

# Oral History of

## Alice Roxie Westover Nielson

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Interviewer: Janet Peterson

Transcriber: Bernice Payne

Janet: Roxie Westover Nielson. Roxie lives in Ferron, Utah and has been an outstanding citizen of this town.

Roxie: On the eve of July 24<sup>th</sup> 1911, while the town was busting with great activity in preparation for the big 24<sup>th</sup> of July celebration the following day, my father, George Henry Westover excitedly raced his horse, Old Clyde, a mile to town to bring Dr. T. C. Hill back, riding behind him on the horse. This was the beginning of one of the three biggest events of my life. At 10:00 that night, I, Alice Roxie Westover, was ushered crying into the world with a loud slap on the barear from the doctor's hand. I was born with the cord wrapped around my neck, thus the hard spank to get me to breath. I was the 6<sup>th</sup> child of a seven children. My oldest brother, Henry was stillborn in 1899. Then came Lina in 1901, Zena in 1904, Eva in 1908 and I was born in 1911 and Caroline in 1913. She was a little blue-eyed blond. The only blue-eyed child in the family. We were very close and always slept together. A brunette and a blonde, few people thought we were sisters.

Jan: Okay Roxie, you born on July 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1911. Is that the day of your birth? In Huntington. Is that right?

R: Yes.

J: Go ahead. Why don't you just leave this written one and just tell your story.

R: Well, I'll go on with it. Lina was 10 years older than I and was always the big sister. It seems we were always looking forward for summer. And Lina's coming home for her summer vacation from her work or school. What wonderful summer's they were.

In late January of 1937, Lina had an appendectomy. Eldon took mom and papa, Caroline and me in to Salt Lake over snow covered roads as slick as glass to be with Lina during her operation. Afterwards, the folks came home and I stayed. I spent every day for two weeks, from 8:00 a.m. until 8:00 p.m. at the hospital with Lina. She was very sick with pneumonia and a stitch abscess. She knew she was going to die until the abscess broke. I was as happy as she was when she was well enough to leave the hospital and I was able to go home to Huntington. While in the hospital with Lina, Paul Nelson, my

boyfriend, sent me a red heart, satin cedar lined box with a mirror on the lid. It was filled with chocolates for Valentines. Stupid me, I took it to the hospital and all the nurses helped me eat the chocolates. I still have the box. I keep my embroidery in it.

J: Let me interject her Roxie. You are from Huntington, right? Paul was from Ferron?

R: Yes.

J: How did you meet?

R: Oh Eva told me there was a good looking man over there in Ferron, that I know you would like. He rides up by here every day on his black horse. And he is always a looking down at Caroline and waving at her and saying "hello" to her.

So I came over and stayed with Eldon and Daphne. They lived here at that time. So I came over and stayed with them for a while. She had to have an abortion because she was full of albumen. It was either her or the baby. So the doctor performed an abortion on her and I had to come and stay. I rode down town with Eldon to the post office and Paul came by and got out and went in to the store and looked at me and smiled and said, "hello" in his bashful way and so that was one time I spoke to him. Then on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July we had a big dance over to Wilberg's Resort. Everybody in the County would go over to this big dance. This was on the eve of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. I went with some girlfriends and we were sitting there on the side of the dance hall on a bench and I looked over and saw Paul and Harold Fish were sitting up behind us and I could see them talking to each other and looking around. Finally Paul got up and come towards me and Harold went the other direction. Paul asked me to dance and I danced every dance with him the rest of the night.

J: Is that how the romance was started:

R: Yes, that is how it all started.

J: Okay, let's backtrack a little bit and tell us a little bit more about your early childhood memories in Huntington. Just kind of tell what comes to your mind. Some of the exciting and fun things you did as a child.

R: I said ours was a happy family. We were taught to pray and to work and to share. May years on Easter our parents took us in the wagon up the canyon to Fish Creek where we could cook our dinners on a sagebrush campfire. Sometimes we would bring back a load of wood for the stove.

In the year of the Emery County-- Sanpete pow wow, at the head of Huntington Canyon at Miller's Flat papa took our whole family and we spent a week there and did we have fun. Papa was always good to take us with him when it was possible. I remember going with him after a load of coal. We left home at 4:00 a.m. in the morning so as to

beat other wagons there and be one of the first to be loaded. Papa let me drive the team and jolting of the wagon over the rough road caused such severe gas pains that I thought I would die. But I wouldn't say a word for anything, because driving was such an honor. Another time papa took me with him to Price with a load of freight. We camped at a wagon campground and slept under the wagon in a bed of quilts papa had made for us. The next morning papa unloaded the freight and loaded another load to take home.

J: What a fun childhood you must have had. How many rooms were there in your house?

R: There were 3 rooms.

J: That was quite normal in those earlier years. To have a very large family and a small house wasn't it?

R: Yes, there were 5 of us 7 with mom and dad. We got along just fine.

J: So all the girls slept in a bedroom?

R: No, mom and dad had the bedroom. Eldon had a couch and then we had a couch that we pulled out and slept on. Some of us slept on the floor.

J: And you did that for a lot of years?

R: Yes, we did. Caroline and I slept together and we cuddled then. We don't do like they do now. Everybody in their separate bedroom. When we were cold she'd turn her back to me and I'd put my arms around her and hug her up tight and get warm. And that's the way we would sleep. And then when we got tired, we turn the other way and she'd put her arms around me and we were very close that way.

J: And that's the house you spent you whole life in until you were married:

R: Yes, that was wonderful.

J: And you didn't even feel like you were being picked on?

R: Oh we were picked on a lot of times. We had our ups and downs. Dad never did...well as much as he ever did to me was raise his hand and say, "I swear I'll slap you." But that was as far as it went, he never did. I couldn't say that about moma. If we needed it we got a spank on the butt and we needed it sometimes.

J: Yeh, I think all children do at times. So, what did you do for fun and recreation.

R: Oh my word, we went skating in the winter time and sleigh riding and we had big

parties over to grandma's on Thanksgiving. We'd make a big ring and play fox and geese. It's such a fun game. The kids don't even know about it now. But it was so much fun. Then in the summer time all the neighbors would get together and play games and chase each other around. We just had lots of fun. Our girlfriends would get together and we just always had a lot of fun.

J: Did they have mutual then?

R: Oh yes. One time I and \_\_\_\_\_ Grange and Della Brasher and Della Brown we went to mutual one night, and we sat up in the gallery and we read the funny papers. And when we got through the Pres. of the mutual got up and said, "I think everybody in the audience has enjoyed this meeting tonight, but for 3 little girls up in the gallery reading the funny book papers.

J: That's probably the worst thing you ever did Roxie.

R: We had lots of fun that way. We'd go sleigh riding in the big sleigh. One time we went up to one of the farms, Reed Brasher's farm and roasted chickens.

J: And they were all taken legitimately???

R: I remember one time I came over here to a dance and I remember Ted Cox won a turkey. It was just before Thanksgiving. Ted and his sister, Pearl and her husband, and there were other couples that I can't remember right now and they all came to my house and mom and dad were gone and we got our big pressure cooker out and the men went out and jerked the feathers off the turkey and cleaned it and I washed the insides out good and we cut it up and cooked it in that pressure cooker and we had it for breakfast about 6:00 that next morning.

J: Probably most kids now days wouldn't know how to clean a turkey.

R: Well, it was a lot of fun. Ted remembered that a long time too. Any way that was another good time we had too.

J: Tell about the pies.

R: Faun Geary was getting married and her parents were giving her a big wedding dinner and they set the table clear the full length of her lawn and mom and aunt Lou (?) had to cook for it. They had everything there was to eat and they had to cook for it and they made lots and lots of pies and put them in the back bedroom on the bed. And about 4 of us girls decided we would take some. We went on the north side of the house there and climbed in and each took a couple of pies. We took them across the street and one of the

girls had a car. So we put them in the car and took them to the girl's place and the next night we had a big party and we had a lot of fun with those pies.

J: Didn't your mom miss them?

R: They missed them all right. They never knew where they went, and I didn't dare tell momma either. But they were sure good pies. We really enjoyed them.

When momma raised turkeys when Caroline and I were younger, we were the turkey herders. Momma had a turkey gobbler that liked to wonder. He'd take the hens up the road toward the mill and Caroline and I would have to go up and chase them back so we were called the turkey herders. Around Thanksgiving dad would take the turkeys and hang them upside down under our shed and then he would go along and with his sharp knife and stick his knife down their throat. And when they would squawk, they would give loose of their feathers and Caroline and mom and I would come along jerking feathers off and we would just clean them off good. And when we got them cleaned up that way we would take them in the house on the kitchen table, we would clean their insides out. One turkey, we hadn't started to clean it out yet, all naked of its feathers got up and started to walk off the table. We about had a fit. But momma hit it over the head or something and killed it. We clean them that way and momma had a lot of sale for these turkeys.

J: Did you ever have to feed the turkeys?

R: Oh no, momma did that. But it was Caroline's and my job to clean up the house while she took care of the turkeys. One night after we had been picking feathers all day, Caroline had a nightmare. She raised up in bed and screamed and her arms up high and said "oh feather". She woke us all up.

J: How many turkeys did she have at one time.

R: Oh about 25 or 30. It was enough to take care of. It was an experience. We were glad when she gave up the job.

J: What did you have for clothing. Did you have a Sunday outfit?

R: Oh yes. When we would go to school, we would always have to come home and change our clothes. Because we would have to wear them the next day. We wore our outfit for a week, unless they were soiled or something. Then on Sunday we would have one certain dress just for Sunday. That was the only nice dress we had. Mother was a wonderful seamstress and she made all our clothes. When I went into Salt Lake, mother came home with some black velvet and made me a dress. It was beautiful. Lina had strung some beautiful crystal beads. Eldon was going to the Thanksgiving dance and I went with in my beautiful velvet dress and went to the dance. But I got sick and he had to

bring me home. When I came in the house, tears were rolling down my face and momma said my tears were just like the crystals on my dress. She felt so sorry for me.

When I was 12 years old papa moved moma, and I and Caroline and Eldon into Provo. Momma took borders to help Eldon through college. We were there for 2 years and I went to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and jr. high. and then after the 2 years we moved back home and I finished high school and graduated from Huntington High. Lina got a school in Salt Lake. She taught school in Elmo and Huntington and then to Salt Lake to teach school. It was at that time that she took her attack of appendicitis. I lived with my aunt while I stayed and took care of Lina. I walked up there to the hospital every day.

When she got that bad abscess, I wasn't old enough to call the doctor. Aunt Carol had to. (I was grown at that time. It was when I was going with Paul) But anyway, Lina just knew that she was dying. The doctor came and worked on it for a long while it was clear full of puss. As soon as he got it all cleaned out she got well.

When that was over I came home with grandpa Petty's step son. He was a cripple. But I got a ride home with him. When we were coming down Price Canyon, he turned the car off and we just coasted down. Clear from the top. I was a complete nervous wreck. I was so glad to get home.

I have to go back to my high school days now. When I was a senior in high school. The school was having an opera. I wanted to have one of the main parts so bad. I would be in the play with a boy from Cleveland. He was such a tall handsome boy and I had a case on him. I can't remember his name now. It's gone. Anyway, I went to Stella Lambert to have her help me with the lines. I was going against one of my friends that thought she was a good singer. In one place I had to sing with this boy. So Stella helped me with the words and we tried out. And I won. I was so proud. We had our dresses come from up to the Costume House. Mine was a green velvet with a fan and it was the most beautiful dress you ever saw. I was so proud. I sang a long with him. It was one of the best experience of my high school days.

J: Now you meet your lovely Paul.

R: In the summer of 1934, I met Paul Andrew Nielson at a dance at the Wilberg Resort. We went steady for a year and we were engaged for two more years. During this time I worked and bought me a sewing machine, a washer, a vacuum, silverware, a pressure cooker and several other things. Momma made me 7 quilts and canned many cases of fruit, vegetables and jellies for me. I really had a big trousseau. When Paul could get time off of the farm, he cut lumber on the mountain and had lumber sold and we had lumber for our home. Paul went to church and was baptized. We went to the Mantle Temple and was married in the morning session on July 1st, 1937.

We lived with his folks for several months while Paul made adobes. Then Willie Thompson, his brother-in-law built us a little 3-room adobe home. These are the three rooms right here. My address is: 650 West Mill Road. On March the 3<sup>rd</sup> we moved in and was very happy even though we had very little money to live on. It was hard. We couldn't afford much. Paul built this home for \$300.00. He hauled coal for his brother-in-law, Thompson, for his work on building the house and other things for him to help. Then

my uncle Frank Petty came and plastered the house for us. It was well made. Just a real cozy little place. Three years after we were married, on Feb. the 10<sup>th</sup>, 1940 we were blessed with a beautiful little blue-eyed daughter. We named her Alice Ann after Grandmother Westover. Four years later on May the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1944, a little brown-eyed baby daughter was born to us. We thought she too was beautiful. We named her Paula Elizabeth after her father and mother Nielson. On Jan. the 18<sup>th</sup> 1951, 7 years later, the Lord send us another little girl. She was a pretty little blue-eyed blonde. And looked just like her daddy. So we named her Roxanna after her moma.

Paul and I worked in the MLA together, both of us as counselors. We enjoyed it very much. We also worked in the county Farm Bureau. He was vice president and I was county President of the women's organization. I was then voted into the State Women's Board as the State Farm Bureau at which time I was on vacation through Arizona and California. Later I was voted in as vice chairman of the State Women's Board. At leadership we banqueted at the Utah State University in honor of Mr. Chase, Dean of the college. I was given great the honor of giving a tribute to him in front of an overflow crowd. My sister Eva was there and she was so surprised. She didn't know that I was giving this tribute. I was really thrilled and honored.

J: Were you involved with the Hereford Association?

R: No, Paul was the head of the Cattleman's Association. We would go into all of the Cattleman's Conventions. One night after their banquet, we came home and it was after dark. The snow was snowing bad and that canyon...man we couldn't hardly see where we were going. It was just before Paula was born in May and I was looking out one window to see if we were going off the side and he was looking off the other side trying to keep going. Then all at once it disappeared. We drove out of it before Price. There was a car stopped and we stopped to help them and all at once Eva and Harry (Conover) drove up and they had been behind us all the time. If we'd know that each other was that close together we would have felt a lot better.

J: That is one thing that never changes. We came back from Salt Lake just a few weeks ago in the same circumstances. So it is the same now as it was back then.

R: We did that several times. Especially when I was in charge of the Farm Bureau. I always had a lot to do with it. Paul was so good to take me all the time. But I got so tired of it I decided to give it up. Barbara and I were good friends and so she ran for my position. I needed to be home.

J: How old were your children at this time.

R: The children were all away to school or gone except Roxanne. She stayed home and cooked and took care of her father.

J: Roxie do you mind if I just read this tribute for you. This is a tribute given to Roxie Nielson by Barbara Whitbeck at the Farm Bureau Banquet on Nov 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1969 at the Terrace Ballroom and there were over 700 people present. It is a real special tribute to you.

It says: Tonight it gives me great pleasure to present the distinguished service award to a person whom I have worked with for many years in Farm Bureau. This person has been on the Women's committee with me. I have learned to love her for her many special traits. She is always thinking of the other guy and always puts their thoughts and actions first before she ever thinks of herself. She always shows her love for people in her own special way. She always has a special cheery hello for everyone that she sees. She's there with a smile that warms you from head to toe. Paul and Roxie Nielson live in Ferron, Utah in Emery County and are ranchers and run pure-bred Hereford cattle. They are the parents of three daughters, Alice Ann, Paula and Roxanne. They are prominent people in their town and are respected citizens for their thoughtfulness of other and their concern for the betterment of their community. They also have 3 grandchildren and are very proud of them. Roxie has served in the LDS church as a Sunday School teacher, Primary teacher and has been a member of two YMIA presidencies. She has been a class leader in the Relief Society. And has been a visiting teacher for 30 years and at the present time she is still in this position. She was county chairman for the polio drive for 10 years. Also president of the Ferron's Association of Women's Club who were instrumental in television into Ferron. She was a 4-H leader for several years. She was also a member of the beautification committee when Ferron was awarded first place for the cleanest town in the State of Utah. She has served on the County Republican's Women's Club. She now is county republican chairman of Emery County. At the present time her and Paul are chairman and co-chairman of the ward budget and are busy raising funds for remodeling the church.

One of the things they have sponsored is teenage dances and the teenagers have surely enjoyed these well planned and supervised entertainment.

They were head of Peach Days Celebration and on the committee to put on a good time for all. They put Emery County on the map for the diligent work on the Greenbelt amendment, and had a float they oversaw in the Peach Days Parade. In Farm Bureau, Roxie has been a real stand-by. Not that she has ever just stood by, but has always been ready and willing to always do a little more than was required of her. She served as Vice-Chairman for two years and then as Chairman for 15 years. If was her push that brought the talent show and got it started in Emery County. And two winner have attended the National Convention and placed high. In 1960 she was elected to be on the State Board of the Farm Bureau Women's Committee during part of this time. Roxie has won the love and respect from all that have been in association with her. She has helped plan state convention programs, and was responsible for all of the table decorations for the banquet at Leadership Week held in Logan, Utah. The decorations were sponsored by Emery County and were so outstanding that they were really sensational. You could be sure that Roxie had had a hand in this. She present the tribute to Dean of College, Mr. Chase. She is indispensable to Emery County Farm Bureau Women and is still serving as county chairman at this time.



Today's farm women is a Jill of all trades. She must know as much as her husband in this business of farming. She must be a business woman, homemaker and mother. She must be a farm manager, record keeper, budgeter, manager, field worker and mechanic. On the other hand she must be an expert on the big and little tasks of home and heart. A meal maker, dish washer, organizer, troubleshooter, redecorator, seamstress, landscaper, and above all a community leader. And always she must find time to look her most attractive self for dad and the youngsters. For all these qualities and more she deserves the top metal of the year. She is the most industrious, most versatile, most wholesome woman on this earth and I am sure all of you that know Roxie will join me in saying, "Roxie, you have all these traits."

J: This is the most beautiful tribute to you Roxie. I am so glad you shared it with me.

R: She loved me. That's why she said such nice things about me.

J: You must have been such an outstanding lady then as you are now. But we have so much more energy when we are younger.

R: Much more. I wish I had a little bit more now.

J: I am really excited Roxie. I didn't know you had done all of those wonderful things. You are a special lady.

J: When you and Paul were married and as your life together progressed, you acquired quite a lot of farm land in Emery County and Paul was a very industrious farmer wasn't he? How many acres of farm land did he farm?

R: Oh I know he had over a 100 acres of farmable ground.

J: And do I remember right that the site that the Millsite Dam is on now was purchased from you for the dam?

R: Yes, we got \$50,000.00 is all. It is a huge piece of ground. Up to the BLM ground. We asked \$75,000.00 for it. A lawyer said it was well worth it. But then the irrigation company wanted him to be their lawyer, so we had to settle for the \$50,000.00. The people of Ferron thought we should of given it to them and they treated us real bad. It started in about 1969 and took about 2 years to build.

J: Well, it was good of you guys to do that. It sure is a great advantage to the farmers.

R: The one thing that we were so hurt over was that they never acknowledged that that ground belonged to Paul Nielson. I am so glad that I have made a book of all the ground and all the building of the dam and all the work. Each of my children have one of these book.

On Sept. 16<sup>th</sup> 1969, we were sitting here having breakfast and Alice Ann came in and on her way down she stopped and she said, Niles said to tell you that the cows are in the corn and so Paul ran to get his horse and saddled it and got on. One of the Behunin boys came and he said tell you mother that she better go out. Paul has been hurt real bad. He was out by the corner of the home. We don't know what happened. If Paul had a heart attach or a stroke. But the horse went over with him and the horse's head hit Paul and he was unconscious. I screamed. My neighbor heard me and called a paramedic. It took 45 min. for the ambulance to come from Castle Dale. When they loaded him in the ambulance, they gave him a blessing. I followed him to Castle Dale, and then to Price. They called for a plane, but they were all in Idaho. So they changed ambulances and drove 90 miles an hour to get him to Provo. We rushed in afterwards and the kids came right in. We were there with him. They operated on him and he lived for 5 hours. The doctor said if he would have lived he would have just been a vegetable. So it was a blessing. But it was a shock. A terrible shock.

J: That is a very sad thing Roxie. Emery County is a very small county. Every town has their own ambulance now, because of the grant money we get. So I guess we have progressed a little bit.

R: The girls stayed with me for about a week with me.