

Dr. Radke Women's Oral History Collection

Gloria Ballantyne - Life Experiences

By Gloria Ballantyne

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Box 1 Folder 3

Oral Interview conducted by Eugene Ballantyne

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Brigham Young University- Idaho

Eugene Ballantyne: Give me background of your early life. You were born in Texas right?

Gloria Ballantyne: No, I was born in Utah.

EB: Oh, right. Ok.

GB: I was born in Ogden, Utah in the Deans Hospital.

EB: How long did you guys end up living in Utah?

GB: We started out living in Utah. My mother was from Fillmore and my father was from Lebanon. He met mother, he was selling an old can of lights. He met mother. He was not a member of the Church, but my mother was. My grandfather said one day he will be a member, he told my father, one day he will be a member of the Church.

EB: So how long were you in Utah for?

GB: Our whole lives.

EB: Your whole life?

GB: Except the last, I went one year to the University of Utah and Then moved to Dallas to the clothing factory. I went to grade school and junior high school and East High School, I graduated from East High School, Salt Lake City, Utah.

EB: Wow. This is a grandchild that is pretty ignorant of that. I didn't realize that, for some reason I thought you were more in Texas for a while.

GB: Well I did live in Texas when Daddy moved. My sister and my brothers were in the South. It was during the World War II. My brothers were both in the South. My dad moved. My sister married a third cousin, her name is Phil Malouf. They lived in west Texas. She met him and loved him, married him and they moved to Texas. My dad moved us down there and he and my brother-in-law opened a women's clothes factory. We lived there during the War and then I met Romney. He was in the service and I met him, that's where I met my husband.

EB: So what was life like in Utah during the '20s and '30s?

GB: It was very simple. My father worked for Metropolitan Life Insurance Company and I was just a little girl. I was born in Ogden and we lived next to the mountains in the foothills of the mountains. We use to get plenty of snowstorms. I remember the outdoor outhouses and when the wind blew, our outhouse use to blow over. My older brother would stand there and hope it would blow over with the door off

because it made such a nice boat, it had portholes and everything. It would snow so bad the meteorologist lived quite a ways and daddy would have to shovel our road and I would watch him from the window. I must have been two years old, maybe three but I remember that. There were two families that lived across the street from us that daddy would dig out. He would be the first car out and then everybody else would follow. I have a picture of me sitting on the front porch of that house with one of my cousins. It had pillars on the outside of the porch. We could pound the butter and paint the pillars to the front porch. I went up there one day after I was grown to see the house and the paint was still coming through the butter outside of the house. I guess they never figured it out, what keeps coming through. Then we bought our first home. My mother and father bought their first home in Ogden. We lived there for many years and he worked for the Metropolitan Insurance Company. One day Heber J. Grant called him in the office and asked him if he would work for the Church with life insurance because he was such a good salesman. We had a nice home. We always had nice things. I don't remember a great deal of things that happened up there in Ogden because I was so little. My Grandfather lived there the rest of his life. My grandfather Giles. We use to go up there around this time and visit with him. There are just a few instances I can remember. Life was simple and I remember being a very happy child. I never felt poor. I'm sure we weren't real poor but I know my mother was very thrifty. She used to take big handkerchiefs and make me clothes out of it. She would take big men handkerchiefs and make me a dress out of it. She made most of my clothes. I was always dressed. She took great care of me. I had especially curly hair. She would bind it in little tufts and she said I was just an absolute angel. I would not move until all the curls gone. She put bobby pins in them. I had little ringlets all over my head. Even now I have a really good head of hair because of the care my mother took of me. She was a true mother. She devoted her whole life to mothering. She was very talented. I guess I got my appreciation of talents from her. I'm not real talented but I love art and I love music. In school I majored in music and minored in dance. I graduated from high school. I went on to college. I went one at the university and then when we moved to Dallas I went one year at the Southern Methodist University. Then after that I went back up to Utah to college at the University for another year. Then I met Romney and married him so I was unable to finish college.

EB: What is your recollection of times during the Great Depression? Do you remember hard times? I mean you just mentioned before that felt you always had what was sufficient but did you notice a difference? Your father working the insurance must have had some repercussions in the stock market.

GB: In my young years we were never rich. My mother would be given the amount of money to do the laundry. I remember the last doll I got for Christmas, she saved the washing money and did the wash in the bath tub. She saved that washing money so that I could have a doll for Christmas. I still have that doll. The last doll I got I got as a little girl. We were never over rich, until he got into the manufacturing business. There was no problem with money after that. He was

very smart, a very good businessman. I was never interested in those types of things. I worked in the factory awhile. I did payroll and I did buttons in the factory that kids can do just like setting tile. I use to run the elevator in the factory. Just things I could do and still go to school. Daddy definitely wanted us all to go to school and wanted us to get a good education because he never did have a solid education. But he was so smart. He could put something in a typewriter and a calculator and he would have the answer to it before it came out. He used the calculator to make sure he was right on his figures. He was a very smart man, very funny too, very Lebanese. There was the beautiful thing of culture. They didn't deny the culture, neither did my grandfather. He really embraced the culture and loved the culture because it was the culture of the Savior. Your Grandfather respected it and always told us that we were never to disrespect their cultures.

EB: What did he come over to America for?

GB: He came over at 15 to buy a bicycle so that he could go back and have a bicycle. But the strange thing about that is the little village was on terraces. Really there was not so many places to ride a bicycle. There little village overlooked the city they lived in Lebanon. And uh, they lived in between two villages you know it was very rocky and very little places to ride it. Remember the Savior when they rolled the rock in his burial place? Well that's the way it is, in that area. His mother- my grandmother was buried in one of those caves. He respected the Jewish people, although he was Catholic. His Grandfather was Greek Orthodox Priest. His grandfather was the only male to look up to. His father died four months before he was born. So he never knew a father. His grandfather raised him. So he was raised in the Greek Orthodox church. So he learned – and he loved, and his grandfather was a very very fine priest. Orthodox priest are allowed to be married, and was a very fine priests. The whole village just loved him. And father loved him and they really took care of him. They both were buried in Lebanon. His whole family was buried there. But they were taught to love the Jewish people, some of daddy's best friends were Jewish, and they learned to just get along because Lebanon was a very small country and still to this day it is being picked on and being taken over by different countries. But they just kind of lived simple lives and dad brought that with him, he never did go back, he bought bicycles for all of us but he never bought one for himself. He never did learn how to ride a bicycle.

But we lived in the upper parts and we lived in the Eastern side of Salt Lake City, and you know that was in the good parts of the city where the people made a good wage lived. We had two cars but we were still required to learn the value of a dollar.

EB: Let's move to the period where you're now a young lady and you're now in Texas. Where is it that you met up with Grandpa?

GB: Oh he was in the service, and both of my brothers were in the service, so we had one board room in our house and two sets for double beds, This was the boys' rooms and there was absolutely no place for the men in the service to stay and Romney was in the service and he came from West Texas, and they had little branches in the church and we had a bigger branch in Dallas and one of the Seventies came to Dallas for stake conference one weekend and Romney came up with him. We could put four boys and we use to house all the soldiers that came, and Romney was one of those boys that came, and that's where we met. And then he went to OCS, he went back to Georgia to go to officers candidate school and I went to the University of Utah to finish my third year of school, and my brother was stationed in Salt Lake so I just lived with my brother while I went to school at the University of Utah, but Romney and I wrote back and forth- from his OCS, and he was pinned to another girl from UCLA at he sorority and had been for three or four years so I never even felt the –you know anything but friendship for Romney. But then, his Father called me one morning before I went to school in Salt Lake, and called and said, that Romney had graduated from OCS and had spent the weekend with my family in Dallas and had left on a plane from Dallas but he had not yet arrived and had not heard anything from him, they were worried, so I gave him my families phone number and Father Ballantyne called and I walked the floor until four o'clock in the morning until- well, I had a test that morning and I was just up in arms. And my sisters were all up with me and asked are you sure you're not in love with that boy? I was so upset wondering where he was and wondering what had happened. And just before I left for school his father had called me and had said he had arrived. I guess he was bumped for some officers or something like that and he had to take a plan that arrived later.

So anyway so when I came back, he was stationed there in West Texas so we became very good friends. And, just one night he asked me to marry him.

EB: How long had you known Grandpa at this point?

GB: Oh maybe two years. And you know every time he would come to Dallas, I was in school. He would always stay at my folks. And he would go to shows with some of my girlfriends and they really liked him. But you know there was a lot of guys who stayed with my folks and Romney was the only one who ever sent a thank- you note. All those boys, they got a thank you note from him telling them how much he appreciated being there, it was an impression that –they just really liked him, they didn't question it at all when –and he came up and daddy didn't want me to marry him in the temple, because he was going overseas, he had orders to go over to Japan and he said honey are you sure this is what you want? I said absolutely, Dad, I know that, I don't ever have to think about it. He said he might not come back. And I said yes but then I will be sure to be married to him. So he let us do that. We had to be married before we went to the temple so that I could travel with him, because no one was allowed to travel by train unless they were on orders, you know families, so I had to be married, so the branch president married us on Sunday in a sweet ceremony then we went by train up to Salt Lake

and were married the following Thursday, in the Salt Lake Temple. And of course our families, my dad and mother couldn't come to the temple with us because they didn't have the transportation. But Aunt Margaret and Romney's mother saved their gas- they were on gas rations and they saved their gas rations so they drove from Los Angeles to Salt Lake and were there at the wedding at the temple. And they had never met me, they had never met me, but they were so sweet. And they had said that they had trusted Romney explicitly. It was a wedding designed in heaven.

EB: Were you younger than you thought you should have been before you got married?

GB: I was 22.

EB: I know that Grandma Wasson has said she got married sooner than she had planned because Grandpa was going off to war.

GB: Yeah, that's right. I hadn't thought of getting married at that time. But things were different at that time, you either did it or you didn't do it. You know? And I couldn't see writing him letters for the rest of the time. We only had about ten days after we were married before he went overseas. But then, it was nice, of course we had known each other quite well because we had -I think often times you get better acquainted in letters because we both wrote back in forth all the time we were in school. He was in OCS and I was up at school. So it was interesting and there was no doubt in my mind that I really liked this boy you know, he was really a good friend. You see I had been going with another boy and he had gone back to Massachusetts, where he was stationed. He wrote me everyday and everyday and everyday and all of a sudden I didn't get any letters anymore, and so Romney was up there visiting one weekend and I was still in the home mission, and he went to a missionary meeting with me and the boy I had been going with, his father was the mission leader in Dallas and um, somehow he took me into the other room and said I want you to know that our son is married. It just threw me for a loop, but I didn't say anything then I went back to the meeting and Romney and I were traveling on a streetcar. By then we were standing at the street corner and he said brother Guthrie had told me what had happened. Then I just started crying. And he says man aren't you a brick? He took me in his arms and I blubbered but you know, he was just a good friend. You know I saw so many good qualities in him he was so dear and sensitive and we became very good friends. So anyway, mother knew I was unhappy so she sent me back up to the University of Utah to - but we still wrote and then Romney decided that he needed another girl so he then decided that maybe we should get married. So when I came back he asked me to marry him.

EB: So when Grandpa was overseas and you guys are married at this point, how often would you receive letter from him?

GB: Oh he was stationed- he was going to Japan but then VJ day came and they were sending boys home so he was in Hawaii for nine months well for almost ten months he was there and then they had him there receiving men to go on back to their homes. So he never did get to Japan. Heavenly Father just interceded. Curtis was born 9 months and one day after we were married. So my mother-in-law called me and on the nine months day saying that you can have the baby anytime now dear. So I had it the next day. Romney didn't see him until he was six weeks old. He came back to Dallas and I went home to stay with my mother and father until he came back from the service but that was really neat. You know I had family there- my sister was there- my brother. My brother is funny, he sent him a letter and put in a bill for the hours he walked while I was having the baby. --- He's a nut!

EB: Ok, so then you have Curtis, Grandpa comes home from the service, how long was it before you moved back to California?

GB: Right after he got out of the service, we brought Curtis home on the plane which they paid our fare all the way back to California from Dallas. You see they transported him by way of so he carried him in his lap I would have given anything to have had a picture of him when he first saw the baby. You know he had never been raised with children so it was kind of hard for him. But he has been a very loving father. Obviously his kids all love him.

EB: You guys stayed close to his dad's house?

GB: We stayed with Father and Mother for I guess almost a year. Then Continental bought us a- and Romney went to school at UCLA, we lived in Long Beach. He went to school in a Model A Ford, to UCLA everyday for school, then Father had his heart attack, but before he had had his heart attack, Continental had bought two buildings with eight units and we lived in those units for several years. We lived with Mother and Father for a year I guess then they bought those apartments, which was nice. Then Father had his heart attack and Romney had to quit school. He had one more semester to graduate but he knew that the company would go under and nobody to run the company if he didn't do it so he did. He quit school. It took Father four years- the doctors all said they don't know how he lived for four years. He lived on oxygen and he took it every place he went. Aunt Margaret quit her job so that she could take father to the job when he needed. Romney didn't know the business but he learned the business and in that four years it took Romney, it took father four years to get him in tune with - he was working with father when father died. But then Romney had always been a worker. Just like your dad. Just on and on and on.

EB: So Grandpa came home, your now in Long Beach, Grandpa takes over the business, what were the fifties like? I know that my dad was born in 48, and others came along.

GB: Times were very meager. We really had to save. But then again, the church – we never had to go on welfare or anything. But just having the church and having something to do with the Church. I was Relief Society president. I've been everything, young women's president, Romney was young men's president then with the scouts and he worked with the volley ball you know our whole life has been a complete delight as far as the church is concerned. It has given us something to do and also to mentor other people. And we have always just loved young people. It has been a delight. Our bishop now has asked us what we have done in the church and I said everything. There isn't anything I haven't done. I was even Relief Society president, which was something that I didn't want. I don't covet anything or any position in the church. But I have directed music, I've played the piano, I've done everything there is to do in MIA, I've done everything there is to do in Relief Society, you know I've filled positions and Romney has too. His positions have always been ones in the background except when he was a councilor in the bishopric. He never wanted to be bishop. It's just we never coveted any position, we have always been happy in what we were doing because it was great for us to live. It was hard as far as earning was concerned, we bought this house for \$18,000 on a vets home and it's now worth \$500,000.

EB: What year did you buy your house? When did you guys move to Santa Ana?

GB: About 42 years ago. We had Wendell- no, Wendell wasn't born here but both Patty and George were born here. And Margaret Ann and Wendell were born in Long Beach. But we then lived here. There were several years between Edward and Margaret but then there were 3 years that I had several miscarriages that I had between Edward and Margaret then I got a good doctor and he fixed me up and I had four more.

EB: Grandma, what would you say that the role of the Relief Society was in the church? How has it changed or evolved through out the years?

GB: It has evolved because of the things that are necessary for women to learn now. We use to have Bazaars because the church's – we had to have ways of raising money- to help the poor. But now with the fast offerings and the way the Church is going, we don't need any of that. We need to learn things of the Spirit. It has very defiantly changed. Our lessons are spiritual, we use to have a cultural nights, not that culture isn't right, but that's the way the lessons were before. When I taught the Relief Society lessons, there were four books written by Brother Thomas, from BYU out of the best books were the cultural lessons and they were great. We studied all the great literature from the world. But these days we are turning towards more spirituality. We need the spirit, we have lost a great deal of the spirit.

EB: Yeah, you're right. We look at some of the roles of the relief society- such as homemaking that was the focus, which was important but we look at the original reason for Emma and Joseph for organizing the society was for building the spirit.

GB: That's right and then they got away from it. Of course homemaking is important but they do that on other days now. On enrichment days, they do that on those days. Even on those days, they have something cultural. But the lessons are definitely spiritual. And something that will enhance our spirits and enhance our study in the gospel. Because sometimes you get away from the gospel and even in Joseph Smith's time sometimes the selfishness and the people didn't know how to forgive people and it's getting that way now. We need to know how to forgive and forget and go on with our lives. We need to go on and give service to people. You all know this, that most of our lessons are on service, on what we can do for others. We need to teach as Christ taught.

EB: Grandma, talk to me a little bit about your role as a mother. Your role obviously now as a grandmother and great-grandmother, what have you learned and what lessons would you pass on to generations that will hear this recording?

GB: I have learned that you don't force anyone to believe, you just live it as you know it- you live it and you learn it and teach it by the way you live. I can't teach anything to anybody they just have to look and feel that from us. I think we judge people when we shouldn't be judging them, we judge each other, we find fault. I've tried not to do that and I have tried to teach my children that. Whenever they have, I bring it their attention, should you really be doing this? Look at our kids, they aren't perfect but they are beautiful kids, every one of them. I'm so proud of them; even Wendell is doing good things. He's a mentor for people. He's not doing what he is suppose to be doing but he has to do it on his own. He has to want and have a desire to do it. Although my heart has hurt, I can't do anything. He has been taught, but Joseph has taught that when we teach our children as little ones the gospel, where they came from and where they are suppose to be going in their life, they will come back one day whether it be in this life or the next they will come back. I have discovered that there are reasons for everything. There are reasons for people's actions and reasons for people's in actions. It is not for me to judge, it is just for me teach. Everything that I have done in my life for some reason I end up in the teaching position. That is what my patriarchal blessing told me that I would teach all my life. I'm not a "teacher teacher," so I'm not a born teacher, I just know that the Gospel is true. I feel that in my heart very deeply.

EB: To you Grandma, what is the role of women on this earth? What is your opinion on women?

GB: Well I know that women are different than men in that men are the providers and the women are the nurturers. That's the way it should be. That doesn't mean that they don't care about other things. That doesn't mean that the women have to do all the nurturing. I remember one night, it was time for Edward to go on a mission

(I don't know if he ever told you this or not) but it was during the [Vietnam] war. They were letting one missionary go every six months. It was the Army that was only letting one missionary go every six months. There was one boy that was going the first six months of the year and Edward was to go the next six months. So he went up to Santa Monica College and lived with Aunt Margaret, ya know to take volleyball from the man who was the coach of the women's Olympic volleyball team. He was now teaching volleyball at Santa Monica College. So Edward went up there, and this man spent many hours teaching Edward to be a good volleyball player. The boy that was suppose to go the first six of the year decided that he didn't want to go on a mission. So they called Edward and asked him if he would like to take that position. He had spent all that time with that man and didn't know what to do. It was something that he had to decide himself. One morning he came home and got daddy out of bed. He said dad can I talk to you? And then he told him the terrible drama that he was going through. And you know whenever any one was sick it was my turn, so I couldn't figure out why Edward had awakened his dad. But I came to the door and here was a boy with a young boy in his arms and he was just sobbing. I knew that that was not my time, that was father's time to nourish. So I just quietly just turned and left. But that next day I had discovered what had happened and dad said we need to go talk to the stake president. So we went to the stake president and explained what had happened. And the stake president said, Edward you were right, you will be a better missionary- what are all these boys on the volleyball team going to think of you if you go out now? So that is what they decided, so he missed his mission. But his mission was greater, and he has done everything that he can to fulfill his mission in life. That lots of times is more important that fulfilling a mission. So there are times when father needs to be there to nourish as well as provide.

EB: So your point is that womanhood, we do have our distinct roles, but they work best as we work together.

GB: Absolutely! You can't just take one role. There have been many women who have been the providers, and that's fine too. It's really hard to be a mother because mothers have a certain tendency to nourish. But I know of one father who is a single father and its been really hard for him. He has three beautiful girls and you know sometimes you just don't know. So its very hard to take both roles, but you do help with both roles. You've seen that, you've seen that in your own household.

EB: Well, that is what is important.

GB: I knew a German couple once that she had just had a new baby and she was doing the wash and someone was going to help her hang it and her husband said don't do that, that's women's work. His children suffered terribly, they didn't know which way to go. Cultures are just that way, and that's just not going to work. It's just not right.

EB: Fortunately we have grown, its not such a patriarchal society, and now were able to work together.

GB: It has to be! The men hold the priesthood, it is for service, its not supposed to be used in commanding. It's not to be used in that manner. And for sure its not to be used for command.
It's been a wonderful life honey, we have been married now for sixty years, father and I. It's been a good sixty years.

EB: I think that in life, I'm not the one who needs to be talking but you're the one who gets to do the positive or negative outlook. If you want your life to be positive- my dads always said that you can wake up and say "O God another day" (negatively) or you can say " O God another day" (Positive) and be thankful for what you have. I mean I walked the streets of Ecuador which were so impoverished, it would make my heart wrench to think how poor they are, and I would think to myself, why was I born to a family that loved me? You know I never went without food, but with a lot of these kids it was just day-to-day with them. I never had that.

GB: That's right.

EB: In life I think you have to look at what good you have been given and try to ignore the negative. Because the negative is not going to be forever.

GB: Well, and you know where all the negative comes from. And if you remember that, you will not let it be there. Because the negative is from Lucifer, always, that is exactly how he works. My father started opening up little shops to sale ladies ready to ware. But he never picked up hitchhikers. He just never wanted to put himself in a predicament. But he saw this old man walking along one time, and he thought to himself, gosh, what is he doing out here in the middle of nowhere?
And he stopped and asked him if he wanted a ride, and he said well I ain't going any place in particular, and I'm in no hurry to get there so I might just as well walk. But thanks! So he had a really good attitude and dad said well that's a good attitude. And he went on his merry way. But he didn't want to have himself or have people feeling sorry for him. So he just went on his way.

EB: Well, Grandma I appreciate your time tonight. This has been enlightening to me. I feel fortunate that I have had a relationship with you, that it's been close in that we have not lived long distance from each other, I've lived most of my life very close to you.

GB: Oh we have just had a wonderful time with our grandchildren. And we are so fortunate that we – we've tried to keep track of all of them, people are just amazed when I say these kids are so and so... and these belong to Margaret, and these belong to Edward and they say how can you remember all their names?

I say how can I not remember them? Because the Lord knows all their names and so do I.

EB: I appreciate our relationship that I've been able to have, there's a lot of kids I know who don't know their grandparents. I know my grandparents.

GB: I know my grandparents – the only grandparent I knew was my mother's father. I didn't know my father's parents, and my mother's mother dies before I was born, or ever before she was even married, so I never did know her but I did know my grandfather and he was lovely.