife Robin to read to her children, Ann and (?).

Q: Oh, I see. And so that is the Ann Wilson that's, I guess Bates' second marriage.

A: That's Annie. Right and the other two girls -- one of them was Janie's age.

Q: So did you say you wrote the Wolf Ranch story to read to the Wilson kids.

A: Yeah. Just wrote it out on a paper. I thought it would be a cute story. They used to come over and Annie would sit on my lap and play with the typewriter when I was working at the Park, you know. And so I wrote this little story for Robin to read to them.

Q: On a piece of paper it sounds like Lincoln's Gettysburg Address.

A: It was just a little story.

Q: Well, you have known people throughout the ages, so to speak, in Moab. What do you think of Moab now?

A: Well, people just gripe about Moab getting too big and too busy. And, I think when we first moved back here Charlie had just discovered Mi Vida and it was just getting going. There was just one motel in town. Well, actually, there one and a half. There was kind of a little motel but Charlie bought that and turned it into office space. And there was another motel down close to the old hospital that had a few rooms for people to stay if they were going to the hospital. And so, they built the Desert Inn. It's now the Ramada but it was the Desert Inn. A man by the name of Sears built it. And we had an interpreter working for the park -- a great interpreter -- and he came in to me one day and he said, they have to do something in this town. They are going to ruin it. He said, they have to get some restrictions. Something like Carmel does. And get them to build frontier type buildings and , I said, look, we have waited all our lives for a big motel. We are not about to tell them how to build it. All we wanted was a motel. So, I kind of changed my mind a little bit, you know.

Q: I have never been to Carmel but they must have strict covenants...

A: They do. You know, little signs and a neat little town. Nothing like

G: And they have a lot of money

Q: Right. I suppose they don't have too many trailer places either.

G: No, I don't think there would be.

A: Heavens, it's not a motel strip like Main Street has become here. But, I still don't think the town is ruined. It's the people that come in have contributed and they are nice people and we have a lot of nice areas. It's going to take a long time for Moab to become a pretty town because you go through a nice residential area then you go through some trash before you come to the next one. And it's going to take years before that finally fills in. But that's all towns that grow up in a hurry grow that way.

Q: Well, I think so. And, I guess, trailers are inexpensive rent, I mean, cheap rent.

A: Well, at the time of the boom

Q: The old ones that is

A: The boom years here they were the fun years. They lasted about 12 years and just all of a sudden the town just mushroomed, you know, just tripled in size in a year. And almost every newcomer lived in a trailer. There weren't any houses for rent, you know. In fact, we rented , there is a little house close to Milt's Drive In. It was actually one and a half bedroom house and the other half wasn't finished and we got a chance to rent that and we took it. We thought we had the world by the tail. And they sold it to Doctor _____(?) and I had to go to Arizona one summer, we didn't have a place to live. The town was just full. So almost all of the newcomers lived in trailers.

Q: But it was exciting?

A: Oh yeah. And they were just spread all over town. Everybody had a trailer in their back yard and there were no restrictions. It took them years to clean it up after they built the Holiday Haven and they had a place to put trailers and they began to put restrictions on

Q: Holiday Haven turned into The Grand Oasis, is that right?

A: Yes. That was Holiday Haven.

G: Now, Main Street turned and actually came by the school here.

Q: Yeah. I gathered. By Milt's.

G: Up Millcreek

A: The town ended right

G: Not Millcreek...uh.... San Juan Drive. Is that right Maxine? There's San Juan Road and San Juan Drive?

Q: I think San Juan Drive is where Bert's is.

A: I don't know where it is.

Q: Off Spanish Trail Road where Bert's wrecking place is. I think that is San Juan Drive.

G: Well, no. You come around and cross the bridge by the bowling alley or the saddle shop and Millcreek goes this way and the other one goes on out

Q: That's Murphy Lane. Because that's the way I come to town. Because the Saddle Shop, it says saddle trees and I thought it was going to be a nursery somehow. Yes, that's by Shirley Lance's

G: But that's Mill Creek Road. And the road keeps going way out to cemetery and Spanish Valley, the nursery -- that's San Juan Drive, I think.

Q: Well, by the nursery and the cemetery is Spanish Trail Road. I mean Spanish Valley Drive. And then Spanish Trail Road shoots off to what's now 191.

G: Well, you have to turn to go to...

Q: That's where I think San Juan is, by Bert's . You know Bert's junk yard?

G: Yeah.

Q: I think that's San Juan.

A: Well, it doesn't really matter.

G: But that was the main road at one time.

A: Well, town actually ended at the creek.

Q: Yes. I guess Bill Meador talks about living where the Taco Bell was. Which now is going to be Western Rivers. But that's where some kind of a creek was there. I mean, no bridge or something.

A: No, there wasn't a bridge.

G: It was irrigation dip -- gate left open when the Mormon's got chased out in '98, 1898 or 1899. Wait a minute. When the Indians chased the Mormons out of here....

Q: Well, I think that was 1854

A: Way back

G: This gate had been left open. That was strictly erosion that went through.

Q: Oh, is that what made it?

G: It went thru what used to be a dime store, I don't know what it is now.

Q: That's what some people call the arroya.

A: Right.

Q: I think Rusty and I went to take a picture -- I mean to see where the picture was and now there is sort of an orthodontist or some kind of a dentist in a little green house that's the site of where it used to come.

A: It goes right past where Dave May lives down near the nursery. Anyway, during the

boom years, everybody was in a happy fun mood. There was we would go to two or three parties a week, you know. Go to somebody's house, usually somebody would have dinner and a party and then the Arches -- Ruth and Stan Peck built a town and country club behind the Arches Cafe. And that was the place to go.

Q: The Arches Cafe?

A: It's on Center Street. It is called the Arches now...

Q: Oh, the Center Street Cafe?

A: Oh yes. The Town and Country was behind it. So that would be a place to go.

Q: So those were the good times. What about the bad times? How was it then?

A: Well, the bad times came after the boom subsided and it all happened at once. They closed the mill and Ken McDougald went out of the oil business, you know, and he was killed.

Q: In his airplane.

A: And everything just came to a halt here and they had some really bad times. Right now when they start, everybody says, "Let's bring WalMart in." They will start boarding up windows on Main Street and that's what happened when the uranium business died and the oil business died. Every other small business along Main Street was boarded up.

Q: Well, they board it up in the winter time a lot now.

A: Well, those are temporary closings. But there just weren't businesses in there. Everybody, a lot of people had to leave. There just wasn't employment. That was the bad time in Moab.

G: Well, when the uranium bust closed the mill because they could buy Australian or Brazilian uranium cheaper. But when the mill closed, it took Plateau Supply, it took so many big businesses --

Q: That's what we need now is big tax bases.

G: Employees were paid a lot of money. Oh, there was just this side of Plateau Supply that's now some woman who has run the river

Q: You mean Sherry Griffith?

G: Yeah. That was Plateau Supply. And then just this side of that today there is UM Trucking

Q: Oh yes.

G: But that was a different trucking company then and, boy, those trucks would come in pulling a trailer behind another trailer and unloading it and it was mining and oil supplies, you know. It was big items that cost money, you know.

Q: So what brought you to town? When did you come to town? To Moab?

G: Well, I came three different times. Third time I never went back. But I came, see at

Green River, they launched the Athena missile into White Sands.

Q: Yes. The missile is still there in the Park.

G: And, I worked for Sperry Gyroscope, Division of Sperry Rand, in Great Neck, Long Island. And I brought a telemetry package out here. We were in competition with Lockheed and General Electric and Caymen Nuclear (?).

Q: Were you an Engineer? I mean, you are an Engineer.

G: Yeah.. And Sperry won the contract and some of those telemetry packages are not even in our particular solar system here anymore. They have gone.... left the solar system and then those were built for NASA, for the Apollo Program. And, they used them on all-- once the government had them in everything and then, ballistic Division Systems of the Air Force liked them so good observing them that they started to buy them for Minuteman. But we fired them from up here into White Sands.

Q: So, when did you connect with Maxine?

G: Oh, '78.

A: '78 or '79. Somewhere in there. George started helping me garden. I had this place and I didn't know what to do with it. Hub had passed away in '75 and I was still working for the Park. And, I was just over my head in yard work and this is a big place.

Q: Was it here?

A: Um hum.

Q: It's so attractive.

A: And so George started coming up and helping me in the yard and we just...

Q: And he just happened to see this attractive widow and decided he liked yard work?

G: I was doing everything. I was making trips by myself out to where you are not supposed to go by yourself and staying a week -- 7 days --

Q: You mean just on your own.? Just camping out?

G: On my own. And then I worked for Bill Hance for a while.

Q: Bill Hance made my driveway.

A: Did he?

Q: Uh-huh.

G: Well, this would be the oil industry. I was repairing a going oil well. Keeping it working. And, I guess Bill's health insurance got so high that he let me go because of my age. It was so high that it was cutting in on his bottom line, you know.

A: I need to say something about when we met. George used to stop in the Park and, if he came across a new petroglyph or something, he would come in the park and report it so I had met him there. And one day he brought me a bunch of little plants and my

mother was here. And she was a wonderful gardener. So she was visiting and I brought these little plants home. My mother planted them. She made them grow. We still have one of them out there -- one of them did grow.

Q: What kind of plants are they?

A: A cliff rose.

Q: Oh yes.

A: So George came up to see how the plants were going and he decided I needed a little help. I needed a lot of help. So he started planning my yard. That's how we met.

Q: I have some native cliff rose at my place. They have been there before I was there.

G: Oh, aren't they very pretty?

A: This one was about two inches high when he brought it. And, so we planted it and sure enough it is still out there.

G: Well, over at my house, you know the town is getting infested with deer at night.

Q: Oh yes, I guess so. Down in the valley.

G: In my yard.

Q: In your yard? Where is your yard?

G: Second North and Second East. And they are pruning my arborvitae.

Q: The deer are doing the pruning?

G: The deer are doing the pruning of the arborvitae.

Q: You sort of have arborvitae ... yeah.

A: They need pruning too.

G: You had a deer run by here didn't you?

A: Yeah. I looked out one day and thought that is the biggest dog I ever saw running down the street. And it was a deer. I couldn't believe it.

G: But at night the old Star gas station and the Advertiser, that vacant lot in between, that's where they come up -- I guess the deer go down there to drink and then go up to rest and I called the police. I was going home. And, gosh there was a big herd of them in there. I called the police and I said, "I just went by so-and-so and the place is loaded with deer." She said, "It's getting that way. They are coming into town from every direction. You know, these animals on these bicycles are forcing them."

Q: Oh, I thought maybe it was the food and the water than was bringing them down..

G: No. I think that the bicyclers...

A: No, I think there weren't enough acorns this last year. That's what they eat.

Q: Oh, those are the bears that like the acorns.

A: Oh, was it the bears?

Q: Well, I don't know. Do deer like acorns?

G: We are starting to get skunks , raccoons

Q: Oh yes.

A: Anyway, I didn't get to finish my uranium story.

Q: Oh yes.

A: I wanted to tell you about the -- you know where the Elks Lodge is now --

Q: Yes.

A: Well, when they built that they called it the Uranium Club. And it was a night club and no matter where you went in Moab, you ended up at the Uranium Club. It was really romping. It was more fun. They would have a band up there and it was a great place. Meet all of your friends. Everybody had been somewhere else.

Q: So you would just go there every Friday night or whatever?

A: No, everytime there was a party before you went home, you went to the Uranium Club to see who else was there.

Q: Oh, just an afterwork?

A: Just a place to go, you know. Popular. It and the Town and Country were the only two night clubs here then. That's where you would end up. It finally went belly-up and the Elks bought it. And turned it into the Elks Lodge.

Q: So, what do you do now mostly to keep you busy? I guess you write these family stories.

A: I garden a lot.

Q: You garden a lot?

A: I have about 70 and 80 roses here and I still do my own yard work. I always do my own pruning so far.

Q: So you and Terby wrote this book about the Staircase?

A: I knew this. It was a file and when I was at the Park, Joe Carrithers (?) sent it out to me. He said, "I know if I send this to you, it won't end up in the waste basket and this is good history." So I stored it away and finally brought it out

(End of tape –side one)

A: Anyway, when President Clinton established the Park, I remembered this file and so I went out to the Park and, sure enough, the file was there. It went clear back to 1934.

Q: Did you know Gregory Crampton?

A: Yes, I have met him.

Q: So you knew him?

A: And this was before him. The file was way back before him. I had made a copy of it and I didn't know...I knew it was worth a book. So I went out to talk to Fran and Terby Barnes and Fran thought it was interesting and Terby and I just ended up doing it together. We got one glowing report from the Deseret News – had a book review- and we got a glowing report on it. The Utah Press, I think it was, or the Historical Society maybe, said it was a boring book and it just depends on...

Q: What your interest is.

A It's really a lot of it. We just copied verbatim out of that file because there were original letters in there and things you couldn't improve on if you tried to rewrite the whole thing and so a lot of it is just... but at that time they were going to build the Dewey Dam up here, did you know?

Q: Yes, did you see our exhibit in the Museum about the proposed dams?

A: No, I didn't. I missed that.

Q: Yes. It wasn't just about that. It was about the River, in general, but I got the copy from John Keyes of the Bureau of Reclamation of the ones they were planning.

A: They were going to have a whole series of dams starting in Parker, Arizona. It was really an ambitious program.

Q: We have a picture of the ladder that is still there, you know, at mile 29.

A: Do you know what that was put there for?

Q: Yes, it was the dam geologist checking up.

A: Oh, is that right? I didn't know that. I knew the ladder was there. I wish I had been on the ball and seen that. Somehow I missed it.

Q: Well it's still there. It was last week.

A: Oh, I'll be in tomorrow. But when we moved here in the 40s, they were still talking about everybody was enthused about the Dewey Dam. We thought it would be a great place to go picnic and boat and would be wonderful fun, you know?

Q: I think where they first proposed the Dewey Dam is where the ladders are and then they decided to move it downstream a bit more to the Sorrel River Ranch, I think.

A: But, finally, they built at Page and that put an end to the other dams.

Q: Well, the big dam. But I also think part of it at that time was that Ken's Lake came about because of some of their planning there. So we have Ken's Lake as far as a dam.

A: Well, Ken's Lake goes clear back to...what was his name?

G: He was the guy that designed...

A: Horace Sheeley? Actually drew the blueprint for the old Dewey Bridge.

Q: Oh?

A: And you have a copy of it. It's in pencil. And he was the engineer that started the tunnel for Ken's Lake.

Q: Oh, that little tunnel...

A: And he ran out of money and into black damp and had to quit but he was years ahead of his time. So what they did was just go out and finish this tunnel. So it actually didn't have anything to do with the dams on the Colorado.

Q: Well, I think they must have resurrected it because it was part of the Pack Creek Dam business.

A: Possibly. Anyway, I remember the story about Horace Sheeley and he was an engineer that was just way ahead of his time.

G: That was Mill Creek Dam, not Pack Creek.

Q: No, Pack Creek out by the Pack Creek Ranch.

G: Oh, oh, we're talking about two different dams.

Q: Right. But they did have a Mill Creek Dam proposal, too.

G: Yeah, and they found out that the water would have gone underneath the bridge.

Q: Depends on how

A: Well, that's how we happened to write the book because this file was just too interesting to....

Q: Well, it's good to see files used, information used.

A: And one of the men that was involved in it was a landscape architect. What was his name now? I'm getting to where I can't pull a name out of a hat. No, he designed Central Park in New York.

Q: Oh, I know that name.

A: And an original letter from him was in this file and it was just too interesting not to use so that's why we wrote it.

G: Where is that file now?

A: Oh, the original is in the Museum at the Park. I just had a copy of it. The original will always be there.

Q: So, what is your latest project?

A: Well, I wrote this family history, mostly because of my good friend, Dave May. We would sit here and he would help me finalize the Steen book so we could get it done for the Discovery Days and we re-wrote and re-published it. And we would be sitting here and all of a sudden I would think of something that happened in Dove Creek and he kept saying, "Write your Dove Creek story." And every time we would get together, Dave would say, "Do the Dove Creek story." And the other day I decided I would do the Dove Creek story. So I started writing and I went down and I got my files and I had quite forgotten about it but I sat across the table from my Dad and my uncle and they told me about the trucking days through this country.. So I wrote it up and took it to my Dad and he corrected it and changed some names and corrected it in pencil. I put it in the file and it has been there for twenty years. I forgot about it. So it's part of this story.

Q: Well, you are good at resurrecting information from files.

G: Well, she has bourbon in ditch water. This is non-fiction.

A: It is fiction.

G: It is fiction and it's all ready to get ready to get somebody to publish it.

Q: You mean you have a novel ready to go?

G: Yeah, hoping the movie people pick it up and make a movie out of it.

Q: Is that the name of it? Bourbon and Ditch Water?

A: Yeah.

Q: I know my father used to have that.

A: You know, Moab got its water right out of the irrigation ditches so that term just carried on through. Anyway, that was the name of my book and I can't afford to have it published. It costs too much now.

Q: Well, that sounds interesting. Well, I know that Dove Creek is the pinto bean capital of the world. Was it also pretty much of a mining town at that time?

A: Well, the mining really came later.

Q: Oh really?

A: Yeah, it came....

Q: Beans were there all the time?

A: Nope, nope, nope. No. Beans were later.

Q: Beans were after uranium?

A: I think when you read this....

G: No, beans were after trying to grow wheat or vegetables or stuff like that and people just moved on.

Q: Oh, I see. But they found that beans...

G: Somebody discovered..... Maxine's got the name. It's written somewhere.

A: It's in that story.

Q: Good.

G: They found that the beans just grew up there like weeds.

Q: Well, great. Who was...?

G: That's when it became the pinto bean capital.

Q: Capital of the world...

A: Dad told me that Jim Posey planted the first crop of beans, of pinto beans.

Q: What was his name? Was he like Posey, the Indian?

A: No, he wasn't Indian. Well, anyway, it's in that story I gave him. He said it took him three years to sell his first crop. And what really gave Dove Creek the reputation for pinto beans was World War II, of course. Because they would send them to the fighting men overseas.

Q: They ate a lot of beans, huh?

A: It was easy to transport them and...

Q: Then they cooked them over there?

A: Yeah. But the story...it's all in there. I didn't...

Q: Now, did you say that these are copies that we can have? Both this one and...

A: This is the story of the trucking experiences and it tells about Dad had a Diamond T truck that went into the Colorado River. A man ran it off into the Colorado River and the story is in there.

Q: This is about yourself growing up?

A: Growing up on the homestead. I just brought these to show you. That's where I had worked in Canada.

Q: I have driven the Alcan Highway a couple of times.

A: Have you?

Q: Well, before it was paved. They were working on it. Gravel was getting thrown up and everybody had "bug eyes" – little plastic things to put on your headlights. Either that or some people had screens.

A: To keep the rocks from breaking...?

Q: Yes, breaking their headlights.

A: Well, actually I was only out when I was at Norman Wells. I got snow-bound there. I couldn't get home for a week. I lived in the hospital. It was the only place to stay. A truck driver took me out to the highway. I told him I had been working on the highway project, you know, in an office for ten years and I guessed I would never see the highway now. He said, "I'll take you." So he put me in his truck and we drove about ten miles on the Alaska Highway. That's the only time I was ever on it.

Q: Well, you've been around a lot. Do you still travel?

A: No, I haven't been anywhere for years. I don't get very far anymore. Got too old before I had time to travel.

Q: Sounds like you did it at the right time. You traveled first.

A: Oh, that was during the war and there weren't any boys here, so just as well be out gallivanting around, you know?

Q: Well, George, I think we have some more tape. What do we say for you? Did you grow up in New York?

A: No. Virginia.

(end of interview)

