

Oral History of Merene Redd Humphrey

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MERENE REDD HUMPHREY

Merene Redd was born in Greyson (Blanding), Utah on April 15, 1912 to Ruth Hurst and Parley Redd. She is the oldest of eight children six of which lived to adult. She married Mark Humphrey on June 20, 1944 in the Manti LDS Temple. She had five children four lived to reach adulthood. She live in Orangeville where fourteen of her seventeen grandchildren live close by. Merene was born on the day that the Titanic sank. Merene just celebrated her eighty-fifth birthday. Her children held an open house for her on the nineteenth of April.

What do you remember about the day that they signed the Armistice ending World War I?

I was six years old when World War I ended. My Brother Dale was born. His name is Dale Piercing. My mother and father named him Piercing after a general in the war. I remember how happy everyone was. There was a lot of men from Blanding in the War. There was a Model T Ford that went through town. They had the top down and the band road in it and they played their horns.

What do you remember about the first time you saw a car?

As a child I remember when dad and mother wanted to say something to each other they would say it in Spanish so that

we children couldn't understand that really bothered me. I always said that when I got a chance I would take a Spanish Class so that I could learn the language but I never did. There were a few words that I learned from them.

The first car I saw was a Model T Ford. It was when the Armistice was signed for World War I. There was a group of young men on this Model T. They had musical instruments that they played while riding through town. Everybody was so excited because there were quite a few men that were in the war or service if you want to say it that way.

After we got cars we would go for a ride on Sundays. These rides would be after church. Dad was in the store all week and this is what he liked to do. We preferred going with our family rather than going somewhere with our friends.

What do you remember about your childhood?

The wagon with the spring seat was my first memory as a child. I went with my father on a wagon that had a spring seat. I sat on my fathers lap and Uncle Ben had Genn on his. We were going down Recapture Road when the wagon tipped over. We weren't hurt, but I was always afraid of Recapture Road as a child after that experience.

My father owned a store in Blanding. It was only about eight blocks from our place. My mother use to let me go up and pick out fabric, only in those days we called it material but now it they call it fabric, for a dress. I'd always come home with a pink fabric. She made all of our dresses. She'd tell me that I'd look better if I'd wear blue.

What did you do for entertainment when you were a child?

When we were kids we had some neighbors that were relatives. Florence and Genn Redd. They lived just across the street. We use to call it the Relief Society fence. It was a fence between Uncle Ben's and our place. We put up a homemade telephone we would get out there and yell for Genn and Florence. When the little birds would die or anything small lie that we would bury it, make little clothes for it and bury it. And have a little headstones at the top. We had like a little cemetery there at the fence which we called the Relief Society fence. And we use to have a lot of fun doing that.

We had a house out back called wash house where mother use to do her laundry. We had our play things in this building. When it would get in a mess dad would come in

there with a pitchfork and gather them up. We would try and get really upset so we would try to ~~keep them~~ picked up and have it cleaned. This was when dad ~~had Uncle~~ Ben make us a playhouse like he had built for his ~~girls~~.

Uncle Ben made a playhouse for us and he had one for his girls. He was a carpenter. It was just a one room, and we would have all of our doll things, our little beds and our little chairs and that little chair over there (pointing to the corner of her frontroom) was my chair when I was a little girl. And I have a little doll bed that he made downstairs I still have it. And then I have a little trunk that was mine when I was a little girl. Then I have my dolls that I had when I was a girl. The last doll I got was when I was twelve years old and I still have that one and one other one that I got before I was twelve. And I'm glad to have those things even though at my age at eighty-five.

Deer hunt was fun too. Selling groceries at the store to the hunters. I use to think it was as much fun as Christmas at the store.

What do you remember about when Uncle Vint was born?

I remember when Vint was born. I sat on the top of mothers bed and held him before he was dressed. I was three

and a half years old. Dad was so proud of his boy.

What was Christmas and Christmas Eve like when you were young?

Christmas day we would go to the store and help dad sack candy and nuts in paper bags. He would have a tub full. The Indians would come about noon. Dad would give a bag of candy to each Indian. In early days in Blanding the Indians would go from door to door saying "Christmas" and people would share their goodies with them.

I remember the Christmas Eves at the store and how dad would give out so much for everyone to have a Merry Christmas. Then we would go home and mother would have tomato soup made with cream. It tasted so good. We would be exhausted and it didn't take long for us to get to bed.

Tell me about the last Indian uprising in Blanding?

Well, I think that was in 1923. When I was in the third grade was when the last Indian Uprising in San Juan took place. As I remember I was in third grade they told us the Indians were on the war path. And for us to hurry up home. So we ran home as fast as we could go and were very frightened. I'll never forget how frightened I was as a little girl. They gathered up the Indians that they could

and put them down in the school building in the basement the ones they could find. That was when Posey was shot and he was out in the hills. They use to let the more dependable Indians go out to see him. But there were just these few in this basement but the others they gathered up and put them in a pen, put all the Indians up in this pen by the store. It had chicken wire around it then they had people guard these Indians day and night. Posey was shot and hid out on Elk Mountain Hill. He would make fires out on Elk Mountain. Elk Mountain that was to the west of Blanding. They'd let the more dependable Indians go out there to take him food and like that. But he got infection in the wound that he had. As I remember it was in his leg or something. Wherever he got shot. He got infection in it and he finally died out in the rocks by himself. He was the last one that was when they had the last Indian fight down there. We know he had died because you couldn't see a fire out on Elk Mountain anymore.

As a girl I remember Posey coming to my mothers place and she would give him food and something to eat. Meat was something that you just didn't get everywhere. One time he came to the door or came to the gate and my dad said "Oh don't let that son of a gun" come in and Posey came in and put a leg of mutton on the table and he said "here you my friend" and that was Posey. My mother had a strand of beads

that he gave her one time. Posey use to come there and he would help with the weeding and like that as a young man. then after I was out in this country and I got married and lived in Orangeville. I use to feel just as bad when I would hear one of those older Indians died like Charlie Ute, Mancus George and Jesse was another Indian that when they'd die I'd feel just as bad as I would when I'd here that a white man had died.

Tell me about some of the Indians that were friends of your family?

George Mancus

George Mancus was a well respected Indian was just a big kid. One night he came to our house about ten o'clock and wanted dad to go to the store saying that it was urgent that he went. And when he got there he wanted three bottles of "Vanilla." Dad gave him three bottles of imitation vanilla. The next day he came back and brought one bottle back and said "what's the matter me drink'em two bottles and me no sing."

Old Indian Grandma

There was an Old Indian Grandma who claimed that she was four years old when Kit Carson rounded up the Navajo's, always came around the house. Mother said that she would

hear someone in the bedroom and go to look. There would be this Old Squaw just looking around. Mother would give her food cause she felt sorry for her. When they got ready to leave she came to tell mother good-bye. She got to the porch and mother opened the door, this Old Squaw put her face like she was going to kiss her. Mother claimed what she lacked wasn't much. Mother shuddered for an hour after that. At Christmas my brother Vint had his girlfriend (that would be Aunt Reva) at our house visiting. Dad, Reva and I were in the front room by the Christmas Tree. The door opened and in walked this squaw. In a few minutes Reva turned around and saw this squaw and nearly fainted.

Old Jane

One year at Christmas time dad came to the house and we had just got our Christmas Tree up. It was too high and he stood on a stool that we had around the house for so many years it collapsed and he fell on one of our dining room chairs. He hit on the corner and broke several ribs. He was in bed in just all kinds of pains. Old Jane had heard of the accident and also heard that Timpox (that's what the Indians called my dad) was going to die. One morning before breakfast she came to the house and forced herself in and right to the bedroom. As she forced herself in she said that she wanted to see Timpox. She spoke to dad and he

talked with her awhile. When she came back into the kitchen she told mother that Jim Cox would be all right and that he would get well. Then she left just as contented as she could be. And I have a ring that I got that Christmas in my cedar chest. It is a pretty red ring. Red set ring.

Mormon Joe

One summer I was at the store at noon waiting on the customers. Everyone else had gone home for their dinner. Old Mormon Joe was one of my customers. He bought a lot of groceries and then he wanted a gunny sack to put them in. I was reluctant to let him have one. And he said "You no savvy me." And I said "I know savvy you." He raised up his lip and showed me that he had false teeth. In those days he was the only Indian to have false teeth. I was glad to see dad when he got back from his dinner.

Now whenever Grandma doesn't understand something that we say to her and we have already repeated it to her a few times she says "I no savvy." I have always wondered where she got that saying.

What do you remember about Uncle Kents birth?

When Kent was born it was Mother's day May the 8, 1920. Dad took several cows. I remember one named Neva she was a holstein and an old dog that we called Old Gartho, out to

West Water and shot them. The cows had Benn tested for TB and found that they had it. The dog was so old that he needed to be done away with. We loved that old dog.

How old were you when your sister Hazel died?

I was thirteen years old. Some places you will see that she died when she was twelve years old but she was eleven and a half years old.

The following story is one that Grandma does not tell you very often but I have heard from her when I would fight with my sister.

Hazel and her would fight and one day her mother told them that one day they would live so far apart that they couldn't even get a letter to each other and later Hazel died.

What was it like while Hazel was so sick and following her death?

When Hazel was so ill dad was sitting with her right that night. It was early in the morning. She said someone was coming across the street. They were by Uncle Ben's ditch then she said that they were coming in our gate then she said that they knocked couldn't dad hear them. And she said come in and she talked to them. She told dad that it

was Uncle Len and somebody else. She told dad to let them in. He tried to tell her that there wasn't anyone there. He couldn't see them. That's when she died. After Hazel died dad couldn't be comforted. One night he had a dream. In the dream he was coming from the corral Hazel came running and skipping down the walk. She threw her arms around his neck loved and kissed him. She said that she was with Grandma Redd and that she could run and play with little children but she couldn't be happy and do her work like she should because he was grieving so much about her passing. After that he didn't grieve for her. He always felt that she was sent to him to comfort him. We felt like we had a letter from her. We all felt better that dream really helped.

What was Great Grandpa Redd like?

He was a friend to everyone. He had a heart of gold. He was a friend to everyone, Indian, Spanish people and white people like that. If anyone needed help he was always there to help up let them have credit or what they needed. The Utes would take hold of his hand and say "Timprox You my friend" in his business he treated fairly. He gave them honest measure. He used to say "An honest days work for an honest days pay." He was a merchant in Blanding all his married life. When he first went to San Juan the town was

known as Greyson. Later the name was changed to Blanding. He pioneered the town. I remember my parents saying that there were only four little graves in the cemetery when they first went to Blanding, sage brush and trees, in a year I was born.

What did he do or say to you when you went on your mission?

My mission was the Northwestern states mission. I left on my mission on Fathers Day June the seventeenth ninety forty. I left him crying. He thought that was the worst thing that could happen to him for me to leave. He later said that wasn't anything compared to each of his four sons left for service in World War Two.

How did you pay for College?

When we were growing up dad would say "I'll give you two years of College then if you get anymore you will have to work for it." Me being the oldest he did just that. I had two years of college a two year course which was a normal certificate.

Where was your first teaching job?

I taught one year at a one teacher school at Horsehead where I had all the grades. I received sixty five dollars a

month for seven months

Why for only seven months?

I decided to go back to college to get my degree. In the summer I worked at the store and received a small amount of money. I use to work for a dollar and a half a day. Vint, my brother, and I bached for two years. Joe Hunt trucked for the store. He would bring us groceries from home every week. That helped a lot. I had my money to pay my rent and my tuition and my share of the food. I had to borrow fifty dollars to finish my college. Which I paid back. I graduated with a B.S. degree. Vint and I were careful with our money. These were two special years. We became close to each other. Remembering this has made me really homesick for my brother. *Uncle Vint died in ninety-four.*

What was life at Horsehead like?

I taught out to Horsehead in a one room school house for sixty-five dollars a month. (I would have to walk to school). IN the winter I would have to build a fire in a stove. If the kids were late and depending on how old they were would determine how many arm loads of wood they would have to bring in. When spring time came around we had so much wood that they would have to carry the wood out. I had

thirteen children ranging in ages from first grade to seventh. I had three first graders and by Thanksgiving I had them reading out of a book. I thought that was so neat I had the hardest time getting the older kids to study while I was helping the younger kids to learn. I would either have to sweep the floor or make the older boys do it for me. This was the first time I had ever heard about school lunch. About three blocks away from the school lived a family named Butler. They would serve a hot meal to the students for some money. It would usually be soup or something like that.

How did Uncle Ansil die?

Uncle Ansil was killed on the twenty-fourth of July 1931. He had entered a game called chicken pull. Which was an Indian game. A bag of sand was buried. They had to pay fifty cents to enter the game. Then they rode horses and tried to get the bag off first. Uncle Ansil's horse was frightened and he was thrown off braking his neck. my friend Mary Ballis and I had gone to the store with dad. Someone came to tell us Uncle Ansil had been thrown from his horse. We went down to see him lying in a puddle of blood such a gruesome sight. Aunt Luise was left with six children to raise. Dad helped her what he could through the years.

How did you pick up netting?

My elderly Aunt Luella lived in La Jara, Colorado. She came to our town to see my grandma. I was a girl in high school. I had sprained my ankle. She wanted me to learn this netting. So just to please her I learned to do it. I have had lots of enjoyment through the years in doing this netting. I still have the piece she taught me to do it on. All the stitches and like that. When we were on our mission it was a good missionary tool. When I would be riding on a bus or to some activity I would get it out and people would look at it and they'd want to know what it was. I would tell them that its netting tying a knot like a fisherman's knot. It was a lost art that not many people knew how to do. I remember one time up on Chilliwack we went to a fair. I said to the lady there that I wish I had got my centerpiece done up and entered it in the fair. She said well these lady's that are here, they did what they call bobbin lace it's like you'd have fifteen or twenty bobbins and you would be working them all the time to make the lace, and she said that they were tired of sitting here doing this so my husband, Mark Humphrey, took me to the apartment and got me some more thread and some pamphlet we went back there I sat there and demonstrated at the fair. I would tell them that it was a lost art and not many people knew how to do it and like that. Then I would say to them that we were

members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Later Day Saints. More commonly known as Mormons and then would you like these pamphlet. Then we would give some of the pamphlet out. We got a lot of contacts through that and we also got some meeting through that. We went and taught them the gospel I have enjoyed it through the years. I didn't teach the girls how to do it over to the school cause I figured their mothers would think I was wasting their time. But if I get tied up in knots and feel like I just tense that I can't stand it I get it[netting] out. I tie knots when I get in knots. I like to do it when I am riding in a car. when I am not driving the car. Because its something that I can easily do and also that I can carry in my purse.

What do you remember about holidays with your children?

We used to go down on the desert Eastering and we would have a good picnic and daown there for a long time but we always had to come back to the farm and roll our Easter eggs and they[her children] didn't think we'd been Eastering until we'd done that. Grandpa would take a hoe and those hill out there where our coral used to be, where Utah Power and Light own it now. And those hills were nice hills. He would make a row, just a trailldown there with the hoe. Our girls and Jay Mark would role the eggs down there. And we always had to do that no matter how long we'd been on the

desert it hadn't been Easter 'til we'd done that.

When did your father die?

Dad died on my birthday on April the fifteenth nineteen fifty five. After I was married he always called me on my birthday to wish me a Happy Birthday. That is what I thought they were doing and the telephone call came the call was to tell me that he had passed away with a heart attack. Mother tried to make me feel that my birthday was more special because he died on that day.



Oral History: Interview Release Form

In view of the historical value of this oral history interview, I Merene R. Humphrey
knowingly and voluntarily permit Rosa Story the full use of this
information for educational purposes.

Signature Merene R. Humphrey + Date May 1, 1997
