



## Vernell Rowley's Oral History

Suzanne: I'm Suzanne Anderson. I am here today with Vernell Rowley at his home. It is January 29th, 2020. Vernell, what's your full name and birth date?

Vernell: I'm Vernell Rowley. I was born on December 7th, 1934. I was born here in Huntington and lived here all my life.

Suzanne: Do you remember any stories about your birth? Did your mom ever tell you?

Vernell: I was born in my mom's house right here in Huntington on 333 North Main Street.

Suzanne: Who were your parents?

Vernell: Neil Rowley and Ester Grange Rowley.

Suzanne: Tell me about your mother.

Vernell: She was a very active lady. She was in different organizations. She loved to cook, sew, and make quilts.

Suzanne: What did she look like?

Vernell: She was medium height, a medium build. She had a kind of light, brownish hair. She turned gray really quickly. The whole Grange family turned gray really early. My dad was a farmer and he worked in the coal mines. He was quite tall and skinny.

Suzanne: Can you remember their personalities?

Vernell: Yeah, they were both quite serious.

Suzanne: What is your earliest memory?

Vernell: Going up to my Grandpa's and playing around up there with an old dump truck that he had.

Suzanne: Where did he live?

Vernell: He lived up there at the top of town in Huntington. The we would go to the farm and do a lot of work around the farm. Then we'd go out to the desert for Easter and holidays and what not. We'd play around down there. They kind of liked to explore quite a bit and they would take me with them.

Suzanne: Is that where you got your love for the desert from?

Vernell: Yes.

Suzanne: Do you have any siblings?

Vernell: I have a sister, Ester Jane Rowley.

Suzanne: Is she older or younger than you?

Vernell: She is four years younger than me.

Suzanne: Were you two close?

Vernell: No, we were kind of spread apart there. We got acquainted when we were teenagers, stuff like that. But as far as when we were young, I don't remember any other association with her other than just being with her.

Suzanne: Did you have a best friend growing up?

Vernell: Probably Greg Wakefield and Burton Guymon. Burt was the only neighbor I had and Greg lived way down there. Parry Wakefield and my dad were quite close, so we got together and ran around together. Then when I got into Jr. High, why there were quite a few more buddies I chased around with: Kenny Johnson, Bruce Johnson, Vernon Sitterud, and LaGrand Mathie. I hung around with them till I graduated from High School.

Suzanne: Are you still friends with them?

Vernell: I've lost touch with them.

Suzanne: What did you do for fun?

Vernell: During school days, why we would play baseball and basketball. I did a lot of hunting and a lot of fishing and a lot of trapping. I kept on the go all the time.

Suzanne: Did you like school?

Vernell: Yes, I quite liked it.

Suzanne: Did you get good grades?

Vernell: Well, average. But I really enjoyed baseball. I was left handed, so I got to be first baseman all the time. When they needed a pitcher, why I broke in for a pitcher too, being left handed. Then I played basketball. I didn't have too much to do with track. As far as other sports, I was pretty active.

Suzanne: Did you play basketball in high school?

Vernell: Yes, North Emery Rangers.

Suzanne: I bet, as tall as you are. Do you have any great memories of your school days that you would like to share?

Vernell: Other than playing basketball and baseball, we went on geology trips and stuff like that. A few little historical trips down along the desert, up in the mountains what not, but it was mostly just sports.

Suzanne: Was it during these school trips that you gained a fascination with history?

Vernell: I had that at a really early age. It always impressed me how hard them old timers had to work to make a living and we only get flashes of that a little bit. Yes, I've always had an interest in history. Then I've always been interested in them old dug outs. How them women lived in those old dugouts is beyond me.

Suzanne: I think every woman would agree with that too. That took a lot of grit, didn't it?

Vernell: I guess. Leaving those homes over in Mount Pleasant and Fairview and then move over here and live in a dirt cellar. It's hard to believe that.

Suzanne: I agree. What did you want to be when you grew up?

Vernell: I started out wanting to be an engineer. I went to college for one quarter and then I got a job with the coal mines and forest service. So, I dropped out. I worked thirteen summers for the forest service doing range maintenance in the spring and summer. Then in the fall and the winter when they closed the stuff down, I'd got to work in the coal mines. I did that until 1958, somewhere along there. Then I started in the coal mine full time.

Suzanne: What coal mines did you work in?

Vernell: I worked in Bear Canyon up Huntington Canyon, Leamasters in Mill Fork Canyon, then I went to Wattis, and then to Hiawatha. I stayed in Hiawatha until I retired.

Suzanne: What lessons did your work life teach you?

Vernell: The forest service taught me to be really active and get out in the wilderness and check on things and live a life style that nobody else was living at that time. Then the coal mines taught us how to live. We always had plenty of money. We never went without very much.

Suzanne: Can you describe what Huntington was like as a child?

Vernell: It was really pretty. Well I knew everybody. I associated with pert near everybody. Over the years, why it's kept getting further and further apart until now when I go to the post offices, I don't know anybody. I don't get to visit with anybody unless I go to the Historical Society and something like that. It's really changed. Since they put the power plant in, all the old times have more or less left or died off and new ones have come in. It's a different world entirely right now. For me anyway.

Suzanne: I can see that. It's like these communities are transitioning from a very family oriented, tight knit settlement to a bigger, less interactive place. It used to be very tight knit.

Vernell: They were. There were a lot of good times together. There were a lot of parties in the canyon and parties on the desert. Now, unless you belong to a church or a ward or something, very seldom do you get out on these socialized parties and stuff. Before, why the whole community got together.

Suzanne: It's sad that we lost that, isn't it?

Vernell: Yeah. All the mines closed down; so that the ones you were acquainted with in and socialized with have left. It's just turned into a new world.

Suzanne: It has. Do you remember any stories or legends about this area that you were told growing up?

Vernell: Well yeah. There is a dugout right there by the Lawrence Bridge, down right there as you're going to the desert. Then there was a McArthur dugout right there. The story goes that a woman was out hanging clothes, in the spring of the year, during high waters. She heard a lady starting to scream and scream and scream. She looked over there and this lady from Orangeville was there. Her husband got killed in a coal mine out there by the Dragerton area and she took the horse and buggy out to get him and was coming back. She didn't tie the coffin down and when she crossed the river, the water started to raise the coffin up. She dropped the lines of the horses and got stranded. The lady hanging her clothes heard it, went out there, and got the horses and the other woman across the river.

Suzanne: That would be so hard to have to drive a team and horse to go pick up your husband.

Vernell: And she was from Orangeville. I guess in those days, all the people in Emery County had to work in the coal mines in Carbon County to keep the farms going. The same up there with Marshall. They claim, in the winter time, he'd bring his family into Huntington and they'd live in here and he'd go out to a coal mine in Carbon County and work. In the spring of the year, when the mines slacked off, he would go back and get his farming in and he'd go back up to what they call Marshall Brush now and work on the farm. He'd go back and forth until he got killed in the coal mine out there. So, they sold their farm to Byron Howard. I don't know who has it now.

Suzanne: And where is Marshall Brush?

Vernell: Up there by the Power Plant.

Suzanne: Oh, up Huntington Canyon area. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Vernell: Do you want to know what I miss? I miss the ones I used to run around with. Mortell Sealy, Don Clements, and Owen McClenahand. We would all get together and go on a geological trip or a historical type of thing. I miss them real bad. Oh, Lindora Drapper, Leora Koford, and Inalee Magnuson. They used to get information for us for the history stuff and we'd go exploring. That's what really got me going on it. The Gunnison trail, the Fremont Trail, and the Arabian Trail, and all these trails around here. They brought that to our attention and we'd got out exploring. Old Mortell Seely and his boy walked that Spanish Trail from Walker Flat out there on the other side of Emery clear out to the Green River Crossing.

Suzanne: Did they really?

Vernell: They really did. I was one of the drivers and I'd pick them up and drop them off and pick them up. And Burt Oman did it too. He'd pick them up and take them and they finally made it all the way through to the Green River.

Suzanne: Do you remember what they said about that experience?

Vernell: Yeah. That's where we got the knowledge for that Spanish Trail brochure we put out was through their experience walking the trail. They would tell us about where things was, the water holes were, where the train was. Stuff like that. Owen McClenahan took us out on the point of Little Cedar Mountain one time and showed us right where that Spanish Trail went right through there. He said, "Now if you don't believe me, you get you a hundred head of horses and see if you can get down there on those ledges. See if you can get those horses up on Cedar Mountain." So sure enough, that's the only way you can get a hundred head of horses right up there through that gap.

Suzanne: Okay. Now let's talk about you and Kathaleen. When did you two meet?

Vernell: Kathaleen was from Orangeville and I was from Huntington. We met one day at a party at...

Kathaleen: We met over at the cafe in Orangeville. Olive's Cafe.

Vernell: Olive Magnuson's.

Suzanne: Where was that located?

Vernell: Just below the Canyon Club.

Kathaleen: Across the creek.

Vernell: You crossed the bridge and just go up the canyon a couple of blocks and it's right there on that side of the road. We dated until December 8th, 1955 and that's when we got married.

Suzanne: How old were you one you met?

Vernell: I was twenty-one when we got married.

Kathaleen: I was eighteen. We met when Vernell was twenty. We had known each other a year and a half.

Vernell: Anyway, I turned twenty-one on the 7th and we got married on the 8th.

Suzanne: How many children did you two have?

Vernell: Three. Karen Rowley Mikkelson, Chris Rowley, and Lisa Rowley Pickering.

Suzanne: Do your children all live around here or have they all left the area?

Vernell: Chris is still here. Karen and Lisa are up around the North part of Salt Lake.

Suzanne: How has being a parent changed you?

Vernell: I haven't got any idea. I just changed and you just become a parent.

Suzanne: It's quite an experience isn't it?

Vernell: Yeah, you just change as time goes on. The landscape changes, the country changes, lives change, things change, and people change. So, you change with it.

Suzanne: Who is the most important person in your life?

Vernell: Kathaleen.

Suzanne: Is there any experiences you want to share that you two went through?

Vernell: Everything we have ever went to, we went together. We are pretty close.

Kathaleen: We have done a lot of things.

Suzanne: Two great partners, huh?

Vernell: Yeah.

Vernell: Well, the Historical Society sent us down to Colorado, to the convention down there where they first started getting organized, the National Convention. We was interested in that. Ron Kessler came up here and went with us a few times. Then the Historical Society nominated Ron Jewkes to stay with the Spanish Trail and he went to Nevada and to Colorado with them and all over the country with that new outfit exploring. He would tell us what took place, where this trail was, and different things in our Historical Society meetings. Other than that, we helped point the trail out, put the signs up, and we'd take GPS readings of the different locations of the Spanish Trail around the country, where it went from Green River down to Oak Springs in Salina Canyon. That's about as far as we went with the Historical Society. Yeah, we've had quite a lot of experiences on that Spanish Trail. We followed the Spanish Trail cut off from Salina Canyon down to Parowan. We found the Fremont Trail down through there. We come across the place they called Bone Valley and we kind of thought that was where Oliver Fuller's remains were. That's what the name of the valley was. But when we went down to Parowan, they didn't know nothing about it. They just figured that was an old valley, so I don't know for sure where that Oliver Fuller is. The day he died, it took them two days to get to Parowan and then it took them a day to get the teams lined up and another two days to get back to bury him. So, I'm sure the coyotes had him pretty well ate up. When he died, the Indians didn't have anything to bury him with because they left all their tools and supplies down there on the point there with Fremont.

Suzanne: What did he die of?

Vernell: Exposure.

Suzanne: Oh.

Kathaleen: Starvation.

Vernell: Yeah, starvation. They were out of food. They were out of everything and abandoned all their goods and everything they had and they went about forty miles further.

Suzanne: So, they were just trying to find their way through and they had nothing.

Vernell: Yeah. So, that was one of the experiences we had. Pointed that out and trying to locate where that grave was. I don't know to this day where its at. In fact, I don't think anybody does. And I still don't think Bone Valley was named.

Suzanne: Okay, that's neat. You've done a lot of great things with your life.

Vernell: We've had a lot of good experiences.

Suzanne: And you have a lot of wealth of knowledge in your head too.



Suzanne: Did you have any favorite relatives?

Vernell: Well, Kevin Rowley was probably my favorite cousin on my Dad's side. That's the only relatives I chased around with.

Suzanne: Tell me something you've done that you are most proud of.

Vernell: Being associated with the Historical Society.

Kathaleen: Playing basketball.

Vernell: No, not basketball. We did a lot of basketball playing. We would go out to Dragerton even after we were married and out to Helper, all over the county playing basketball and baseball. One time, we were out there playing baseball and this Holy Roller church was right there. They would start screaming and carrying on like you couldn't believe and that ball game just stopped right there. We just stopped right there and paid attention to what was going on over at that church.

Suzanne: I bet they'd never seen anything like that!

Vernell: Nope, they'd never seen anything like it.

Suzanne: Let's talk about the Historical Society. Tell me what you've been involved in.

Vernell: Well, we started in the Historical Society about 1980 when Roma Powell was president of it. Then I got to be president and that got us interested. It just swelled up and got to be a really exciting adventure for us. I mean we got involved with the Spanish Trail Association and several others. Montell and them guys took their horses and we started a trail ride at the Red seals and went across at Wilsonville. We got in wagons, on horse back, and on foot. I got some pictures of it I'll have to show you. I finally got involved in this uranium mine. So, we would go down there and take histories and take pictures and find out where those old uranium mines was and stuff like that. That took us several years. Owen McClenahan and I were one of the prospectors at one time and stuff like that and one right after another we got interested in.

Kathaleen: I've made quilts and bonnets and helped them raise money. The Historical Society sold them.

Vernell: These quilts, the Historical Society got started on them.

Suzanne: Is there anything else you'd like to add about your involvement with the Spanish Trail? Or anything else we have left out?

Kathaleen: We helped put up the geology sights going down through the desert. We did that.

Suzanne: You've been a big part of Emery County history.

Vernell: Yeah, Emery County, Owen McClenahan, Steve Williams, Mark H. Williams, and Montell Seely worked at that geological sight out through the desert. We had a program there. Leora Kofford, Mark Williams, and the Historical Society rededicated the Swinging Bridge. The schools went down. We had a big crowd down there. You can't believe the crowd we had. Kent Peterson was a commissioner then. We've got a pictures of him cutting the ribbon to re-dedicate. There's been a lot for things going with that Historical Society we've been involved in. And boy, I'll tell you, we've enjoyed every minute of it. It's been one great adventure.