Riverton Yesterdays

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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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"I Was a Catcher":
Bob Silcox

[Note: This is an edited transcript of a lecture program sponsored by the Riverton Historical Society on 20 April 1989. Bob Silcox was the featured speaker. Comments and questions from some of those in attendance included Elias Butterfield, Karen and Mel Bashore, and Scott Crump.]

Bob: We played eighteen ball games a year — 9- to 12- year-old kids. I did that for sixteen years.

Scott: How did that work? Did the boys have to sign up?

Bob: They usually had tryouts in March. The coaches would watch these boys play or practice in the tryouts. Then they'd have a meeting of these coaches and the player agent. At that time the player agent was Max Parry. You bid so many points. You'd think this kid was pretty good and you'd bid 5,000 points. You'd get like 20,000 points each season and then you could carry over the points. If you only spent 5,000, the next year you'd have the 15,000 plus another 20,000 so you'd have 35,000 points. You could only have fifteen kids on a team. You could have five 9-year-olds, five 10-year-olds, and 11's and 12's. You could have a combination of two 12's and three 11's to make up your fifteen.

Karen: Would you try and choose the same kids the next year?

Bob: Once you got them — if you picked them up when they were 9-years-old — you had them till they were 12. From ages 12 to 14 was for the Babe Ruth League, but at that time Riverton didn't have a Babe Ruth League. American Legion started at 16-years-old. I did that for sixteen years. I coached Little League football for five years and Little League basketball for a couple of years. That was after the baseball. I spent a lot of my vacations in baseball parks. You really started practicing in April. The league games usually started about May 15th. You'd play Monday and Tuesday and Friday and Saturday. It was over the first part of July. From the middle of July until the first of August was the tournaments and the all-star game. It went until about

I spent a lot of my vacations in baseball parks.

the 5th of August.

Karen: Was it a big thing in town?

Bob: The parents who had kids on a team were pretty interested. As far as general town participation, if there wasn't a son or grandson playing, there wasn't that many people.

Mel: That's a little different from your baseball memories, isn't it, Elias? Didn't they shut the town businesses down every Thursday and go to the ball park?

Elias: Yes. That was back in the '20s though. Bob can remember when Thursday afternoon was a holiday in Riverton.

Bob: Yes.

Mel: Why did they do that?

Elias: So you could do something else other than run your store.

Bob: When I worked for Mortensen Appliance, he closed it right down on Thursday. Paul Mortensen closed it down all day Thursday year round. He had two or three guys working for him. If they wanted to go fishing, he'd take them fishing and take 'em hunting. Then we'd work Friday and Saturday and then have Sunday off and go back at it again Monday. Thursday we'd go fishing again.

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Elias: We closed at noon on Thursday. We did that during baseball times so that they could go to the baseball game.

Karen: Did you know why you were closing?

Elias: Well, so you didn't have to work, I guess.

[to be continued]

Ninety Years of Memories:
Wilford Myers

[Note: This is an excerpt of a transcript of an interview Mel and Karen Bashore conducted with Wilford Myers on 12 January 1985. His son, Merlin, a BYU professor of anthropology, was also present during the interview and some of his comments are included. It is edited for clarity and readability.]

Karen: Did people try and rustle the sheep?

Wilford: Oh, yeah. You always kept a gun in your camp. There was a lot of coyotes. Coyotes were pretty smart and clever. I've seen 'em start after a jack rabbit and they'd get that jack rabbit running in circles. And then they'd short cut it and finally they'd run the rabbit down and just grab it by his mouth. Had a good meal.

Karen: What was there to do when you were out there besides watching the sheep?

Wilford: There was a lot of them that read. Some would read the bible and different books. This fellow down there in South Jordan would read all the time. He could stand there for hours just reading. There's always a way to entertain yourself a little.

Karen: Was there an ice house here for people to get ice for their ice boxes?

Wilford: My folks had an ice shed. Every winter we'd put up ice. It would last for as long as we needed it. We hauled in sawdust from up in Coalville. We hauled several big loads of sawdust. We used the same thing that the other people used to preserve ice.

Karen: Did your mother do a lot of canning and preserving?

Wilford: My mother put up a thousand or two thousand quarts of fruit every year. We had a nice big orchard — and we bought some, too. Lots of people would come and say, "I haven't got any money, but I've got some fruit.

My mother put up a thousand or two thousand quarts of fruit every year.

We'll trade you some fruit for some butter." In those days they traded around quite a bit amongst themselves.

Karen: Did you say you were called on a mission when you were twenty? Who was the person that called you?

Wilford: It'd have to come from the First Presidency. The bishop would generally send in word — I think this boy's ready to go on a mission. It wasn't long until you'd get a call from the First Presidency of the Church. I went to the state of Michigan. I was gone for just over two years. I enjoyed it because I got out and mingled with the people.

Karen: Was it hard talking about religion with other people?

Wilford: It become easy. Sometimes you'd meet people that wouldn't listen to religion and couldn't talk. But I got along very nice. I made a lot of friends.

Karen: Did your parents support you on your mission or did you have your own money?

Wilford: My brother Lionell kept me. He was eleven years older than me. I think he was really the cause of me going on a mission. He'd been on a mission and he wanted me to go. He got word to the Church that he had a brother that should go on a mission. Michigan was quite alive with a lot of Reorganized people. They were our worst enemies. One time there was some people that was going to drive me out of a town. They brought out a few cow bells when we was holding our meeting. I can't remember the town. They did get pretty nasty sometimes. Generally I got along fine if I could start to talk to them people. Never had nobody hurt me. We used to hold street meetings. I think twice they come in there with their cow bells to break up our meetings.

I got along fine if I could start to talk to them people. Never had nobody hurt me.

[to be continued]

"I'm Just a Common Old Citizen": Zach Butterfield

[Note: This is a transcript of a recorded interview conducted with Zachariah Butterfield on 31 January 1958. He was 94 years old at the time and lived for another six years. Wallace E. Malmstrom and John A. Butterfield of the Temple Quarry Chapter, Sons of Utah Pioneers, recorded his reminiscences. The interviewers ask him to relate his missionary experiences.]

Now my last wife, when it comes the 2nd of this month, tomorrow — she died on the 2nd of this month, coming tomorrow twenty-one years ago. This girl of mine — Phyllis — has took charge of me, brethren, and cooked for me and washed my clothes and stayed with me all these many years. And she was a great girl when Mother was here. She never got married. She said nobody never come after her. And she said, "I never asked anybody." Now, I'm thankful for my life. I'm sorry for some things I've done. As I said, I was just a human being. I pray the Lord to be with me and to be with you brethren and be with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I bear it humbly in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

She never got married. She said nobody never come after her. And she said, "I never asked anybody."

I left here May the 20th 1893. There was twelve of us got on the train at that time. The first World's Fair that had ever held in America here was held in Chicago. There was twelve elders in this bunch. We was all going to the Southern States Mission. There was George Albert Smith. Golden Kimball had lost a child and he and his wife come to Salt Lake to bury the child and George Albert Smith was the secretary of the mission. He came down to Chicago and stayed there almost a week with us twelve men. Then he got us on the train and we went up with him to Chattanooga, Tennessee. And there we was separated. He said, "Elder Butterfield, how much money have you?" I'll never forget it. I said, "Forty-two dollars and a half." "Well," he said, "we're going to send you down to Kentucky." He said, "I'll keep the forty dollars and the two and a half will take you down to Madisonville, Kentucky." I said, "Well, what'll I do then?" He said, "Your companion will tell you what to do." That was George Albert Smith

[to be continued]

"I'm Going to Love This Town":
Betty Mitchell Hansen

[Note: These are edited excerpts from an interview Mel Bashore conducted with Betty Hansen on 15 May 2004.]

Mel: Who were your friends?

Betty: My close friends was Vi Morris and Ann Page and her sister Elizabeth, and then Truby and Doris Densley. They were cousins. They lived just a block away from us down on Redwood. We liked to sing. We had a trio and we sang at school functions. We sang at wedding anniversaries and in church functions. In those days, you could walk the street and hold your girl friends' hands and sing. We'd go to the cafe down here and have hamburgers and malts with our friends. We loved to go to the dances and we went without boys.

Mel: What cafe was it?

Betty: Gus and Adine MacFarland had a cafe. Before that there was one farther down called the Blue Cottage. I worked there for a little while. I tried to work through most of my school years.

Mel: I've never heard of the Blue Cottage. Where was it?

Betty: It didn't stay there very long. It was across from the old Riverton Motor in that Page building there. It was in that area. It was just a little, small ice cream and hamburger parlor. They didn't stay there very long. Who owned that? It may have even been Gus and Adine MacFarland and then they built a bigger one. It was tore down and they went over to the bigger one. Adine is still alive. She's a wonderful dear old lady. She's very alert. I think that their café was just called MacFarland's Café.

> The Blue Cottage . . . . was just a little, small ice cream and hamburger parlor.

Mel: Was the dome church standing at the time the Blue Cottage Cafe was there?

Betty: You know, the year we moved here, they were tearing it down. That was in 1939. We could not imagine why that beautiful edifice was being destroyed. We didn't know any of the history of it. You couldn't go in that building any more. It had been declared a danger. It wasn't heating properly. But that was sad for us. The Blue Cottage was built after that.

Mel: What was you job at the Blue Cottage?

Betty: Just doing things that the girls do — waiting on tables and making the ice creams and hamburgers. Waitress, I guess you'd call me. I did some cooking.

Mel: Whatever needed doing?

Betty: That was it.

Mel: Did they give tips when you were a waitress?

Betty: No. Nothing like that.

Mel: There was no tip-giving?

Betty: No. Twenty-five cents an hour was our wages at that time. I kept finding different little odd jobs in Riverton because of my mother's health. She had rheumatoid arthritis. She had a period of time that she was very ill. I always tried to work so I was close to home, too. I also worked at the old theater. Bert and Irma Bastian ran it. I worked at the candy counter and I worked as an usherette there. I went from there actually to work at the Salt Lake Tribune. Then my mother was so ill that I came back out. Mr. Stringham interviewed me and I went to the drug store. I was there from 1949, '50, '51, and '52. Four years I worked for Mr. and Mrs. Stringham.

At the old theater. . . . I worked at the candy counter and I worked as an usherette.

[to be continued]

Driving around Town with Elvoy Dansie

[Note: These are edited excerpts from an interview Scott Crump conducted with Elvoy Dansie on 25 January 1986.]

Scott: What was on the southwest corner of the intersection where the First Security Bank is [1700 W. 12600 S.]?

Elvoy: It was the first store in Riverton or so I have been told. It was the Bates' home when I first remember it. It was made out of adobe and wood. It was the first post office and store. They used to bring the mail from the D&RG railroad station in Sandy across the river over here. The Bates' home was a one-story building. It had kind of a front facing on it for a store-type building. One night Mrs. Crane called our home in the middle of the night. She wanted to know if I was home. I said, "Yes. Why?" She said that she needed to have some help. The water was getting into this old home. She said, "I've got to have some help." I said, "Well, isn't Bert home?" She said, "Yes, but he won't help me." She said that I was the only person in Riverton that she dared call at midnight for help. So we came over and I went up and shut off the water. I dropped a headgate so the water pulled away from it. We got the water receding so that she could go home and sleep. The Bates house was a combination house and store. They lived in it and they used this room for the store.

In those days they didn't have much that you could buy in a store. You only needed salt and sugar and flour. Most everyone had all the other stuff. Almost everyone would go to the mill with the grist. You'd take maybe eight or ten sacks of wheat and come home with flour, bran, shorts, and mush. Shorts was pig food. We'd bring this home and mix it up with the bran and feed the pigs.

In those days they didn't have much that you could buy in a store.

[to be continued]

RIVERTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Death Notices

Luana Elizabeth Neff Roach (80); wife of (1) Melvin J. Giles and (2) Tom Roach; daughter of William Austin and Inez Dansie Neff; 5 children

Marjorie G. Berrett (81); widow of Sterling Tee Berrett; daughter of Roy and Lorena Mae Glazier; 4 children