

EMERY COUNTY ARCHIVES

ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Frieda Filmore

Interviewed by Dottie Grimes

October 6, 2010

Dottie: Let's start with your name and when you were born.

Frieda: I am Frieda Lynn Thorderson Filmore and I was born December 13th, 1939 in Cleveland, Utah. My parents are Lawrence Ecklander Thorderson and Deanette Rawlinson Thorderson.

D: Who are your grandparents?

F: My grandparents are John Julius Thorderson and Freida Olafson Thorderson. They were my father's parents.

D: Is John the one that came from Iceland?

F: John and Frieda both came from Iceland. John was a small boy when he came and he went back to Iceland on a mission and he met my grandmother over there and she went to Canada. She went to nursing school and was a nurse and after he got off his mission, they were married in the Salt Lake Temple.

D: She went to Canada for nursing school and how did they get back together?

F: They corresponded and then she came to Utah and they were married in Salt Lake.

D: She was a nurse in what years?

F: Til she died (laughs). Well they were married in 1908, I think, seems like and she was a nurse then. She was the nurse that delivered a lot of the babies in Cleveland, me being one of them. I have no idea how many babies she delivered, but a lot. She worked under Dr. Hill, that was the physician in Huntington.

D: My grandmother did too.

F: A lot of people called her a midwife but she was very adamant about letting people know that she was a nurse, she was not a midwife.

D: She did other cases as well?

F: She did.

D: Did she have to go stay in homes?

F: Yeah, she did.

D: Who were John's parents that came here, that brought him here as a child?

F: They brought him, his brother and his mother and his father was Swen Thorderson and his mother was Helga Arnasson Thorderson.

D: Did they convert in Iceland?

F: Yes they converted in Iceland.

D: Do you know who the missionary was that converted them?

F: I don't, it may be in Helga's book because Helga was the historian.

D: Do you have her book?

F: I do not have her book. My sister, does, but I don't have one.

D: Who's your sister?

F: Lorell Hughes

D: Does she live here?

F: No, she's in Alamo, Nevada.

D: They converted and did they come over here as a group of Mormons?

F: That I don't know. I have no idea if they came as a group.

D: Do you know if they settled first in Spanish Fork?

F: They came to Spanish Fork and my grandfather, as I understand it, was about 18 years old when he came over the mountain to Emery County from Spanish Fork.

D: So your great grandfather didn't come?

F: He did, he did later. Grandpa and grandma both came and lived with...I assume that they lived with grandpa, but I don't know that for sure.

D: Where did they live once they settled in Cleveland?

F: Out on the farm, out south of town about two miles out.

D: Did they build a log cabin or a home?

F: They had a home out there, a framed and adobe.

D: Is it still standing?

F: Partly. It's out across the road from where the Hansen's live, oh, Patty's middle boy, Brandon.

D: Who built this house that you live in.

F: Well my grandfather and grandmother had it built. John Ward built it.

D: The same grandparents?

F: Yes, Grandpa John and Grandma Freeda.

D: Who were your mother's parents?

F: My mother's parents were from Delta. Walter Rawlinson and Eliza Rawlinson. My mother was born in Bountiful but they moved to Joseph, Utah and then they moved to Delta, where they lived where she went to school and graduated from school. She went to Snow College and my father went to Snow College and that's where they met. Mother was a very accomplished musician and my father had a beautiful singing voice and he needed an accompanist. They guided him to her because she was the best in the school, they said. (Laughs)

D: What a neat story.

D: Do you remember your grandparents?

F: Yes.

D: Did they speak Icelandic?

F: My grandmother spoke Icelandic and I'm sure my grandfather spoke it to her but not...he was a small boy when he came to the states and...

D: Did she speak English, I imagine?

F: She spoke English, yeah. But it was kind of broken some time.

D: Do you know how they felt about Utah once they moved here compared to Iceland?

F: My grandmother missed the sea. She missed the water, missed the fish. When you come to Emery County with alkali, you know. (Laughing) You saw some of the pictures of where she came from where it was green and the sea.

D: I would miss the sea too.

F: Yeah, she did miss the sea.

D: What about him, did he adjust better because he was younger?

F: I'm sure he did. He was a merchant in Cleveland.

D: What store?

F: He had the mercantile. He ran the Co-op, down here in Cleveland.

D: Yeah, I have a picture of it.

F: You have a picture of it? Did Kit see the picture? He asked me if I had a picture and I don't.

D: No, he didn't but I'll get you both a picture of it. I'm not sure who gave it to us but I also saw it again today online. There's a couple online that talk about their Icelandic ancestors from Cleveland. I'll print it out for you.

F: Yeah, he asked me yesterday if I had one and I've never seen one.

D: It's not a good one, it looks like it's a copy of a copy.

D: Did you father grow up with any Icelandic traditions?

F: No, my father was a realist, (laughing) I guess that's what you'd call them. He didn't live in the past and he worked hard all of his life. He farmed and worked for soil conservation and traveled around...was instrumental in a lot of the soil conservation programs that are being used now all over the country.

D: Who did he work for? the government?

F: The government. He got into soil conservation work too because he was always looking to improve the property and the land and everything.

D: Did he do any forestry work up there?

F: No, farming and cattle. We had cattle and still have property in the mountain.

D: How many cattle did he run?

F: About 50 head.

D: Did he every work in the mines too?

F: Not a lot. He was a school teacher. Well he went to school to be a school teacher, he taught school for I don't know how many years in the 40's, probably the late 39's and 40's.

D: What school did he teach at?

F: He taught in Huntington.

D: At the high school or the elementary?

F: At that time, I have no idea, probably 7th, 8th, probably the 1st through 8th grades because that's what we used to have is 1st through 8th grade and then high school.

D: Do you know what he taught? Did he teach everything?

F: Probably, but I don't know for sure what he taught. He was the principal at that time. (Laughing) You have to understand this was during war time and all the stuff being involved with principal now didn't take place at that time. It's a little different.

D: So during the war he was principal and a teacher?

F: Yes, a teacher and principal, I don't know exactly how long but...

D: What about your mom?

F: Oh, what about her?

D: What was she like?

F: Mother was a musician and she was postmaster in Cleveland for 17 years, I think.

D: Where was the post office then?

F: Well I have the book, do you want to see the book?

D: Yes. LaRue is going to give me a copy. It's neat.

F: The way I look at this book, it's for the whole state of Utah, the one that she's got. She's got pretty much the original stuff that's in it. The Cleveland part...the Emery County part...this is it. The history book has all of Emery County. She also taught many, many, many children to play the piano; she was a piano teacher.

D: She was busy then.

F: Yeah, she was. See a lot of this stuff I don't know if she compiled this whole book herself because they are original pictures from other places.

D: Yeah, she must have. I need to borrow yours because it's original pictures, the next one I get will be copies. Look, I could scan all of these original pictures. We talked about her (looking at book)...

F: Yeah, that's Hannah Oveson.

D: And she's from Iceland?

F: Now I don't, know if she is or not, I've never asked anybody. So I don't promise to know. This old house here used to sit on the corner up by the store that's just below the dike. This is the house that sits up across the road from the school.

D: These are so neat.

F: (Still looking at book) This house used to belong to this lady, this is Ruth Neilsen. So she had the post office in this part of her house for a time. This was the post office which is up by the library, the little cinderblock building. That's where the post office was. Her son built that building. And this house is the one on the other side of the library. This was the post master then, Della (?). She had a little addition built on here to have the post office in it. Then my mother went in as postmaster and she went back to this building since this other one was in somebody else's home. And then that was hers up until she retired, I guess. I also worked under this but she wrote this before I worked under her. I was her assistant too for about six years, five years.

D: How did you like working with your mom?

F: Actually I didn't really work with her because I was her substitute while she was gone. The time I spent working with her was training time.

D: Oh yeah.

F: But anyway, this has all of Emery County but it is the whole state of Utah. So anyway if you want to take that and copy that stuff.

D: Oh I do, I'll give you a disc and you can pass it around to your family or I can make as many discs as you want. Oh, this is great.

D: You were a substitute at the post office and what else have you done?

F: Well I was 20 years at the school in the lunch program.

D: When did you retire from that?

F: I retired from that in 1998.

D: Just about the time they started getting processed foods?

F: Exactly, the next year after that...

D: It's sad, oh the food smelled so good every day.

F: It is, it's sad because the kids don't get the benefit of the bread cooking and it isn't fair to the cooks because the cooks are all better cooks than that.

D: At least you got to have your time in there.

F: (Laughing) Yeah, I actually cooked.

D: Did you make turkey turnovers?

F: Yeah, we made all kinds of stuff.

D: My daughter would come home from school and say “mom why can’t you make turkey turnovers?”

F: The one I kept getting the most requests for was cheese sandwiches. Even after I retired, for three, four or five years after that there were two little girls here in town that said “won’t you please come back and make cheese sandwiches”? (Laughing)

D: Well Katie was in love with turkey turnovers; I tried and they didn’t measure up.

F: Anyway, I worked with some really nice ladies and we had some good times.

D: Who did you work with?

F: The longest I worked with was Dixie Allred. I always had Julie Smith and Linda Jensen and Deloras Marvadakis worked there for a while and Ardeth Bell worked there for a while.

D: When did you start, did you start at the old building?

F: Well I started under Bonnie Johansen was the manager and I started in...well it had to been 78 because I retired in 98. The first year I started there, I worked as an aid and then the next year I went into the kitchen and worked for 19 years in the kitchen.

D: That’s neat.

F: When I started there, we did work in the old building and then they added the new.

D: Were you sad when they tore the old building down?

F: Uh, well a lot of memories go with it, you know but also it needed to be done. It was disintegrating.

D: Did you go to Cleveland Elementary in the old building?

F: I went to Cleveland Elementary in the old building when we had...

D: Do you remember who your teachers were?

F: Yes I do. Mertyl Larsen was 1st and 2nd, Bertha Peterson was 3rd and 4th, Gomer (?) Arnold was 5th and 6th and Lyman Larsen was 7th and 8th.

D: Did you like them all?

F: Well that's a leading question (laughs). That's history. I really liked the two lady teachers and I tolerated and they tolerated me.

D: Who was the principal?

F: Lyman Larsen.

D: You went through the 8th grade in Cleveland?

F: Yeah

D: And then you went to North Emery?

F: Went to North Emery High School...graduated from there in 1957.

D: Do you remember when they closed Central School?

F: Nope, that was all before my time. I don't even know what year they closed it down.

D: It was something like '48 or '46.

F: I know Merrill went to the old school where the swimming pool is. He went to that school in Castle Dale.

D: But he didn't go to Central either, that was before his time?

F: Uh-huh. His dad and mother both went to Central.

D: How did you feel when they combined the two high schools and made a new one...one for the

D: You didn't?

F: Um, I didn't care. So we came back to Utah.

D: Do you remember your parents talking about closing Central High School?

F: No.

D: Did you have any older brothers and sisters that went there?

Frieda's husband, Merrill, joins the conversation.

F: Nope. But your dad and mother both went there.

Merrill: Yeah.

D: You went to South Emery?

M: Well, North Emery, South Emery both and Castle Dale. When we lived in Lawrence, we belonged to Huntington school. Then we moved to Castle Dale and went to 4th, 5th and 6th in Castle Dale or 7th, 8th. Then went to Ferron for a year, South Emery for a year. Then we moved back to the farm again in Lawrence and went back Huntington, North Emery.

D: You went to both schools, so you didn't have any rivalry there, huh, they were both your schools. I heard the rivalry was something else.

F: Oh it was.

(Laughing)

M: I was getting class reunions from both of them. I didn't go so I guess they quit sending them to me.

F: Maybe they quit having them because you didn't go. (Laughs)

D: What do you remember about high school? Did you enjoy it?

F: No, not really. I enjoyed farming so I'd rather have been home farming but I went because I had to and I did good in the subjects I liked. The subjects I didn't...it was just like let's get this over with and get on with life. (Laughs) But yeah, the school was good, it was fine.

D: Did you have any favorite teachers there?

F: Mm, I can't really think of any that were any more particular than the others. I liked music classes so I liked Mrs. Diamond.

D: What was her first name?

F: Mond (?) Guymon's mother, what was her name?

D: Oh, Ruth.

F: Ruth. And I liked band, that was Mr. Peterson that taught band.

D: What did you play?

F: French horn.

D: When did you two meet?

F: In 1955.

D: How did you meet?

F: You really don't want to know (Laughing)

M: She was with some boy, sitting in the corner and I went up grabbed her and kissed her and she slapped my face.

(Laughing)

D: She was with another guy?

M: To a dance.

F: And now you know all of our life.

M: So I followed her home to see where she lived when she went home.

D: Because you didn't know each other in school?

F: No because he was at South Emery and I was at North Emery but I was a freshman and he was a sophomore.

D: So he followed you home, what did you think of that?

F: I just came in the house. He just kept on going, evidently, because I'm not sure I even knew yet.

D: After that did you ask her out?

M: I'm not sure how we got together. We got together somehow.

(Laughing)

D: I love that, he grabbed and kissed you when you were on a date with another guy. That is really, really romantic.

F: Really. Or nervy, one or the other. That's been a lot of years ago. We've been married 52 years now, will be in December.

D: How many kids do you have?

F: Five

D: What are their names?

F: Tracy, Randall, Wade Filmore, Sherry Nichols, Paul Filmore and Peggy Richards.

M: And a whole bunch of grandkids.

F: Grandkids and great grandkids.

D: Asked to Merrill: Why did you move back here?

M: My dad was getting in bad shape and Frieda's dad was getting where he kept having trouble, so we moved back.

D: Why did you go to Kansas?

M: I went to Kansas to start with in the Army and then came back from Germany.

D: Were you in the Army full time?

F: Yeah.

M: Six years or seven before I got out.

D: Did you like it?

M: Well, yeah. I liked it. I was a medic for the Army.

D: You were in Germany for a while?

M: Three years and then came back and spent three years out to Fort Riley.

D: So did you go to Germany?

F: No, that was before we were married. We got right after he came home from Germany.

D: You waited for him while he was in Germany? Were you going together before then?

F: Yeah, we went before then. Off and on.

M: I got home on the 21st of December, just before Christmas and we married on the 27th of December and on the 1st of January, I threw her on the train and sent her to Texas.

D: (Laughing)

M: And I went to Kansas.

D: How long were you in Texas alone?

F: About nine months, I was in the military too.

D: Oh you were? You didn't tell me that part.

F: I was in the Airforce. I went in in 1958, 57, 58? When did we get married?

M: We got married in 58.

F: Yeah, I went in in 58, August 58. I have to stop and think, I'm getting old.

D: What did you do?

F: I worked in supply services in the hospital.

D: Did you like it?

F: I did like it.

D: Why did you join? Did you have friends that wanted to join to?

F: It was just something I wanted to do so I did it. (Laughing) That's how I lived my life, if it was something I wanted to do, I did it.

D: That's great.

M: We had plans to get married the year before that. I was supposed to come back from Germany but they left me over there for another year and that's when she went in the Airforce.

F: That's when I joined up.

D: That's interesting. Do you have any childhood stories that you'd like to share?

F: I don't know off the top of my head, I don't know, I just grew up all the time on the horse. I rode horses a lot, farmed with my dad and...I don't know...

D: Who were your friends when you were young?

F: I didn't have any particular friends, we were all just kind of a group. We didn't have this one on one thing and the third man left out, you know. Our classes were all small.

D: What stores were in town when you were young?

F: When I was young, Allred had a grocery store, my grandfather had a grocery store, (?) Lister Mercantile, or whatever they called it. So there were three grocery stores here.

D: How did that work? How could three grocery stores survive in a little town?

F: I don't know (Laughing) but I'm supposing that when credit went bad in one store, they went to the other one. That's awful, I'm not really sure but you know my childhood was in the early 40's so it was during the war and so let's see, I think we had two stores. My grandparents and my....my mother and dad helped in the store, now I don't know...see we never talked business in our house, they just did whatever and we did what we were told.

D: You don't remember any rivalry between the stores?

F: I don't think so.

D: When I was young and went to a little store in the neighborhood, the guy knew who I was, knew I didn't shop there very often and was really rude to me. "Oh you go to the big store for most of your groceries."

F: I really don't remember there being a problem between the store keepers. I know, as I recall, the Lister store was the first store that had a public telephone that you could use when the telephone first came in.

D: Were they the only ones that had a phone?

F: The two that I can remember personally and I don't know that they were the only ones but Floyd Anderson and the Lister store were the only two that I....as I recall it, the switchboard was in the Anderson's home and there couldn't have been very many telephones in town. But we could have electricity.

D: You did? Your whole life?

F: Yeah, they did, my whole life uh, except for the months that we moved to the farm. We moved to the farm and didn't have electricity. They put electricity out around South Flat in 1948.

D: Do you remember when the farm got electricity?

F: Uh-huh.

D: Was that exciting?

F: It was. It was nice to not have to light everything with a candle. But yeah, it was 1948 when they got power out around South Flat.

D: What about the roller skating rink? Did you go to it?

F: Yeah, everybody went to the rollerskating rink. (Laughs)

D: Even from Castle Dale or Lawrence?

F & M: And Price.

D: Really? Who was it that owned that? I know it was called Davis Hall.

F: Ernie Davis.

D: It was also known as an opera house.

F: An opera house, I guess when it was built evidently, that was the purpose for it. It had wood floors and wood walls and everything and it also served as a....there was a stage on it and a screen, that was the movie theater.

D: Did you have movies every weekend?

F: We had movies quite regularly.

D: Did you go?

F: I went, I didn't go a lot because we didn't have...tickets were 10 cents but 10 cents was 10 cents (Laughs). But we did go to the movies when they had movies and I don't really know how often they had them.

D: You went skating also?

F: I went roller skating. It's the kind of skates that you strap with a key onto your shoes.

D: When did they turn that into a roller skating rink?

F: I have no idea.

D: I haven't studied roller skating here.

F: They roller skated there as long as I can remember. I think...course this is gospel according to me...I think that the Davis' did all this to survive their family...they had a large family and they were all hard working people and they all worked as a family. I think this was their way of

keeping their family working together.

D: Making money, neat. Was there any other roller skating rink in the county?

F: As far as I know, that was the only one and they had dances there. They used to have big dances, live music. We had a band that...

D: Do you remember who the band was?

F: Vonal Allred was one of them and his son Kerry played with him.

D: How do you say his first name?

F: Vonal. We had two guys that played, there was a guitar player and a fiddle player sometimes that was from Moab that come up and played.

D: Thank you for all this information. This little town was a big deal.

F: Actually this little town had a lot when you consider it, you know, they had their own adobe brick building kiln at one time and they also had a place, now I don't know where that was either but they made caskets. There were all kinds of businesses, there was a bee keeper who had bees and made honey.

D: Who was that?

F: Joseph Larsen, Joseph J.

D: Well thank you, I can tell it's dinner time and I appreciate so much all of this.