

# Riverton Yesterdays



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A Monthly Newsletter of Oldtime Stuff about Riverton, Utah

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## 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: Is there a canal above this "High Line" canal?

Elvoy: No. This is the highest canal in the area. Anything above here has to be watered by wells except in Herriman where a little creek comes out of Butterfield Canyon. This is the canal that irrigates the "flat." This is what we always called the "flat." It's flat country.

Scott: Has this road always been called the Herriman Road?

Elvoy: It's always been the Herriman Road until they started numbering it. Now it's 12600 South. To me, it's always been the Herriman Road. You'll notice the curve in it here [near Herriman]. They say that the surveyors didn't keep their minutes up and they got drunk and made a mistake. Now the road has a curve in it. 118<sup>th</sup> South is known as the Myer's Lane.

The surveyors didn't keep their minutes up and they got drunk and made a mistake.

Scott: My grandfather always used to call the upper part of Myer's Lane the Ranch Road.

Elvoy: Yes. The Ranch Road went to the ranches. 13400 South was known as the Morgan Road because Ed Morgan lived on Redwood Road down there.

[concluded]

## Gassing Up, Lighting Fires, and Eating Cherries: Elvoy Dansie

[Note: These are edited excerpts from Elvoy Dansie's autobiography, written about 1978.]

Thomas Torkelsen lived about a block or nearly just north of our house. We played together a lot in our barn, granary, silo, sheds, even the holes dug to grade for the railroad. Many times in the summer these would fill with water when the fields were irrigated and we would go swimming. There would be about 2 feet of water so we could stand up anywhere. When the ties were taken out of the railroad base we made a raft and would float around on the ponds. We rode horses and done most everything kids used to do. Many trips we took to the west hills and down to the river bottoms.

One of the Kirkham brothers had an automobile and it was parked at our house as they rode horses to the sight of their work surveying and overlooking the construction. Tom Torkelsen and I used to sit in it and play we were traveling. The hand brake and gear shift was on the outside. The horn was one you would squeeze to make it honk. It was a touring car with a Habbrick top and bows across the top to hold the top up. There was a two-piece windshield. It had running boards on the sides with a gas tank on back. One day Tom and I ran out of gas, so we added some sand. I never did hear the outcome.

It was about this time when Father built a silo or had a steel one put up. He also built a large granary to hold 500 bushels. About the time the cherries were ripe, Joe Tea, a boy about two years older than I came down to our house to play. His father had worked for Dad a year or two before so I knew him well. They had used the silo one year when this incident I'm telling about took place. There were some paper bags and papers out in the barn. Joe said let's go get some matches out of the tent—which was on the north side of the house—and some paper and cedar bark off of some post so we could smoke it. We took the paper and bark and rolled it up and lit it, but I couldn't make mine burn, but he was able to meet with some success. Now this was inside the silo on the unused corn. After leaving the silo we went out under the straw shed and found some eggs so we decided to cook them in the shed. That didn't work either so we stomped the fire out and went over to a cherry tree and started eating cherries when someone came home and told Dad his shed and a 40-ton hay stack was on fire. Joe took off for home, but I was too young to realize what was going on. It was hours later before I realized that it was our fire that burned down the shed as I figured we put our fire out.

“We Had Good Times and Bad Times”:  
Owen Seth Hamilton

[Note: These excerpts, edited for readability and clarity, are from an autobiographical sketch written in 1986.]

I don't hardly remember how I met La Vetta. She was born in Murray and moved to Aberdeen, Idaho. Her father died in 1918 of the flu. They came back to Murray and lived and then came back to Riverton and she came to our school. I was about in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Later on I finally took up with her and we went together for about four years before we were married. She lived approximately one mile from where I lived—south of us just before you get to Bluffdale. I was 23 and we built our home before we were married. Reynold Bills built the home for me. In those days the total cost of a home was around \$6,000. I worked on the farm until that time and for almost a year later. That was in 1927 and there was a drought on. That was the worst depression they had. It kind of touched your heart to see the sheep men—those people who we looked up to as people who had money, who had a good income from their sheep and then for all of them to go broke at the same time and then to see them standing in lines for food on the road waiting their turn to get food stuffs from the trucks that had been sent out. It was something I will always remember. When they talk about a depression here, it was mostly a drought. Utah Lake dried up or we would have been fairly good even during the Depression. When Utah Lake dried up, we couldn't grow any crops. There was no water to use at all. That's when I had to look for other employment. I told my dad I would have to leave him on the farm because I had to have some money. I had house payments and different things coming in. My \$20 a month house payment was quite a bit of money. Most of our family was working.

They were building a building for the Inter-mountain Farmers. It used to be Utah Poultry Producers Cooperative Association. I went to Salt Lake and talked to the officials there and got a job as an egg candler. I had that job for about 6 or 8 months. Then they made me a floor man. People would buy eggs and feed and I would serve them. In about another six months they were building a new building at Midvale. Golden Tempest was the manager of the Riverton Branch. They put him in as manager at Midvale and came and handed me the keys and made me manager of Riverton. I was there in that capacity for thirty years.

Sephus Wilkins was a good old neighbor. He lived over by the railroad

tracks. In those days the houses were about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile apart. We were going up Daniels Canyon one time in a Model T Ford. We had to stop and fix the brakes on it. We crossed the old creek and we were fixing the planks on the bridge. Sephus picked up a \$20 bill. That was like \$1,000 now. There was nothing to do but keep it because there was nobody to give it to. We would get stuck every once in awhile, but everyone would pitch in and push and get us out of the mud.

One time La Vetta and I was on the Johnson Reservoir. She didn't want to get in the boat. Finally she said she would. We went out. We didn't have any oars so I took sticks with me. We got out down there quite aways. It was about 8-10 feet deep. I stuck the poles down in the mud and tied the boat to them. We caught two or three fish and then the wind came up and it blew awfully hard. La Vetta was frightened so I decided we had better get ashore. I turned around to pull the poles out and the poles were still stuck in the mud. We had to sit in the boat until the wind blew us ashore. She was a little out of patience with me over that. She always liked to wear a dress. When she got out of the boat, her dress was stuck to her body. She said, "Just look at me!" People sitting in all these cars were looking at me. She was quite out of patience with me.

We went to Strawberry and Clyde and Dick Stocking wanted to go with us. We got out aways and Dick said he was sick. He had to go ashore. He just couldn't take it. The wind was blowing so hard and we knew if we stayed out there aways the wind would go down and we would be able to go ashore, but he had to go ashore. We went ashore and as we came to the bank which was about three feet higher than the water level, the waves would go up against the back and kind of curl over. One of them filled the boat full and it sunk. There we all stood up to our necks in water and the boat underneath us. We lost our fishing tackle and everything. We had to walk to camp and told the boat owners that their boat was sunk. They said they would get it. It had happened before.

Eldred Beckstead and I used to go out to Scofield Reservoir quite a bit. We enjoyed it there. He was good company and we always had a good time. We went quite often.

I had my job at the Poultry which took a lot of time and a lot of worry. La Vetta and I decided to buy a farm. We bought forty acres and I farmed that. The farm was on 2700 West between 13400 and 12600 South. It was a good farm and I kept that for a number of years and did real well on it. It was more than I could handle so we finally sold it. They built a school on it a few years ago and took twenty acres of it. We also raise 2,000 chickens all the time and

There we all stood up to our necks in water and the boat underneath us.

also had a cow.

I have lived through two world wars. They were both real wars—big wars. The first one was mostly hand-to-hand combat over in Europe. The next one had come into planes and tanks and they didn't fight so much in trenches as they did in World War I. During the World War I, I was ten or twelve years old. I was helping around home with the cows and farm. Life at home was about the same. During World War II and in both wars, you could only buy certain foods because the government would issue allotments.

My mother died while the war was still on. She died in 1917. She was a real nice person. It was a loss to us. I was thirteen when she passed away. She died in childbirth. Her heart wouldn't take it. I was turning the separator in the kitchen.

We always separated the milk. Dad came out of the bedroom and said, "Your mother's gone." The baby died also. It was a shock to us all, but they didn't take the body away. In those days the morticians would come over. They opened the doors. It was in January. It was very cold with lots of snow. They had two wooden saw horses like carpenters use. They laid a plank on it and laid her on that. I always remember her hair. It was about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet long and it was long enough to lay in a pile on the floor. Her hair was a very pretty auburn. When they had her funeral, they took her away in a sleigh. They never took her away from home to a mortuary. They took her in a sleigh down to the cemetery. When the dug down, the snow was as deep as the dirt was when they got to digging in the dirt. You could touch the telephone wires when you walked down the road. It was a very hard winter. They lost a lot of cattle. Dad said, "I think everything we have got is going to die." After Mother died there were seven of us. Aunt Till helped us more than anybody, I think.

Two years later, Dad married Annie Madsen of Riverton. She was just a wonderful person. She was like we were. Us kids were bashful to go into the house and she was a little bashful about seeing us when we did come in. It took a little while to get acquainted, but we all just thought the world of her. She was the type of person who was not selfish for herself. She would correct us of course, but not very much. We all got along well. I lived next door to Dad all my life. He had his work and I had mine. When the drought was on and we couldn't get any water, I had to quit the farm and go to work so we didn't see much of each other.

Dad was just an ordinary person who liked his cattle, sheep, farming, and politics. He was road supervisor for two terms. That was quite a job. They used horses and wagon then to move dirt. He worked for Salt Lake County.

Dad and Uncle Reub were quite the people to buy ground. He was always

Dad said, "I think everything we have got is going to die."

buying forty acres someplace. They would run it for two or three years and then they would sell it. We almost had more work than we could do. We always milked about twenty cows. That was done by hand. We also had two thousand chickens—mine and Dad's. We didn't know any different than what we were doing at the time. The coyotes would come in. We had sheep. We would hear them at night out there. We would have to build a solid fence to keep them out of the sheep pens. We would have to watch them very close because the coyotes were so bad.

Dad was in the bishopric with Dave Bills. Dave Bills was the bishop then. Dad tried to keep us on the straight and narrow. He did his best.

We got ourselves into some troubles, but we got out of them. There was just one I would rather not have been in. In fact, I didn't get in it too much. Ike Freeman had a house up on the farm which was about 3600 West. He had quite a nice house there. There was a young fellow who worked for Isaac

Freeman, Meredith Page, Hen Bills, Elmo and Eldred, and myself and Everett. We had a good time up there one night with snow up to our waist. Finally Meredith Page went outside and drank a little too much and threw the hand plow through the window in the kitchen. Then he stood on the table with a big stick. If you didn't do what he said he would hit you with it. It didn't feel very good. Finally the table broke with him standing on it. Elmo, Everett, and I didn't drink the stuff. Hen Bills and someone else went to Midvale and got a gallon of it. It made them all drunk. Elmo was in one room and his head was in the other. They had kicked the plaster off the wall and his head came through and there he lay looking up in the kitchen and his feet and the rest of him was in the other room. When we had done about all the damage we could do, we finally decided we had better go home. Everett and I was the only two that could drive, so I drove Hen Bills's car. When we got home to let him out he walked over and took a Sego tree off from the post over there and gave it a toss out to the garden. Afterwards when they couldn't find the Sego tree, I told him where it was and that he had thrown it away. He wouldn't believe me. We showed him where it was. We had plenty of trouble with our dads over it.

I never went anyplace at night myself. Everett was always going out at night. A bunch of them got together and turned over back houses. They did a little damage in the old Commercial Building. The sheriff rounded them all up and gave them the devil and that's all it amounted to.

We did a lot of swimming at the Crystal Hot Lake. In those days, it was just the hot pots in Bluffdale. They built an inner pool there and called it the Crystal Hot Lake. It didn't last very long. A Bodell from Herriman drowned

Meredith Page went outside and drank a little too much and threw the hand plow through the window in the kitchen.

there. He was in the pool and drowned before they could get him out.

Eldred Beckstead and I went fishing. He worked with me at the plant. He was a truck driver. When we weren't busy, we would go fishing out to Strawberry. The most fun we ever had out to Strawberry was when Dad and I would go. We would drive the Model T's out there. In those days all there was was Daniel's Creek. It would cross the road about every one hundred feet. They would have three pieces of three trees cut off and some plank laid along the other way. Every time they would start the trucks up, it would be a little bit on a steep hill and they would kick the boards off. All the way along the road, somebody had to get out and put those boards back on before you could cross over. That was a continuous thing clear through the canyon. I have never seen such big trout. They would lay down in the water and just wiggle along. The willows were so thick you had to get in the stream almost or else find a trail underneath to get there. It wasn't unlawful to take the spoon off the hooks as long as you had a spoon on. We would take the big hooks off and put on a spoon as big as your small fingernail. That made it legal. Then we would put it up in front of the fish and let it coast down until we could see that it was underneath and then give it a jerk. Then we would jump in sometimes up to our neck. We would wade down and chase the fish and he would finally give up and we would get him. The biggest fish were around twelve pounds.

Dad said, "Be careful. Be careful." That was about all he could say. We always caught the fish—not Dad. Uncle Reub would always go up on the little creek. The fish up there were only about eight or ten inches. He would come back and think he was king until he saw ours.

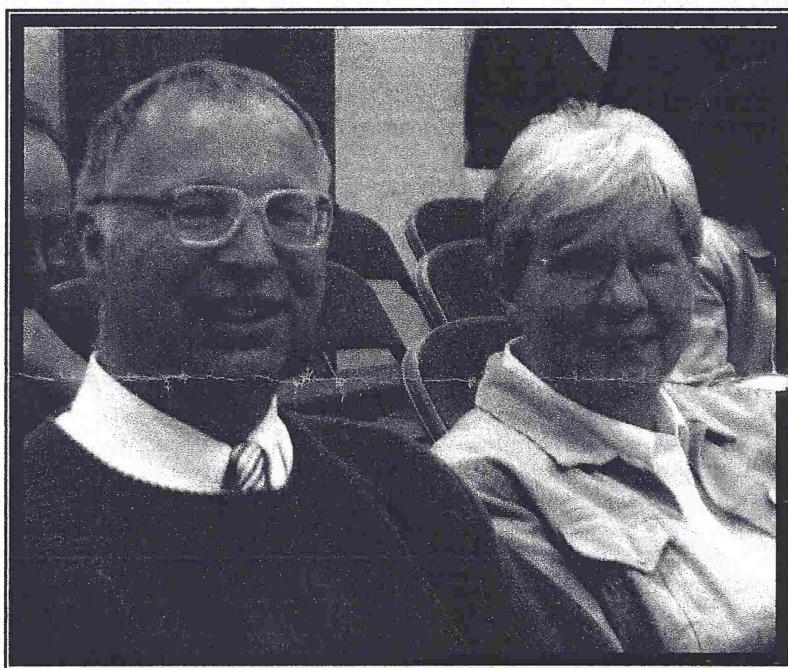
Ren Howard's brother Elmer went over in World War I and never did come home from France. When we sent them off they had a wagon down on the corner. The hay rack and a band gave them quite a send-off. We thought that was a big thing. It was right across the road from where they built the Crane home. The Crane home wasn't there at that time. There was an old adobe house there. Later they built the big home.

When I worked as a fireman, we did the best we could with what we had. The materials and trucks we had were not up-to-date like they are now. Lots of time we couldn't save buildings because we didn't have the right type of equipment to spray with and couldn't carry the water that they carry now. Earlier we didn't have a truck for Riverton. It was Salt Lake County. By the time the Salt Lake County Fire Department could get here, all they could do was save other buildings. When they built the building across from the school where the Senior Citizen's Center is now, they built it to house a truck.

In the winter we used to put up ice down on the Jordan River. We had hand saws and rails. We didn't have trucks. Everything was horses and wagons. We would back the

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and wagons.

wagon right into the ice. We would put the rails down through and then we would cut these big blocks of ice which would be three or four feet long and about two feet thick. The winters then were awful cold. There would be a horse up ahead and we would put a pair of tongs on the chunk of ice and pull it up on the wagon and haul it home and stack the building full of ice. We would put a foot to two feet of sawdust on it and that kept it from melting. We used it mostly to freeze ice cream all summer. Aunt Till would make it. Mother would make it, too. We ate lots of ice cream. That's all we had in those days was what we made ourselves. We could go buy an ice cream cone for a nickel. Elmo used to get mad at me because I would throw mine away and eat the cone. I didn't care for ice cream. He would say, "Why don't you give it to me?"



#### It's Been Our Pleasure—A Labor of Love

As the cover of this issue states, this is the final issue of *Riverton Yesterdays*. We've enjoyed bringing you old-time stuff about Riverton each month for the past four years. It was especially gratifying to hear from our subscribers. That's really what kept us going for as long as we did. It brought us joy to hear how much these old recollections were enjoyed. The files of the Riverton Historical Society are full of these old-time things. They are now preserved in a room at the Riverton City Hall. For those who may not have subscribed from the beginning, complete runs are available at Riverton Library, BYU Library, Church History Library-Archives, and Utah State Historical Society.

Mel and Karen Bashore

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