

Dr. David L. Crowder Oral History Project

Lowe Rudd – Stockman in the Depression

By Lowe Rudd

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Box 2 Folder 35

Oral Interview conducted by Kenneth Taylor

Transcribed by Alina Mower November 2005

Brigham Young University- Idaho

KT: I'm Kenneth Taylor. Today is March the 26th. I'm going to interview Mr. Lowe Rudd. The general topic will be "Stockman in the Depression." Mr. Rudd, where were you born?

LR: I was born in the town of Parker, Idaho.

KT: How long have you lived here in Parker?

LR: That has been the time of my life, 60 years to date, more or less, here and elsewhere, but this has been my home.

KT: Where were your parents born, Mr. Rudd?

LR: They were born in Parker, too. My grandparents from both sides homesteaded in the Parker community.

KT: What was your occupation at this time?

LR: As a young man you probably understand my occupation was rather varied, because Depression times didn't lend itself to being occupied. Being a farm boy, a ranch boy, the activities were centered around ranching. This is the activities of my day, and it was my interest at the time.

KT: Well as we talked last week you told me that you were in school. Well, could you tell us a little bit about going to school and then furthering your education and what period of the time this took?

LR: Well, school was rather a spotted, sporadic affair in my life, and perhaps hard to understand today. A little gal in Parker had a two year high school, and I went there for two years, and then it was our responsibility to get ourselves to St. Anthony and finish our high school. I was there three years getting through that two years of high school because of sickness, and because of the fact that we had to ride horses through the winter, distance five miles, to get to school, and I think I graduated from St. Anthony High School about 1931. Couple of years that I laid out after that because funds were not adequate to get me into school, and then my father became a warden of the penitentiary in Boise, so my younger brother and I went to Boise to go to college there, and through a misfortune on his part he lost his position there, or was replaced there at the first of the year, so my year was discontinued or my school was there. I came back and, here is where the various activities that we participated in, but it was a year or two later that the Ricks College had a team going to Hawaii to play football; and because I'd played in Boise and thought perhaps I might make the team at Ricks I went to Ricks College with that ambition. Worked pretty well, but we were rather short on financial assistance and certainly short on anything that we had of our own to participate in school. School was very cooperative in trying to help us. After the second quarter, I decided a college education and me weren't for each other, and then I went back to my activities of being a young man on the loose, so to speak, and after the summer I decided maybe I should go back to school. So with what money I could muster, I got back into Ricks again and because the School Board here encouraged me, I stayed and I went to summer school and got my teaching certificate, but that didn't materialize, that particular job, so I was

back on the loose again without finances to go on to any other school. A younger brother had more thought into the future perhaps than I did and by a little help on my part he was able to go on and go through school; and I in turn, was able to follow after he had graduated. I think I graduated from University of Utah State University in the spring of 1940. We were married at the first of the year 1940, I recall, Mrs. Rudd and I, perhaps did something that didn't, many people didn't do. But, we were able to get by on about \$28 a month and go on finish our school year out. She had her teaching certificate and had been teaching in Parker where I had met her, and I guess that's what she thought she was going to do is marry a teacher.

KT: Okay, you said it took about nine years to get through your schooling?

LR: From the time I got out of high school, yes about nine years.

KT: The reason for this, of course, was that you just didn't have the money and things?

LR: No, my folks are financially unable to help me. They, my dad had never really had a success in farming. He had been a second generation farmer here, and so he and his associates of his age groups rented the desert north of here to homestead and got in a few years of good farming out there and then, and then farming went capoop, and they were broke, and they had to come back into the valley here to endeavor to find some kind of work and just about that time that is when the big wind started to blow.

KT: Okay, now what different type of jobs did you have during this period of time?

LR: Well, most of our work, a lot of it was self-initiated. Some of it was, some of it was, through our endeavors. We, I say we because I had associates—my older brother, myself, and a friend or two who we lived with, Ken Miller, is one. We batched and in those days we took care of some cattle on the desert, pumped water for them out there. My father and brother owned the well. They took what we call herd cattle-people, everybody's cattle—and we grazed them for the summer, for figures like \$4 for the summer, and we contracted for the summer. Each one of us, had \$150 for summer wages for taking care of these cattle. We would board ourselves, and we were able to work out a milking program, we raised hogs, we contracted hogs, we broke horses, we did just about anything that came along. Winter times we stayed out there when I wasn't in school. We trapped wild animals—fur bearing animals. We chased coyotes, ran them on our saddle-horses. We were able to get fairly good price for the hides in some of those years. We did quite a few things in this particular phase.

Work was impossible to get in the immediate area, even fathers and family-men were unable to secure employment for more than 20 or 30 hours a week at 15 to 25 cents a hour. They certainly weren't going to hire young men, and of course, we weren't looking for, we were making more money than our parents by sort of being on the loose, so to speak. Up until 1929 or 1930 I'd spend my summers in Jackson Hole being a wrangler on dude ranches, but that went flat when this came along. I spent one summer skidding timber for my uncle, spent all year, and Fourth of July I asked him if I could get some money for the Fourth of July and he said yes here's a dollar, and that's all the money that I received that entire summer. I took lumber for pay and traded the lumber off, if and where I could to, mostly traded for livestock, and we then in

time built up a herd of cattle, and then I'd get a nucleus of cattle then, I'd or horses would sell them, and then go back to school for a while.

KT: Well, what is a Dude Ranch then, you were talking about?

LR: A dude ranch is a summer recreation place, a ranch where people are accepted as guests and taken in for the summer. They're entertained in a western up-most style with the interest of making the people happy, and it included all kinds of riding—anything related to western activity we did it. Pack trips into the Tetons, this is in Jackson Hole area, this particular area is well noted for this. It's sort of an allocation with me, and it has worked out for me to date very satisfactorily.

KT: Uh-huh. Well, you also said a little while back that you sold horses in those times. Well, how much did a horse sell for during that period of time?

LR: Well, we were of a disposition at those times to get the horses in this area. In fact, the desert to the north and west of us when I was younger, was amassed with wild horses so to speak. Many of them had brands and many of them didn't; and them long and tough winters there, and some of them died of starvation and the Clark County rounded many of them and sold them for whatever they could. They were eroding and denuding the ranges, so they had to be moved, but my particular activity was related to this. I would gather some of these horses, break them, if I couldn't buy them I would break some on shares, and then we would—my partner and I, either my brother or Ken and I, Ken Miller and I—would take them over to Jackson, and we would sell them; and we, of course, through the difficult time had a bad time trying to sell them. We would get as little or as much I should say, as \$15 a head for these horses, after we had to wait 'til fall to get our money, because hunting in Jackson Hole was a reasonably secure thing for many of the people and many of the outfitters, and so they had some assurance that they would have money then.

KT: Well on these horses how much the same price today would you get out of these same horses?

LR: Well, we run about 100 head of horses we take over there each summer now in as much as we have a concession there, and these particular kinds of horses cost around 250 to 300 dollars a head.

KT: 200 or 300 dollars a head. Okay, well just in conclusion then Mr. Rudd, what would you say, would you say this brought the families on this Depression closer together or something like this, because of the shortage of money and things like this?

LR: Now this would go into another phase of my life. I mean another angle of it, of course. Our home was a very close, closely knit home. My father and mother were home-reared and nurtured on love and affection, and my mother was one of the greatest cooks in the world, and I didn't even have any trouble getting my grub-box full when I went back, and she always had plenty there for my friends and any who came; but our home was, of course, center of our stays in Parker, so to speak. We had a very fond recollection, and during the times of the Depression if

you like to refer to that, I really can't tell when the Depression started in my life, because my parents were brought up in very limited funds. My grandfather was a successful lumberman, but even in that degree, they were living in a limited facilities—limited money—but that just continued on throughout my father's life, and I was part of that. I fit into it and not until the 50s have I ever known any different so were not prepared to talk about any changes in our life, but my home was a lovely place, and it wasn't because of the affluence of financial affluence, it was because of the wonders of a loving father and mother really. We knew where home base was and what was expected of us, and when we found ourselves with nothing to do in the evenings like watch television or of the likes, my father and mother and friends or family or whomever we had some wonderful times at home; and we lived them and relived them, of course, for the rest of our lives because they really sunk in, they got to us, and this is basic. I think we had a gramophone when I was younger and that's the closest we had to artificial entertainment. If I wanted to go see a picture show, I walked from Parker to St. Anthony, five miles, and paid my dime at the window and felt myself very fortunate, but I did that about once or twice a summer and that was it.

KT: Well, thank you very kindly Mr. Rudd, for this interview tonight.

LR: Well, I'm sure it isn't very wide coverage, but perhaps it gives you just a little idea of the things that were close to us—part of us.