HF: Oral History of the Upper Snake River Valley, the subject to be considered primarily is the transportation of goods and supplies to and from Market Lake to Rexburg between 1883 and 1899.

HF: I am privileged this Saturday afternoon the 12th of March, 1983 to interview Mr. Anderson. Will you kindly state your full name and your address, Mr. Anderson?

GA: My name is George Alton Anderson, I live at 252 West 1st North Rexburg, Idaho. In fact, that has been my address all my life.

HF: That’s interesting. All your life?

GA: Right.

HF: Does that mean that…?

GA: I was born in the location where I am now living. I have lived there for 78 years.

HF: Who were your father and mother?

GA: My father was Oluf Chenster Anderson, my mother Marian Bell Anderson.

HF: Now, did your father have any brothers and sisters that reproduced Andersons of your lineage here in the Upper Snake River Valley?

GA: Yes, there was Oliver Anderson and Otto Anderson Thornton. Oliver Anderson lived in Rexburg and married Lulath Tempest. Otto Anderson lived in Thornton and married Sarah McCarthy.

HF: Are there any of their descendants living in Rexburg?

GA: Yes. There are, there are…not living in Rexburg, but there are some in Thornton. Some of my relatives are living in Thornton.

HF: Now, on your mother’s side…

GA: I don’t have any living relatives in my own family around close.

HF: I see. Now, on your mother’s side, the Bells, did she have brothers and sisters?

GA: Yes. William A. Bell, the blacksmith in Rexburg for many, many years, I guess he, well I don’t know what year he started, but it must have been before 1900. But he was a blacksmith in Rexburg and did primarily all, nearly all the blacksmithing here for many years. And his son William, we call him Bill, took over and they, uh, they’re still, two of his descendants that are still operating blacksmith shops in Rexburg.
HF: Now William A. had his shop where?

GA: On Main Street. Down where the junior high school now is.

HF: On that same block?

GA: Mm-hmm.

HF: In the area of food center?

GA: Well, it’s right in that area, I think it was more where the high school is, over to that side.

HF: I see. Now, what other brothers did she have? William A. Bell…

GA: And she had, Eli Bell, he had a farm out west of Rexburg where the road going to Hibbard intersects it, it’s on that corner, on the, Highway 33 where the Hibbard road takes off. He had a farm in there and farmed there. I…

HF: Any other Bells?

GA: I’ve been down a lot of times and helped him put up hay when I was a kid.

HF: I see.

GA: The other, there weren’t any others that lived right here in Rexburg. There was Uncle Hyrum, Hyrum Bell that lived at Salem, and then there was a Joel Bell. Uncle Joe was a red head. He lived down in the Third Ward. He’s lived here for many years but has been, their family moved away, oh, early 40, 50 years ago.

HF: Now of those four brothers Bells, are there any of those that have descendants here in Rexburg?

GA: Yes. Eli has descendants here. Eli Bell. Brent Bell who runs the Bell Building Supplies is a grandson of Eli’s.

HF: K. William A., he doesn’t have nay…

GA: Well, yes, William A. has some relatives. One of them operates Robert Bell, Bob Bell, married Olita Labram and he lives in, a block north of my place, but he operates Bell Blacksmith Shop down on the Highway, south of town.

HF: Now there’s a Bell that I know…

GA: And his father, his father was Bill Bell, the one that operated the Blacksmith Shop on Main Street. Now there’s another…
HF: There’s another Bill Bell out in Archer, right now, who married…

GA: Yes?

HF: He married, Mary Lou…

GA: Westover.

HF: Westover! Right. Now who was he, what, who was he, what Bell was that?

GA: He was a descendant of William A. Bell, the old blacksmith.

HF: Oh, okay. I see.

GA: His father was Alfred. Alfred Bell.

HF: And that pretty well takes care. There’s…

GA: And, uh, some of his descendants are still running this blacksmith shop on this little street here in back of the Madison Co-op. There’s a Bell Blacksmith shop there too, and they’re operated by descendants of William A. Bell.

HF: Isn’t that interesting. That’s very interesting. Well, now, as a young fellow, surely you must have gone to your Uncle Bill’s blacksmith shop.

GA: I loved to watch him shoe horses! (Laughter) See the sparks fly and, he, he was just, quite fluent with his language. (Laughing)

HF: I imagine.

GA: But, uh, he was a wonderful old man. He was just so kind to me and to my family and the kids, some of my friends used to go in there with me and watch, but he was so kind and so generous and so thoughtful. See my father died when I was fifteen and I had to kind of take over as man of the house. My brothers were working and away from home, so I had to take over as man of the house and I had repairs and things like that to do and he used to sharpen my saws for me and things of that nature. He was a wonderful old man, just very conscientious, kind old man.

HF: They really were involved in keeping the horse drawn buggies and wagons and equipment…

GA: Absolutely!

HF: Had it not been for these blacksmiths, they wouldn’t have been able to conduct their farming.
GA: No they wouldn’t, they wouldn’t have been able to do that. They, he’d build all kinds of things for the farmers that helped them to get by and make things work. Plowshares and things of that sort that were so necessary so absolutely necessary that I guess he did thousands and thousands of plowshares, sharpened them and welded pieces onto them and, or they’d worn off, you know the point would wear of eventually and it’d have to weld a piece on and then temper it properly so it wouldn’t wear out to fast and shapen it and sharpen it so it’d do the job. I’m sure there were thousands of those things that he did.

HF: I’m always reminded of Longfellow’s poem, the *Village Blacksmith* when we’re talking about these blacksmith’s.

GA: I think about, my uncle Will and ever time I see that poem because it so described him. It described him so well.

HF: Now, Mr. Anderson, Alton I’m going to call you, knowing you as Alton all the time, um…

GA: That’s right.

HF: Umm…let’s get into the meat of our subject.

GA: All right.

HF: Uh, transporting goods and supplies between Rexburg and Market Lake, and Market Lake and Rexburg. Uh, first of all, I know you’re going to talk to me about your father and his involvement, uh, when did that all begin with your father?

GA: My father was born in Spanish Fork and his father had received an injury on his head a number of years before, it didn’t show up until later in life, but it was necessary for someone to be with him most of the time because he’d have seizures occasionally, and when my father was twelve years old, he went with my grandfather into the hills to burn charcoal. They burned charcoal for the smelters in Utah, and uh, he went with my grandfather into the hills to be with him and help him and take care of him, make sure he was taken care of. So, as time went on, they didn’t need the charcoal so much and my grandfather had four sons growing up and he needed to find something for them to do and he heard about the, this great, wonderful Snake River Valley and decided to come up and take a look. So, in the spring of 1883, I guess about two months after the Ricks Company came into Rexburg, my father, with my grandfather and two brothers came to the Snake River Valley and settled in Rexburg. I guess a good bit of the surveying had been done at that time and one of the first things they did, my father was 25 years old and he was really the one that led out, he was the oldest of the boys and he led out and he purchased the south half of block 25. That’s the block on which I now live. The house isn’t where they had it. They had their first house that went down to the riverbed and cut logs and…

HF: Probably cottonwood.

GA: Cottonwood logs and built a home, a two room home on the east side of the block where the Am-Co Service Station now is, the oil company. And there they lived while the, when the
first, the first, let’s see, seven of the children were born there. Three…father and mother lost three babies, but four of them lived to maturity. Anyway, my father, who loved horses and he had a good out fit, a real fine outfit, and in the spring of 1884, the Bell family moved into Rexburg and purchased property quite close to where my father lived. And, my father met and got acquainted with the oldest daughter, that is the oldest living daughter, one daughter had passed away, and married Marian Bell in the fall, in November of 1884.

HF: Do you know who married them?

GA: Well, they were married in the Logan Temple.

HF: Oh, were they? I see.

GA: They went down to, uh, they, she went down earlier in the season and then met him at the Temple and then came back in a covered wagon. It took them five days to come back. Five days to come back from Logan to Rexburg and it was in November, so the roads were muddy and snowy and they had a covered wagon, I guess it was quite a traumatic experience coming back, but he brought her back to this two room log cabin that they had built the year before and there the four children that lived to maturity were born and, uh…

HF: One of them included yourself?

GA: No, no, I came later.

HF: Oh.

GA: I came after they built a new house.

HF: All right.

GA: Uh, I don’t know the years…but anyway he got started…he’d go down and get a load for somebody and then occasionally somebody else and then finally he started making trips, regular trips, three times a week to Market Lake to haul things in for others.

HF: Now, would this have been maybe as early as 1885 or ’86?

GA: I would think so. I don’t have any dates on that. I don’t…

HF: Would he bring things in to, say the Flamm, the Flamm store, maybe?

GA: Yes, he did! Brought nearly all their merchandise, I think, that came by freight. He brought from Market Lake.

HF: Who else did he cater to, who else did he work for and bring…?

GA: I don’t have any other names.
HF: I see. But you know that he did for Flamm?

GA: I know he did. There was quite a traumatic experience on one of those occasions, at least. I guess many of them, but, uh…the riverbed, and they had to ford the river out at Henry’s Fork west of town, there’s no bridge across and no ferry. So they forded that river and there’s quite a long, low stretch east of the river before the land rises and, uh, on one occasion, the riverbed, the eddies and things had changed the riverbed. It was okay when you went down, but when he come back he had a hole that had eddied out. And the wagon box and load for Flamm’s store, a big load of merchandise for Flamm’s store floated off down the river. Dad was, uh, father was not a swimmer, he had never learned to swim and uh, I haven’t a faint idea how he managed to get his outfit out, but he did, he got his team and wagon out, lost part of the equipment, the box and most of Flamm’s merchandise. But Brother Flamm, he was a good old man. He didn’t hold him responsible, he said it wasn’t your fault it was one of those things that happen and he didn’t hold him responsible for it so, they were both out some, both Brother Flamm and my father.

HF: Do you have any idea what kind of equipment your dad used in transporting goods?

GA: I have a picture of them; I wish you could see it.

HF: You have it, you have it here with you?

GA: Hold on, I believe so. [Looking for the picture] I didn’t, I guess I didn’t…yeah, here it is.

HF: Oh, okay. Well, uh…

GA: It’s this way.

HF: Describe what’s on there.

GA: There’s a team of horse and then one of these wagons and it was just a wagon box, like they had, you, I don’t know if you were familiar with the old wagon boxes and that’s what it was and there’s a load on here and my father sitting up there on the front on the spring seat that was on the front and there’s four boys out to the side, I don’t know how the four boys were, I never was able to find out who they were, but it was taken up in the east end of town, up, uh, near where Smith park now is this was taken.

HF: What year?

GA: I don’t know. It must have been early because later on he had regular official drays that he used. So this must have been right soon after he got going on this. It, the picture is error. See my father died when I was fifteen and I’ve had a hard time getting really a lot of dates and…

HF: I see. Now, you mentioned that he went regularly three times…
GA: He made three times a week, he’d load up...he’d go out there one day, stay overnight—in stormy weather the railroad agent let him sleep in the station, in the railroad station, but on other nights he just camped out. He’d get loaded up and the next day he’d come back and unload here.

HF: Now by he would have to start...what is the exact distance?

GA: It’s about twenty-six miles. That’s the way we had it figured at, at least.

HF: Mm-hmm.

GA: But he, uh, that makes a pretty good day for a team of horses. On two or three occasions he did make two trips in one day, but that, uh, I mean a trip over and back in a day, but not usually. Usually he went over one day and back the next. But he’d haul freight for Flamm’s store for several years. Oh it must have been five or six years, anyway, I don’t know.

HF: Well, let’s see, your dad died when you were fifteen, you were born what year?

GA: 1905.

HF: In 19...so ’20s, about 1920’s when your dad passed away.

GA: No, I’ve got that wrong. I’ve got that wrong here. I must have been 17. I was 17 when he died. Because he died in 1922. He died December 1, 1922.

HF: Okay, so,...

GA: So I was 17 years old. That’ll have to be corrected.

HF: So 1922 he passed away. Had he been working pretty regularly up until about the date of his death?

GA: No, he got out of the freight business and the dray business, uh, a good bit earlier than that. After the railroad came in he saw the opportunity of a dray outfit in town and so he fixed up two nice outfits, business was so, there was so much of it that he had to get another wagon and hire a man to help. Then along about, uh, I don’t know just exactly when, but a few years after he got going, he had a good business going and was making money and things were going great. Then he came down with pneumonia and was laid up for several months. He had a bad time getting over it. And, of course, the business had to, he had to depend on his hired help to see that it was down and I guess their carelessness or neglect or something, they didn’t do very well. During his absence, after he was laid up, they was, business didn’t go very well. And another outfit came in and opened a dray outfit and it just kind of really hurt their business a lot and he decided that maybe the thing he ought to do is to get into farming.

HF: K, now, let’s go back just a minute. I’d like to be rather intent on getting as much data as I can about this dray business, uh, he, before and after 1899, when the railroad came in to Rexburg, of course, you were born after...
GA: 1912.

HF: …uh, after the train came to Rexburg, but, uh, from your father’s account, he primarily had one, one team of horses, or…?

GA: At first. But the bus...as the community grew and as, uh, there was more business in town, the dray [indistinguishable] couldn’t handle it with one outfit and had to get another one and hire a man to help.

HF: I see. And now, was this going out to Market Lake?

GA: No, this was just delivering from the railroad station to the merchants around town.

HF: Around town.

GA: Delivering things around town.

HF: But was…

GA: …See I have to be home from the freight house to the stores they’d get a big shipment of freight in and somebody had to haul it from the railroad station to the store. And that was his primarily, his job was doing that.

HF: Okay, now, can you describe the freight depot. The first freight depot? That was used here in Rexburg?

GA: There’s the one that down there now, but, uh, Steiner’s are using it. It was the first one I remember. I don’t know what was there before. But the two, the passenger depot and the freight depot are as I remember them. I don’t have anything on, on…

HF: On anything earlier?

GA: Anything earlier than that.

HF: Earlier than that.

GA: There probably was, but I, as far as my recollection, there isn’t anything in the history. My brother Ray wrote up dad’s history. He has a keen memory and wrote up the history in detail, and they’ve got a quite a detail history of his life.

HF: All right now, over at Market Lake do you have any knowledge about, the depot over there? How it was described?

GA: No.
HF: I think they pulled it down not to many years ago, over in…

GA: In Roberts.

HF: In Roberts. But, uh…

GA: I don’t know anything about it, only that he, the station agent let him go in there and sleep when the weather was bad outside.

HF: Yeah.

GA: And he used to, to sleep inside over night.

HF: Now, Alton do you know, has anything come down you about some particular big amount of freight that your dad helped haul over that was significant to the community of Rexburg? Uh, you know, equipment for a flour mill, or equipment for some big development here in Rexburg. Do you know anything…?

GA: There isn’t, there, I don’t have any information on that, Harold, I just don’t have any, anything…there wasn’t very much mentioned of any specific trip except these two or three occasions when, uh, like the one I told you about…

HF: A disaster came along.

GA: A disaster came. Another time he got stuck in the mud holes east of the river and he had to carry them piece by piece about a quarter of a mile up to higher land to lighten the load enough so that the horses could pull the wagon out and reload it and bring it to town.

HF: Now, to your knowledge did he make trips up there in the winter time, in sleighs?

GA: Oh yes!

HF: Mm-hmm.

GA: He crossed on the ice when there was ice…when there was ice. Of course when it was just broken they couldn’t, they couldn’t make trips. He didn’t make them regular in the wintertime.

HF: Now once they got the, the uh, ferry in there, he used the ferry.

GA: Yes, uh-huh.

HF: Now that ferry was in there fairly early, I’m not sure of the exact date when, I think…

GA: I have a, there wasn’t anything much said in there about the ferry.

HF: The ferry.
GA: I don’t have any information on it.

HF: Mm-hmm.

GA: I’m sure that he used that in later years as soon as that got going that’s what he used.

HF: Now as a young man do you personally remember some of the dray outfit and the horses?

GA: No. No, by the time I came along dad was in the farming business.

HF: I see. But, of course…

GA: Back in about 1917, ’16, I guess 1916… no, it’d have to be before that. It’d have to be about 1915. He purchased the relinquishment on the dray farm, up here there miles southeast of Rexburg and, uh, in fact that dry farm that he had, 160 acres, he purchased a homestead relinquishment is now part of, uh, Smith farm up there. Jay Fred Smith and Dick Smith. What a beautiful sprinkling, irrigation farm is. My father broke the sage brush and broke the land and got it farmable and worked it for seven or eight years and then he, at the time of the World War I, my brothers, the three brothers were old enough to go into service and they were called into the service and he had to give up farming and he died soon after.

HF: Oh, I see. Now, Alton, you got your schooling here in Rexburg, did ya?

GA: Yes.

HF: Uh, where did you go to school?

GA: I went to school in the Old Rock building that’s now taken down…


GA: The eight, the eighth, eight grades there. And then I went up to Ricks Academy for high school. Four years in high school from 1920 to 1924. I was the class of ’24 from high school. There wasn’t any high school here, public high school. There was just, uh, just, uh, Ricks Academy.

HF: Did you go on to school anywhere else?

GA: Yes, I, uh, by then…

HF: Who was the principal of, uh, or the head of administration at Ricks…was it called Ricks Academy at that time?

GA: It was Ricks Normal College when I, I guess that was when I went back. Yes it was, uh, George S. Romney was the president when I was up there.
HF: Was he also the president of the stake?

GA: Yes.

HF: At that time?

GA: I think so. Somewhere along there he was. I don’t know just what years he was the president of the stake. But I knew him and was acquainted with George, George Romney. I was in his office a time or two and he talked to me.

HF: And I suppose you knew his son…

GA: Marion?

HF: Marion.

GA: And I was real close and friendly with Anton Romney. That’s Marion’s younger brother.

HF: I see. Now, where did you go to school after Ricks?

GA: After Ricks I went to BYU.

HF: Did you finish up down there?

GA: I, I went to Seven Ray Summers. I got a, it was necessary for me to work cause my mother had no income, my father was dead, and it was up to me to keep things going. My, me and my sister, my sister Iome, she uh, taught school and helped considerably, but, uh, it was kind of up to the two of us. We’d get a little help from the boys occasionally, but they were on their own and trying to establish homes of their own. But primarily the maintenance of the home was up to my sister and I and we, uh, as soon as we got through Ricks up here we got to teaching school. So when I graduated form the Junior College up here, I got a job teaching in Rexburg. I, uh, in the fall of 1933, I started teaching in Rexburg. Gone up to Washington school the next year, I was principal of the elementary school, the Adam’s school, I worked there for six years, then I went back to the Washington school and the junior high. It was then 7th and 8th grade.

HF: So you knew William, uh, William Gay Lewis over there, didn’t you?

GA: Yes, you bet.

HF: He taught with you.

GA: Yeah.

HF: Bill Lewis.
GA: I don’t remember him teaching with me.

HF: Don’t ya?

GA: Was he, where was he, in high school?

HF: No, I think he taught there in Adams.

GA: Not while I was there.

HF: William Gay Lewis?

GA: No.

HF: Maybe a little bit later.

GA: Or earlier.

HF: Now, William Jay Lewis, the one I’m referring to is the one who had the grocery store with…

GA: Bill…Bill Lewis.

HF: Bassett?

GA: Mm-hmmm.

HF: Bassett and, uh…

GA: Yes, Bassett and Lewis. I know him real well, but he wasn’t, he didn’t teach in town when I was teaching.

HF: I see.

GA: It was either before that or after. I don’t, I believe, I think it must have been before. I don’t know.

HF: Uh, now you taught at Adams.

GA: And then I went back to the Washington School, the old rock building.

HF: Mm-hmmm.

GA: And taught seventh and eight for eight more years. So I taught 15 years all together.

HF: That would have been in the ‘30’s?
GA: Yeah, from ’33 to ’45. In 1945, Grover Hemming and I went into the hardware business on College Ave.

HF: and now…

GA: We operated a hardware business for three years for…three years, I believe it was. No, four years. I’m not sure of the years. I can’t tell you exactly when we made the change, but I bought Grover’s interest out and I operated a little hardware store, moved over on the main street on the corner where the carousel now is and operated there for seventeen years. All, a total of seventeen years. Grover went into the shoe business when I bought him out and his son-in-law now operates the Shoe Hauss on Main Street.

HF: Now where was your store, uh, on College Ave?

GA: Across from the old Ida Moff hotel.

HF: Uh…

GA: It’s part of, it’s part of Porters…

HF: Porters.

GA: Porters store.

HF: Right. I see. And, uh, this was hardware?

GA: Yes, it was a hardware store.

HF: In other words you sold, what, small…

[HF: To continue the interview please turn to side two.]

HF: Now, you indicated that you went into the hardware business and sold materials primarily catering to the farmers.

GA: Well, to the public generally we sold all kinds of small appliances. We were the Filco dealer and the Whirlpool dealer. I was the first whirlpool dealer in town. And we were in business when, in fact, when TV broke, at one time I had two crews going and selling TV’s. It was so, business was so good that that I won a trip to the Hawaiian Islands, a ten day trip to the Hawaiian Islands selling Filco TV. It was a, business was really booming for a while, it was really good.

HF: Now, what would this have been about, 1951, 2, along in there?

GA: Uh-huh, ’51 to ’52 and 3. In 1958, I had a burnout.
HF: Now this was after you moved over to where the Carr…

GA: Over on Main Street.

HF: Uh, main street and south center.

GA: That’s right.

HF: Mm-hmm. Had a burnout?

GA: Ah, the store burned nearly every…oh we damaged practically all the merchandise. It was three but four months till I got back in the business. But we were underfinanced and a lot of problems and then, that’s when these other stores like the drug stores started stocking harder items and grocery stores and things like that put in hardware items, house wares and things of that sort the things that we were living on and it was uh, about 1961 I decided to get out of the hardware business and I liquidated and sold out.

HF: Under what name were you operating?

GA: Rexburg Hardware.

HF: And that, uh, that name has been used…

GA: Well, it was well known because I had, I knew practically everyone in the valley during the time I was in the hardware business. I…

HF: What did Graham call his store?

GA: Graham-Boyle Hardware.

HF: Graham…

GA: Graham Boyle Hardware.

HF: Now, his name is, was ah, Mr. Graham’s full name was…

GA: James…I don’t know if he had another Jim Graham they called him.

HF: James Graham. And who was Boyle?

GA: I never did know the Boyle part. I guess maybe he was a sign on partner, because I never did meet him. But Grover had worked for him for six or seven years before we went into the partnership. So he knew the hardware business pretty well and I had studied accounting and uh, business education, so it made a pretty good combination. But we decided to separate and so uh, I operated the hardware store and he went into the shoe business.
HF: Well now, whirlpool, that’s, uh, that’s a trade name…

GA: That’s a trade name for all kinds of big appliances, washing machines, ranges, refrigerators…

HF: All electric…?

GA: All electric.

HF: And Filco was…

GA: Television, primarily television, radios, and record players, and things of that sort.

HF: Mm-hmm. Now, was Mr. Larson, George Larson in business at that time?

GA: Yes he was. He was a neighbor of mine. Right close neighbor when we were on College Avenue. ‘Cause he had, his store was on College Avenue too.

HF: Uh, just down the street to the, uh, to the south?

GA: Well it was just to the south of us.

HF: Mm-hmm. And he was catering in musical things, wasn’t he?

GA: Musical things too.

HF: Pianos as well as…

GA: Oh yes, I bought my piano from him.

HF: And that, of course, was the father to Gilbert.

GA: Gilbert Larson.

HF: Larson.

GA: Gilbert Larson and I went to school together.

HF: Well Mr. Graham had his hardware store. Was it primarily hardware?

GA: Primarily Hardware to start with. They had hardware and furniture. They had two departments in there. Uh, John Weber run the furniture end of it quite a lot and Bob Archer had the hardware part. But, uh, they had two sections. There was a furniture section and a hardware section.
HF: Now that’s where the Johnson’s Drug is?

GA: That’s where Johnson’s Drug is, mm-hmm.

HF: Mm-hmm. Graham was in there for quite a few years, wasn’t he?

GA: Yes he was! He was quite a prominent businessman in Rexburg.

HF: And he became involved in politics I guess a little bit too, didn’t he?

GA: Well, yes, I guess so.

HF: And so on. Well, uh…

GA: I served on the City Council and the Playing Board and was Chairman of the School Board and—during this time while I was in business—and the President of the Alumni Association at Ricks College, well, I’ve had quite a bit of activity in the operation of Rexburg as it was growing back in the ’40’s to ’60.

HF: In the ’40’s, ’50’s, and…

GA: And ’60’s.

HF: Early part of ’60.

GA: Mm-hmm.

HF: Mm-hmm. Um…

GA: I’d like to insert one little thing here, that I don’t know that’s important or not, maybe you won’t even want to use it, but my father served on the town board, the city council, two terms with some of the prominent businessmen of the…

HF: Now was that when Rexburg was…

GA: 1896 to ’97.

HF: Okay, that was still a village board.

GA: Uh-huh. He served two terms.

HF: When it was Board of Trustees?

GA: Mm-hmm.

HF: I see.
GA: From about 19…

HF: You have the names of some of his companions?

GA: Yes, I do.

HF: Why don’t you read those. What years did your dad serve and who were his…

GA: I’ll read that part.

HF: …his fellow companions? Umm, Rexburg, as I understand it, between 1893 and 1903, the city government was a Board of Trustees for that ten year period.

GA: He was already, my father was always ready to go the extra mile with time and money helping to build the community he loved so much. He was elected to the town board serving for two terms. He was loved and respected by all who knew him. During his first term on the town board he served with C. F. Lutz…

HF: And that L-U…


HF: I wonder where the City board was at that time, where it was located.

GA: I don’t know where…

HF: Where they transacted business.

GA: I haven’t any idea where they [indistinguishable]. Nope. If I had my brother here—he passed away a few years ago—but he had a keen memory for all those little details. That was my brother Ray. And he could remember dates and names and all this, but uh, my wheels don’t turn that good.

HF: I’d like to backtrack a little bit, if you don’t mind, Alton, and ask you who some of your classmates were when you graduated from high school and it wasn’t a public high school it was at the academy. Who were some of your graduating…

GA: When I graduated from high school, from the…?

HF: Uh-huh.
GA: Well there was the young Christensen, there was Grover...Oh, I have a hard time on things like that. Harold, my memory for names, the names just don’t come to me. I’ve got pictures of them in my mind but their names don’t come to me very good.

HF: Okay.

GA: Uh, Arthur Wilson, Art Wilson, everybody knew around here for many years. He was in my class in school. And, uh, I’d have to have a little time to kind of accumulate that.

HF: All right. Now, you went on, you didn’t, uh, you didn’t immediately go into college then, Junior college, did you?

GA: No. No, I had to stay out and work. I worked in the hotel. My first job in the hotel was a bell hop. I worked there when I was going through high school.

HF: Now that was the Ida...

GA: That was Eccles Hotel at that time.

HF: Eccles Hotel.

GA: And they had a hotel in Rexburg, in Blackfoot, and Logan.

HF: Now that was a beautiful building, wasn’t it?

GA: Yes it was and they had a complete, really a nice hotel. Dining Room, kitchen, a dining room facilities, it had sample rooms for the salesmen and they’ve all they really catered to a lot of traveling salesman. And it was a booming hotel when I worked there.

HF: Uh, did the second and third floor cater then to rooms for couples or something...

GA: No, they were just rooms for overnight. Overnight rooms. There were no, no apartments, they came later. The apartments and...

HF: No one lived there.

GA: Nobody lived there.

HF: Catered specifically to just overnight travelers.

GA: Right. And did a good business.

HF: Now, was there a bus stop there at that time?

GA: No, there was no regular busses then.
HF: No regular busses then.

GA: No, not when I worked there.

HF: That was a beautiful building too.

GA: Yes, it was really nice.

HF: Who owned it?

GA: It belonged to the Eccles.

HF: The Eccles people. Now those where the people with the banks.

GA: Right. George Eccles came up and relieved our manager, I worked with him for a couple of weeks while the manager went on a trip and then, uh, hired me.

HF: You were a bell hop.

GA: I was a bell hop.

HF: Catered to any wealthy or famous guests that stopped into town? Do you remember?

GA: Not a bit, not even that I can think of.

HF: I see.

GA: George Eccles, he’s become quite famous!

HF: Right. (Laughter)

GA: Uh, he was a friend of mine.

HF: Well then, you did other work, I guess there.

GA: Well, when I got out after I graduated from high school I went on full time. On maintenance. I was, on maintenance, I repaired things and uh, oh, they had a central vacuum system and I ran that and hauled freight up and down the manual freight elevator and I was the maintenance man for several years. And, uh, eventually in 1927 I was called on a mission to Canada. And so I served two years in Canada on a mission, came back in 1929 and went back to the hotel with night work. I had served as part time clerk…

HF: Did they have a manager? Who was the local manager?
GA: Well, then I…when I went on my mission, the manager was H. H. Deemer, D-double E-M-E-R. He was the manager then when I came back. There was a Childs…uh, I can’t tell you what his first name is now, but he was the manager when I came back, but I worked as a night clerk.

HF: They had a big lobby there where people could come in and lounge and wait…

GA: Right, big leather chairs and marble stairs up the, marble steps…

HF: Really quite spacious, wasn’t it?

GA: It was a nice hotel.

HF: The nicest in the town.

GA: Oh yes, there wasn’t any other, really! (Laughter)

HF: There wasn’t any other real noted hotel in town?

GA: No.

HF: Other than that?

GA: That’s right.

HF: The Eccles. And, uh, was the name still Eccles?

GA: I don’t know just, I can’t remember just when that changed. Uh, they got out of business and it was a local group, a Rigby, Loretta Rigby’s husband ran it for a number of years. He ran the hotel for a number of years. They were living there when my, when I was teaching, when my wife came to Rexburg to teach, Child’s were running it at that time. And, uh, she had a room in the hotel, they had converted it to apartments and things then, the upper floor had been converted to apartments.

HF: Now, you went back to college, did you, to Ricks?

GA: In 1933.

HF: In ’33.

GA: In 1932!

HF: In ’32. Fall of ’32?

GA: Well, let’s see. It’d have to be ’31, because I graduated in ’33.

HF: You ca…okay, you graduated in the Spring of ’33.
GA: Right. Mm-hmm.

HF: Who was the head of the administration? Who operated the college at that time? Do you recall?

GA: I guess it was George Romney, I believe. I’m not right sure. See I, as I think back now, I’ve got this high school and the college to keep them separated in my mind I’m not right sure. So I believe, I believe that…I don’t know just when Hyrum Manwaring took over.

HF: Remember any of your graduating class of ’33?

GA: Yes, I know quite a few of them. We have reunions quite frequently. Willis Nelson was in my graduating class, and Zena, uh…

HF: I’m sorry to do this to you.

GA: You’ll have to forgive me about names! (Laughter)

HF: I’m sorry to do this to you, I…

GA: I’m just not able to recall…

HF: Now, Willis was quite a, he became quite a school administrator, didn’t he?

GA: Yes, he did.

HF: And so did his brother, what’s his name? Stanley? No.

GA: I don’t know any brother.

HF: Other Nelson…

GA: Well, there was a William Bill Nelson and Sterling.

HF: Sterling.

GA: That was a different family entirely.

HF: Oh, was it?

GA: They were different…see, William Nelson was superintendent of schools in Rexburg for a number of years.

HF: Oh, let’s see, William Nelson, or was it Willis?
GA: Well, William was. Back in the days when I was going to school, William Nelson taught me in the seventh and eighth grade taught me wood work. And eventually he became the county superintendent. And his brother Sterling taught in high school for years and years in Rexburg.

HF: How ‘bout Willis? Wasn’t there a Willis?

GA: And then Willis came later. He’s from Oakley, Idaho originally. He came here and attended school and then later got a job teaching in Rexburg.

HF: But that’s a completely different family?

GA: Yes, it’s a completely different family.

HF: That something that I didn’t know.

GA: His wife was a McKinley, McKinley.

HF: Well now, Alton, you married. . . who?

GA: Ethel Owen Ashton, from Vernal, Utah.

HF: And when?

GA: Spring of 1939, May 29, 1939. She came up here to teach two years before that and we became acquainted and were married in the spring of 1939.

HF: And have there been children?

GA: We have. . . 5 children, 5 children, they are all married now. My oldest son was Lynn A. Anderson, he lives in Idaho Falls, he’s a controller for HK Construction Company.

HF: Ok.

GA: My son, my daughter, Alice was next. She married Ronald Bish, B-I-S-H. They live in Salt Lake, he’s a . . . works with a more financial group as their credit manager. His wife is a supervising nurse for the surgical center in Salt Lake. She graduated from Ricks College nursing program. My third child was Richard Anderson, he’s a . . . teaches at Bonneville High School, teaches industrial arts at Bonneville High School. He has a metal department. He married . . . Evelyn Phillips, Max Phillips daughter, and they have one child. They live in Idaho Falls, too. My fourth child was Carol Beth and she married. . . she graduated from the nursing school, too, at Ricks, and served in the Children’s Hospital in Salt Lake and up in Seattle in a Children’s Ward she was a premi, a specialist in premature nursing, really a specialist in premature nursing! They, she married Richard Later, his folks live in Mountain Home. They just opened a practice in Payson, Utah, last summer, July 30. They operate a. . .he’s a pediatrician in Payson, Utah, and they have four children.
HF: Does that take care of the five?

GA: That’s, that’s. . . and then the youngest boy graduated . . . he got his bachelor’s degree from Utah State and he went on to Santa Clara, California, and to school in Minnesota and graduated with two masters degrees, one in Agrobusiness and one in plant breeding. He now works for Lubersol, out of Cleveland, Ohio. They go to church in Kirkland. He has four children. We have nineteen grandchildren.

HF: Isn’t that wonderful?

GA: Fine family.

HF: Just, and there all very close one to another?

GA: Oh yes, you bet. We were all but, all of my children, all five of my children were here three weeks ago. They had a good visit. David was on a business trip to California and Oregon and swung around this way to be with us, and the others all made it home, so we had a good visit.

HF: Isn’t this grand? Well I, I wanted you to know how much I have deeply appreciated the opportunity of, of doing this, this afternoon. There’s a . . .

GA: I feel like a . . . my father especially, my mother too, if she had a heart in it as the same as father did, but a . . . he was primarily the leader in it and I feel like he should be on record as one of the early pioneers of Rexburg, and I don’t believe he his, I don’t think he is anywhere . . . yet. I feel that, that is kinda my obligation to see that he does get . . . on record.