VERNON LEAMASTER September 3, 2004
HUNTINGTON, UTAH
EMERY COUNTY ARCHIVES
WWII PROJECT AND SWINGING BRIDGE ORAL HISTORY
Interviewed by Dottie Grimes

Dottie:Let's start by you telling us your name.

Vernon: My name is Vernon Leamaster, and the biggest part of my life was spent coal mining. I did work 17 years as the superintendent of the Emery County Roads.19. . . I think it started in 1969. Real nice people to work with and it was a good part of our life.

Dottie: Where were you born? Were you born here?

Vernon: I was born in West Hiawatha, Utah. That's three miles west of the town called Hiawatha. They pulled it down in 1925.

Dottie: How long did you live in Hiawatha?

Vernon: Ten years.

Dottie: Did you enjoy living there?

Vernon: Yes, I sure did. It was the best town.

Dottie: I've heard that those who lived in Hiawatha never got over Hiawatha.

Vernon: Well, it was really a nice town. There were all kinds of people–Greeks and Japs and they just all got along together and it was really a nice community.

Dottie: Who were your parents?

Vernon: My parents were John Martin Leamaster and Millie Whiting.

Dottie: When did they come to Emery County, or did they?

Vernon: Well, they moved. . .they married in Springville. My dad had homesteaded in Castle Dale and . . .?

Dottie: Do you have brothers and sisters?

Vernon: I have. . .altogether there was 14 of us. I was number 13. I'm the only one left.

Dottie: Did they live around here also?

Vernon: Well, they lived in Castle Dale and Price, Hiawatha, Provo and then into Huntington. . .

Dottie: Tell us about how you met your wife.

Vernon: Oh, I met her at school. . .down town. There's a dance hall down there in Cleveland and they had dances.

Dottie: Was that the same as the Davis?

Vernon: Yes. The Davis Hall.

Dottie: Who were her parents?

Vernon: Her parents were Ed Jensen and Maude

Dottie: Who were her brothers and sisters?

Vernon: Harriet, Ike, Ted . . . Hey Leora! We were just talking about your mom and your dad. I named Harriet and Ike and Ted and Lindora

Leora: Bill, Glen, Ted, Lloyd, Fred.

Dottie: Where did you live; where did you grow up?

L: Right there on main street in Cleveland.

Vernon: Where the city park is now. . .

Dottie: Where did you go to school?

L: Cleveland Elementary.

Dottie: So you met before highschool?

Vernon: Ninth grade and eight grade.

Dottie: When were you born? Tell us how old you are.

Vernon: I was born in 1915.

Dottie: How many children do you have?

Vernon:We have four. William Kay, he lives in Wyoming. Darrel he lives here. He is in charge of the Special Service District. Lynn, he lives. . .and

Dottie: I know Darrel well. He is a really nice guy. You began working for the roads–Emery Roads.

Vernon: I started working for them in 1965. I worked for Hiawatha and then my brother and I bought some coal mine property. . .and we operated that for 18 years.

Dottie: Oh! And what was the name of that?

Vernon: Leamaster Coal Company

Dottie: I think I have a history you wrote about that. Did you write a history?

Vernon: Yes I did.

Dottie: How long did you say you operated that mine?

Vernon: We were up there for 18 years–lot of hours.

Dottie: How did the business go?

Vernon: It didn't go very good. We didn't have any money to start with and everything we made had to go back into the business. . .(Inaudible)

Dottie: So was the Road your favorite job?

Vernon: I believe I enjoyed it more than anything else I did. I worked for the state for a few years and when Floyd Brinkerhoff retired, why they asked me if I wanted to take the superintendent job, and I really enjoyed that. The people I was working with were all right!

Dottie: Who were they?

Vernon: Walt. . .Scovil. . .Jeff Childs. . .Nielsen. . . Roy Jensen. . .I can't remember them all. Boyd Jensen, Mike Jensen.

Dottie: What were your responsibilities?

Vernon: To oversee the roads–the maintenance, mostly. When I started there was only 60 miles of oiled roads in the county. 1500 miles of road and 60 of them was oiled. So it was just mostly, those first few years trying to maintain all of those dirt roads so people could get over them. When I started, we had five road graters. One stationed in Green River and the rest . . .around the county. We did have a loader and four dump trucks, and we maintained the roads. . . we were pretty scant on money.

Dottie: Well, that was the roads through the towns and out on the desert?

Vernon: . . .Well, it was mostly scattered all over the whole county–a big area.

Dottie: Did you do office work or were out in the fields?

Vernon: Well I had a secretary Cheryl Ware, now. She came in and she worked in the office.

Dottie: So did you work actually on the roads or did you go check on what was happening?

Vernon: I . . .did a lot of travel between here and Green River. Green River is down there all alone. Eventually we hired more men. All we had was one man working there. He had a the biggest area in the whole part of the county.

Dottie: What did he cover?

Vernon: He covered everything from Green River down around the lower San Rafael and up into Goblin Valley. . .

Dottie: So the county maintained the roads on the San Rafael Swell?

Vernon: Yes.

Dottie: What were the challenges of maintaining the San Rafael roads.

Vernon: Snow for one thing. We used to have snow.

Dottie: That's what I hear.

Vernon: Winter time brought a lot of trouble with snow. Several years there was trouble with the area where the cattle and sheep were.

Dottie: What area was that where they were grazing?

Vernon: Down by the San Rafael River over to Temple Mountain and all that area down there.

Dottie: We are doing a special project on the San Rafael Bridge and anything that pertains to that, and I read that at the dedication of the Bridge in 1937, they said, "This bridge will open up and give access to more grazing lands to the ranchers and it will be a benefit to generations yet to come." So, in your opinion, is that what happened? Did it open up grazing –for more grazing?

Vernon:Well it was there when I started. But it certainly was. The San Rafael river used to be, in the spring

time, it would almost. . .there was a crossing right there above the bridge over the rocks and that's where they could cross with cattle and equipment, trucks and that. . .but in the springtime, that was impossible. As soon as they got the bridge in opened the access. Up until then it would be into June before they could even cross it. So it was an asset. The CCC built that bridge. That was in 1930s.

Dottie: I heard that it was part of the Buckhorn. . .I know they were improving the Buckhorn Draw road, and then they went on from there to build the. . .

Vernon: It was the only road to the South. It was long before the Interstate

Dottie: What other significance did the bridge have like tourism or sight seeing. Was there a lot of that?

Vernon: Everybody wanted to get out on the desert, like they do now. Not quite as many people. Everybody wanted to get out there–Easter time especially.

Dottie: Well today, I read that the swinging-bridge area is one of the most visited parts of the San Rafael.

Vernon: We put in a lot of work on that bridge–it took quite a lot of maintenance to maintain it.

Dottie: Like what?

Vernon: We had to replace boards, and adjusting the cables on it. The swinging bridge, you know, if a road grader or a truck went on it, why then the other end would come up about 18 inches, then it would come over and it would drop back down. It is quite a unique bridge. It and the Dewey Bridge that crosses the Colorado. They were built on the same order.

Dottie: That is neat. It is a unique bridge. I am glad they are restoring it. I think it is getting run-down again. That's why we're doing this project.

Vernon: They don't let anything cross it. . .

Dottie: Is there anything else about the bridge that you can share with us. Was there any vandalism or anything like that?

Vernon: No there was not vandalism there. We had some of the other bridges where they would take some of the siding off of it. We didn't have much vandalism.

Dottie: When you did repairs on it, did the level of the river ever factor in when you could go to do repairs?

Vernon: No we never had to worry about the river because we only changed one plank at a time or . . .

Dottie: How did the grazing go. Did permits increase or decrease during your experience?

Vernon: I don't know I wasn't into cattle, but surely there was more use–a lot more cattle and sheep down there. Seemed like to me there now they keep getting cut back on the number of cows. . .It was a massive piece on the other side of the river and to get to the other side you had to cross that. Then people could travel anywhere. Then the mining – got into uranium mining. Mines got in there by the San Rafael River to Mexican Mountain. There was a lot of uranium mining or prospecting. There wasn't much uranium brought out.

Dottie: I hadn't thought of mining, but most of it is on the other side of the river. At that time before I-70 was the bridge the only access to the other side of the Swell?

Vernon: Yeah. It was. Our roads go all over down to Temple Mountain, but until I-70, that was the only access to that area.

Dottie: Were you supervisor of the roads when they brought that freeway through?

Vernon: No. I worked on it though. I worked on Eagle Canyon Bridge. I worked for the state for a few years.

Dottie: What year did the Interstate go through?

Vernon: Golly, I don't know. It wasn't through when I left there. I left in 1965. I can't remember, it seems like it was about '77, but it may have been later than that.

Dottie: Tell me what you know about Eagle Bridge. That is pretty amazing.

Vernon: I think the height of the bridge is 200 feet, and the length of it was 300. There was a lot of preliminary work done on the bridge before it even started. I worked on the inspection team. . .they had to drill accurately-- contractors had to drill down there 75 feet . . .I don't know how many miles we'd have to drive in order to get to the one side of the canyon from the other. We'd have to bypass the canyon and go way down and back up to get to the other side. It seems like it was 17 or 18 miles we'd have to travel to get to the other side. When I left, it still wasn't quite spanning, it still had to come together.

Dottie: Were there any disasters out on the San Rafael Swell while you were. . .any fighting over grazing rights.

Vernon: There were plenty of battles over sheep and cattle.

Dottie: Do you remember hearing about any of those battles?

Vernon: (Inaudible) . . .there are quite a few wild horses in that area.

Dottie: Are there roads through the wild horse areas? Did you see a lot of them?

Vernon: Yes. We didn't see a many, but a lot of cowboys–used to be recreation to go down there and catch wild horses. It was recreation to go down there and take wild horses go down there now and bring in the herds and sell them because there were no restrictions. But I never was around when that was going on. It was quite a scene–quite a fete to see 150 head of wild horses.

Dottie: Yeah. Wild horses are an amazing sight.

Vernon: They are.

Dottie: We are also doing a project on World War II. How old were you when Pearl Harbor was bombed? In 1941?

Vernon: I was 26.

Dottie: Were you married?

Vernon: Yes.

Dottie: How long did you date? I didn't ask that.

Vernon: We were married in 1936. We met five years before that.

Dottie: How long have you been married?

Vernon: Sixty eight. Going on sixty nine.

Dottie: Do you know what your posterity is? How many?

Vernon: Let's see, what have we got? 20 grandchildren? And 28 great-grandchildren. That's pretty close.

Dottie: Do you remember where you were when you heard that Pearl Harbor had been bombed?

Vernon: Hiawatha. I was working in the coal mine at Hiawatha.

Dottie: Did you live up there after you were married?

Vernon: Yes. We lived up there for eight years.

Dottie: My mother lived there off and on with her sisters for a few years.

Vernon: What was her name?

Dottie: Sammy Rowley. She was born in 1910; she probably lived there before you.

So you have lived in Emery County a long time–all your life, so you have made a big contribution.

During the war, do either of you remember. . .You had children, so you weren't drafted or anything? Did you serve in the war?

Vernon: No. I was working at Hiawatha.

Dottie: Were there any changes you felt when the war started? You were living through the depression–did you feel some prosperity, some patriotism? What changes did you feel?

Vernon: Well, after Pearl Harbor, there were lot of patriotism. Everybody got in and found what we got to do. There were some changes. Lot of. . .I knew some of the girls from here that got jobs welding down in California.

Dottie: Do you remember participating in any of the recycling like scrap metal?

Vernon: Oh yeah. . .

Dottie: Newspapers were recycled and kitchen grease was recycled, do you remember any of that?

Vernon: I remember rationing of sugar and tires and things like that.

Dottie: How did the rationing affect you?

Vernon: Oh, it didn't hurt anything. We could survive on it alright.

Dottie: Did you have a car?

Vernon: Yes.

Dottie: Were there times when you couldn't go anyplace because you didn't have the gas?

Vernon: Well I guess we stayed home because of gas--Gas and tires. We never were hurting.

Dottie: Did you travel much anyway? Where would you go if you did travel? To family or ?

Vernon: Yes. always. We made quite a lot of trips out to California and the Redwoods and up into Canada.

Dottie: Did you take your family with you?

Vernon: Part of the time. . .when we were in the coal mine industry, we did very little traveling–all that hard work.

Dottie: Tell me how you feel about Emery County? What are the pros and cons of this area?

Vernon: I don't think there is any place where people are as considerate and concerned about each other. . .I'm satisfied right here.

Dottie: How long have you lived in this home and where else have you lived in Huntington?

Vernon: We came here in 1944 and have lived here since 1944.

Dottie: In this home?

Vernon: No. We built this home in 1962.

Dottie: Where else did you live?

Vernon:Oh we lived in Dr. Hill's house, and lived in my brother's house . . .then we built this home.

Dottie: You lived in Dr. Hill's house on main street?

Vernon: He had a little . . .home. . .

Dottie: Can you tell me about some of the businesses in your earlier life? What were some of the businesses and who were the doctors?

Vernon: Dr. Hill's the only one that I know. Oh yeah, and Dr. Schirer. When Hill left, then Dr. Schirer came here.

Dottie: When did she come here?

Vernon: In the 50s. She stayed here and had her office down here in . . . She stayed here until she was 90.

Dottie: Really?

Vernon: Yeah. She fell down and broker her hip and they moved her over to the rest home over there.

Dottie: How long of that time was she doctoring?

Vernon: How long? About 20 years. She was in her 70s when she came here.

Dottie: Do you know how to spell her name?

Vernon: SCHIRER Glenna Schirer

Dottie: Had Dr. Hill left by then?

Vernon: Yes he died.

Dottie: My grandmother was a nurse and midwife and worked with Dr. Hill.

Vernon: What was her name?

Dottie: That was in the early 1900s. Her name was Maggie Rowley. They called her Aunt Maggie. Where were your babies born? Were they born at home?

Leora: The first one was, but . . .

Dottie: What doctors did you have?

Vernon: Dr. Hill.

Dottie: Do you miss any of the stores that used to be in Huntington? Did you have a favorite market?

Vernon: I don't know. I miss the Guymon Merc.

Dottie: Where was that?

Vernon: Down where Fun Fabrics was. Guymon Merc. . .the post office and everything was right there. . .

Dottie: Do you remember the hotel? What was the name of it?

Vernon: Brasher Hotel

Dottie: I miss the old mill.

Vernon: Yeah. That was a big part of the county.

Dottie: I moved here in '75. I loved all the products.

Vernon: Sandbergs built that mill. . . You'd bring grain in there and they'd make flour out of it. It was a big part of our lives.

Dottie: Do you remember the first car you saw or the first telephone?

Your lives span such a variety of technology. Do you remember the first car you rode in?

Vernon: I was probably eight or nine years old before I saw a car. We even had a stage that would drive you to Hiawatha. I think it had about four seats in it. . .

Dottie: Do you remember the first airplane you saw?

Vernon: The first airplane I saw landed on a beach. The Air Force used a beach at Utah Lake.

Dottie: When did you get your first car as a married couple?

Vernon: I had a car when we got married.

Dottie: Great. That was still the depression.

Vernon: We felt pretty lucky. . .

Dottie: How did you two feel about the Japanese during the war?

Vernon: There were some in Hiawatha.

Dottie: Did your feelings change after the war started?

Vernon: No, but they just disappeared.

Dottie: Did they go to Topaz?

Vernon: I don't know. Your reaction to Pearl Harbor was to bring up the hate.

Dottie: What about the ones who lived here?

Vernon: You wouldn't know if they part of the war or not. You soon felt sorry for them.

Dottie: What about Germans. Did you have any Germans that lived here?

Vernon: We didn't have any Germans. It seems like the Germans stayed in Germany.

Dottie: How did you feel about the war? When we joined did you feel we were justified?

Vernon: Well, before Pearl Harbor, I thought we ought to be helping out there with Hitler taking over everywhere.

Dottie: Can you tell me how you felt when we dropped the bomb on Pearl Harbor (meant Japan) Did I say Pearl Harbor? I meant Japan.

Vernon: I thought it was the thing to do. I really did. If we hadn't a done it how many more people would have died?

Dottie: Do you remember hearing when President Roosevelt died in office while the war was still going? Did that affect you?

Vernon: I had kind of got disappointed with Roosevelt. I thought he was giving in to Russia and made a lot of

. . .like stopping our armies from going in to Berlin. If he had left Patton in there, the war would have ended sooner and there would be a lot less people killed, and the Germans would have surrendered to American forces, but they went ahead and let Russia go in there first and caused fuss over Berlin–lot of mistakes were made, and I was really disappointed in the way he handled things.

Dottie: How did you feel about Patton during the war?

Vernon: I thought he was all right!

Dottie: What about McArthur? Were they heroes to you?

Vernon: Well, Patton, 'course he done some real good stuff in the war, and he wasn't always looking for the glory in the things. I think they got a bad deal.

Dottie: You seem to have followed the war a lot. Do you remember if you had an opinion about Truman? Did you know him at all as vice president? When he took office, do you remember having any. . .

Vernon: He was a fiery old boy, but he was the one that had the courage to drop the bomb on Hiroshima. I think he done right. I don't know if anybody else would have had the ability to go ahead and do that? I think he worried about it. Most people didn't realize what the atomic bomb would do until it was dropped. Nobody's going to drop anymore.

Dottie: How did you feel about the fact that we went in and helped them restore and build again.

Vernon: Well, I guess that is just how we are. . .

Dottie: That is a good summary. Did you feel any differently when the war was over–the economy or anything in your life style?

Vernon: The industry part seemed to boom from there on.

Dottie: Did you feel that boom in your life?

Vernon: I was in the coal mining business (laugh).

Dottie: How did you get your news on the war. Did you take a newspaper or did you have a radio?

Vernon: Oh, we had newspapers and we had a radio.

Dottie: Do you remember what your reaction was when Truman fired McArthur?

Vernon: I thought McArthur was doing the best he could. I think he was trying to show his authority over the president, and you got to have cooperation . . .

Dottie: What year did you retire?

Vernon: 1984 (?)

Dottie: What have you done since you retired?

Vernon: We've done quite a bit of traveling since we retired. I haven't stopped working.

Dottie: That's what I hear, that there is more work after you retire.

What are some of the places you've traveled?

Vernon: We went on a mission to South Carolina.

Dottie: What kind of mission?

Vernon: Help out the branch and work on part member families. . .

Dottie: I appreciate all the information you have given us so much. Thank you so much for sharing your history and the information on the bridge. You are wonderful people and have a great reputation around here, and have contributed so much to the county.

Emery County Oral History Project
Consolidation of Schools
Vernon Leamaster
Interviewed by Bernice Payne, August 10, 2010

Bernice: I am visiting today with Vernon Leamaster of Huntington, Utah. Vern, would you please give us your full name and your birth date.

Vern: I am Vernon Leamaster. I was born the 10th of July 1915, in West Hiawatha Utah, Carbon County Utah.

B: Tell me about your family, how many brothers and sisters.

V: I was the 13th child of 14 children born to John Martin and Millie Whiting Leamaster. Several of them died in infancy.

B: How long did you live in Hiawatha? I didn't realize there was a difference in West Hiawatha and Hiawatha.

V: West Hiawatha was up in Miller Creek Canyon about 3 miles above Hiawatha in Miller Creek Canyon. There was a town up there that had a store, and a school, a coffeehouse and a few homes along Miller Creek wash. Probably about 50 houses or something like that.

B: Did your father work at the mine up there?

V: He was a deputy sheriff and my brothers worked up there.

B: How long did you live up there?

V: I lived there until 1925. We lived there ten years. I was about 10 years when we left there and moved to Provo.

B: What were some of the things that you did for fun up there?

V: Mostly sleigh ride. Miller Creek Canyon was a steep walled canyon. The houses were on different levels. We lived in the top end of town and I could get on my sleigh and go clear to Hiawatha in nothing flat. It was 3 miles down the track and you could just go. In the summertime, I and my friends just wandered the hills there and up in the mountains and I spent my life up in the hills and rocks and stuff like that.

B: Did they have certain holiday celebrations up there as a town or anything like that?

V: No they didn't. We had ballgames. We would go down to East Hiawatha and they had a ballpark down there and they had the 4th of July ballgames down there.

B: Was it a bigger town?

V: Yeah, Hiawatha was a lot bigger. They had a big amusement hall, jail house and all the good stuff.

B: After you left Hiawatha where did you go?

V: We went to Provo and bought a home there and went to school there for a few years. One of the reasons we left Hiawatha was that my sisters weren't able to go to school there. There was no place for them to go to high school—they had to go to Price and live in the dormitories. So my brothers decided we'd move to Provo and go to school. So we move there. I was in the 3rd grade. My sister was in the 1st or 2nd and Carrie in the 6th and my other 2 sisters were in high school.

B: So did it go from kindergarten to 6th grade?

V: No they didn't have a kindergarten. Just a 1st grade to 6th. There were two big rooms and 3 grades to a room.

B: So after 6th grade, you would have to be in a dormitory in Price.

V: Well, let's see, no I think it went to the 8th grade. They would transport them back and forth from West Hiawatha to Hiawatha, then they had to go to Price. My brothers, well, Dell, my brother next to me lived in Price and went to high school that way. That was the main reason we went to Provo was for the schooling.

B: What did your father do in Provo? Did he stay in law enforcement?

V: No, after we left West Hiawatha he retired. We didn't have social security or nothing like that so my brothers worked and took care of the family. We stayed there two years and they closed West Hiawatha down and my brothers moved to the mine in Hiawatha to work. Then they started having cars so they decided they would buy a home here in Huntington and we would all move back there and they would go to work and we would go to school.

B: How long did you live in Provo before you moved back down here to Huntington?

V: Two years. We moved here in 1928. We bought the J. W. Nixon home. This is it right here. We had an orchard and stuff right here. We moved here and then my brothers were some of the first guys, along with others, that lived here and drove back and forth to work to the mines. The roads weren't very good. They had a lot of flat tires. But anyway, that's how we did it.

B: So in this home here?

V: No the home next door.(north) J. W. Nixon was the doctor. He had made a doctors office there and it took up a half a block. So we sold lots and then did this home.

B: When you were in school here, what were some of things you liked to do with your friends?

V: We played baseball when I was in the 7th and 8th grades. The ball field was just over there (east across the street). Then we did basket ball. When we got to be freshman in high school we played football.

B: What do you remember about the depression? How did that affect you?

V: Oh Boy, it was pretty rough! We moved here in 1928 and that was before the depression started. The depression hit about 1930. The boys worked at Hiawatha and they made good money, had cars and things, but after the depression.....well, they still had their jobs, but it was rough. Then they got in the CC's. They wouldn't let me in the CC's because my brothers still had jobs and making money. And we had enough money to keep the family. But the guys in the CC's they got a dollar a day. They'd send $25.00 home to their parents and that left them $5.00 and their board and room to live on. But that CC organization really accomplished a lot of work. That was one good government program that really worked. They ran the military at that time too. It taught a lot of guys how to run equipment and when they got out of it they could get other jobs. But I never got into it.

B: So when you were living at home during that time can you remember some of the things you had to endure?

V: Oh yeah. I had to work for 25 cents a day. We hauled hay and then stopped and we had to get our own dinner. That was something boy...you just didn't have much. But we had chickens and we could take the eggs to the store and buy a piece of candy. It was really some rough going. Things were rationed for quite a while. Even after we got started in to the coal mine, we had to ration sugar and gas and even into the 1940's when WWII started.

B: Did you spend much time down on the San Rafael?

V: We traveled all over down there and up in the mountains. We'd spend a lot of time fishing. My family took me and a friend up in the mountains when I was about 12 and put us in a tent and gave us a fishing pole and some bacon and oh yeah, we had some rice. I remember making rice pudding and raisins. But we stayed along the creek there for about a month and lived off fish and bacon.

B: Was there a particular part of the canyon that you liked the best?

V: It was just up there in the right-hand fork and up above Old Folks Flat a little ways, where it was good fishing.

B: What about the San Rafael?

V: We just went there a lot of times during the depression. My brother, Dell bought a seine. What that was was a 30 foot net. And we'd take it down to the San Rafael River and one person would stand on the shore and the other would take it out into the river and back. You can't imagine how many fish you could catch. We'd get white fish and suckers and lots. We'd go down to Fuller's Bottom and down by the San Rafael bridge and go seining. Seining was lots better than a line and hook. Just one guy was stationed here with one end of the seine and the other guy would go down and come back up around with the other end and you'd have a whole bunch of fish.

B: What did you do with them? Did you sell some to try to make money?

V: No, just for our own use. There was no limit on what you took or anything. We'd eat them and bottle them. We bottled a lot of them.

B: Do you remember the Wilberg Resort?

V: Oh yes.

B: Tell me what you remember about that?

V: Maybe I better not tell you all of that? (chuckles) It was really the best place. Every Saturday night they'd have dances over there. The kids that were playing in the high school band would be the orchestra and play for the dances. We'd just have a real nice time. Wilbergs had a swimming pool and yards and stuff like that. We had a good time and come home.

B: It sounds like they had a real set-up over there. Concessions and everything.

V: Yes, and then during the week, we could go over there and they had a pond and we could go fishing and they had a swimming pool and they had a fox farm it was really a great place. It was a big part of Emery County.

B: You were how old when the second World War broke out?

V: Let's see, it broke out about '39 or '40. I was working in Hiawatha when it started.

B: Did you have to go to war?

V: No I didn't. I worked in Hiawatha and then they kept the coal miners there and then I quit Hiawatha and we started our own mine up in Mill Fork. So I never did get in the armed services.

B: What difference did it make in your daily life?

V: Oh I guess we had more trouble with food rations and stuff. But we didn't really suffer. We had our own mine and we had trucks and a little trouble getting tires for the trucks. But we had all the food we needed. We raised a big garden, and chickens and had an orchard.
I remember one year my dad raised 2 pigs and they were really nice pigs. He butchered them and hung them up in a tree and the next morning they were gone. It didn't bother him too much. He just said, "Well, I guess some body needed them worse than we did."
But that was one thing I remember. But people here---out in the rural areas fared out a lot better than people in the cities. I don't know how the people in the cities managed, especially during the depression. My brother, Von went to the city to work and he told about a guy that always brought his lunch bucket and would go off and sit to the side to eat his dinner. And finally he went over to the guy and looked and all he had in his bucket was potato peelings.

B: A lot of the families from the city came to the country if they had families they could move in with. I remember my grandma and grandpa had family that moved from Washington State to live with them.

V: Yeah it was pretty rough trying to live in the city. Boy I hope we never have another one. But the way we are going now, I just sweat it out.

B: When did you start courting your wife?

V: I guess I was about 15 when I first me her. It was down at Ernie's Hall. We went down there to a dance. We went together for about 6 or 8 years before we were married. We went to high school together. We had our mind made up I guess.

B: She must have really made an impression on you.

V: Oh yes, she sure did. We were married in 1936 in Price. I was just shy of being 21 yrs. old. So my mother had to go over and sign for me to get married. Leora was fine since girls could get married at 18.

B: Did you still have your Oldsmobile?

V: Yes, I did. We drove over to Price and got married and came back and at that time there was a lot of kids getting married and having these receptions all the time. And some of the people didn't have the money ya know to keep doing this and they were complaining about all the receptions. So Leora and I never did have a reception. We just had a little family get together.

B: Where was your first home?

V: In Hiawatha. I was working in Hiawatha at the time. We moved up there and lived up there in a mine-owned house. We paid $13.00 a month and they furnished us power and water for that. But then the wages weren't all that high either. My brothers and I had been working on this coal property so we decided to be coal miners. What a mistake that was. Anyway we left Hiawatha and Leora and I moved down here and we've been here ever since. We lived with my mother and dad and tried to run the mine. We went up in about September, but in December we had to give it up because it snowed so much and all we had to clear the road with for the trucks was a snow shovel. So we turned around and went back to Hiawatha and they gave us a job, which was fortunate. Leora and I moved back to Hiawatha.

B: Did you just keep the mine and reopen it?

V: Yeah, we opened it again in 1944 and stayed with it for 19 years before we went broke. But the mine industry changed. It used to be that everyone burned coal in their homes, but that dropped off and there were a lot of mines that went belly up. Spring Canyon and all those places.

B: Tell me about your family. Did you have children while you lived in Hiawatha?

V: We had a baby born while we were working up at the mine the first year, but it was born stillborn. So we bought a lot down here and had a memorial. Kaye was born in 1939 and Darrell was a year old when we moved here in 1944 and we have been here ever since.

B: Tell me the rest of your children while we're on this subject.

V: We had Edna Kaye in 1939; Darrel was born in 1943; then James and Terry Ann. So we have 4 children and the baby.

B: How do you see Huntington has changed over all that time. I'll bet you have seen a lot of changes in your life.

V: Boy I should say. We just had 1 church down on main street--one ward. I wasn't really active in the church. Leora was always active she was in the Relief Society, Primary, Sunday School and everything else, but I was not active. I didn't get active until—oh I don't know--quite a while.

They asked me to go to stake conference with them once -- after that I did get active. After that I was busy.

B: I remember when we were scanning in your pictures, you said something about your friends going down to Ernie Davis's Hall.

V: Oh yeah, down to old Shep's? You probably don't know about Shep.

B: I heard about him.

V: His old cabin is still down there isn't it. (Between Cleveland & Elmo)
He was a bootlegger. He was black and a big guy and his wife. He had 2 or 3 children in that log cabin. During the intermission at the dances all the guys would run down to Shep's to get whiskey. The only thing I remember is going down there to get a drink of whiskey in the middle of intermission and when this guy poured it out in the glass—I looked in the glass and there was a fly in it. So I looked at it and pretty soon set it down. But soon, Duane Ward said, "Here let me have it, and he flicked the fly out and drank it." That was funny, I'll never forget it.

There were a lot of bootleggers then--and Durrand's, they used to sell wine. I went in there a lot of times. They grew the grapes and everything. It was a different world then. Then I learned that whiskey was no good for you.

B: Do you remember talk about Butch Cassidy coming around?

V: Oh yeah, there were a few stories going around. Murnings had a ranch out where Nielson's are now. They claim that Butch came around a bit and wanted to trade them horses. If they didn't want to trade, Butch would take them anyway. So they'd trade him horses, and they'd go on down through the desert. I heard that happened after the Castle Gate robbery, but I don't know. I don't remember anything only the stories. That was before my time.

B: After your mine closed, did you retire then or did you have to find other work.

V: Darrell was working at the State Road. Then he found another job and he wanted that one so I took his job out on the interstate as an inspector for the State Road. I worked there and Drannan Seely was a commissioner and I'd been working for the State Road and he asked me if I wanted to be the superintendent of Emery County Roads, so I took that and did that for the rest of my work life, about 18 or 19 years. That was a really a good job for me.

Anyway, I want to say one sentence about alcohol. When I was going to seminary, there was a teacher there that would tell kids not to drink. He would do his hand like a pair of scissors and tell us, "Alcohol was just like a pair of scissors; it would give you a bad hangover and cut all the threads to your brain." I have really come to realize what a difference that has made to my knowledge. When I finally came to realize all of that and quit messing with the alcohol, I'd lost lots of my mentality. Alcohol for me is the worst thing that has ever happened to people. We didn't have drugs to worry about, but the alcohol was terrible on young people. I remember every time I had a hangover, I felt terrible.

B: He made a real impression on you then didn't he?

V: Oh he sure did. But I was too late for the times. I already used it and lost part of my brain. You pay the bill when you use it.

B: You used to do a lot of extraction work didn't you—for the church?

V: Yeah, Leora and I did when they first started it. We bought a computer, but we never did really learn much on it. We worked on that for about 5 or 6 years. They'd give us some little cards, the last bunch I got was 1000. Boy, we got them done, but we had a hard time with the computer. Anyway, we enjoyed it – down there in the family center.

B: Did you have certain traditions that you can think of that you did with your siblings or your own family? Certain holiday traditions?

V: We had the usual, Christmas and Thanksgiving. We had big family gatherings. Sometimes we had Thanksgiving dinner down at Leora's family and then Christmas up home.
We had our socks handing up and usually got an orange down in the end and then some candy and nuts and a little toy. I remember one time I did get a kiddy-car that had wheels that moved. But it wasn't much. That was in West Hiawatha. There was only one sidewalk there in front of the store for maybe a block and a half. I went down there a lot in that kiddy-car. When we left for Provo, my mother talked me into giving it to my neighbor they didn't have anything. I guess it was kind of like a scooter. One place for your foot and push with the other.

Darrel's grandson came the other day and he had a power scooter. Boy was he happy. I think it went about 10 miles an hour. A lot of changes in life.

B: What do you think has made you have such a long life?

V: (chuckles) I don't have any idea. It wasn't the alcohol I can tell you that. But I didn't have any of the serious sicknesses either.

B: Your mind is extraordinary to me. The alcohol didn't do too much I don't think to you.

V: Oh it did. It did a lot to me. I can really tell it. Anyway, I can't take it back at this point in my life. I never did smoke or anything, so what's wrong with my mind is from that. I guess I can attribute my long life to Mother's Oats. I had that every morning and I still do.
I think the Word of Wisdom is something we should really pay attention to. Not many people do, but you would save yourself a lot of trouble.

B: Were there many problems with diseases in your family before they had the vaccines?

V: I remember my dad fell off of his horse working at the mine. He fell on his hip and broke his leg and they didn't have x-ray machines or nothing like that. He had to lay in bed for over a year trying to get his leg to knit together. But it was 3 inches shorter than the other one. That's one thing I remember. But for the most part the whole family was healthy. Mother had a set of twins that died. One was stillborn and the other lived 3 weeks. That was in Castle Dale. Then she had another son that died when they lived in Sunnyside. Some of the family has died of cancer, but that's about all. But we have pretty much lived good long lives. My sister, Alice lived until she was 95 and now I'm 95.

Leora and I were lucky. She had some surgeries and such, but we did good.

B: How long were you married?

V: Well, we lacked 2 months of being 74 yrs.

B: That's wonderful. Absolutely wonderful.

V: Yeah, we were really fortunate. We didn't have any serious illnesses.

B: Is there anything that you want to say to your children or grandchildren as we finish this? Other than stay away from alcohol. (both chuckle)

V: The gospel is true. If everyone would just live up to the teachings of the church, it would take care of everything. I've lived on both sides, so I know what I'm talking about. But the peace and comfort that you get in your life just by following church council is worth it. If you have done something wrong, then go straighten it out.

Another thing that I think hurts people is the gossip. I had one thing that happened to me. I was at the beer joint and some gal asked me about something and I said, "Sure that's what happened." I have regretted it all my life. It was the biggest lie of my life. I tried to straighten it out. (cries) I never got it straightened out until about 5 or 6 years ago. It really messed me up. She is still alive and I talked to her, and she didn't even remember it, but I did. I worried about it for years. You say something like that and you can't get it back. That's it. People really need to be careful what they say. It can ruin lives. Be careful what you say.

B: I heard it likened one time to—if you take a feather pillow and let the feathers out in the wind and then try to pick up all of those feathers. There's no way you can. The wind has taken them every where. The same way with gossip, once you start it, you can't ever get it back.

V: Yeah, I agree. If people will just live up to the teachings of the church. In their lives and their marriages.