

**Pioneer Voices of Zion Canyon**  
Oral History Project

Interviewer: Dan McGuire

Narrator: Austin D. Excell

Date: March 24, 2004

Location: N/A

[Speakers are identified: DMcG = Dan McGuire; AE = Austen Excell. Transcriber is Alison Keith. October 6, 2004]

DMcG:        Okay, this is an interview with Austen D. Excell on the twenty-fourth of March, 2004. My name is Dan McGuire and I'll be talking to Austen and asking him the questions that have been provided on the Voices of Zion Canyon, on the family and social life in Zion Canyon. Please say your name and then spell your name.

AE:            My name is Austen Excell. A-u-s-t-e-n E-x-c-e-double l.

DMcG:        Where and how long did you live and or work in the Zion Canyon area?

AE:            I came to Zion Canyon in March the fourth, 1930 with my family, my dad who had a job building the superintendent's home in Zion National Park, and we came here for that purpose.

DMcG:        What was your dad's name?

AE:            Dewey Excell.

DMcG:        That's D-e-w-e-y.

AE:            That's right.

DMcG:        What was your mother's name?

AE:            Ethel.

DMcG:        Ethel? E-t-h-e-l.

AE:            Right.

DMcG:        And where did they come from?

AE: Panguitch.

DMcG: Oh, you lived in Panguitch.

AE: I was born and raised in Panguitch, up to the age of ten.

DMcG: And that's when you moved up to Zion Canyon.

AE: I was ten when we moved in Zion Canyon.

DMcG: Please describe the members of your family and how many people were in it. And if you can give me names of brothers and sisters.

AE: My dad and mother and myself was the oldest child and I had three other brothers younger than me and one sister.

DMcG: What were their names?

AE: My next younger than me were Ward Excell.

DMcG: W-a-r-d.

AE: Right. Then came Venece, the girl.

DMcG: V -a-n-e-c-e?

AE: V -e-n-e-c-e.

DMcG: V -e-n-e-c-e, thank you.

AE: And the next was Mack Excell, my brother.

DMcG: And how did he spell his first name?

AE: M-a-c-k. The next Deemont.

DMcG: Deemont?

AE: D-e-e-m-o-n-t. And one other was later born in Springdale after we moved here, Gary Excell.

DMcG: So all of your brothers and sisters except for Gary were born in Panguitch?

AE: That's right, yes.

DMcG: Okay.

DMcG: What brought your family to live in Zion Canyon?

AE: My dad had a job with his brother to build the superintendent's home in Zion. They were rock masons, and at that time they wanted to build the superintendent's home out of rock.

DMcG: What was your father's brother's name?

AE: John Excell.

DMcG: Did they have a company or were they just private independent (workers??)?

AE: No, they were independent; they just worked together. They all, they both learned the trade from their father who came over from England to build missionary homes in Panguitch. He was a convert to the LDS church.

DMcG: Do you remember the superintendent's name at that time? For the home they built.

AE: I believe it was Patroe (??).

DMcG: Patroe (??)?

AE: Uh-hn.

DMcG: But you're not sure.

AE: I'm not sure.

DMcG: Okay.

DMcG: What year did they build the home?

AE: They were building it in 1930.

DMcG: How long did it take to build it, do you know?

AE: It was done by late summer in 1930, I believe.

DMcG: Is the home still standing?

AE: It is still being used by the superintendent.

DMcG: It's the superintendent's place even today.

AE: That's right.

DMcG: Okay.

AE: They built many other homes out of rock in Zion. Of course, we never did move from Springdale. We lived here, so all the retaining walls, the Arch Bridge, all that stuff was built by my dad, my brother, and his brother.

DMcG: They built the Arch Bridge, huh?

AE: Yeah. They claimed they'd had their hands on every rock that went in that Arch Bridge. [laughs]

[ sound of telephone ring]

DMcG: Did you all live in one house?

AE: Actually, when we first moved to Springdale, we lived in tents. There was no housing.

DMcG: [laughs]

AE: Later we did manage to live in different houses, but they were small and uncomfortable.

DMcG: In Springdale itself, (\_\_\_\_the houses??). Can you tell me about any of them, where they are?

AE: The first place we lived was right where the Visitors' Center is now, the old Visitors' Center.

DMcG: It's now the Museum.

AE: Yah.

DMcG: You had a home there.

AE: A tent.

DMcG: A tent?

AE: Yes.

DMcG: Did most people in the area live in tents?

AE: No, they had houses, but there was no extra (houses??).

DMcG: If you wanted one, you had to build one.

AE: That's right.

DMcG: So where was your first home?

AE: Where my sister and her husband lives now. They built that home.

DMcG: And what's your sister's name?

AE: Venece.

DMcG: And—

AE: Clark.

DMcG: Venece Clark.

AE: Uh-hn.

DMcG: And you built that home.

AE: Well, my father did.

DMcG: And your family lived in that home?

DMcG: What year would that be?

AE: Oh, that would've been 1942 or three.

DMcG: So you were in this area for about twelve or thirteen years before you had a home.

AE: Oh, yes.

DMcG: So you lived in tents that many years?

AE: Yeah, tents and sometimes we, when we could find a house that was vacant we could rent (\_\_\_\_??).

DMcG: Well, that must have been quite a challenge.

AE: It was.

DMcG: With a large family.

AE: The first tent we lived in there was no electricity then, no TV!

[laughter]

DMcG: TV wasn't even invented then.

AE: No, it was not. And no electricity. We used kerosene lamps.

DMcG: Can you tell me about the work-related activities that you can recall doing with your family?

AE: My father always had jobs for us to do. We did raise a garden and we had to keep the weeds out of the garden, harvest the produce. Ah, my dad was always interested in rock, and taught us to quarry ( \_\_??)rock and lay rock.

DMcG: So were you a rock man too?

AE: Ah, I did some of that, yes. Quite a bit.

DMcG: What non-work activities do you recall doing with your family, for example, recreation?

AE: Well, there was always church. And we had, like, entertainment for ourselves, dances--we had dances, and sometimes a movie would come into town. Or I remember a lot of plays that came in from outside and brought entertainment.

DMcG: Where did they perform these plays?

AE: Well, they were usually at the Old Church.

DMcG: The Old Church, which was where?

AE: In the middle of town.

DMcG: Where the Pizza 'n Noodle is now?

AE: Where the Pizza 'n Noodle is now, yes.

DMcG: And so the dances were held there. Were the musicians local or did they come in?

AE: Yeah. They had the Springdale Band, they called it, even playing pitchforks.

DMcG: Playing pitchforks?

AE: Saws. Yeah. [laughter]

DMcG: Do you recall how you play a pitchfork?

AE: Well, they were just playing on the tines, yeah. And the saw, they'd use like a violin.

DMcG: So many of the instruments were home-made?

AE: Yes, yes they were. Of course, there was people that played piano and saxophone ("saxophone").

DMcG: So the music was pretty good?

AE: Pretty good. Unusual, but pretty good.

DMcG: So were these weekly events, the dances?

AE: Almost weekly, particularly when the CCC came into town.

DMcG: We'll talk about that later, we'll cover some of that.

DMcG: Did you attend church with your family and if so please describe this? What was it like?

AE: Well, church was, was all right. That was what you done on Sunday morning. You, the kids get dressed up in their best and went to church.

DMcG: Do you remember about how many members there were of that church?

AE: Gee, I would say, forty or fifty.

DMcG: Oh, really?

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: Were you part of the organizations of the church as a young man?

AE: Yes, I held young man's priesthood.

DMcG: Did you have leadership responsibilities as you grew older?

AE: Oh, when I was older, of course I became the first mayor of Springdale.

DMcG: Ah. The first mayor.

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: What year was that?

AE: 1959, I believe.

DMcG: And how long were you the mayor?

AE: Seven years.

DMcG: Seven years.

AE: I was appointed for three years by the County Commission and elected for one four-year term.

DMcG: Was 1959 the year that Springdale incorporated?

AE: Yes, I think so.

DMcG: So you were appointed the first mayor by the County Commission. Then you ran for re-election for four more years.



AE: That's right.

DMcG: That's a style in itself, isn't it?

DMcG: Do you have a religious view of the land here and if so please describe it. Do you feel it's a spiritual place?

AE: Well, maybe not so much that - some, of course - but the thing that ( ?? ) is the beauty of the land, and the climate.

DMcG: The beauty of the land, and the climate. Can't beat 'em.

AE: That's right.

DMcG: Do you think your religion had much impact on how you and your family felt about the Zion area?

AE: Well, it had some impact, of course, but not entirely.

DMcG: Outside of your family, who were the people you saw the most when you were growing up?

AE: Well, we always had a lot of friends, three, four, five boys in my grade in school spent the days together.

DMcG: What kind of activities did you do, when you were together?

AE: Climbing all these ledges, and entertaining ourselves.

DMcG: No mischief, of course.

AE: No, very little. (laughter.) I wouldn't admit.

DMcG: Can you tell me the names of any of your childhood pals? Are they still here?

AE: Most of them are gone now. That was a long time ago.

DMcG: Moved away, or they've passed away?

AE: Passed away.

AE: Raymond (??) Gifford was one of them. Alan Ruche (??), I think he's still alive but he's down in Texas. Ortho Christensen, but he's dead.

DMcG: Any others that you can remember?

AE: Oh, there's a lot of them. Owen(??) Crawford, JL Crawford.

DMcG: You and JL were buddies, eh?

AE: We palled around.

DMcG: Any your primary activity when you were together after school and on weekends was to climb around the ledges?

AE: Well, we done every canyon—

DMcG: Any (secret / favorite??) canyons?

AE: No, not particularly. We just liked them all.

DMcG: Did you play with children other than your siblings? Well, you just answered that question.

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: Did you have much of a relationship with your brothers and sisters when you were growing up? Did they pal around with you?

AE: Well, yes, the older ones did, yes, of course.

DMcG: Kind of watching over you?

AE: Well, I was kind of watching over them, being the oldest brother.

[laughter.]

DMcG: Were there other organized activities in the Zion Canyon area like dances, games or parties? You talked about that some. Organized by someone?

AE: No. Of course, the bishop was the main character in town and he probably organized most entertainment.

DMcG: Can you remember the names of any of your bishops?

AE: Bishop Alvin Hardy.

DMcG: Was he one of the early ones?

AE: He was one of the earlier ones, and he was bishop for a good many years, all the time when I was growing up.

DMcG: Oh, they stayed being bishop a lot longer than they do today.

AE: Oh, yes, he stayed—

DMcG: So all that time he was your bishop.

AE: Yes.

DMcG: Is he still alive?

AE: No. He's dead years ago.

DMcG: Okay.

DMcG: There's a question here: If you spent time outside when you were young, how much time was this and please try to describe it? I think we talked about that.

AE: Well, whenever daylight came, we were outside and stayed till dark, as a rule. Yeah, we spent a lot of time outside. The weather was always nice and being so much different than where I was born and raised up to ten -- we left Panguitch in a snowstorm on the fourth of March and got down here and the alfalfa was almost ready to cut.

DMcG: Kind of like paradise, eh?

AE: A new country.

DMcG: Good reason to leave Panguitch, eh?

[laughter]

AE: Well, we never went back.

DMcG: If you were married at the time you lived in Zion Canyon, was your spouse from the area? How did you meet her?

AE: I met her when I was twenty-three years old working at that time for Lockheed Aircraft in Burbank, California. Of course, that was the only work at that time, defense work, and my wife was working there also. She was from Malaka (??), Minnesota.

DMcG: Tell me your wife's maiden name and spell her name.

AE: Helen Bjurman. a Swede.

Bjurman, yes.

DMcG: And you met her at Lockheed, where you were both working?

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: What did you do for Lockheed?

AE: I was a radio drill operator. We were building at that time a B-38.

DMcG: Oh, boy. The Lightning. The B-38 Lightning. You were building those.

AE: Yeah. Also the Con - E.

DMcG: The Super Constellation?

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: How long did you work for Lockheed?

AE: Ah, I worked there for a little over a year, and then I was called in, drafted into the service.

DMcG: Into the Army?

AE: Into the Air Force.

DMcG: What year was that?

AE: 1943. My wife and I were married on May the second 1943. Two weeks later I was drafted.

DMcG: Wow. Where did you go first? Where was that station?

AE: Went down to Anaheim, California.

DMcG: For basic training.

AE: Yah, for basic.

DMcG: And then where did you go?

AE: Oh, let's see. I was in several different camps. I think out of there went to Biloxi, Mississippi.

DMcG: You remember the year you went there?

AE: That would have been 1943.

DMcG: And what did you do--

AE: That wouldn't have been it. Yeah, 1943.

DMcG: Was that for schooling?

AE: That was for airplane engine mechanics schooling, yes.

DMcG: How long were you in Biloxi?

AE: I would say about six months.

DMcG: And then where did you go?

AE: I went to Amarillo, Texas.

DMcG: To be assigned to a squadron?

AE: Not yet. No, there was more training. And from there--

DMcG: What kind of training was it at Amarillo?

AE: That was also engine training. Maintenance.

DMcG: Those are (??) engines, that you're talking about?

AE: I was eventually assigned to B-24 bombers. That was a radio engine, (nine sonar ??) radio engine.

DMcG: B-24s. That the Marauders?

AE: That was the, no, the heavy bomber at the time. Yeah, Marauder, you're right.

DMcG: Where was your first squadron, then, where was that located?

AE: The first time we flew was in Boise, Idaho, overseas training, in Boise.

DMcG: Were you a member of a flight crew?

AE: Yes, I was a flight engineer.

DMcG: Okay.

DMcG: So you logged a lot of hours on a B-24.

AE: Yeah. Thirty-five missions.

DMcG: Missions overseas?

AE: Overseas.

DMcG: And what campaign? Where were you?

AE: Part of those were in Germany, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Poland.

DMcG: Those were bombing missions?

AE: That's right.

DMcG: Wow. Thirty-five missions. Contact missions.

AE: Four or five of them were (Pareski??)?

DMcG: Oh. That's a biggy.

AE: That was a biggy.

DMcG: Did you ever get injured?

AE: Yes. Not personally, but we were shot up several times.

DMcG: Did the plane ever get shot down? Did you have to parachute.

AE: Yeah, no. We never had to parachute. We had to crash-land once.

DMcG: One time. Was that from the (Pareski??) raid?

AE: Yup. We had two engines knocked out there, got back to the base and lost another one on the final approach. The landing gears were, hadn't come down and locked. We had to come in on the belly.

DMcG: Were you ever captured by the enemy?

AE: No.

DMcG: Did you ever receive any medals?

AE: Oh yeah, yeah.

DMcG: What kind? Can you tell me? (Air??) medals?

AE: Oh, for different operations we got different areas.

DMcG: Did you get a Purple Heart?

AE: No. I wasn't injured in any way. I had the back of a turret I was operating on shot up, but I didn't--

DMcG: Never got injured?

AE: Never touched me.

DMcG: Wonderful.

AE: The Old Boy was setting there beside me, many times.

DMcG: Were you employed during your early years in the canyon?

AE: Yes. I worked in maintenance, built roads and curbs, and building and utilities.

DMcG: For Zion National Park?

AE: That's right.

DMcG: And what year did you begin work for them, can you remember?

AE: Well, that was in, that would have been, in '40.and '41 (AK: 1940 and 1941]. I was working here when the job we finished here was done and there was no more work and then I went to California.

DMcG: To work for Lockheed.

AE: Lockheed, yah.

DMcG: I didn't ask you when you were born.

AE: December 9, 1919.

DMcG: Did your family build your house, and if so, what materials did they use (rocks, wood, etc...)?

AE: Well, it was mostly wood, some rock veneer trim.

DMcG: This is the home that is now occupied by Venece (and??) Clark. And so where did that wood come from, do you know?

AE: Well, I would assume that most of it come locally. There was a sawmill up on the ledges that they

DMcG: They were active at that time, and they were shipping lumber down in the Canyon?

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: So that home was built from that wood?

AE: I'm sure some of it, yes.

DMcG: Does the home look pretty much the same today as it was then?

AE: They have added on to it a little bit, yes.

DMcG: We've noticed a lot of long rock walls in the area. You have one in front of your home.



AE: Yes.

DMcG: Did you have any of these rock walls on your family's land, and if so, what was the purpose of the walls?

AE: They were put in mostly for retainer walls, to hold the earth.

AE: There's a lot of slope to the ground in the canyon, and the retaining walls hold.

DMcG: So the rocks that were used for the walls, did they come ...

AE: They all come from this area, yeah.

DMcG: In (Illinois??) when they clear a field, then they use the rocks to build walls around the field

AE: Right. There were a lot of that here. Fences were even built with rocks years ago when I was young.

DMcG: Do you need to take a break or anything?

AE: No, I'm fine.

## Section II: Wild Plants and Gardens

DMcG: Did you have a garden or did your family farm when you were in Zion Canyon, and if so, what plants? What were these plants used for?

AE: Well, your garden was your main source of food in those days, and so we planted vegetables of all kinds, raised fruit, fruit trees.

DMcG: What kind of fruit?

AE: Peaches, grapes, apples, pears.

DMcG: Apricots?

AE: Apricots.

DMcG: Pretty much all of them.

AE: All fruits. Almost anything but citrus would grow in the Springdale, Zion Canyon area.

DMcG: Primarily for food.

AE: Primarily for food.

DMcG: Was anything you grew used for medicine in any way?

AE: No, I think not. Probably a few herbs that grew wild were used maybe for medical purposes, like Brigham tea.

DMcG: Yes. That's something that you'd brew and then drink?

AE: It always, I don't know it's true, but they claimed it cleared your blood, sterilized your system.

DMcG: Were there lots of those? (?)

AE: No particularly. There's just something they drank. Kids never liked it. It was bitter.

DMcG: Did you ever drink it as a grownup?

AE: No, no.

DMcG: So you don't know if it really worked.

AE: No. I don't know that. I know a lot of people that swear by it, but it's an old wives' tale maybe. [laughter]

DMcG: Do you remember eating any wild plants while you were growing up in Zion Canyon? If so, can you name and describe any of them?

AE: Well, the only wild ones I can think of was elderberries they grew--and bullberries, up along the Sevier River. We used, they used to make jams and jellies.

DMcG: Bullberries?

AE: Bullberries, yes.

DMcG: Is that something that still grows around here?

AE: Oh, yes, they ( ??) round Panguitch, they take bullberries and make jelly out of it all the time.

DMcG: What does it look like?

AE: A little, very tiny red berry that grows along the streams. Well, they make good jelly and jam, very, very.

DMcG: Any other plants, that you can recall?

AE: No.

DMcG: Were any of these plants that you just described besides being along the Sevier River, were there any in Zion Canyon?

AE: No. Elderberries grow here, ‘specially at a little higher elevations, the Kolob area.

DMcG: All right.

DMcG: Were any plants used for medicine, and if so, which plants and how were they used? You described Brigham tea.

AE: Well, that’s the only one I can really think of that was used.

AE: Sacred datura grew here, but we were advised to stay away from that. Some people claimed--

DMcG: Did some people use it for medicine?

AE: I doubt that. They used to claim that it would make you blind if you handled it. There was

AE: ( \_\_ ??) here, the poison ivy, poison oak that grows here, that we stayed away from.

DMcG: You believed it would make you blind so you didn’t fool with the sacred datura.

AE: Well, that’s what they told us when we were kids, so we just didn’t ever deal with it.

DMcG: Were any plants used for decoration like wreaths, or trees, or bouquets while you were growing up? Can you recall anything like that?

AE: Well, all the flowers, most flowers we grew in the gardens, roses, lilacs.

DMcG: Some of the flowers were used within the homes for decorations.

AE: Oh, sure, sure, they used them.

DMcG: What kind of flowers other than (you've mentioned) roses and lilacs, what other flowers were common around here

AE: Daisies, dandelions. [laughter]

DMcG: I can grow those.

AE: Oh, yeah. Plentiful.

DMcG: Some people eat dandelions ("dandaelions").

AE: Yeah, dandelion greens. I never did eat 'em, but

DMcG: Did some people eat them?

AE: Well, I suppose they did.

They boil them. I know--boil them, kind of like spinach.

DMcG: Were plants used in rituals at all like wedding ceremonies and church-related events, and if so, how and which ones?

AE: Well, I'm sure they had some, yes, most all of 'em were used, yeah.

DMcG: If you gathered wild plants, what areas/places did you gather them from?

AE: Well, they grew, depending on the weather, we had a lot of rain, and they grow on the sides, most any place, and they used to even eat what they called bottle-stopper.

DMcG: What was that like? Can you describe it?

AE: It's like an onion. It grows out of the ground and you pull it up and it's like a small onion on it.

DMcG: What's underground is what you eat?

AE: Yeah.

AE: There's a hill up there we used to call bottle-stopper hill.

DMcG: Is that a local term?

AE: That's local. That's the only place I ever heard of it, right here.

(\_\_\_\_\_??)

AE: Probably it tasted more like an onion, but it wasn't as strong as an onion.

DMcG: As a kid did you eat them?

FIX

DMcG: Are they still in the area?

AE: Well, I'm sure they are.

AE: And they look like onions, from the surface.

DMcG: I'll have to keep an eye out.

AE: Green sprout, like an onion. If we had a good wet spring, they'd come up, a lot of them.

DMcG: Was there a time your family stopped using wild plants? If so, when and why?

AE: Well, I suppose as we got older we just quit using them

(\_\_\_\_\_??)

AE: Well, food came a little easier, and you didn't have to look for it.

DMcG: What did you use to heat your house? And if it was wood, what kind and where did you get it?

AE: Yes, it was wood. And sometimes, seldom, but sometimes coal. The type of wood we burned here was pinyon pine and cedar.

DMcG: Where did that come from?

AE: Oh, we always went on the east side of Zion to gather wood.

DMcG: Gather your own wood?

AE: Oh yeah.

DMcG: And you spoke of coal. Did someone deliver coal?

AE: Yes, yes. Some truck would go up and haul the coal from Alton (??) area.

DMcG: Do you remember the name of the company, by any chance?

AE: It was Alton (??) coal mines, is far as I can remember.

( ?? )

AE: Somebody would go up there and get it. I remember a fellow from Hurricane used to haul coal through here.

DMcG: Oh, I see.

AE: It was expensive, but if you could afford it, it was a little better than burning wood.

DMcG: Do you remember how expensive it was?

AE: I don't remember, but I remember that if you bought a number three tub it would cost you a dollar and a half, or something like that.

DMcG: A number three tub, like a wash tub?

AE: Yes.

DMcG: And that's usually how you bought it--

AE: Yes.

DMcG: And used it, I suppose, sparingly.

AE: Sparingly. Mostly wood for your cooking and heating.

DMcG: Pinyon and cedar was the ones you burned.

AE: Pinyon and cedar.

DMcG: And did you burn it in fireplaces or stoves?

AE: Fireplaces and cook stoves and heating stoves. They liked cedar better for a cook stove. It seemed to work better, and pinyon for heating.

DMcG: I guess you got to be a real expert at learning how to cook with a wood fire, because of the temperature--

AE: Yeah, you did.

DMcG: Did your mother usually, do most of the cooking?

AE: Yes, she did.

DMcG: So I suppose like most campers you wait until you really get embers before you really start cooking on it.

AE: Well, yeah, they knew when to put more in.

DMcG: I'm going to ask you a few very specific questions about plants that you may or may not remember.

DMcG: Can you remember the plant salt cedar (which is called tamarisk) from when you were growing up and if so, what do you remember about it? Did you have a tamarisk on your property?

AE: Oh yes, yes, on our property we had two or three tamarisk trees. They were big then, much bigger than they grow along the ...

( \_\_\_\_\_??)

AE: Oh, we could even climb up in these tamarisk trees.

DMcG: What years would that be that you were doing that?

AE: That would have been in the 40's and 50's [AK: 1940's and 1950's].

DMcG: You actually had full-fledged tamarisk trees along your property.

AE: Yeah, yeah. Now we try to keep them down, keep them off. But most of the shade trees of course were cottonwood.

DMcG: Did the tamarisk have any particular use? Did you use the wood?

AE: Well, it was pretty good burning wood, you could use it, yes.

(\_\_\_??) Climbing it

DMcG: Do you remember anything about the plant sacred datura (jimsonweed...the one with the big white flowers)? If so, do you remember anyone using it for anything?

AE: No, no. That's the one they told us to stay away from, so we ultimately did.

### Section III: The Virgin River

DMcG: Tell me what you remember about the Virgin River from your childhood (or early time in the area) ...

AE: Well, I remember it was a wonderful place to swim in the summertime, and we even used to go New Year's Eve and take a dip in the river.

DMcG: Was that kind of like a special--

AE: A ritual. [laughter]

DMcG: At midnight?

AE: No, in the daytime.

(\_\_\_\_\_??)

AE: But we also remembered that it could be very treacherous, flooding.

DMcG: Was the river bigger then than it is today, wider, bigger.

AE: It seemed like it, but I doubt that it was.



DMcG: We know that the Virgin River changed some of its course over the years, because of--

DMcG: Whereabouts in the river did you usually go? Can you describe any of the areas where you actually went into the river?

AE: Well, close to where we lived, the kids used to go down there and swim, different locations.

DMcG: Right across the street from the Clark home now is just a big vacant lot. Was it (\_\_\_??) a favorite spot?

AE: No, that's--I see, we used to swim right down in back of there, yes.

DMcG: What is in back of what today is the Desert Pearl

AE: Yeah, yeah.

(We did live ??)

DMcG: Did you ever dam up the river to make a swimming area?

AE: Oh yeah, we used to use rocks and make it so it would pool a little deeper.

DMcG: Did you ever tie ropes onto trees so you could swim a little further?

AE: Oh, yes.

DMcG: Was the Virgin River used for irrigation by your family, for recreation, for drinking water and for anything else?

AE: It was used mainly by our family-by the time we got down here, there was a water system so we didn't have to use the river. But we used it for recreation and for irrigation, yes, of course.

DMcG: There was a canal system?

AE: There was a canal system in, yes. And your land, for growing the vegetables and things you had was on the canal.

DMcG: Do you know often you were able to use the water from the river to irrigate?

AE: It seemed to me like we'd get a turn at least once a week.

DMcG: But a water (\_??)

AE: Yes.

DMcG: Did the Virgin River flood a lot during your early years in Zion Canyon and if so, tell me about it, how often, and how much damage?

AE: Well, it seemed like every spring we would get floods and run off and sometimes in the fall we'd get hard rains.

DMcG: What kind of damage did it do?

AE: Well, it would do damage by washing over the land and depositing sand, especially close to the river. There was occasions when people were drowned in floods.

DMcG: There were flood periods (\_\_\_??)

AE: Yeah, yeah. I happened to be mayor when those scouts were drowned in 1961.

DMcG: Up in the canyon?

AE: Yes. Drowned in the Narrows and washed out of the canyon.

DMcG: They got caught up there.

AE: We found one body just caught down here below the place (??) and one up above.

DMcG: But during the time you were a kid, during the spring and fall flooding times did any of your friends ever get in trouble in the river--

AE: No, no. They were very careful. The only time that I can remember anybody getting in trouble was that time when the scouts drowned. They weren't local.

DMcG: Did you or your family ever fish in the river, and if so, for what fish and were they common?

AE: Oh, you could get rainbow.

DMcG: In the Virgin River?

AE: Yeah. When I was a kid, we used to fish there.

DMcG: What kind of bait did you use?

AE: Well, you could use earthworms.

DMcG: Earthworms.

AE: You could use cheese. You could use a minnow.

DMcG: Did you fish in still river areas, or in the running water?

AE: Well, you could get them in both. Depend on if you were using flies, you could get them in rough water.

DMcG: Did you fish a lot?

AE: I, I fished a lot.

DMcG: Did you eat the fish that you caught?

AE: Yes.

DMcG: So rainbow trout was the number one game fish.

AE: Yes. The river had a lot of carp in it, but we didn't eat those.

DMcG: So tell me again what years this would have been. You moved into the canyon in 1930

AE: Yes.

DMcG: So what were you doing in the '30s [AK: 1930's].

AE: Well, clear up to when you went to the service--

DMcG: So as a young boy and as a teenager, you fished the river.

AE: Oh yes, yes. Even after I was twenty-two or twenty-three, even after the service, we used to fish in Zion.

DMcG: But the Virgin River isn't known now for its fish. What happened--

AE: Well, they used to stock it.

DMcG: Oh, I see.

AE: But they quit that.

DMcG: Where did they stock it?

AE: Right here in the canyon.

DMcG: Did they do that once a year?

AE: They usually did, yes, for a number of years, but then they stopped it because there was too many people comin' to fish, yeah.

DMcG: Well, we wouldn't want the people to have any fun.

AE: Yeah [laughter] Well, they were doing damage to the vegetation, and other things.

DMcG: So that was the primary reason--How about the carp?

AE: No, they were a natural fish, and always were. There are still there.

DMcG: There are carp in the Virgin River?

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: I didn't know that.

AE: The Virgin River sucker, we called it.

DMcG: Do you remember what plants/trees were along the banks of the Virgin River and how many/how dense they would have been

AE: Yeah, there were. Cottonwoods were the main thing. The others were-- There were other types of tree, boxelder. Up in the canyon up (\_\_\_\_\_) boxelder.

DMcG: Were the trees that were there back then pretty dense, more dense than they are today?

AE: Well, I think so, yes, particularly there've been a lot of them go because they've abandoned the canal.

DMcG: What canal was that?

AE: The irrigation canal, that brought the water out of the river and irrigated the fields, and so forth. It's now in a pipeline underground, and so the trees along the canal have died.

DMcG: Where is the head gate for the (irrigation thing??)?

[End of tape side. Continuation on other side.]

DMcG: We were talking about the Virgin River banks, and how many trees. And trying to determine whether it is less dense than it was before.

AE: The irrigation ditch has been discontinued now. So the trees along that canal that fed the trees, the are dying out, pretty much. We still have, most of the trees along the river are still there. But the irrigation canal has been put into a pipeline now and we sprinkle instead of irrigate.

DMcG: So the main tree along the embankment has always been the cottonwood.

AE: That's the main one, yes.

DMcG: What other kinds of trees do you remember?

AE: Boxelder. Iolanthus (?). That was a tree that was brought into the country in the early days of Zion to build chairs.

DMcG: Oh really.

(unclear section. Seems about Gifford or Griffith chairs.)

AE: Brought 'em in here because the tree was easy to work with, grew tall and straight, and when it dried it was very hard, but it was very soft when it was alive.

DMcG: Where did that tree come from?

AE: I understand that it was brought in from England, some way or another. But it was a wonderful tree for chair-making because you could bend it and it would stay bent and when it dried it was very hard.

DMcG: Was (Revern??) Gifford the only chair-maker around here?

AE: No, no. There was some of the Crawford boys made chairs, too. In fact, we've got chairs that Newell (??) Crawford made.

DMcG: Did they sell their chairs locally, and also outside the canyon?

AE: Yes, wherever they could sell them, they did. They made all kinds, dining room chairs, rocking chairs, almost any kind, with rawhide bottoms.

DMcG: Rawhide bottoms. Where did they get the rawhide?

AE: From hides.

DMcG: Domestic animals?

AE: Yes.

DMcG: They were killed for food, and they used the skin.

AE: They used the skin.

DMcG: Did they have a tannery here?

AE: No, they were tanning, they done it theirselves, scraped them, it was just rawhide, it wasn't tanned.

DMcG: Were they lasting chairs?

AE: Oh, yah, they last forever.

DMcG: Do you have any today?

AE: My daughter's got away with the only ones we had. [laughter]

DMcG: Which daughter is that?

AE: Shirley. She's got the rockin' chair that they was raised in, with a rawhide bottom.

DMcG: That was made from an iolanthus (??) tree?

AE: That's right.

DMcG: That was made there by the Griffiths?

AE: It was made by Newell(??) Crawford.

DMcG: Newell(??) Crawford?

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: I'm going to stop again just for a moment.

#### Section IV: Animals of Zion Canyon

DMcG: What wild animals did you see and/or hear when you were a child?

AE: Well, when we first come into Zion, there was big horn sheep here. We seen them for a few years and finally they disappeared. But mostly deer, mule deer.

DMcG: This was in the '30's [AK: 1930's] when you saw the bighorn sheep.

AE: Oh yeah. In fact, we saw some right above the tunnel, coming in one time, bighorn sheep there. But it wasn't very many years after that they all disappeared. Fact is, I hadn't seen any after, oh, maybe five years after we--

DMcG: Do you have any idea why they disappeared?

AE: Something, something just got rid of them all at once. I don't know whether it was disease or what it was.

DMcG: But you just didn't see them after that five years?

AE: Until later on when they did introduce them again.

AE: But good old mule deer, and, oh, there was all kinds of small animals.

DMcG: Like beaver?

AE: Beaver, on the river.

DMcG: And beaver dams?

AE: Yeah, and beaver dams on the river.

DMcG: How about desert tortoises?

AE: We used to see them here, occasionally.

DMcG: Plenty of coyotes?

AE: Plenty of coyotes.

DMcG: Turkeys?

AE: Very few turkeys.

DMcG: Very few. Did you hunt turkeys?

AE: No, not until I grew up and they started to plant them in the area then, and I did start to hunt them a little bit.

DMcG: How about different kinds of birds, like raptors, or hawks and eagles?

AE: Well, we seen lots of those. Lots of owl.

DMcG: Lot of owl.

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: How about snakes?

AE: Most any kind of snake, you could find in Zion.

DMcG: Were there a lot of poisonous snakes?

AE: The rattlesnake was about the only one.

DMcG: That would be the diamondback?



AE: Diamondback, yeah. But there were a lot of other kinds of snakes.

DMcG: How about mountain lions?

AE: We seen them here.

DMcG: You saw them often?

AE: Oh, not often, but occasionally.

DMcG: See them at a particular time of the year?

AE: Not particularly, but most any time. Of course, we got out to see most of them during the deer hunt, of course, that's when you got out in the--

DMcG: Out in the wilds; not so much down in town.

AE: Well, I've seen at least one—oh, I've seen two or three right in town, and at least one up the canyon, a lot of them on the east side.

DMcG: Was it a problem for local people?

AE: Not a problem except here a few years ago they had one that got loose out of a cage here and went and killed a man's dog. But that's the only—I understand now that they're around the area, and they're maybe getting a few cats, things like that.

DMcG: Yes, down in Rockville we've had a problem this past year with cats and some small goats were killed. But we've since taken care of the problem by covering up the animals and putting cages around them.

AE: Coyotes I know have come in and got sheep a time or two.

DMcG: Did you ever see any wolves in the area?

AE: I have, but only up on the east side, not down in the canyon.

DMcG: Would they be grey wolf?

AE: Grey wolf, yeah.

DMcG: But they're not seen so much any more.

AE: No, no. I remember seeing in my lifetime maybe seeing two, maybe three.

DMcG: Any other animals that you recall seeing that are no longer around here?

AE: There was a time when we were infested with the little grey fox, but they're gone, for some reason or other.

DMcG: Did they cause any damage?

AE: Well, they would get into your gardens, and things like that, and they got very prevalent at one time.

DMcG: They're more after the garden vegetables as opposed to other foodstuffs.

AE: Oh, yes, I don't think they ever killed another animal. Maybe mice, or something like that.

DMcG: Did your family use many non-farm animals for food or hides or other purposes. If so, which animals and how were they used?

AE: Well, we of course done a lot of deer hunting, used the deer for food and for hides.

DMcG: What did you use the hides for?

AE: Well, we'd usually sell 'em and they would get tanned.

DMcG: And the deer meat you'd eat as roasts and things, or did you jerk a lot of it?

AE: Well, we done both, both, yeah. But Mother used to even, when there was no season on them, even can it, for the wintertime.

DMcG: So (\_\_\_??) do vegetables and things in it by boiling, (\_\_\_\_??)

AE: By pressure cooker.

DMcG: Pressure cooker.

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: Did you ever eat the canned meat?

AE: Oh, yes. That's good meat, all of it, made wonderful sandwiches.

DMcG: (Like tuna fish foil??)

AE: That's right.

DMcG: Did your family keep domestic animals, farm animals, bees?

AE: No bees. But we always had a milk cow, two or three pigs.

DMcG: Did you have to move the cow periodically for grazing?

AE: No, no. We generally managed to get a little hay for wintertime and pasture on the place. We usually had one milk cow.

DMcG: And a couple of pigs.

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: And periodically kill the pigs

AE: Right. That was for food, and the cow for milk, of course.

DMcG: Do you think your religious beliefs influenced in any ways the way you felt about the animals around you or the ways in which you took care of them?

AE: Well, some influence, not entirely, no.

#### Section V: Zion National Park

DMcG: Do you remember the early years of the Zion National Park and if so can you describe them?

AE: Well, yes, I remember fairly early years. I think Zion had only been a park maybe eight or nine years when we came into the country. I remember then. It was much different, travel much less. I think when we first went into the restaurant business in Zion there was about 125,000 visitors per year.

DMcG: Where was your restaurant?

AE: The old Canyon Inn, up (\_\_\_??)

DMcG: On the left side?

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: Across from the Desert Pearl?

DMcG: That's the one with individual cabins?

AE: Oh, no, that's Olson's motel there. [AK: The motel is now named Canyon Ranch.] They've got a store in there now.

DMcG: The Indian trading store? [AK: Now The Big Chief store]

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: OK.

AE: When we went into business there, when I got out of the service, in 1945.

DMcG: What was the name of the restaurant?

AE: Canyon Inn.

DMcG: And how many people could you feed?

AE: We had I think six bar stools and four tables, started out.

DMcG: Did you serve breakfast, lunch and dinner?

AE: Yes, yes.

DMcG: Did you have alcohol in there?

AE: Beer.

DMcG: Sold beer. And what kind of food was your specialty?

AE: Well, we started out with sandwiches and finally got into everything. Steaks(\_\_\_\_\_??)

DMcG: Full (??) course meals.

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: How many people did you have working for you?

AE: Well, there was only about, uh--My wife and I done most of it.  
(\_\_\_\_\_??)

DMcG: Did you use your children for work?

AE: No, they were all too small at that time.

DMcG: Let's see. Was the tunnel completed at that time?

AE: Tunnel was completed in 1930, yes.

DMcG: So you came about the time the tunnel was finishing.

AE: Well, when we first moved in and had, first came through the tunnel, it had planks laid down, you had to run your car over these planks because the sand was so deep in the tunnel. They were still working on it.

DMcG: Yeah.

AE: But it was punched all the way through by then.

DMcG: When you lived in Panguitch, were you aware of the tunnel project?

AE: Heavens, no. Not until Dad come down here for work, and then of course we were.

DMcG: You didn't know anything about its planning and that they were going to do that--

AE: Well, yeah, but I was only ten, and I didn't pay any attention to that.

DMcG: Was any of your family's land bought by the government for inclusion in the park and if so where was it located?

AE: No, we didn't own any land at the time the Park was buying up part of Springdale. We did live in Springdale and when it was bought up we had to move down lower. We were just renting then.

DMcG: That was at the location of the Visitors' Center.

AE: That's right.

DMcG: So you were living in that home and then you were asked to move because the government was buying the property.

DMcG: How'd you feel about that?

AE: Well, it was all right at the time. We only lived in tents anyway and all we could do is something better. [laughter]

DMcG: Do you remember how your family felt about having a new national park in their backyard?

AE: Well, we liked it. We were always business-oriented, and that was our source of business.

( \_\_\_\_\_ ??)

AE: That's right. It has been good to us, over the years.

DMcG: Were there many non-local visitors once Zion National Park was established? You talked about one hundred twenty-five visitors a year.

AE: 125,000, when we went into business in 1945, and when we retired, why, there was a little over three million, so there was an increase.

DMcG: That's an increase.

[laughter]

( \_\_\_\_\_ access roads coming into the Park ??)

AE: It was a little harder to get here until the roads opened up. The visitors used to have to come in through the old Rockville mountain road, from Cedar City, and buses. In here and back out, the same way.

DMcG: Most of the people at that time were coming in by bus.

AE: Most of them, yes.

DMcG: A few in private vehicles?

AE: A few in private vehicles, but--

DMcG: Do you recall whether the Park was ever a big attraction for local people, to go in and see it?

AE: Well, most of them grew up in it.

DMcG: So it wasn't a big deal.

AE: No, I mean--of course, I always enjoyed going into it because I could see something different every time I went up there.

DMcG: Those people who came by bus from Cedar City, were they mostly Utah residents or were they--

AE: They were from all over the country, because there was a rail come into Cedar City, a spur come into the Escalante Hotel there, and then buses run out of the Escalante to the park services.

DMcG: So even then the people visiting the park were from all over the country.

AE: Oh, I'm sure, yes, yes.

DMcG: Did you--Excuse me. Did you have something else--

AE: I was just going to mention, they had movies, were making movies in there at one time.

DMcG: In the Park?

AE: In the Park and just outside the Park.

DMcG: I've heard lots of stories about the movies in Springdale and Rockville and Kanab--

(\_\_\_\_\_)??

AE: But they got to shoot in the Park.

DMcG: Oh, I take that back. I remember seeing something now how one movie queen had to be carried up the trails in a throne. She didn't want to walk.

AE: That's right. [laughter]

AE: Oh, we used to, when we were in the restaurant business in the other place, we fed a lot of movie stars in there.

(\_\_\_\_\_??)

AE: Oh, and yes, Howard (?? \_\_\_\_\_??)

(Directors??)

AE: The Duke.

DMcG: John Wayne?

AE: Yeah, he ate in our place. Ross Berry(??), a lot of the old-timers.

DMcG: So you met a lot of movie stars.

AE: Oh, yeah, it was a good thing to us. We used to feed them, took a contract to feed them for \$1.75 for dinner, and a dollar and a half I think for lunch, and seventy-five cents for breakfast.

DMcG: So you had a contract with the movie people for food.

AE: Yeah.

DMcG: Would you bring it to them or they--

AE: No, they'd come there and eat. We had it done, and come in to the ..., and had more seating I think we were feeding about thirty-five movie stars for three meals a day.

DMcG: What would a typical dinner be like?

AE: Menu (\_\_\_\_\_??) we served trout, steaks of all kinds, served a lot of chicken-fried steaks, chicken.

DMcG: Was the trout from the Virgin River?

AE: No. We used to have to buy them.

DMcG: It was a commercial trout.



AE: Yeah. They were rainbow trout.

DMcG: Did you have any contact with people who worked in the park, including people in the CCC?

AE: Why yes. My younger brother worked in the CCC.

DMcG: What was his name?

AE: Ward.

DMcG: How long did he work for the CCC?

AE: Couple of years anyway.

AE: That would have been in, let's see, he would have been, I think 1936, '37.

DMcG: What did he do for the CCC?

AE: Well generally, whatever they had him do. They were doing a lot of erosion work, stuff like that.

DMcG: Building retaining walls--

AE: Building retaining walls, planting trees, and mostly that kind of stuff.

DMcG: Did he work in any particular area of the Park?

AE: I don't think so. He later, after the CCCs were gone, he actually went to work in maintenance there, on roads and trails, as a truck driver.

DMcG: Did you have any contact with any other employees in the park, other than your brother?

AE: Oh, yeah. We knew them all. And then they used to, when I grew up, we used to party together, established the Lions Club. A lot of them, the Park Service people, belonged to the club.

DMcG: Much closer family then--

AE: Oh yes. I don't know a lot of the people now. But I used to know them all.

DMcG: So many more today, a much larger operation.

(\_\_\_\_\_??)

DMcG: (\_\_\_\_\_??) in the community

AE: Yes, they did.

DMcG: Just like they do today.

DMcG: Do you think people felt differently about the land and the park during your early years in the Canyon area than they do today and if so, how?

AE: Well, I don't know. They're more conscious of it now, I'm sure. Most of the people in town are business people and they rely on Park Service (\_\_\_\_ ??), of course. And they're interested in many things (\_\_\_\_ ??).

DMcG: So is it safe to say that many people in the community have a sort of (\_\_\_\_ ??) towards the Park and what it takes to make it right. (\_\_\_\_ ??)

AE: That's right.

## Section VI Conclusions

DMcG: Can you give us an overall feeling of what it was like to be part of a Zion pioneer family and to grow up in the Zion Canyon area. What was it like?

AE: Well, it was great for me. I always enjoyed it. When we left for employment purposes, like when I went to California, I was there a couple of years, I couldn't wait to get back to Zion. Same way when I was in the service for a year and eight months. Come back to Zion.

DMcG: This is the place you want to be.

AE: That's right. We've never left since.

DMcG: Do you think your early years in the canyon area influenced who you are today and if so, how?

AE: Well, there's no doubt it had quite an influence. I had (\_\_\_\_ ??) it's made me a better person.

DMcG: Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you would like to share?

AE: Oh, I can't think of anything right now. I appreciate the opportunity.

DMcG: Oh, I do too, and I appreciate you taking the time to talk to me and answer these questions.

DMcG: We'll conclude the interview at this time, at 10:15 on the 24th of March, 2004.