MW: Could you tell me the story of your Grandfather and let me know a little about him. My research paper is on plural marriage and people who lived it in the area.

CB: He didn’t live in the area, he lived in Salt Lake.

MW: That’s ok. That will work.

CB: There were two brothers. John was the older and Andrew was my Great Grandfather. John joined the church first and it was quite a story how he joined the church. After he joined the church then he came to America. Then he worked to save up $100.00 and sent it to Scotland and that brought his Dad and Mother and Andrew over here. Andrew signed a deal with somebody to drive a wagon across the plains with the people that were coming west. The guy that hired him was killed somehow. Anyway, the two of them came to Salt Lake. Both of them had three wives. We always heard the story that they each had twenty-one kids, but my genealogy record shows that Andrew, I think, he had twenty-three. I don’t know about John. I haven’t done much research on John, but John tells an incredible story. He goes to a meeting, a street meeting. The family moves to what they call Clark Menan, Scotland, and after they got there they were having a meeting of the elders and he went to the meeting. And at the end of the meeting a number of the saints and elders and the guy that spoke: Elder William Gibson, President of the Idenburg Conference spoke at this meeting.

[At this point Cyril started reading from a family history about John Burt.]

At the end of the meeting a number of the Saints and elders formed a circle around me and asked what I thought of the elders discourse. I hesitated at this point at first to enlighten them on this point, not wanting them to press my opinion on the subject. But being pressed for an answer I acknowledged that I was clearly impressed to the truth of Elder Gibson’s remarks and that he was a man of God that had preached no doubt the Gospel of Christ furthermore if I were in possession of the wealth of the world I would freely exchange it for the light and information I had received to the discourse of Elder Gibson in that one meeting.

CB: Well, he had a dream. He worried about it. Then Satan got him to doubt that it was right. And so in his talk (Elder Gibson) said he quoted that scripture “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God” (in James 1:5). So he said he did. And then he had a dream. And this dream he saw a guy there in this dream. And by the way and he said,

[Cyril started to read from a family history again.] He saw a personage in broad cloth and a white neckerchief on that came at his right hand. The moment I beheld this personage a voice whispered to me “That is Joseph Smith the Prophet.” When he spoke to me he was saying that he desired me to answer some questions. Said he, “If you are a Latter-day Saint you may enter.” Listen to this. I hold the keys to that door. That no man from hence forth can ever enter there in without first obtaining my permission and my consent. With this I opened the door and walked in and saw a meeting and immediately I woke.
CB: It was quite a story. Joseph Smith he said nobody in this dispensation would go through that door without permission. Now that’s quite a thing. But anyway, immediately after he applied for baptism. And John Sharp baptized him. They became lifelong friends. They were boyhood friends. Anyways, he talks about that he stayed in Clark Menan. In August of 1848, he left his mother and his father and his only brother to seek a home among the saints. He’s just gotten married.

[Cyril reads from Family history again.] We sailed from Liverpool on a sailing vessel.

CB: Now he comes to this country. He talks about arriving in Salt Lake and on the way earning $100.00 and sending it home. And then Andrew and his dad and mother come on the scene. Now do you want anymore said about John or just stick to Andrew?

MW: Let’s just stick to Andrew. There is probably a whole story there right?

CB: Well there is a lot of information about him. By the way this John Sharp I looked up his name in the Church History. Very prominent individual in the church. In fact, he was so prominent that and so close to Brigham Young that when Brigham Young died he was one of the committee that decided on how to distribute his inheritance.

MW: Oh really, I just read about that last week in Church history.

CB: Now I looked up Andrew Burt and he got in a fight with a guy, with one of the officers in the army. He polished him off and they fined hi 25 bucks for doing it. Anyway, so he was quite a guy. I won’t go into that. Just the fact that Andrew Hill Burt is in the history books in two or three places really thrills me. And this John Sharp was too. There were both very prominent individuals.

MW: It’s thrilling that you have your history.

CB: Now let me ask you how much detail you want about Andrew Burt?

MW: If we could talk as much as you know about plural marriage that will help. My topic is specifically is how these men and their families dealt with life when they had to go into hiding and if they did? How they evaded the law?

CB: Now John there is a lot about him now he left and went to Hawaii and Canada. But Andrew before the Manifesto was murdered and killed. So I can’t talk too much to that about Andrew.

MW: So should we talk about John since he is your uncle, right?

CB: Of course I would rather talk about my Great Grandpa.

MW: Let’s do that then. So he had passed on well before your time.
CB: Yes he was killed in 1883 when my grandfather was 18 years old.

MW: I’ll start asking you some questions and we’ll see what develops out [of] it. Is that ok?

CB: Yeah that’s fine.

MW: I love that you have all this information.

CB: [Cyril went to get pedigree charts on Andrew Burt Hill.] There’s his picture. He was quite a guy. I went down to Salt Lake years ago and I had heard that his picture was hanging in the city hall. So I went down to Salt Lake and I found a picture of him. And I went to the people who made the picture and they were still in business. So I went to them and got one made. It is in my Dad’s life history. I wrote my Dad’s life history too. Anyway, I had a picture made in 8x10 for everyone of his, well I had a picture made for everyone of my uncles, my Dad and everyone of his brothers. They were really pleased to get the picture. So anyway, let’s go ahead and you start asking questions.

MW: How many children did Andrew Hill Burt have with each wife?

CB: He had somewhere in between twenty-three and twenty-five children. He had a lot of children and there was a lot of Burts in the valley. But when Mary Kirkpatrick, she told him that if he married this other women she was leaving.

MW: And that’s the second wife?

CB: That was my grandmother.

MW: And did she leave him?

CB: She left him. But he furnished her with a house and everything. He was quite a guy. But she left him and she remarried. And later on married another guy. This was a result of her jealousies of the third wife. Maybe the third wife might have been a younger girl. I don’t know exactly how old she was. You can imagine the… Of course, I don’t know how they stood to live polygamy anyway.

MW: You know I’ve researched a lot and my mind has been opened but I can’t tell you I have all the answers.

CB: Well she was born in 1849 and Andrew was born in 1828 so she was 19 years younger than Andrew. She was probably the same age as some of his daughters.

MW: So are there any other stories as to how she dealt with polygamy situation other than that she divorced him?
CB: I don’t have much information on the women. I remember that Andrew Burt uh… because not only a marshal, but a chief police in Salt Lake City. And like I say he was a commander in the Mormon Battalion and he was bishop of one of the wards. In the Salt Lake 23rd Ward I think. And uh, so he was quite a prominent individual, and in the community.

When he… being the chief of police there was one day… there was a fellow that went into a café and ordered a breakfast or something. He did something to the proprietor. And the proprietor run him off. They sent for the police. Andrew was the chief of police but he was the only man in the office when he called. And so he and his friend, it was a bosom pal of his the Water Master, the two of ‘em went up to see what was going on, from the police station. When they got there the guy had left (the colored man.) So they went looking for him and when they got back to the café to talk to the proprietor again and here the guy showed up. And the proprietor said that’s him. And this guy turned and looked at Andrew and the Water Master and he said, “Are you a police officer?” Before Andrew could even answer he pulled out a gun and shot him. And uh… now mind you Andrew’s 55 years old, right in the prime of his life. And so when the guy after he shot Andrew, he pulled out a revolver to shoot the Water Master. He went nuts ya know. So the Water Master grabbed him, jumped right into him. The newspaper article said they were both fearless men. The Water Master grabbed him and he shot the Water Master through the arm, right at his elbow. He throwed him down on the ground and another guy came running over and they captured the guy came running over and they captured the guy. Subdued him. In the mean time Andrew had staggered into a drug store and fell on the floor. Well a mob started gathering around, and they took the colored man over to the police station and city hall to get him away from all the people. But for some reason or another, the police officers came out the door to talk to the crowd that was gathering around wanting to lynch him, and then word came down the pike that Andrew had died. He was very well thought of in the community. So the crowd went nuts. And they – when this colored man came out of the door they grabbed him. And then they started jerking him around and whooping him and beating him half to death. And hollering for a rope to hang him. They jerked the reins out of a harness to use for a hanging instrument, and here comes a guy with a rope. They tied a rope around his neck, drug him through that crowd. One gentlemen was trying to stop it, to get ‘em settled down. He said, “You can’t lynch this man.” And then they had to put him in the jail, and lock him in to keep the crowd from killing him, lynching him. I think it’s the only instance of a lynching in Salt Lake that I know of. So anyway, but he was dead. Andrew Hill Burt was dead. Anyway, they came to a shed, some sort of city building, wood shed or something. Threw the rope up over a beam, and hung him til he was dead. And then they cut him down. My family always said they drug him behind a horse, but the story indicates they drug him around but it doesn’t say by horse. Said you couldn’t even recognize him as [a] human being. So that was the end of Andrew Hill Burt’s life, and his assassin’s life. They looked in his pockets and found he had $165.00 dollars worth of gold and silver and some shells for his gun. Did I get off the subject?

MW: No, that’s great. So when Andrew Hill Burt was shot what happened to his wives at that point?
CB: Now there’s… I need to do some research on it. I don’t really know what happened to them, however, my grandmother remarried of course. And the other two gals had families and what happened to them I don’t know. I’m sorry to say that.

MW: So you probably have lots of relatives out there that you don’t know about.

CB: Certainly. I think the women just took care of themselves and I don’t know if the other two girls ever got remarried or not. I don’t know. I’d like to know. I’ll have to look that up and see. And I should make that an assignment for myself to do that.

MW: It gets complicated doesn’t it? [Keeping track of family history.]

CB: It really is interesting to me. I really thrive on it.

MW: That’s great. You’ve got the fever.

CB: But I’d like to take time to read you something. Maybe you don’t want to record it.

[Cyril read a newspaper obituary that said John Sharp, Joseph F. Smith, and John Taylor spoke.]

MW: Now what was your grandfather’s name that was Andrew Hill Burt’s son?

CB: His name was Fred. He went by the name of Fred but his name was Charles Frederick Burt. But he went by the name of Fred.

MW: And do remember this grandfather? Was he alive when you were a child?

CB: My grandfather, very, definitely. He was alive when I was in high school. He and I were really good friends. His wife died quite a few years before he did. Grandma died in 1933. Grandpa died in 1940, so seven years later. He wasn’t all that old when he died either. My grandpa died when he was seventy-five.

MW: Did he ever tell you stories of the plural marriage or the other siblings from the other marriages? I was very taken by the fact that your great grandfather had all these children and died leaving these women alone to care for them.

CB: According to the pedigree chart from one wife the youngest son was 23 and so they were pretty well grown.

MW: Does it say how old the youngest wife’s children were?

CB: My grandfather was 18 when his father died. His third wife’s youngest child was born in 1884. And he died in 1883 August, and this child was born in the next January so she was expecting a child. And she had another one that was 2 years old.
MW: Did you grandfather talk about his brothers and sisters?

CB: Yes, my uncle was a newspaper reporter for the Salt Lake Tribune and he found this article about 1953. And he sent it to me, and I typed it all. My oldest son was killed in an accident about that time in 1952. And we went to Salt Lake. And we had some insurance on my son, about $2000.00. Back in those days that was a lot of money. I took the money and I brought a type writer with a long carriage to do genealogy work. I typed that story verbatim.

MW: Did your grandfather ever talk about what brought them to the Rexburg area other than the railroad?

CB: [Cyril then read his father’s life story written in his father’s hand.] I took this excerpt from it. George Frederick Burt: My mother’s maiden name was Mary Kirkpatrick. She crossed the plains with the saints in the handcart company. She was young but she had the nerve. They had all kinds of hardships and difficulties but they finally arrived in that Salt Lake Valley. My mother was an expert needle worker and lace maker. She did embroidery work for the Bon Tons (a store in Salt Lake). She also did knit lace. She got along very nicely. She had not been here very long when she met a young man by the name of Charlie Booth. They kept company a short time then they were married. They had one baby girl. (Inaudible) by name. Mother said she was so happy with Charlie and her baby but her happiness was not to last long. Her baby was six months old when her husband died very suddenly. Heart trouble she said. He was a blacksmith by trade. Left alone again she went back to her needle and knitting. She was widowed for two years then she married my father. She had three children with my father, all boys; Andrew, James, and Fred. The two oldest died, that left me to buck it alone. When I was seven years old, father and mother separated. For what reason I don’t know. [Cyril interjected at this point “Grandpa was old, getting along in years and he knew why they separated.”] Father gave us a house on the outside of town. Fuel was so high we could not afford it. We would go up to a flat above the house and gather sage brush and put it in an old shed. When we wanted good wood for the heater we would go up where the herds were and gather buffalo chips. During harvest we would go gather wheat and bring it home and thrash it out by hand. That was the way we got most of our flour.

When I was ten years old my mother remarried. [The story goes on for pages. It is the life story of George Frederick Burt in the possession of George Burt.]

MW: I have a more personal question for you. How does it make you feel to know that you are a descendent [of] a man who was obedient to the commandment of plural marriage? Do you have any personal thoughts on that?

CB: No, maybe I should be envious of him. No I don’t really see how a person could live polygamy. I can understand how any women would permit it. And I can’t understand any man that would want to. I don’t think they did it because they were told to.

MW: I’ve learned a lot about it and I’m less judgmental and my eyes have been opened.
CB: Since you’ve been studying about polygamy?

MW: Yes.

CB: How do you feel about it?

MW: I think it was maybe the test of Abraham for the early church. The idea that if you can do this, if you can live this then you can be my people. I don’t know I don’t have all the answers. I know that Eliza R. Snow said that, “it was to make a more perfect manhood, physically and mentally.” It certainly forced the young men to live honorable in order to marry because there was a demand for young women.

CB: I never thought of that. I’m glad you said that. That could have had a tremendous effect. Well I’ve had a hard time figuring out the reason for it, but this is the conclusion I’ve come to. I think the law of polygamy was given to Joseph Smith by revelation was… But I believe one of the reasons why the Lord did that was to… I think he had an objective in mind. For example a lot of the men had been killed in the mobs and what not. And so there were a lot of widows and they had to cross the plains. The Lord knew that. So by living polygamy they at least had a husband, the other factor I think… this is strictly my opinion was to hurry up and populate the area.

MW: You can find that in the Old Testament that it was to propagate the land.

CB: Now if they hadn’t of done that can you imagine how many years the church would have been set back? And maybe the church wouldn’t have flourished in spite of the persecution. People having twenty-one kids for example threwed the population ahead dramatically. For example, look at my grandfather’s family.