

Pioneer Voices of Zion Canyon
Oral History Project

Interviewer: Victor C. Hall
Narrator: Lorna Jolley Kesterson
Date: January 14, 2004
Location: Henderson, NV

Lorna was born December 1925; her earliest recollections coincide with the family's move into a Zion Park residence where her father was chief ranger. She lived there until she finished high school. Most of her adult life has been spent in Henderson NV where she served on the city council, and as mayor besides serving in various Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints capacities. William R. Crawford was Lorna's great grandfather

Date and place of interview: April 1, 2004 in Henderson NV.

Interviewer: Victor C. Hall

Interviewee: Lorna Jolley Kesterson.

VH: OK, go ahead.

LK: This is Loma Kesterson and my name was "Lorna Jolley". I lived in Zion National Park until I was about eighteen. My dad was the first ranger in Zion; his name was Donald J. Jolly. He was also the first chief ranger. We lived in Springdale at first but moved we when I was a small child to Zion and lived in one house; there were three houses altogether on the main road and that's where we spent the rest of our time until Dad was transferred to Lake Mead. The superintendent lived in the house next to us. My mother was Nora Crawford and I had two sisters, Alta and Venice, and one brother, Donald who was named after my dad.

VH: JL is your uncle?

LK: No cousin, probably.

VH: Oh, oh.

LK: Don was born in the park. My sisters were born in Springdale and I was born in St. George.

VH: So, how old were you then when you began living in the park?

LK: Probably around four.

VH: OK, so your memories begin when you were living in the park pretty well?

LK: I have a picture of me on a tricycle in the park and I must have been maybe four. I don't know how much before that, that we lived there.

VH: Those homes. Are they still there?

LK: Yes, they're still living in them. They are rock homes and very sturdy. Of course when we lived there we had a coal stove and an electric stove in the kitchen, but mostly we lived like everybody else.

VH: Now, uh, are they located down near Oak Creek?

LK: No they're right on the main road when you pass Oak Creek and when you pass the museum. It's right on up the main road before you make the big turn.

VH: OK, up off the road to the left. That's great; your childhood was there and any other kids in those three homes?

LK: At different times. Sometimes the superintendent had some children The Brockmeyer's, I don't know if you remember the Brockmeyer's?

VH: Myrna and I were classmates.

LK: They lived by Oak Creek; that was probably a couple of miles down. And Dorothy Schaefer

VH: Another classmate. (skip briefly) So, did you have friends; did you go somewhere else or did you, Alta and Venice kind of make your own? ·

LK: Ya, we did. 'We were really close because that's all we had. But we did have cousins in Springdale and sometimes they would come up or we would go down there but until we started school we were pretty much alone and then in the summers we were alone. (The Jolley children were no doubt sought out by other children in the area. They were all very popular in high school)

VH: As little kids, what kind of freedom did your mother give you as far as wandering out into the park wherever you wanted to go?

LK: I've always been amazed that she let us do what we did. We were always climbing cliffs or going swimming in the river. She never seemed to worry so we did our own thing. I wouldn't let my children--- (laughter)

VH: So you climbed up cliffs and dangerous places.

LK: Yea, behind our house. It was a wonderful life and my dad of course kept us in line. They didn't seem to bother when we'd take off and we'd find rattlesnakes in the front yard but nobody seemed to bother.

VH: So rattlesnakes in your front yard; that was just part of living in Zion

LK: It was. In Zion we couldn't have anything penned like a dog but we had a lot of deer in the yard and ring-tailed cats and one mountain sheep that took over our whole house inside until finally Dad decided he was too rough. (laughter)

VH: It did what?

LK: He would come in and slide the rug. He finally decided the sheep was too rough for us. My dad decided he was too rough.

VH: Oh, you were inviting him in. He liked to come in and frisk about in your house and knock things over.

LK: We all took music lessons; sometimes in Springdale, sometimes Orderville. Sometimes we would have to go to Orderville to see a movie, or Hurricane.

VH: That would be a family activity?

LK: Oh yes. In those days EVERYbody could go to the movie.

VH: Ya; the parents and all the kids would hop in the car and go to a movie. As far as being stuck up there in Zion, you never had cause for complaint?

LK: Oh no. We were always happy I guess because we didn't know anything else.

VH: Well, a lot of children would look with envy on living there. You had deer to entertain you especially in the winter I suppose and even in the summer and rattlesnakes to watch out for. Ring-tailed cats at night; they don't come out in the daytime do they?

LK: They got in between the rafters; anyway, they had to get them out of there. But Dad at that time was over Bryce and Cedar Breaks, Timpanogas Cave and Lehman Caves. They had them all boxed into one at that time, so we did a lot of traveling.

VH: So, you'd load the whole family up when you went to Lehman Caves--.

LK: He went to Bryce and Cedar Breaks a lot of times without us. Sometimes he'd stay up there

VH: So you grew up pretty well acquainted with the other parks. What of these animals; the big horn sheep you were kinda making a pet of and-- until he got too house-broken. Skunks; did they ever make it into your house?

LK: No

VH: You saw skunks and porcupines I suppose?

LK: No I don't remember them. Only at the mountains- on Cedar Mountain. My dad found a mountain lion the mother had been killed and he kept that lion in the park for a long time. They had to feed it forty or fifty rabbits a day or something and they ended up giving it to a zoo in Salt Lake

VH: The Hoagle Zoo So it was kept right there in Zion?

LK: Dad did a lot of horseback riding during like hunting season. He had to ride the boundaries because some of the deer hunters always poached in the park.

VH: Was he ever in danger by an angry hunter that you know about?

LK: Not that I know about

VH: Lets see, any other animals? We covered coyotes, cougars. Did you ever hear a cougar?

LK: No

VH: Of course chipmunks and squirrels.

LK: Oh yes.

VH: Anything else, like marmots?

LK: Not that I remember of.

VH: What about plants, flowers or weeds or anything that comes to mind.

LK: Well my dad knew the names of all of them and he schooled us pretty well in all the flowers and trees especially on the Narrows trail.

VH: Um, more than you see now?

LK: I haven't been up there for I don't like (the restrictions) We used to roam through there

VH: It's not the same when you have to follow the rules. Over the years were you aware of changes in the vegetation anywhere in the Park?

LK: The Mormons lived in the park and they planted fruit trees and asparagus and things like that, that still existed; and still do but the Park Service wouldn't let you change anything.

VH: As far as the natural vegetation—uh, they have a question about tamarisks. It's become quite a weed I think along the river. Were you aware of Tamarisks?

LK: No, we have a little ranch out here and we're encouraging them to grow out there.

VH: Oh, you'll take anything. (laughter)

LK: I don't remember tamarisks. Grape vines; wild grapes

VH: Wild grapes. Did you ever eat them?

LK: Probably but I don't ---

VH: You didn't get very fat on them I know. Anything else like Squaw Berries?

LK: Yes

VH: You ate--- you chewed those

LK: Oh yes; acorns

VH: I've never eaten an acorn

LK: You'd probably not want a second one. You wouldn't want the first one.

VH: I wondered if you soaked them, roasted them or anything.

LK: We just tried them. Bottle stoppers. I don't if you---

VH: What did you do with them

LK: We ate em.

VH: Oh, you ate bottle stoppers in the spring. How do you go about eating bottle stoppers?

LK: Just like they are.

VH: Just like; you mother wouldn't make a salad or anything like that. Sego Lillies. You ate Sego Lilies?

LK: No. My dad was pretty strict about what we were doing. I'll tell you this one story about my dad. They were making a movie up in Zion with Tom Mix and they had their cameras set up and there was one branch of a tree that was right in the way, so they kept after Dad to cut that down so they wouldn't have to move their camera. But he wouldn't do it. So Tom Mix offered him a cowboy hat if he'd cut that branch off but Dad wouldn't cut it and he didn't get the cowboy hat either. That's the way he was; very strict; strict with regulations.

VH: What sort of church involvement did your family have?

LK: Mom and Dad were both LDS but Mom usually took us to church because Dad worked and didn't go church anyway. but

VH: He wasn't really addicted to religion.

LK: Not until he got down here and then got into it but Mom made sure that we were at church and Mutual and everything.

VH: You went to church down in Springdale.

LK: Ya.

VH: Did you work as a teenager; did you work in the park?

LK: Yes I worked in the cafeteria. You know where that is; it's called something else now.

VH: Is it up by the Lodge?

LK: No, it's by the campground down--

VH: Oh.

LK: No I never worked at the lodge.

VH: There was a cafeteria down near the entrance?

LK: It was by the campground there.

VH: Open to the public

LK: Yeah, I was a waitress.

VH: Of course, other than your yard, you wouldn't have had any kind of a garden or You might have raised flowers or something in your yard.

LK: My mother had a lot of flowers but she brought them in before they had so many restrictions, but we weren't allowed to have anything domestic.

VH: So you could barely walk in your yard.

LK: We had grass. I visited that house about a month ago. We used to have a nice lawn and trees. The things looked pretty bad, but we couldn't have like a dog or a cat or anything.

VH: Did you hike all the trails growing up?

LK: Yeah, we tried them all.

VH: You mentioned that your home was heated with a coal stove but that you had electricity for cooking

LK: We had a little coal stove in the kitchen for heating, but there was no heater upstairs or anything.

VH: So you guys like the rest of us went up and slept in a cold bedroom.

LK: Um hm.

VH: And you swam in the river?

LK: Oh yes. Every summer we'd have to find a new swimming hole because when the floods came down they'd re-arrange the rocks, so every spring we went out to find a new swimming hole. And we used to go up to Pine Creek. That used to be--

VH: Oscar Johnson; you know him?

LK: Mh h'm.

VH: He told about going up there and. He and his friends would go up and put a rock dam every year in Pine Creek.

(skip redundant dialogue)

VH: And then on down the river depending on vicissitudes of floods; they might blast you out a pretty good swimming hole, or might not.

LK: Yeah, it would re-arrange the rocks. You could hear the rocks moving when it was flooding even from our house, so we knew we'd be looking for a new place.. I don't even remember when I didn't know how to swim

VH: So you don't remember where or how

LK: I'm sure I learned in the river.

VH: So when you were little kids you had to learn to swim or get washed down the river?

LK: Ya

VH: That's good motivation. Oak Creek was never used for swimming apparently?

LK: No, when Brockmeyer's were there one time we made a raft. We had a lot of fun but mostly there was no water there compared to the others.

VH: So Pine Creek was a lot higher than you've seen it in recent years

LK: Yes. It never was a big stream but---

VH: And the river itself, did it flood a lot more do you think and run higher in the old days

LK: It probably did

VH: What about winter storms and summer thunderstorms? Was there any difference in being up in Zion from being more out in the open?

LK: Of course when there were storms there were a lot of waterfalls. One time we went up; it was a long time after we lived there and we stopped at the checking station and they said "You really shouldn't go through the tunnel and out that way because there's an ice storm." We thought, whoever saw an ice storm so went on and of course there was no ice but there was a lot of water.

(skip discussion of ice)

VH: We talked about--- Oh fish. Any fishing go on that you knew about.

LK: Not from us. The tourists might have tried, but there was pollywogs and frogs--

VB: I didn't know there were any there you could eat. I just thought they had suckers.

LK: I didn't know there was either

VH: Well let's see, no domestic animals obviously.

LK: Dad bought a cow once and hid it up behind the house.

VH: Oh he did?

LK: but they soon got wind of it and we did away with the cow.

VH: They got wind of it hunh.

LK: We got some rabbits once One time somebody fell of Angel's Landing he had a dog; he (the climber) was killed, so we kept the dog for a week while.

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

LK: Oh I'm sure it did because my grandfather was one of the first settlers there.

VH: William R. Crawford?

LK: No mine was James.

VH: Oh, William R. was your great grandfather.

LK: I'm sure our religion played an important part in whatever we did.

VH: But as far as using the land, their pioneering brought them here and they had to make a living and as near as I can tell everybody who came here appreciated the view. Do you have reason to think that any of them thought of the big canyon walls as just being a barrier to raising cattle or anything like that? Did you hear of people not appreciating the view?

LK: No; that brings to mind when they used to cut logs above here and bring them down to Cable Mountain. Probably they wished there was some way to bring them down besides that way but other than that I've never heard of anybody that didn't appreciate Zion.

VH: As far as religion having some direct influence on your attitudes, uh, other than that our religion espouses the belief that we are stewards of the land and must care for it, any thoughts beyond that?

LK: When I was in high school a bunch of kids came up from Springdale and we had a watermelon bust in the tunnel, in the big window there?

VH: Oh ya.

LK: And of course everybody left and then my dad came in and of course there was watermelon everywhere so you can guess who cleaned it up--- Alta (older sister) and I. (laughter) We learned to appreciate the scenery; not to pick flowers and learned not to destroy anything

VH: I assume they threw the rinds out the window down and you had to climb down and--

LK: No, they were just right there.

VH: That's certainly a dramatic change that's taken place; being able to stop at the windows.

LK: My dad was one of the first people through the tunnel.

VH: So you--- there was a window bigger than the others and had more of an alcove and that was the scene of your party?

LK: That's right. It was a nice party.

(skips)

VH: What kind of contact did you have with park visitors?

LK: There was very little.

VH: They just drove on past your home?

LK: They went on up to Lodge. We used to go to the lodge at night for programs and things like that. Otherwise we weren't allowed to mingle.

VH: Oh, you weren't allowed. Was there a little bit of a concern about you being contaminated or

LK: Oh no. If someone stopped and asked us a question, we answered but

VH: And you had no desire to go up and spend more time mingling with some of the other young people who were working there.

LK: No.

VH: And when the CC camp came in. Where was it? Where was the camp located?

LK: It was across the river.

VH: Oh. Over on the flat to the west (east) of the museum

LK: Over there in that area.

VH: Uh, within sight from your home?

LK: Actually, we couldn't quite see it from our house. And some of they guys worked around our place but we weren't allowed to----

VH: Well was that because they were concerned with what kind of boys those CC's were or just that---

LK: Probably, maybe that we didn't make the effort. But there was a doctor at the CC camp so we did go there once in while rather than go to Hurricane. We didn't have any doctors in Springdale.

Stop. The remaining dialogue appears to have no relevance.