

**Emery County Archives**  
**Oral History Project**  
**Courtney Guymon**  
**Interviewed by Trinadee Grimes**

Trinadee: Okay, I'm Trinadee Grimes, and let's start this interview with your name and when you were born.

Courtney: My name is Courtney Guymon and I was born November 4, 1944.

T: Where were you born?

C: In Huntington.

T: And who are your parents?

C: Madge and Hal Guymon.

T: Have you been in Huntington your whole life?

C: Yes.

T: Who was the first of your family to settle in Emery County?

C: My Grandmother and Grandfather McElprang. Grandma Minerva come in from the Hole in the Rock. They settled in Blanding and come on from Blanding and settled here.

T: Oh, Cool! We just visited Hole in the Rock and that's amazing country out there.  
So where did they settle when they came here?

C: They settled in Huntington. My -great grandfather Ab Guymon is the one that laid out the streets in Huntington. He had a team of horses, and marked the streets with logs from north to south, east to west.

T: What did he do? What was his trade?

C: Farmer.

And the relatives on my dad's side started the Guymon Mercantile on Main Street in Huntington. The building's still there. Then my Grandpa was killed—my dad was 12 and it left him and his younger sister and older brother to help Grandma with the farm. They had a farm outside of town on the river.

T: Wow that's young to have to take that responsibility. So then did he farm the rest of his life?

C: Yeah. He worked in the coal mines and farmed; he spent some time in the military, that's where he learned to be a mechanic. He died when he was 87. He taught me what he knew, and I

got a college education along with it. Dad and Ross Gordon bought Jack's Motor Service from Jack Harvey (sp?) in about 1962. And I went to work over there with dad in the shop. Ross took care of the parts and the counter up front and Dad took care of the shop in the back.

T: Cool. So were your neighbors and your friend growing up?

C: Well the closest neighbors was the Johnsons--mother's brother lived next door, and they had a boy that was a couple of years older than I was, Danny. And another friend that lived next door to him was Matt (or Mack) Cox, and then a cousin on down the street—Roger Defriez and Sheldon Defriez, and Don Cook, Chall Cook and Ray Rowley lived up there.

T: What did you guys do for fun when you got together with your friends?

C: Well, we used to go out and steal a chicken or shoot a pheasant and have a roast out there in the middle of the street at night. When the sun went down, we would go get a chicken or play Kick the Can or something.

T: So what did Huntington look like back then? I don't know much about Huntington. Was it paved roads or ...?

C: The streets going east and west were paved when I was a boy; the ones going north and south were not, so part of the roads were paved and part of them were not. Most of it was just like it is now with the houses—a lot of the houses are still there that were there when I was a boy. A few of them have been torn down, a few of them burned down, but most of them are still there.

T: Where did you go to school?

C: We walked to school. I lived four blocks away from school down on Main Street. I went to Huntington Elementary, and North Emery High School was just across the street. The junior high and high school is where the Utah Power building is on Main Street in Huntington now. The old elementary has been torn down; they built a new one, and then they built the junior high on the hill. But the grade school was right across the street, and it was a building in structure and design like the high school in that old building that Utah Power and Light has now.

T: What did you do for fun when you were in school?

C: We played basketball and baseball. That was the main sports. We didn't play football. There wasn't any real desire to play football. We played baseball and basketball and track in the spring.

T: So you started out high school in Huntington, right?

C: I went my sophomore and junior year in Huntington and then we moved to Castle Dale. They consolidated the high schools in 1963, during the school year in 1963. They started building the building in about 1961, and we moved in 1963. This building here (conversation is going on at the bus garage). It has been added on a couple of times. The athletic center wasn't there and the

basketball court wasn't there. The little one in the high school is where we played basketball, and the little theater was across from the office.

T: Yeah, I think they do choir there now.

C: There was a stage in there and that's where they had plays and stuff.

T: You were saying they didn't have much football. Did they not have a football team?

C: They started the football curriculum the year after I graduated from Emery High.

T: So when you played sports was there a lot of rivalry?

C: Well we played in what you call 1-A. We played with Notre Dame, Green River, South Emery over in Ferron, and we played in Richfield, and Monticello and San Juan—Blanding.

T: Did you have a rival school like Emery and Carbon?

C: Yeah. It was North and South Emery. There's still a lot of animosity for kids my age that goes back to that rivalry.

T: Was there a reason?

C: We hated each other.

T: How did it work out when you had to go to the same school?

C: We got along with a peaceful coexistence, but that first year, it was South Emery and North Emery.

T: Really?

C: Oh yeah. It took two or three years to get it to where they mingled. The girls would date a few of the boys from the north side of the county, but they had been before, a little bit—on the Q.T. But if you was to date those girls from South Emery, those boys let you know...

T: Really?

C: Oh yeah.

T: When they told you that you were going to go to a new school together, what was your reaction?

C: Hell, no! We had to; we were forced to. We didn't want to go.

T: I heard that there was a big uproar—not just the kids but the parents too.

C: Nobody wanted it. They were unhappy about it.

T: So when you went to the school were there North Emery teachers and South Emery teachers?

C: There was.

T: Was that fair with the teachers?

C: There was a little bit of rivalry, and the teachers probably showed a little favoritism to the kids they knew. We had an ace in the hole because our principal was the first principal. A.G. Kinder was the first principal, and he was the guy that we knew as the principal from Huntington.

T: So did South Emery not like that?

C: Well they felt like they had been picked on a little bit in some places, yeah. The schedule was written up to favor the South Emery kids because it was the way the curriculum had been over there with the classes schedule they had over there, so a lot of the kids in the graduating class in the north end of the county couldn't get the classes they needed to fill the groups to graduate. So we had to rewrite the schedule to fit everybody. It made the kids in South Emery mad because they had to get up at 7:30. The class schedule that they had was set up so they got every class they wanted—the schedule to fit their needs—and we was left out. So we made them rewrite the schedule, and there was animosity over it.

T: That's interesting. So how did games and dances go when you had to put rival teams onto one team?

C: The first string at North and South Emery got together and formed a team, and the kids in the red shirts, they didn't know what to do with us, so we quit. We didn't go back out. There were a bunch of kids from the south end of the county that didn't participate in sports programs, and a bunch of kids from the north end of the county that didn't participate.

T: I can't imagine how hard that must have been.

C: The campus was closed. There was campus was closed. There was no food sources nearby—they were all in downtown Castle Dale. The kids didn't drive a lot of cars, they rode the buses, so we ate school lunch or brought our own. They gave us about 45 minutes, so we had plenty of free time to goof around. We played basketball in the gymnasium all the time. We had a little team made up of kids from the south end of the county who had gone out for the basketball and kids from the north end of the county and we would play against the high school basketball team and knock the socks off of them.

T: So you guys kind of teamed up? Or did you play North against South?

C: Well when finally figured out that we had a common enemy—the guys on the [inaudible], we kind of stuck together. We was playing team sports and they was playing individual. You

know, they were still hot shots. The coach would come in every single day and say, “I want you guys on my ball team, if you’re going to teach my boys how to play ball, I want you under my supervision,” but no, they didn’t want to play.

T: Was the coach from Ferron?

C: No. He was a brand new coach. The coach we had at North Emery, Roundy, went back to South Sevier to Monroe where he came from and coached over there. Phillip Nelson coached the junior high in Ferron, and they hired a new coach. This helped relieve the problems they had with the sports rivalry.

T: Oh yeah. I remember we were rivals in junior high, and when we got to high school they had an assembly and they would say “Whose from Canyon View Junior High and whose from San Rafael Junior High, and we’d shout and scream, and then they’d say, “Shut up and knock it off because you’re all Spartans now. Whatever problems you had at your old school, leave them there; don’t bring them here.” [laughing] So obviously for you guys it was much worse than that.

C: It took a lot of years to get it watered down. There’s still some bad blood, and it shows up in some of the grandkids we’ve got.

T: I wondered because it was pretty strong in junior high. I don’t have any reason to hate anyone from Huntington, but it was put strongly enough that I can see how it could go down into the bloodstream [laughing].

So when things got mixed up and settled down, did the entertainment start moving to Castle Dale where the school was? Because when the school is in your hometown, that’s where the entertainment usually is—at school.

C: They moved the location—yeah.

T: And did people start lightening up and going there?

C: Yeah, quite a bit. The high school started being the center of things. But you still had the junior high schools and the public participation increased there. They started finding more and more excuses to get together there—having more activities.

People have more and more free time. When I grew up you spent most of your time making a living. If you had one job, you were considered horrible because you had to have two jobs to survive. A lot of guys would have a job and farmed on the side. It’s still that way in some places. In those days the dad would have one or two jobs and the mom would stay home with the kids. Now you’ve got to have Dad with one or two jobs and Mom working to pay the taxes.

T: How did you hear the news about the schools combining? Did they have town meetings or what?

C: They announced it in the schools that they were going to build one school in Castle Dale. The enrollment was declining to the point where neither one of the schools was big enough to do a lot.

T: Were there petitions to stop it or that people didn't want the new school?

C: There was a lot of complaining that people thought they should build the school in a more central location like Huntington and things like that, but they settled in Castle Dale, and then they put it up on the hill, not in town. This wasn't part of Castle Dale when they built the high school here.

There was that little house next to the seminary and all this was a little farm. They bought it from the Dyche's family and built the school on it.

T: Did you say you rode the bus to school?

C: Yes. I walked to school for 11 years and rode the bus for one.

T: Now you fix the buses!

C: Yeah.

T: Where's your favorite place in the county growing up? Did you like the mountains or the desert...?

C: Gentry.

T: Gentry Mountain? Did you have cattle out there?

C: We still do; we run cattle up on that block.

T: Did you spend a lot of time up there as a kid?

C: Uh-huh.

T: What did you do besides tending to the cattle?

C: I spent a lot of time working for other farmers, tending cattle, the water, whatever odd jobs I could get.

T: That reminds me of another question I have on my list. What was farming like in your area and did you have enough water?

C: No. There still isn't.

T: Was there ever enough water? [laughing]

C: The Joe's Valley Project was started in 1960's and that helped quite a bit providing more water for farmers to use, but there's never enough.

T: I don't know anything about it. How do they split up the water? How do you even get water

rights?

C: Well, you buy it on a share basis. The share is based on the water shed will yield. The water belongs to the state. The water doesn't belong to the people. It belongs to the state, and they issue a share in the canal company that has a user license. What that means is the state will let you use it. The farmer's irrigation companies and canal companies issue stock certificates or shares in the company—share that state how much that water will cover. And usually a share is an acre foot of water. That's what they started out with. Some water companies still have an acre foot per share, and but because of crooked dealings, the Huntington water was split up until it's about 3/10s of an acre share. I think Cottonwood Creek is still an acre foot per share, and I don't know what Ferron is. They'd figure up about what that stream would yield that year and would allocate so much water per share, and you were entitled to that much of the stream flow. And with the Joe's Valley Project, it is on a continuous flow, and you receive a portion of the stream flow, and you use it as it comes down the river. But after the Joe's Valley Project with storage up Huntington Canyon, they put it on a call basis, so you could let somebody else use your water while you were building something else or whatever. It worked out pretty good so people could have a bigger stream of water when they needed it.

T: This is kind of a nutty question, but what do you use the water for? Do you use it for crops or for your animals too?

C: Both.

T: Is it the sprinkling system, is that the water you use?

C: Now we're putting a new sprinkling system on the Huntington Drainage. The Ferron Drainage already put one in, and the Cottonwood Drainage will just start one right quick. The Ferron Drainage already put one in. They built the Ferron Reservoir and put the lines in underground, and that's what they're doing right now with the Salinity Project. The better control you have on the application of the water, the more efficiently you can use it. With a small stream and a flood irrigation system, you have to just herd it around on the ground and let it soak into the crops, and most generally you can't put enough on to satisfy the crop without running it off the end into waste. The return flow is waste water. With the sprinklers, it goes down into the soil and doesn't come out.

T: So what did farming entail when you were growing up?

C: Well basically farming around here is livestock. They grow feed for livestock to feed them in the winter time. Most of the people have a few cows and they have a permit on the public lands to feed their cows in the summertime—growing feed on the farm for the wintertime.

T: Oh that's why they take their cows... I grew up in the county but not on a farm. So that's why you move them off of your land so you can farm it during the summer.

C: We spend all summer long growing feed, putting it in haystacks so we can carry it back out to the cows and feed them in the winter time.

T: So hay's not something you make money on, it's just staying on your...

C: Well, it's getting where more and more people are growing hay for sale rather than feed your own livestock. That is because the government has limited the number of cattle that they will allow on public land. The sportsmen have to have some place they could go, the fishermen have to have some place to go, and the hunters has to have some place to go and they don't want to step in a cow pie. They don't want to mess with the cows in the process. So they restrict the number of cows. You know Huntington Canyon, we used to run cows from the forest boundary clear to Electric Lake on our permit. We had 2400 head of cows on that permit—the ranchers that had permits in that association, and in the 1950s they cut our numbers by 50% and cut our time by 25%. They done it in favor of the elk and the fishermen that we were impacting and interfering with on the public land. And they have consistently whittle us down and whittle us down until now, we still have the permit, but we can't utilize the bottom of the canyon because we've campers, we've got fishermen, so we have to use the side canyons up where they don't go. We take what we can get and leave the rest to wild life. Right now we take 50% and leave 50%. They keep putting us into smaller and smaller spaces and cutting us off and cutting us off until one of these days we'll be eliminated.

T: Looking at the list of questions—a lot of these questions are before your time, like “Do you remember the first automobile you saw?” [laughing]

C: Well I remember the first automobile we had in our family. It was a 1948 Chevy pick-up. That was the first automobile Mother and Dad had after they got married in 1944. Dad and Mother got married in Baltimore Maryland. He'd signed up for the military in World War II. He was in the Infantry. He served in Belgium and France. They got married in 1944, and he served in the military until 1945-46. And the first automobile they had was a 1948 pick-up.

T: What did she do while he was gone? Did she come back here?

C: Yeah, she come back here and lived with her parents, and after he come back from the service they built a home where my son lives now. I grew up in that house.

T: Is your wife from here?

C: She was born and raised in Huntington.

T: So you didn't marry someone from the “other side?” [laughing]

C: I dated a couple of girls from over there so it was obvious they didn't cut it.

T: Did you get in some fights for dating girls from over there?

C: Yeah.

T: So they were serious about it.

C: We were serious about it, yeah. We stood nose to nose and argued with some of those kids from South Emery, but most of the time we took it out on the basketball court—trip them, push, them, elbow them, you know.

T: Sports was a good way to do it—better than getting caught in the hallway.

C: We did that too.

T: So how did you meet your wife? Did you go to school with her?

C: Yeah, basically. She was a few years younger than me. You couldn't date girls your own age. They was smart enough to leave you alone.

T: They wanted somebody who was a few years older than them.

C: Yeah.

T: So where did you guys live when you got married?

C: We lived in a little three room house on the north east corner of Huntington. We bought the home we are living in now in 1966.

T: What did you guys do for dating back then?

C: Well the biggest thing was go to the show house and take in a movie down there in the theater.

T: When was that theater built?

C: About 1950 something. The Drive-In was built in 1960s south of Huntington. Church, school and movies—that was our entertainment. We had dances—Christmas Dance, Thanksgiving Dance, Junior Prom.

T: Did they always have promenade or was that something that Gardner did?

C: No, we always had promenade at the Junior Prom. It was part of the dance.

T: See that's what I thought, but up in the city they'd say, "What's Promenade?" and I'd say, "It's the reason for Prom!"

C: Well—and when we were kids we always had a swing tied up in a cottonwood tree and we'd take turns pulling each other back and forth. We'd kill a chicken and have a roast in the middle of the street, play "Kick the Can" and things. Aunt Blanche used to make us take one of her chickens; she didn't want us shooting a pheasant and getting caught, because that was against the law, unless it was hunting season. We'd put it on a stick and roast it on a fire.

T: Would the girls come too?

C: Yeah, there were quite a few girls—Danny’s sisters and Mike’s sisters and the Wagoners from across the street had girls. And kids from across town would come. There was quite a bunch of them. We probably had 12 or 15 kids out there playing in the dark.

T: That would be fun.

C: About 10:30-11:00 at night, the parents would come out on their porch and tell us to knock it off, time to go home.

T: What did you do in the winter time?

C: In the winter we’d go out and mark a big circle in the snow and play “Fox and Geese” or play basketball. We’d clear the snow off and play basketball—there was a basketball hoop out in the back at Mike Cox’s place. We’d shovel snow off that sucker and play basketball out there. In the winter time we went to school. On the weekends when we couldn’t get into school we’d basketball and throw snowballs.

T: As a farmer what do you do in the wintertime?

C: Feed cows. When the sun goes down, you could go home and read books, until the television come along. The first television I had was one my grandfather bought when I was 12 or 13.

T: Really? Did you have radio before that?

C: We had radio.

T: So your grandfather bought it, so did you go to their house?

C: My grandfather lived alone. My grandma died when I was about 10 or 11, so he lived alone and we’d take turns staying with him at night. He had a television, and we’d watch television. Then he’d turn it off and go to bed. He was hard of hearing so we could listen to KOMA--Oklahoma City KOMA. It’s still on—1620. They played the latest rock and roll stuff.

T: That’s cool! Another question. Do you remember flash flooding?

C: Yes, in the summertime I’d ride a horse out to the farm and have to ride across a wash. My dad told me, “Now if you ever come out of there in a rain storm and that horse don’t want to go don’t want to go across the wash, don’t make him. And I was out there one time in a rain storm and that horse didn’t want to go across that wash. I sat there; it was raining and I was getting wet, and pretty soon here come a flood down, and I mean it filled that wash clear full—it took all the bridges and everything out, and in five minutes it was gone. The horse went across the wash and we come home. But there was fence posts, tires, junk got rolled down that wash in that flash flood.

T: Does it still do it that bad?

C: We don't have the rainstorms we used to, but when I was a kid growing up, when it rained, it would rain! When those drops come down they was big; it just poured.

T: Was there more snow?

C: Sometimes. I remember many times playing on dry dirt on New Year's Day. And I can remember other years playing "Fox and Geese" in 18" of snow.

T: What is "Fox and Geese?"

C: Well you draw a big circle—a big racetrack around the outside, and you draw spokes in them. And the fox gets in the middle. You can only go one way, and if he gets you going around and you need to turn you go into one of the spokes and he catches you before you can get out and around, the fox has got you—you know fox and geese. He can run either way. The geese have to go one way.

T: Oh, that's a cool game!

C: It's a lot of fun.

T: Let's see—did you serve in the war?

C: I never did have to serve in Viet Nam. But lots of kids I knew did. It was hard seeing those kids go off to Viet Nam, and the way they were treated in this country when they come home was terrible.

T: Was it like that in Emery County?

C: No.

T: I've always thought it was just in the big cities with the protesters and things.

C: There's just a minority of people are that way, and the majority of the people don't want to get involved; they don't want to speak up. That's the biggest problem we've got today too 'cause people don't want to get involved in it; they want somebody to do it for them. The country has changed so much in the last four or five years, that I'm afraid that what is left of it may not last. It's surely not the America I grew up in. The privileges and freedoms we had--we don't have now. I didn't have any qualms about walking the streets of Huntington any time day or night. I wouldn't do it now. I didn't have any reservations as a kid growing up, even as a teenager and an adult. I didn't have any qualms about walking the streets at night. I felt safe in any neighborhood. There's places in that town today that I wouldn't dare venture. It's not the people that are there, it's the people that go there. They're wandering around looking for mischief to get into.

T: Did a change a lot here, though?

C: Our biggest change came when they built the power plants. They brought people in and their support groups. It changed more with the power plants than it did with the Joe's Valley construction. I was surprised that the power plant construction changed our town like it did.

T: Did the power plant bring in more people than the coal mines?

C: Yeah, it did. The coal companies began producing more to fire the power plant up. We had coal mines around here—it was nothing to see a coal mine shut down for two or three months, until the power plant construction needed a lot of coal. It brought a lot of changes, some good, some bad. We had a lot more money floating around and more construction that we had never had before—we got a lot of nice buildings that the power companies helped build with their tax money. But we have to support them now because their tax money is running out or depreciated, so now the burden is falling back on the people that are here in property taxes and things to fund those things that were built by the power plant money. You wonder why your taxes are going up, that's part of the reason why. And they've given us the mentality, that is not good either, that somebody else is paying the bills. If the power plant, and the coal mines and their severance money can build this road out here and this sidewalk out here, go for it. Over time, usually the building of something is the cheapest part of it; maintaining and keeping it is a lot more expensive.

T: I think we've gone through all the questions. We have one about the outlaws, and if we had any family members that knew the outlaws.

C: Well we did. Butch Cassidy used to come and trade at the store my great grandfather had. They would come in and trade late at night and deal and go out the back door. They'd run off down to Robber's Roost and hide out. There was a lot of people around here that knew the outlaws.

T: And they kind of liked them, right? They got along well with them?

C: Yeah, they were kind of Robin Hood. They'd steal from rich people and pay cash at the local merchants. I can show you a spot on the desert where Matt Warner put his name on a rock.

T: That was going to be another question. Did you spend a lot of time out on the San Rafael?

C: No, whenever we had a vacation we went somewhere far away from here. We didn't spend a lot of time in our own back yard. We had cows on Gentry Mountain so we spent a lot of time up there watching the cows and taking care of the stuff we had to do up there. We didn't have a lot of time to go on a vacation.

(inaudible section of the tape)

T: What was his name?

C: Dr. Merrill—Gerald H. Merrill.

T: He was brought in by the coal company?

C: Yeah, he was brought in by U.S. Fuel Coal Company. He treated old miners and stuff like that in Hiawatha.

T: And you guys had to go to Hiawatha? How far was it to Hiawatha?

C: You had to go clear over to Hiawatha Junction on Highway 10, and then go to Hiawatha. And then they built Mohrland Road over across into Hiawatha, so you could come out of Mohrland and go over there.

T: So did you ever have to go to him?

C: Oh yeah, that's where I had my tonsils taken out was in his office. There was his nurse and Dr. Merrill did a tonsillectomy right there in his office.

T: How did they do it?

C: They used ether as an anesthetic. They put a cotton thing over my mouth. They put a few drops of it on some cotton and I hate the smell of ether to this day. When I woke up, he said, "He's going to be fine now. Take him down to the store and get him a Dreamscicle. We went down to the store in Hiawatha right down there by the tracks, and told the store owner that we was supposed to get a Dreamscicle, and he said, Dr. Merrill took your tonsils out, huh?" [laugh] and I got an orange Dreamscicle and then we went home.

T: What if you had an emergency?

C: Like breaking an arm? You'd go to Hiawatha. I broke my arm three times. I broke my left one twice and my right one once.

T: How did you do that?

C: I had a knack of falling off my horse, especially when I was riding with my cousins. Mother would grab a towel and we'd head off to Hiawatha. He'd take plaster and gauze and build a cast, put your arm in a cast, set the arm. He didn't have X-rays. He'd do it by feeling the arm and he'd put it back in as best he could and put a cast on it. That's how he'd take care of it.

T: So when did they get the doctor and clinic here?

C: Well the coal mine closed in 1965 or 66, and Dr. Merrill moved to Price, and then he had so many people that wanted him to come over here that he set up an office in Huntington. We had him as the doctor in Huntington for a while.

T: When you were a kid did they do house calls?

C: Nope. We went to his office

T: They eventually got the clinic here?

C: Dr. Merrill died and Dr. Shrier came. I think she was a doctor. I don't know if she got a medical degree or not. They had Dr. Turman over in Castle Dale and before that Dr. Nixon— Grace Johansen's dad. We went to Dr. Turman a little bit when I was a kid.

T: What about childbirth did they have midwives or what?

C: I was born in my grandma's house in Huntington. My brother Lamar was born in Huntington. The rest of the kids were born in Carbon Hospital in Price. We had a doctor in Huntington for a number of years when Dr. Nixon was here.--Dr. Hill. He lived in Huntington. His wife taught at the high school. I think Dr. Hill is the one that delivered me.. Stella Hill was his wife and she taught home-ec and English teacher. She was about as straight laced as she could be. You didn't mess with Mrs. Hill.

T: Who was your favorite teacher?

C: Probably Aunt Ruth. She was strict but fair.

T: What was your favorite subject?

C: I liked math classes. I done pretty good in math. I didn't like English. I can't write a letter and I can't anything, but I can sure diagnose a (inaudible) in a construction plan.

T: Well I've learned things I never knew. I sure appreciate it. I loved hearing the stories. Thanks for your time; I'll let you get back to work.