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Asst. Editor: Mel Bashore

Address: Riverton Historical Society
Riverton Art Museum at the Crane House
1640 West 13200 South
Riverton, UT 84065
Phone 253-3020

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"I Drove a School Bus": Rulon Dansie

[Note: This is an edited transcript of a Riverton Historical Society program held on the evening of 3 December 1986 at the Riverton City Hall. Participants included Rulon Dansie, Elvoy Dansie, Joe Butterfield, Elias Butterfield, Ken Silcox, and Willard Bills. Over the course of the next few months, selections from this program will be printed.]

I drove in the 1920s. I'm gonna' let a secret out. The first two times I ever went with my wife was in the Jordan bus. They had to go to Bingham to get the students for field day. The first time I ever took her for a ride was in the bus. The first

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time was when we took the kids back up to Bingham. The next time, we was down to Saratoga. So she rode in the bus with us. There was Horace Ashby and Lucile Jensen and my wife and I. After we delivered all the kids, we went to Draper to the show. We took 'em home in the bus and Ashby brought me and he took the bus home. So we used the bus for transportation. I was so darned bashful, I couldn't hardly speak to a girl anyway.

I'm going to tell you another little thing about when I was scared. It's a wonder we didn't have an accident. In them days, we had no cement on the roads. We were going west of the State Road to South Jordan and there was three of the girls that was in the bus got foolin' around. I'll be darned if they didn't step on the gas. I told 'em, "Hell, I got to slow down. See that car a comin'?" I had to slow and put the clutch on and we finally got around the car and that engine was goin' full blast. They didn't realize the danger. I was so glad when they got men to drive because we were just kids. The kids kind of took advantage of us. But I'm glad I drove because I learned how to handle a bus. Giles was our teacher in charge of the bus drivers. He told me never to go up a hill in high gear. He says, "You put it in second gear and then you'll be alright. Never go down in high gear on them steep hills." He said, "Use your gears especially when you're hauling kiddoes and don't trust your brakes."

I almost drove a bus after we were married, but Eldred Hamilton got the bus route because the bus that Hagen wanted me to take over was too near wore out. Eldred got a more later bus. It was in better shape. When they stopped letting the kids drive the bus, it was a whole lot safer. We took a lot of chances. One day in the spring, a couple of the girls got up and set there on the headlights instead of getting on the bus. I refused to go. So I took 'em over and then they got after 'em and told 'em never to ride there again. They wouldn't listen to me. These kids wouldn't listen to us.

"I Drove a School Bus": Elvoy Dansie

We didn't call 'em buses in those days. We called 'em stages. Mahonri Jensen got sick along in January and they called up and wanted to know if I'd come up and drive the bus over to Jordan. They asked Cary Weenig to drive it, but

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he'd gone to Bingham with the Dave Bills meat truck. So that left the bus sitting over in the shed at the school house. Pearl called me and I went up. We used to have to get the water out of the boiler room from Edgar Aylette. We'd take it over and put it into the old bus. It had an Armstrong starter on it. We wound it up and got it going and drove it to Jordan. We'd park it in the garages over there in the day time and then at night we'd bring it home. We'd have to drain the water out in the winter time. That was an old Republic bus. It had about four or five windows on the side and the seats were on the sides on both sides. There was a door on the side for the driver to get in and out so you didn't have to get in it and walk clear through.

I'll never forget one morning, I was driving over to Jordan. Down about where Ike Freeman's home [12400 S. 1300 W.] was, they'd just put a new coat of oil on it and it was icy from the cold. If you'd go over to one side just a little bit, you'd start pulling so you'd have to slow back and pull over in the middle of the road and try to keep the tires so that each one balanced on each side. By about South Jordan, it warmed up enough so that it was halfway decent. In about two or three weeks, Mahonri got better and he took over for awhile. He wasn't about to graduate so he asked Clarence Nelson, "If I come back next year, can I drive a bus so that I can graduate?" Clarence says, "Oh, yes. We'll get you a stage." So then he quit and helped his dad on the farm and I finished driving that year.

The next year, I got what we called number 23. It was a new bus — a new body and the whole outfit. The bus was made over to Jordan. My route was from home. They asked me to come up to the school house and pick every body up on Redwood Road. There was nobody from the school house to the corner of the road so they discontinued that and I went from my home down to 90th South and across over to Jordan High School. I'd let that group out and then I'd go back to what we called 7800 or Social Hall Avenue, just under the underpass there in Midvale. I picked up the grade school kids and the junior high kids up to 7th East. I went over to the old Union school house to let the grade school kids out. I picked up some more junior high kids and come down Union Avenue. I picked up two girls at State Street on Union Avenue — a Carlson girl and a Glover girl. Then I'd go down to the Midvale junior high school. It was the east building — just east of the elementary

school. The junior high kids would get out of the bus and another load of high school kids would get in the bus and I'd go back to Jordan. I had to keep track of the number that I hauled from each load. They had a chart for you to put down how many was there so they'd get an idea of how many we hauled. That was the longest route of any of them.

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The group of us drivers got together and formed a club. We had two or three parties of our own during the winter. Along in April, we furnished a dance for the entire student body. We drove the buses and took them there. That particular night, we had a light snow storm. I had an electric windshield wiper. The old number 13 had an Armstrong wiper. We'd turn the electric wiper on and it would wipe the snow off so you could see. I had one flat tire all the time I drove the school bus. That happened because they had some Goodyear rubber tire chains. We let the air out of the tires and put these chains on and filled them back up. Somewhere along the line we had goofed on the valve. It never tightened down so the tire went down. So I had to change one flat tire in the entire year. Cecil Freeman drove number 9 that year and drove up along the Pole Line Road. That road was used by the wagons. A nail would drop out here and a nail would drop out there. Ceece was picking up a nail about every other day. He had more flat tires than any of the other drivers that drove that year.

The year that Rulon and Marvin drove, they parked the buses down in our old machine shed. The machine shed was built for the old threshing machine. It was not there any more so we had these two high Studebaker buses. We called them the cracker boxes. The year that I drove, they asked me if I had a place they could park it. I told them, "Yes. I had a place." That's one of the reasons that I got to drive.

Notice

On Saturday, 2 February, from 2 until 5 PM, Elvoy Dansie is going to be honored at a birthday open house at his ward meetinghouse (located behind and to the west of his home). All are invited.

"We Used to Have Fun": Phyllis Butterfield

[Note: Elvoy Dansie interviewed Phyllis Butterfield on 4 November 1986. This is an edited transcript.]

Phyllis: I went to school in the Commercial Building. They were building a new schoolhouse on Redwood Road. They never had any room for the "Beginners," they called it then, so we used to go to a school room in the Commercial Building.

Some of the boys didn't like to go to school, so they'd put leaves in the stove and make it smoke. So we didn't have to go to school too often.

Some of the boys didn't like to go to school, so they'd put leaves in the stove and make it smoke. So we didn't have to go to school too often. They were so crowded that they told me I wasn't old enough to go to school. I said, "I know I'm old enough, because my brother Morris is going to come to school next year." I said, "I know I'm six." When they sent me home, my Mother said, "Well, you can stay home." The next year, they had the building finished. Miss Bernhardt was the "Beginning" teacher. My second year in school, they tried to teach me how to draw. They had us draw a picture of a horse. I didn't know how to draw. I graduated from the 8th grade and went to Jordan High School for four years. We used to have fun. We used to have a children's dance.

The big event at Christmas was the Page-Hansen Christmas tree. Everybody got a little present. They had three big presents — first presents. Then everyone got a present. Our parents would have to shop and they got so many tickets on this Christmas tree. That was a big event. We always had a Christmas dance and they gave us a popcorn ball, oranges, or some treat. In those days, oranges were a real treat because they didn't have them like they do now. That dance was held in the Commercial Building. In the evening they had a dance for the grownups. Fred Webb had an orchestra. His daughter played the piano and his son-in-law played the banjo. I think they just had the three. Fred played the violin. Sometimes they'd have the Smuin Band from Lehi. On special occasions, they'd play for us. When the church had a little extra money, they gave us a little extra. I think Brother Webb didn't charge anything for that dance. In those days, people did a

lot of things and didn't have to be paid.

I just about drowned once. When we were kids, we went over to Brother Nielsen's to play. I have always been afraid of water. I looked down in that water ditch. I guess — in I went. Brother Nielsen

said, "Zelma, where's Phyllis?" She said, "She's down in the water." He went down and got me out of the ditch. I was headed right down for the canal and I guess that would have been the end of me.

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We played "Run, Sheep, Run" and "Kick the Can." That was a lot of fun. The neighborhood would gather. We always had a lot of friends come to our house. Mother said she knew where the kids were if they came to her house so they'd come there. We'd play games. In the winter, we'd play "Pit" and "Rook." We never did have playing cards. My Dad wouldn't allow those. So I didn't know anything about those kind of cards. We had a game that we made up that we used to call "Old Mother Hubbard." We had a lot of fun with that.

Elvoy: Do you remember who owned the Commercial Building when you went to school there?

Phyllis: I don't remember, but there was a store there called Frisbee and Shill. I think Uncle Dan [Densley] was there first. Then George Bills had a store there. There was also a bakery. I believe it was [run by a man by the name of] Weber. We used to get bread and cakes. Mother didn't like his cakes because he put almond flavor in it. She didn't like almond flavor. He was a good cook, but there wasn't enough people to support him. That bakery didn't last very long. The post office was there for awhile. Geneva Garside was the post mistress and we could get the mail on Sunday. After Sunday School, everybody made a beeline to get their mail on Sunday.

Elvoy: Do you remember when your dad [Zach Butterfield] built his new home over here?

Phyllis: Yes. We lived outside in two rooms in a tent. It was kind of a mess out there with cold weather coming on. It took forever to

build that house, it seems. Carl Madsen built the house. Heber Burgon was the contractor for the brick work. We used to bother them when they put the steps in. We'd like to see how far we could jump when the cement was new. We got the dickens for jumping on their new cement, but we thought it was fun to jump on. When they dug the cesspool, they found the skeleton of a big fish. It was so interesting that the fellow that dug it, took it. I guess that was proof that there used to be fish around in this country. We had a cesspool on one side of the house and one on the other side. The Riverton pipe line came into Riverton before the house was built. Reub Hamilton was the supervisor that took care of the water. He was the one that dug the tap for the outside. When they built the house, water was put in the house. It was piped into the house.

The power had not come to Riverton when they first built the house, but my Father had it all wired. I was down in the basement. I looked up and I said to Mother, "Oh something's happened down here." I called to her up the steps and said, "You better come down. There's a light in the ceiling." She said, "That's the power." They'd turned the power on. It kind of frightened

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me to look up and see a light in the ceiling. It hadn't been there before. That would be around 1912. It was before LaVell was born in 1913. My Dad had it all wired. They said, "What are you doing that for?" He said, "One of these days we're going to have power in Riverton." So it was all wired for the lights. When the power was turned on, the light came on. I was the first one to see the light. I was quite proud of that. I didn't know what it was.

[continued in next issue]

Around the Block with Meredith and Maurine Page

[Note: Mel Bashore interviewed Meredith and Maurine Page on 2 March 1985. This is an edited transcript of excerpts of that interview.]

Maurine: We had such good times dancing in the Commercial Building. The floor was just marvelous and when they tore that down, we didn't dance any more.

Meredith: It was sad. Each Friday we'd go up and have a dance in the Commercial Building. There was some of my friends, full of pep and ginger. We'd get out each Friday and have a dance and that was really enjoyable. We

I said to him, "What are we going to fight for?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "I don't either." So I let him up.

decided to have a little gang of boys my age and that made the other boys jealous of us. They was going to fight us and our bunch. There was ten or fifteen of us. So we went down there out in the middle of the street. There was one by the name of Sam Millard — a big, husky fellow. He was a little bigger and stronger than me, but I was always quite gifted in wrestling and boxing. This Millard and myself sized up to have a fight. He grabbed me and I grabbed him and I pinned him down. He couldn't move. I said to him, "What are we going to fight for?" He said, "I don't know." I said, "I don't either." So I let him up.

Maurine: One time some gypsies came down the road. They were traveling. They had a horse and a kind of a wagon — a covered wagon. They stopped at our place up on the farm. One of the gypsy ladies got out of the carriage and asked if they could get some hay. Father said yes. He didn't mind giving it to them. He got up there and threw down a lot of hay. When he got through, the gypsy woman said, "Yump down into my arms."



Ninth Grade, Riverton Junior High, 1945
Willa Conkle collection

Next Issue

"I Drove a Stage": Joe Butterfield

"We Used to Have Fun": Phyllis Butterfield (cont.)

**RIVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
CRANE HOUSE
1640 W. 13200 S.
RIVERTON, UT 84065**



ZACHARIAH BUTTERFIELD HOME, FOLLOWING 1959 FIRE