

Crowder, Dr. David L. Oral History Project

# Geneva Hayes Anderson Munk-Life during the Depression

By Geneva Hayes Anderson Munk

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## Box 2 Folder 17

Oral Interview conducted by Susan Anderson

Transcribed by Sarah McCorristin      February 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

SA: My name is Susan Anderson and I am interviewing Mrs. Geneva Munk. Could you please spell your name?

GM: G-E-N-E-V-A M-U-N-K

SA: Where were you born?

GM: In Georgetown, Idaho.

SA: What year were you born?

GM: What year? December 26, 1896.

SA: How long have you lived in Idaho?

GM: All my life.

SA: Have you lived here in the Bear Lake Valley all your life?

GM: Yes.

SA: Where were your parents born?

GM: Father was born in Farmington, Utah; and my mother was born in Bloomington, Idaho.

SA: What was your occupation during the depression?

GM: Housewife.

SA: And your husband's?

GM: Farmer.

SA: As a farmer during the depression, did you experience any great difficulty in trying to keep your ranch down there?

GM: No.

SA: You always had money?

GM: We always had, you know, we had animals and we raised most of our feed. We had to buy, of course, we had to buy soap, and sugar, and stuff like that. But other than that, we got along pretty well. We had wheat and then we had our wheat made into flour. I even made my soap for, you know, the laundry. I would save the fat and render it out, and then I'd make this soap.

SA: During the depression, did you have the sheep then that was on the ranch now?

GM: Oh no, that was a different type of sheep then. We had a few sheep all the time, but not the ones that are on the ranch now.

SA: What else did you raise?

GM: We had horses and cows and calves and pigs and chickens and turkeys.

SA: Were you able to sell them?

GM: Yes. We could make veal out of the calves when they were, you know, old enough. Then, of course, we had all kinds of eggs all the time. Then we had chickens to eat, you know. Then we had these turkeys. Then they used to have a turkey pool and, both before Christmas and after, and they really sold really good. I never remember getting less than fifty cents a pound.

SA: OK. When World War I was over, did it seem like the depression really hit the farmers here then? Did it affect you then?

GM: Well, It kind of affected everybody. Of course, but the farmers not near as bad as others. There was only one time that I remember that we couldn't pay our taxes in full.

SA: Was it during the 1930's?

GM: Uh-huh.

SA: Ok. When the stock market itself, crashed did that affect you in any way?

GM: No.

SA: Just general prices and stuff?

GM: That's right.

SA: OK. What kind of stuff was rationed during the depression?

GM: Well, sugar and flour and all kinds of meats were rationed. Of course, we had our own. About all we had to buy would be sugar and our hand soap, you know. We like to have better soap then, you know, the soap I made for our hands.

SA: How about was gas rationed?

GM: Oh, yes.

SA: Was it really hard to come by?

GM: Really hard to come by.

SA: When you had to run the machinery down on the farm, you know, and use gas and stuff; did you have much machinery to run?

GM: We used horses then. We didn't have tractors and things.

SA: When your food was rationed, was it really hard to come by the food or could you get pretty easy the rations?

GM: Well, you could get it if they had it, but then there was such a shortage of food. You had to be pretty careful about using sugar. I use to use syrup and honey and stuff like that, you know.

SA: OK. When you were down there on the ranch, did you have very many people work for you?

GM: Well, not so many and only when we were harvesting the grain, then we had quite a few. Oh there was a time when Ray McCammon stayed with us, you know, just kind of started out for his, you know, he was room and board because he didn't have anything else to do. But we never had anyone steady.

SA: So you didn't have very many people live down there with you then?

GM: Oh no. Well, Johnsons lived lived over, you know. There was two families; the Johnsons just lived south of us, you know, that place is just over the hill so you wouldn't see that home of ours.

SA: OK. When you were raising crops and animals and stuff, did you ever have to destroy anything or could you use it all or sell it all?

GM: Well, yes, there was usually a sale and then we had animals that would always take care of the surplus, like hay and grain, barley and wheat, you know is what we raised.

SA: OK, what kind of prices did you get for your crops?

GM: Well, they weren't like they are now, of course, but they're just about half that price. I remember one year when we got...we had quite a nice lot of grain and not too much frost, and we made about thirty dollars an acre on our wheat. We thought that was pretty good.

SA: How about did you do pretty good on your barley too?

GM: Oh yes, but we used our barley mostly for feed for our cows, you know, in the winter. We'd grind it and have it for the cows and then, of course, for our hogs. We'd sometimes had a couple of sows with baby pigs, you know.

SA: Could you sell your animals pretty good?

GM: Yes, always. We always take good care of them. They were feed good and in good shape.

SA: What did you personally think of President Roosevelt?

GM: Well, I thought he was a pretty nice fellow. I wondered the third time why they elected him because he was getting kind of old. But, up until the time I guess he done about as well as anyone.

SA: OK. These New Deal Policies that he had, did they effect you in any way?

GM: No, I don't think so.

SA: Being as young as I am I really don't understand what they were. Could you, do you really know what they were all about?

GM: Well, now really I don't. I don't know what they were about really. I forgotten I suppose, in all those years, you see, that's quite a long time.

SA: What were your holidays like, like Christmas and Thanksgiving?

GM: Well, I always tried to have something special for birthdays, you know. Then, of course, when we had Christmas we just really went out for Christmas. I have a son and a daughter and we use to buy them everything we could get our hands on and we could afford.

SA: Then you would buy them presents?

GM: Oh yeah.

SA: Did you make them a lot of things?

GM: Well, no we didn't make so much, but we could buy nice things up here at Theland Olsen's, that's a hardware store. I remember that we bought our son when he was just a real little guy, a nice big steel truck. A toy, of course.

SA: I think we still got that truck down home in the granary. How about did you guys celebrate things like the Fourth of July and Halloween and things like that very much?

GM: Well, not so much Halloween. But on the fourth of July we used to go to the celebrations in Soda or Montpelier, mostly Soda. It seemed like it was a little handier to go to Soda than Montpelier.

SA: Did they have big rodeos?

GM: They had ball games and parades and you know things like that.

SA: So it was quite a big affair?

GM: Yes.

SA: During the depression, did you see your neighbors suffering, you know, especially, or did it seem everybody was doing fairly well?

GM: Well they were, because the farmers was all that we knew anything about, of course, you know living around there. You know, on a farm you're so tied up with your work, so interested in your work, that you just spend your whole time working. Then when night comes you are ready to go to sleep.

SA: Sack out. So your neighbors were pretty well off about as well off as you were?

GM: I think so. They didn't work maybe quite as hard as my husband did and didn't manage quite so good. He's real ambitious and he keep going all the time until his health broke. Then he was ill for about five years. Then he died in '51.

SA: Did he ever go out any place else and work or just stay on?

GM: Yes, well that was the going wage.

SA: Did your son work particularly or was he just growing up during the time?

GM: Well, he didn't work away, to speak of. I remember when he tromped wool for Smarts for a while. My husband used to have a header and he did heading for people around, you know. Then, of course, my son, he would have been drafted when World War II came along, but he enlisted before. So that was right after he was eighteen.

SA: During the depression, you know you was saying how your neighbors didn't really suffer, but did you see very many people here in this southeastern part of Idaho suffering, I mean, was there very much poverty?

GM: No there really wasn't.

SA: So generally the people in this area were pretty prosperous?

GM: I think so.

SA: OK. When your husband went out and started working on the...when he worked away from the farm, did it really seem like it was worth the money he was getting paid for it?

GM: No, it really didn't. Because he worked on the section and they were short of hands and he helped out between crops and like that. His pay was really not worth it because it was a dollar and a half a day and he boarded himself.

SA: So actually he didn't really bring anything home?

GM: No, it didn't amount to anything.

SA: When you were on the farm, did you have any cars, trucks, or anything of that sort to get around or just horses?

GM: Well, we didn't have any not until, let's see, well it was just before your dad was married. We got this tractor not too long before that and that was the first tractor we had. Then we had a combine too that year, a little combine, you know. Of course, we always had cars to go in.

SA: Were you able to buy a new one during the depression or did you just have the same one all the way through?

GM: Oh, no. First we had a new Ford. I think it cost about four hundred dollars. Then when that got a little bit old, my husband's father had a Ford like that only it had a starter on it. Ours didn't have a starter, we had to crank it. So then we got that car for a while and then after that we bought a new Dodge. So we always had good cars to run. Of course, we had quite a ways to go because that's...well I really don't know the mileage to Georgetown. I don't think we've ever measured but I image it's about five miles or so, isn't it?

SA: Did you have a church close by? Where was the LDS church?

GM: That was up here in Georgetown. That's after we moved here in Georgetown.

SA: Did you travel from the ranch to the church?

GM: No, when we lived on the ranch, we didn't go to church very much. One time when the gravel pit was in down there, you know, there was some people came from Utah and boarded with us, EK Brown and his wife. Her and I used to come up to church occasionally. She was quite a singer.

SA: So did you get out of the ranch very much in the wintertime or did you even live on it?

GM: Yes, we lived out there all the time. Sometime the road was snowed in and sometimes we didn't have our mail for a month. I remember one winter my husband walked out to get the mail, you know. He walked up the railroad track and came up through Novine and then on to Georgetown and got the mail and then on back home. He was really tired out.

SA: I'll bet.

GM: We had a lot of mail.

SA: Yeah, I imagine you did. Now you didn't have any electricity on the ranch did you?

GM: No we had gas lights.

SA: Did any of your neighbors have electricity?

GM: No.

SA: So everybody was just kinda have gas lights?

GM: Uh-huh.

SA: Did you have a telephone?

GM: No.

SA: Did you ever get much use of one?

GM: Well, not until we moved here in town. Then, of course, I felt I had to keep the telephone on account of my husband's sickness. We had to call the doctor and things, you know.

SA: Were you on the ranch during the whole depression or did you move into town?

GM: Yes, we were down there the whole depression. Well, now we were on the ranch until 1932 and that's when my son started to school. You see he was six years old in April and he started to school that following September.

SA: Could you tell me very much what his school life was like?

GM: Well, I know he was awful excited to get to school and he really seemed to like it. But he was kind of handicapped a little because he had a broken leg and he couldn't get around very good. We were up here one time fixing the cemetery up, you know cleaning it up for Decoration Day, there was a monument that was kind of loose. He was playing around and kind of jumped up on it and it fell over on him and broke his leg. Then he was really tied up for a long time. He still limped when he went to school.

SA: Did you have to pay anything for him to go to school?

GM: No there wasn't any charge. Well you, of course, you had to furnish the notebooks and pencils and stuff like that but all the rest was furnished.

SA: Was it a one room school or did they have separate grades and stuff?

GM: Oh yes, let's see, we had from the first up to the eighth.

SA: Were they here in Georgetown?

GM: Uh-huh.

SA: Did you have much difficulty in the wintertime getting him in for school?

GM: Oh well, we lived up here when they had to go to school.

SA: What did you use to do on the ranch during the depression for entertainment?

GM: Well, just work, I guess. That's just about all the entertainment we had. Once in a while we'd have a birthday party or something, you know. But we were pretty well tied up with our animals. Milk the cows by hand and did everything by hand, you know.

SA: Did you have a radio or anything?

GM: Yeah, we had a battery radio.

SA: So you listened to that at night?

GM: Oh we use to listen to it quite a lot. I remember when my son was a little bit of a guy, I had a little wash house out and I was out washing and he'd come running out and he said Mama we'd have to have Uncle Jess come down because we don't have Denver today.

SA: Was Denver a radio station?

GM: Yeah, that was the radio station we got so good. It was a battery set.

SA: What kind of things did you get on the radio?

GM: Well lots of singing and dancing and a lot different than it is now. But it sounded pretty good to us.

SA: Did you have stories, you know, and did people act things out on the radio and stuff?

GM: Well yes, there was quite a lot of that going on. I know I used to like that Mert and Marge show, and Andy and somebody else. Funny how you can't remember. You probably know about Andy. That was the show, you know, they were dark men and they were really quite comical. Then there was father Barber. That was quite a program, then that was just the things that they done from day to day, you know. That was quite the just like the programs are now.

SA: You had to use your imagination a lot though?

GM: Oh yes, of course, you did. Because there was nothing you could see. You see television wasn't even thought of then.

SA: Did you have very many luxuries?

GM: Oh yes, we had a player piano down there too, you know, and that was pretty lovely. You know the day they delivered this player piano we were playing those tunes and our cows heard them and lined up along the fence and listened all day. As long as the player piano was playing. You see there was the music and then there was the songs on there, and the words, and if you wanted to sing you could.

SA: Did you ever have any of our relatives come and live on the ranch and stuff because they couldn't really fend for themselves, so they came and helped you?

GM: Well, a little, not so much. Allen was kind of a strong headed little guy. I remember one time when he hooked the horses up wrong on the mower and they were getting ready to mow hay, you know. He hooked the horses up wrong on the mower and this one horse keep trying to get over on the other side where he belonged or used to going. He got mad and said he was ignorant and everything and we ought to kill that kind of crap and everything. Isn't that something?

SA: Were the roads paved at all?

GM: No, no they weren't even oiled then. Or the gravel like we have, you know, they weren't that way then. They were just dirt roads. So when it got muddy, you really had to... Now when we were down on the ranch and we'd have to make a trip to Montpelier when it was getting kind of cold in the fall. So we'd get up real early and get our things done and go up and maybe... we came up I know one day and hurried up there to town and hurried back. When we got down to the divide where we had to go up here, there was a lot of cars stuck in the mud. It was just that soft, you know. So I use to get in one car and drive and then the men would push and then I'd just go on back until all cars were through, because I was the only woman around that could drive.

SA: Did you have any parties at the ranch?

GM: Oh yes, we had birthday parties and things like that. Occasionally, not too many. We had a lot of friends come down, you know. Then when I used to have people come down and visit me, you know, even in the winter they came in sleighs. My brother and his wife, Gene Hayes, and Pauline used to come down and visit me in the winter, you know. Louise Petersen was one that came and Milt Smith and his wife and their baby came down one day with Pat Smart and his wife, Emily. We had quite a lot of friends. Mrs. Smart and I used to... I remember one time we bought a license to hunt, you know, and so we used to shoot chickens. She had a 4-10 gun and I had the 12-gauge shotgun, and so we shot some chickens and we really had a lot of fun. We use to go fishing too. I didn't fish a lot then, but she did, and my husband and son, how tired they were and you couldn't put a pin point between the mosquito bites on my son's hands. He was just worn to a frazzle so, of course, we were glad to get a good supper for them and get them so they could have some rest.

SA: Sounds like the mosquitoes were as bad then as they are now.

GM: Oh they were just in droves and that poor little kid, he was just bit all over. Course, his skin is fair, you know, and they like that kind of people. Is that going? You'll get more than you bargain for maybe.

SA: That's OK. What kind of clothes did you have to wear? Did you have anything fancy?

GM: Oh yes, I had some nice dresses. I remember one time for Christmas I had a long green dress, with all kinds of sequins on it. A big cluster of them here and around the sleeves. It was a beautiful dress and then I had silver slippers to wear with it.

SA: Did you have to wait for your clothes to wear out before you could get new ones or could you just get them?

GM: Well I was really quite conserving. I could have had a little more clothes but I always kind of wanted to get the security stashed away, so that was what I had in mind.

SA: Did you keep your money in the house or did you keep it in a bank?

GM: Oh we had it in the bank. We use to do business with the Logilire Bank in Soda. When the Logilire bank burned down, we had a lot of valuable things, you know, in the vault there and it never touched any of it. It wasn't even marked.

SA: That's good. Did the closing of the banks effect you or anything?

GM: Well, this bank burned down and then you see they made another one. No, we had a little money lost in the First National Bank in Montpelier at one time and never got it all back. But not a great lot.

SA: So it didn't really affect you a whole lot?

GM: No. You know those days; people done things on kind of a small scale to what they do now-a-days. Now a dollar then would be worth at least five now. Or you'd pay five.

SA: Did they raise raspberries here like they use to?

GM: Oh yes. I know my second husband's son had sometimes as many as fifty pickers up here picking raspberries.

SA: Did they sell for really well, not sometime compared to now? Now they sell them for about nine dollars a case.

GM: No, they weren't that high but then they done real good. They had money all over the place. They said that Louis, that's his oldest son, or his son, they had money stuck all over, you know. Then my husband, he used to deliver these berries sometimes in Pocatello and I think as far as some place in Wyoming. Then they used to ship them, this Mr. Carlton up here at the station, you know, he used to get ready to crate it up to ship, you know, and this different places. They had quite a market. In fact, they made a lot of money out of it. But they had strawberries too.

SA: They still have quite a market I guess.

GM: Uh-huh, oh yes but then they really had it. When they'd have to have fifty pickers, you know, that would be a lot of berries. I remember one time when I came up here to wash, you know, I use to come up here to wash because it was electric up here. I saw my second husband go by with a load of pickers, and this truck was just loaded with pickers. Then they, well they never picked during the hot part of the day, they used to get out as early as they could and then pick so long and then they'd pick again the next morning. Start again the next morning.

SA: When it was time for dad to get his class ring, was it easy to come by?

GM: Well, we had the money. It never seemed to...we always had a little money. We was never broke.

SA: About college, did it just kinda seem like it was a far off dream or?

GM: Well, you see I was really in favor and I'm sure his dad was too of him going to college. But he never seemed to want to go. He was just so glad to get out of school. See he had these good marks in school, and he didn't even show up for graduation. He was that shy. Then, of course, the war took care of this deal, you know. They would have drafted him, so he enlisted so he could go where he wanted him to go. Then this way when they gave him the test why, he thought his was good for school, so they put him in school. Where the other boys went overseas he went to school.

SA: So it would have been a possibility, you could have afforded to send him to college?

GM: Oh yeah, we could have afforded to send him to school.

SA: Would you have sent him to an in-state Idaho school or?

GM: I imagine Provo is where I would have wanted him to have gone.

SA: The "Y"?

GM: Uh-huh.

SA: I know the "Y" doesn't have out-of-state tuition, but if had wanted to go some place like Utah state or something, would there have been much out-of-state tuition to pay then?

GM: I don't think so. I really don't know about that. I know that Vera Gene Kelly, Aunt Molly's girl, she was going down to Utah State. She didn't seem like the expense was bothering her any, you know.

SA: When you were getting food for the ranch and stuff, did you get a lot of your food from hunting and fishing and stuff?

GM: Oh we got quite a bit. But in the fall of the year, just before it was well getting kind of cold like, and we thought the roads would get too bad, see that'd be quite a ways to drive to Soda with the team, that's before we had a car. We used to just get a whole sleigh load of food. My husband used to work for Gorton Supply for years and he could get anything he wanted.

SA: You didn't have a freezer or a fridge or anything so how did you store it?

GM: The food? It was stuff that you could keep down in the basement, in the cellar. That basement has been just as full of food as it could ever be at times.

SA: Did you ever smoke or jerk any meat?

GM: No, not to speak of. I bought some smoked one time, for some ham we'd cured it, you know, in salt and stuff. Then we salt the water and then we put, and then we dried it out good, and put the smoke on it. I believe it's called Martins Cure or something like that. That was quite good and that was a change. But we used to just kill a mutton, you know, and eat it up and like that. Then we would have a hog, and I'd make a lot of doughnuts, and when I would render the grease, you know. Then we'd want to kill a mutton, we could or a chicken or something like that. We always had food, you know.

SA: Did you ever have to rent out the property or did you always work it yourself?

GM: No, we never did rent it out.

SA: You know how we use poison oats now to kill the squirrels and stuff, could you get a hold of that stuff then?

GM: I don't really know, but I remember one fall or it in the summer it was, we had a lovely field of grain just north of the house there. The grasshoppers got in. So we had to have some help then to come and we just had people just take the whole thing, you know, as we went along. They had this poison stuff for the grasshoppers and we saved the crop. They were hanging just thick on these, you know, where the heads are. It was just terrible.

SA: Was there any crop dusting or any airplanes or anything like that?

GM: Oh no, they didn't do things like that then.

SA: Did they have much transportation like airplanes, trains, boats, and things?

GM: Oh they had trains.

SA: They had the old passenger trains then?

GM: Yeah, they had the passenger trains. The Ping Pong used to stop down at Cavena all the time.

SA: Did you ever get to ride one to Pocatello, and stuff during that time?

GM: Well, we went to Pocatello and got married. You know, your grandfather and I didn't drive a lot because we had the farm and it was always something that you had to see to, you know. Then the longer we stayed, the more stuff we got and the more work we had. So that's the way things went.

SA: What were the prices like to ride the train?

GM: Well, they wouldn't be very expensive I don't think. I think it was about fifty cents to go from Cavena, Montpelier on the Ping Pong. About that to go to Soda. But they always stopped and if they'd see you coming, you see we had the horses, they'd see these horses and this rig coming down over the hill and boy they'd slow down and let us get on.

SA: How did you do your doctoring?

GM: Well, all the doctoring we done, we use to either go to the doctor or one time my husband had a siactic rheumatism and we had to have, he had to be put in the hospital for a treatment. They treated this siactic rheumatism and left his foot paralyzed. They put a big needle in this back, here you know, for some kind of medicine and stuff. That was awful painful.

SA: Then it was pretty easy to get to the doctor?

GM: Oh yes, you could get someway or other. If he could crawl out into the car I could take him in any direction.

SA: Where did you usually go?

GM: Well, we went both ways. We used to go to Dr. Kackley and then we used to go to Dr. Gerter in Montpelier. Dr. Kackley in Soda and Dr. Gertner in Montpelier. So we figured we had a couple of pretty good doctors. One time Bobbe got some saw dust in his eye and we had to take him up to Montpelier to get it taken out. The doctor just hit him a little pop under the eye and the eye popped right out of his face here and then he cleaned the saw dust out and put the, it back.

SA: You know how close Lava is to Soda. You know it's only about thirty-eight miles. Did dad when he went down swimming, did he learn in the Bear River or did he, did he get to go to Lava?

GM: He used to go to Lava. Then I used to take one of the kids and Bob, my husband, would take the other and just paddle around with them. But he never really learned to swim until he was in the Navy. He said that was the hardest thing that he had to do was to learn to swim like you have to for the Navy.

SA: Did they have that outside pool and the inside pool?

GM: No, they just had one down there then.

SA: Was it just that big inside pool?

GM: That covered one, uh-huh.

SA: Did they have a hot springs?

GM: They had a hot springs up here above Montpelier. They still have.

SA: Did you get to do many things like that, you know, go out?

GM: Oh yeah, on Sunday afternoon or Saturday or something like that, we could scoot most any place we want to, you know, after the crops were in. we always had to get home in time to tend to the animals. Those cows had to be milked, and the eggs had to be gathered, and the pigs had to be fed, the calves had to be fed, and everything like that.

SA: Now was chocolate hard to come by, or did you have to substitute?

GM: Well, chocolate was always rather rare, you know quite expensive too. I think it really is cheap now. It's cheaper now than it used to be, and it's expensive now too.

SA: Then you didn't use chocolate very much?

GM: Oh yes, I made chocolate cakes, you know. This friend, Pauline and Gen's boy, they liked, he used to come down and stay with Bobbe, you know, he was his friend. Those kids were so rowdy; you could never keep your rug straight. They'd always want ice cream and chocolate cake and all that kind of stuff, you know. I remember one time my brother and his wife and their two children, Ronald and LuDean, they went to Soda and then they said they'd maybe drive down to our place when they came back. Ronald said be good, I hope they're making ice cream. When they got almost to the house, why Bob just came over with some ice, getting ready you know to freeze some ice ready ice cream. So they were glad.

SA: Did you ever have to substitute anything?

GM: Oh yes. I had to substitute. I got so I quite, that's when I kinda learned to like gram flour and whole wheat and that way you know. That's when I learned that.

SA: Did you have a mill to grind your wheat?

GM: Yes, I had a little mill, mill that you could grind. But that made it kind of course, it was really a coffee mill. It seemed like it was kind of course for that or it was probably the wrong kind of wheat to grind.

SA: What did you do? You'd store your wheat and when you got ready to make it into flour, you'd do it a little bit at a time or did you do it all at once?

GM: Oh, we'd just take a load for what we'd need, for a year. Then we'd stack it up in the winter. We had a big stack down at the ranch in the bedroom.

SA: So all in all you did pretty well for yourself during the depression.

GM: Yes.

SA: Well, I don't have any more questions, so is there anything else you'd like to add?

GM: Uh-uh.

SA: Well, thank you for your time. This tape will be put in the Rick's College Library in Rexburg, Idaho. Thanks.