

Voices From the Past

Boxing and Wrestling in the Upper Snake River Valley

By Gordon Dixon

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Oral Interview conducted by Harold Forbush

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Harold Forbush: Intercity wrestling and boxing in the Upper Snake River Valley between the late 1920's and during the '30's. It is with much pleasure I interview Gordon Dixon of Rexburg, Idaho pertaining to the above subject; this being done on the 3rd day of June, 1981. In a day when the communities had to promote their own sports activities and entertainment and in a day when the talking movies were just coming in; it's during this period that we're going to be considering how some of the leaders, sports-minded persons in the Upper Valley, the community of Rexburg maybe Idaho Falls, Ririe, Rigby, on up in to Driggs and Ashton and so forth, had commenced doing, promoting, to some extent, the boxing and wrestling. Gordon Dixon is here as not only a witness, and eye witness to these items and these activities, but he was a participant. And now Gordon tell me just briefly how you came to be a participant, and how the opportunity has come to you to be able to recount some of these items we're going to be talking about.

Gordon Dixon: Thank you judge. I'm going to relate these events as I saw them and witnessed them and as I remember them. I've also talked with A.C. McNichols in Ashton and also with Carl Sheener of Ririe who are old-timers, and they've helped considerably in giving me this information. Now, I lived at Ashton for about nine years. First, in the grade school at Marysville right near by Ashton. And then I went to Ashton high School for the four years, and during that time I participated in sports of all sorts and my brother for the four years, and during that time I participated in sports of all sorts and my brother who is Wilbur Dixon, older than I, was quite handy with the boxing gloves. And he's the one who taught me a little about boxing, and we got interested in it and were invited to come down to St. Anthony and participate in some of their boxing matches. Now this is just about the way it got started. We were invited to come down and offered a small amount of money for our expenses, and so that's how we got started.

HF: Gordon, at that time, now we're talking about, let's see—you were in high school between '25 and '29 I think you mentioned?

GD: Yes.

HF: And so, you were doing some boxing yourself during this time with your older brother. And what weight were you boxing?

GD: In high school I was a freshman and 135 pounds. And I remember that because I went out for football at 135 pounds. And then by the time I was a senior, I was up to 150 pounds. And my older brother was about 165 or 75.

HF: Was the high schools doing anything in boxing?

GD: No, there was no boxing in the high schools then, and no wrestling then. It was all team sports: football, basketball, and track—that was individual sports.

HF: And so who was actually sponsoring these...?

GD: In the communities?

HF: Uh huh.

GD: Mostly businessmen. Now take Rexburg for instance, there were two real estate men down here who—I guess their business had dropped off. It was the beginning of the depression, the bottom of the depression, and I think they wanted to make a little money and stir up some activity and two names come into my mind: Frank Turner and E.L. Walker. And they got permission to stage these boxing matches in Rexburg and there was quite a following. Lots of people turned out for them.

HF: Where would they usually be held, now for example: in Rexburg? Where would most of these...

GD: In Rexburg, they were held in the old Elk Theatre and the Woodman Hall.

HF: Now where were those building located?

GD: Well, the Elk Theatre was straight north of the extension of College Avenue. They've taken it down now and the Woodman Hall was over—was on Main Street.

HF: Is that where Penney's store was a long time?

GD: Yes, above Penney's store, I think that's where it is.

HF- Above Penney's store?

GD: Yes. That's where they used to hold wrestling matches and boxing matches there.

HF: Now, were the participants pretty much local boys?

GD: Yes, mostly, but later on they started bringing in some boxer from Utah and Montana to challenge our best men here. But most of them were local boys. A lot of them started out, what they call smokers, for example, up at Ririe. Now Ririe, the commotion up there was mostly by Hand and Duke Potter. Duke was a pharmacist and in the basement of his drug store he had a little room where they used to go down and have smokers and they'd invite young men from around town to come in and provide their entertainment. And they'd pay them a little—chip in some money for them, and they developed some pretty good boxers over there. Later, Carl Shanger took it over and he promoted them down in the dance hall. He built a ring down there and these are some of the fighters in Ririe. They had Doug Byington, and Harlan Mason and Byron Mason, both good fighter, Raymond Young, Bob Montgomery, ad a man by the name of Avery, and they fought in the old dance hall.

HF: DO you recall of ever boxing yourself over there in Ririe?

GD: o I didn't, but I took a team from Idaho Falls, a high school team, up there and boxed them. I coached at Idaho Falls for three years. I coached football in the fall, and

in the winter I coached boxing. I got a team together and we participated with Pocatello, the high school team—and now this is contrary to just what I said because no other high schools I know of had boxing in the '20's. This was in the early thirties.

HF: When you took a team over there?

GD: Yes, about '35. That's when it was.

HF: And you had just started teaching yourself?

GD: Yes, I just got some activity going in Idaho Falls High School, and one of my boxers I took up there was Bill Kennedy. You know him, attorney here in Rexburg.

HF: Oh, is that right?

GD: He was my heavy weight boxer. And we went up to Ririe, and they'd got together a bunch of town boys, and they had a pretty good team. And I remember Bill Kennedy, my heavyweight, was rather small for a heavy weight. He only weighed about 165 pound and he met a man that weighed over 200. But I'd coached him pretty well and told him how to fight the fight, and he won it by decision.

JF: Well isn't that something. I'll have to remind Bill of that sometime. Well now, who were some of the other promoters in other communities who participated in this activity?

GD: Well, let's take Driggs for example. Driggs' promoter was Jack Harper, and up at Driggs they used to raise a lot of peas, fresh peas and they'd pick them in the pods and ice them and ship out to the restaurants all over the country, especially back east. And they'd bring in a lot of pea-pickers, Mexican laborers, and they'd come in by the thousands, so I thin Jack Harper figures out some entertainment form and started promoting them. And he set a ring up in the old theatre there and got some local boxers, and invited others in from around the valley and put on some real good programs.

HF: The Winger boys were especially noted weren't they? Floyd and Eldon and...?

GD: And Vernon

HF: And Vernon. All, well, the tree of them. And then there was a challenger from over in Victor, Arden Stevens.

GD: Yes. Now Winger was probably about the best boxer of the group.

HF: Floyd probably?

GD: Yes, Floyd Winger. He was known as the champion from one of the districts in Canada. I think it was Alberta; he was the champion. He had a belt to show for his wins up there, and he was promoted and used to box up there quite a lot. And Byron and

Raymond Riley form Felt was another two of the boxers. And Ron White was from up there and Arden Stevens was a good boxer.

HF: I thin that the Arden and Winger boys had kind of a feud going. I've heard that. Now it may be just tradition, but they took their boxing and their competition very seriously to the point where it was a kind of a feud.

GD: Sometimes that's the way it develops, and it builds up and draws the crowd.

HF: I'll tell you it does.

GD: We had that going between Ashton and St. Anthony just the same way, boxers...

HF: Who were some of the involved there, in this so-called feud?

GD: Well, St. Anthony had a group of young men who used to attend the dances, and lot s of times there was some trouble in these public dances. There'd be fist fights out behind the dace hall and whatnot. And when the Ashton boys went down to St. Anthony, why, they used to go down and be real careful they didn't get in trouble. And Ray Peterson and his brother Spencer and Ken were some of the leaders down in St. Anthony. There's also Curly Angel, Larry Jackson and Tom Son was a boxer. And in Ashton, my brother Dick, myself, and here's some more boxers: Cal Smith, and Vern Collange Earl Swenson, Victor Bjorn, Neal Bedwin was form Drummond. And we were participants in the boxing matches in St. Anthony and also at the Ashton dog races.

HF: We can't forget, what it, Conny Nichol is.

GD: Conny Nichols, he was an old-timer. He boxed, he mostly wrestled, but he boxed some. But he was before our time.

HF: Oh, I see.

GD: But he was a very good wrestler. He used to take on some of the best, and they outweighed him. He was not heavy, but he was an excellent wrestler.

HF: Now do you specifically recall of coming to St. Anthony in any well-advertised boxing event and participating? Right there in St. Anthony?

GD: Yes, I went there several times. The first fight I ever had, I was invited down. I was a sophomore or a junior in high school, and I boxed a boy for New Dale, and I can't remember his name, but I got two dollars and fifty cents for expenses on that fight and it was a tough one. I remember he was a farm boy from New Dale, and he was strong, but I got the decision on him. And later, I boxed there with a boy form Idaho Falls. I've tried to recall his name, but I can't. It was a difficult way to learn how to box—is to jump in the ring and not have a trainer who had taught you in the skills of boxing. We just, my brother and I, we used to box. In fact, our very first boxing gloves came when I was in

about the fifth grade sown in Smithfield, Utah. And it was a time when we all got vacienated for small pox. It was just before Christmas, and we had our arms all swollen up with those big small pox reaction scabs on there. And we got these boxing gloves, and we would box, knowck the scabs off about the time they got healed up; and then, they'd heal up again, and we'd knock the scab off, and they kept getting bigger and bigger, and finally, our mother had to take the gloves and hide them so our arms would heal up. And ever since then, the doctors look at our arms and say, "Oh, you'be got a terrifica reaction there, didn't you? And it will last you for life." Well, I'll go back to this boy from Idaho Falls I boxed in St. Anthony. He was skilled at the art of boxing, and he's the first one I ever ran into that had some training. And he had a terrific straight left and a fast one-two, and I learned a lot during that fight. In the first round he knocked me down and broke my nose, in the first round. Of course I came back, and I could hit fast and rather hard and got him against the ropes and knocked him down and finally came out with a draw. That twas one of the two draws I had during my career, but that was a pretty hard lesson. I went around after wards and asked my big brother Dick how to det away from a straight left, and he taught me right fast and after that, why, it gave me no more trouble. Straight left hand and one-two, how to avoid it—and this is a hard way to learn how to box.

HF: Gordon, what were some of the , well, for example, what kind of gloves did they use in those days? Were they big so you wouldn't get hurt too bad or did you get tht full benefit of the fist?

GD: No, it depends on what it was. Usually, te beginners used heavier gloves—ten ounces or twelve ounces.

HF: Uh huh.

GD: But the top,, the top of the card, the main fight was to use eight ounces usually some around eight. And they didn't care too much about you getting hurt in those days. Now they're more careful; it's a good thing that they're more careful. They stop the fight and give them a standing eight count if things don't seem to be going right.

HF: Now they always had the ring fixed up with a mattress or whatever you call it mats?

GD: Yes, the mat was not very thick. It was quite thin so that the fighters could move easily ad yet it would cushion and fall.

HF: Would the round be limited to maybe two to three minutes?

GD: Well the preliminaries were two minute rounds, three two minute rounds. And then the main event was three minute rounds, usually ten.

HF: So that would take quite a while, wouldn't it?

GD: Yes.

HF: Now at the time this was going on, did you pugilists know about the big professional boxers at the day and age.

GD: Oh yes. That was great.

HF: Who were some of the biggies who maybe were your ideals?

GD: Well, that was the day of Dempsey. Dempsey was at his height about that time. He'd had a great career and we followed him all the time. In fact, when I was going to school at Utah State, I later went down there in 1929-'34 and he came sown there and put on exhibitions. They built a big arena, big ring out in the stadium, pulled in a big crowd and Jack Dempsey came in there and put on an exhibition. He boxed George Nelson our trainer down there. George was an old wrestler, but he had boxed during his life and they put on a good show.

HF: Gordon, going back to the Rexburg area, you had called to mind the promoters. Do you recall specifically some of the boxers in the area who participated in these bouts?

GD: Well yes, some of these names were given to me as I said before by Nichols, and they date back maybe earlier than this time. For example, Al Brown Sr. from Burton and Al Brown Jr. and Vern Wilcox form Archer participated from Thornton; there's Jules Spaulding; there was a Herrit from Lorenzo; and then right here in Rexburg there's Roy participated in boxing around the valley.

HF: Now, of course you and your brother were form up in Ashton weren't you?

GD: Yes.

HF: At the time do you recall of boxing with any of the individuals you last named, or your brother boxing with any of them?

GD: Well, I'll tell you about my brother and Ray Peterson from St. Anthony. And they had quite a feud, they fought tour times. Tay Peterson wanted to lick my brother so badly that he kept challenging him even though he lost. Ray was a, had a very cougar style of fighting. He would get in the ring and bend his left arm and put his shin in the elbow, raise his left arm, put his chin and nose right in the bend of his elbow. Then he carried his rights right close to his body, and when he got in close he'd bring over like an axe and chop it right over the top and boy, he had power behind that blow. And that's how he used it when he did a little fighting around the dance halls. But Dick was fast on his feet and...

HF: Dick was your brother?

GD: Yes, my brother Wilbur, he was fast on his feet and had a hard right hand. He could hit like a mule kick, and he had a good straight left, and Ray couldn't get close to him. He'd go in and out and he'd hit Ray, he'd go in and out and Ray just couldn't get close to him. He fought him at Venice one time. I was there.

HF: Where's Venice?

GD: Venice, the Venice Dance Hall.

HF: Oh.

GD: In St. Anthony

HF: In St. Anthony? Okay.

GD: It used to be just above St. Anthony right by the steel bridge on the west side of the river right along the road there. It was his favorite dance hall. And they built a ring in it. And a big crowd turned out.

HF: It used to be the Del Rio later didn't it or something?

GD: Well, that was the café they had right close there, but this was a little further up the river.

HF: I see.

GD: North. And Ray, this was about the fourth fight I believe that they had, and Ray wanted to win, but he couldn't get close enough and brother Dick would pound him on the arm and on the shoulder. But he kept that arm up his so he couldn't hit him of the head. Of course, he would once and a while. But after the fight, Dick won by a decision, I walked in the dressing room and Dick Peterson had big, black bruises all over his arm and his left shoulder, round bruises that had formed from stopping the blows my brother was laying on him trying to hit him on the chin. He hit him on the arm. But Ray finally gave up after four fights. In fact, one fight, my brother Dick was down here going to Ricks College and he was training up in the gym and sparring with a young man. The young man butted him with his head and broke Dick's nose just three days before the fight. And Dick didn't know whether to cancel the fight or not, but decided to go ahead with it but not to tell anybody he had a broken nose. So he went in the fight with a broken nose. Of course, he stayed away from Ray, just went in and out and in and out and never got his nose hit. And he won the fight again.

HF: He surely must have had a tremendous ability to protect himself?

GD: Well, he was so fast on his feet that he could go in and out

HF: What weight did he usually box?

GD: About 175 or 80.

HF: Pretty much heavy weight then?

GD: Yes.

HF: OR light heavy weight?

GD: Yes. HE was the best boxer in the area I thought. And if somebody got a hold of him and trained and taught him a little more to maneuver, to duck, and dodge I think he could have gone to the top. He lost a fight with a good fighter, his name was Harold Hawkswood, he was the best in Utah, and he came up here and fought, and he fought at Ashton. And they fought ten rounds to a draw, and it was a terrific fight, ten rounds to a draw. This Hawkswood was fast, he was quick, he seemed to have everything, and Dick was matching him. Dick knocked him down once, but finally they fought ten rounds to a draw, and the judge said, "well, we got to have a decision." So they made them fight three more.

HF: Oh boy.

GD: they fought three more rounds, and Dick lost the decision. This Harold Hawkswood went back to Madison Square Gardens and fought back there for about a year, so he was one of the best.

HF: During these years, we talked about the promoters, and it seemed to be kind of individual promoters. IT wasn't any organization that promoted boxing like the American Legion or any group like that?

GD: No, usually businessmen.

HF: Usually businessmen?

GD: Businessmen in town or sports promoters who wanted to do something for the young folks.

HF: Did it draw—did these matches draw quite big crowds.

GD: Oh, they were always jammed. They came in from far and near. They'll follow their fighters clear around the country.

HF: Quite a few women with the group?

GD: Yes.

HF: Quite a few ladies that would engage in that type of thing?

GD: Oh yes, everybody and the women I can remember standing up and screaming at ringside for their fighter. They used them up in Ashton at the dog races. I remember one up there, this incident happened, my brother Dick was on the main fight, he was the

mainline fight and they put up a ring in the old opera house, right on the stage, and the crowd gathered in there, and they had seats around the ring and the main event was going to take place, and my brother Dick crawled in the ring. You know how they'll kind of loosen up right in the ring and do some squats and exercise their arms. Well, he got a hold of the two top ropes in the corner that he was going to be in, and he sat down and pulled, and he purlled the post over. And his opponent was across the ring looking at him, and I tell you he turned white. And his opponent was across the ring looking at him, and I tell you he turned white. And so that fight didn't last long. One punch and Dick knocked him out. It was over first round.

HF: That's about like Joe Louis when he came on the scene later in the boxing era. How he was able to polish his opponents off in about one round or a half a round.

GD: It happens that way.

HF: Well, we haven't said anything about the wrestlers of that day. Do you have any names there you'd like to mention?

GD: Well yes, I have a number of them. They used to combine boxing with wrestling often up here. And Rexburg was a favorite place for the wrestlers to come up from Salt Lake and they'd put on a real show. And I want to tell you about some of them here that used to come here in the area. Ira Dern was one of the favorites.

HF: How do you spell his last name?

GD: D_E_R_N

HF: Uh huh, okay.

GD: Ira Dern, he came up from Salt Lake City, and he was a favorite of the crowd because he had a final hold called the airplane spin, and usually they'd match him with someone else like Leo Papiano. They'd come up together of course in the same car.

HF: And put on a big show?

GD: And put on a show. And I'll tell you, if you're any kind of an athlete and done any boxing or wrestling, you could see that a lot of it was put on, but they took some punishment, there's no doubt about it. They'd throw each other around the ring—something that you wouldn't believe, and then they'd get dirty and Leo Papiano, this was the favorite, he'd...

HF: Was he a Greek?

GD: Yes.

HF: Sounds like a Greek name.

GD: He was dark. And he'd gauge Ira, and he'd punish him and twist his arms and the crowd would—of course they were for Ira Dern, and Papiano, why they were against him. And finally, usually Papiano would win a couple of falls, and then just look like he was going to win the match, and then Dern would turn around and win it. And they did that one time, and it was all in the program and it was so mean and dirty that Dern finally challenged Papiano to a boxing match. So in two weeks they scheduled them to come back up for a boxing match. And oh, they pulled a crowd in there, and it was a farce. Neil Papiano didn't know how to box and Ira just beat him all around the ring, and that was the end of that. But they drew a crowd.

HF: I bet they did. As a kid, I can remember that name, you know, Ira Dern. That's all I can recall. Well these fellows of course would be the heavy weights?

GD: Well, Ira Dern was a light heavy, but they wrestled heavy and light heavy together. I want to tell you about Ira Dern's airplane spin. He'd finally, and he did this many times, he'd finally get his opponent on his shoulder and just about to mid-sections, and he'd spin around and around until the guy got dizzy, and then he'd throw him on the mat and knock him out. And everybody was waiting for that and when they got it they'd yell. When he got that hold, they'd shout and yell, and that was the end of it.

HF: Did you have any local people who would care to challenge some of those guys that they brought in from out below, you know, from Salt Lake or anything. Did you have any challengers?

GD: Well, Com Nichols was about the only one, but he wrestled for a time—but he used to wrestle the best of them. They used to come here and he was small, but he'd take them on. Here's some more: Jim Wright is listed as a wrestler from around here and Jet Ricks, Henry Hunsaker, Rolan Freeman, and Ray McCarrol. All from Rexburg and they used to put on a good show among themselves and other who came in. Now I got this information from Nick Nichols.

HF: Uh huh.

GD: HE was quite a fan for this. Some of the other outside wrestlers: Sherman Chistenson from Salt Lake City and George Nelson, and I mention George Nelson because was the trainer, the athletic trainer at Utah State. And George was a favorite for the crowd. Everybody liked George to win, and he usually did, and he was scientific. He was also the wrestling coach down at Utah State and put out many championship teams at Utah State and Mike Yokel from Nielson, Wyoming. He was the world middle-weight champion, recognized world middle-weight champion.

HF: Wrestler?

GD: Wrestler. And he was a great wrestler. And Dean Denton—I don't know where he's from, but he was recognized as the world heavy weight champion—used come up here occasionally. Jack Miller was from Parker, he was a college middle-weight

champion and Vicky Gardner from New York came out here and wrestled occasionally. Mitch Strangler Lewis from Salt Lake City, he came up here and was quite a wrestler. Strangler Lewis, that's quite a wrestling name.

HF: Yah, the name sounds pretty much that way.

GD: And there was a Clarence Call and there was a Tim Kay I think from Victor did you know him?

HF: A Kay, well, there was Jim Kay's boy.

GD: Jim Kay maybe.

HF: Jim Kay was the older man, but he had some boys I think that did both boxing and wrestling down at the ISU. Well, it's now ISU, but then it was as the southern branch in those days. Well now Gordon after you graduated from high school you went on to the AC you mentioned. Did you do any doing on the collegiate level?

GD: Well yes, in a way. When I got to Utah State I played football in the fall, and then in the winter I turned to boxing and got a group together of the students around there who wanted to learn a little about boxing. And we finally organized a team that participated in the Salt Lake Elk's Club Invitational. And George Nelson kind of supervised us, but I was charged with training the boys and getting them into physical condition and take them down there to the tournament. That was an invitational tournament and they invited boxers from all around the states. From Utah, Idaho, and Nevada, Montana they came down there and they put on a terrific tournament for the boys. And I participated in that for this team. And they ran nights. That was in 1931, the spring of '31. And they ran three nights and usually there's enough boxers in there that you'd have to box three, maybe four times before you won if you did win, and I happened to win the middle-weight championship that year.

HF: Tremendous, I suppose you might have a few little mementos of your boxing successes, don't you?

GD: Yes, I can tell you some stories if that's what you'd like.

HF: Well, not only some stories, but little plaques or recognition pins or something like that?

GD: They gave us a gold medal down there for that, that's about all. All these matches I had up in the valley here were, oh they just pay you enough for your expenses. About enough that I saved my money and it helped me get through school. I say that it wasn't only my head that got me through college, it was my first. Because I did make enough money you know here and there that I could save it and get started. In those days it didn't take too much to get through school. It was the bottom of the Depression. I could tell you of an incident, down at Utah State that happened—Just kind of a funny incident. I

was training these young boxers and we were working in the old Smart Gymnasium and they were having basketball practice and Dick Romney was the coach there and I was down getting dressed to come and work out. There was kind of a floater come in there, a fellow who had boxed some and he came in and went down and he challenged one of my boxers and wanted to put the gloves on with him. And of course my boxers, one of them says okay, and so he started boxing, and he just beat him up. He beat up my boy so he had the nose running and his lip was all swelled up, and I came up there and saw him and we stopped the fight and he says come on, I'll box you. He challenged me, and of course, I was kind of mad and angry because he beat up my boxer, and we were going to have a match in a few days, and so I put the gloves on with him, and I was angry enough to put him away if I could. And we went after it and the whole gym quit practicing basketball and come over and watched us and we put up quite a fight. We battled for a while, and finally I knocked him down, and he didn't get up for a while, and he took the gloves off and went home.

HF: Well, that's interesting, that's interesting. Well now Gordon after you'd graduated was your first teaching job associated in some way or at least in an extracurricular way with getting boxing going?

GD: Well, I was always active in athletics, and I went to Ashton to coach boxing and my first teaching assignment...

HF: Was at Ashton?

GD: At Ashton.

HF: And that's where you'd been reared as a kid?

GD: Yes, that's during the Depression. I got, I think it was nine hundred dollars a year, that was my first contract. And that was pretty good for those days. But I didn't promote any boxing; we boxed a little around the gym but nothing, no team boxing or anything like that. But we did have a little club going around the gym. And then I moved down to Idaho Falls and coached down there, taught in Idaho Falls High School for three years. And there I did get a team going and we boxed in Pocatello twice and around the valley a few places.

HF: Now eventually, boxing and wrestling became some of the curricular, part of the curriculum of a lot of the high schools didn't it for a few years?

GD: Well, they put some boxing in, but it's so difficult to get qualified teachers and trainers for boxing. And I also don't thin the public went for it much. It's a sport that's a little dangerous if not controlled carefully. And if they're not trained properly, there can be some damage done. I—it seems like I had my nose broken and I broke both my hands. That's when I got out of boxing, but it wasn't serious, I got a lot of good things out of boxing. I think that the youth of today needs challenges, and I think that this is one way

they get it, to put them into the ring wrestling and boxing, team play. Athletics is a great thing for the youth.

HF: Of course, now it's team play with basketball and football.

GD: Yes.

HF: Most of the schools, oh, wouldn't you say for the past ten, fifteen years in the Upper Valley have had a pretty good wrestling program, but no boxing?

GD: No, no they haven't put boxing in. Wrestling has been very popular in the...

HF: In the state, pretty much over the state?

GD: Yes.

HF: They've done quite a bit with it, but by and large, why, this whole thing has been taken over by football and basketball?

GD: Yes. When I came to Ricks College, Rexburg here, I started a team up over here in the old Madison Memorial building by the courthouse. We used to have a bag over there and had a little team going, a bunch of the boys came in. And then I started coaching at Ricks College, and then I went full-time at Ricks, and I promoted a team at Ricks College and we had boxing up there for about four years, four or five years. And we won all the conference every year because we didn't have much competition in the other schools—they just didn't have teams. But we boxed Alby and Alby use to have the toughest team around here. And we boxed the JV's in Idaho State, and we had a tournament, and I had some real good boxers in that group. We had two boys who went to the invitational tournament in Pocatello and won their weight. And one year I boxed and not one of my boxers got knocked off his feet. And I thought that was pretty good.

HF: Now were you doing this as a kind of an extracurricular thing or were you with the athletic department?

GD: I was with the athletic department and they promoted, they brought a ring and mounted it in the old Gymnasium. They mounted it right in the middle there. We had matches in there. Dan Hess was one of my boxers, and he was good at it.

HF: That's what I've heard, that Dan was a pretty good boxer. Mr. Dixon, before we leave this subject and complete it, I'd kind to have your personal feeling about the thing that we're talked about here: boxing, wrestling, those who participated in it. Can one learn some good lessons that will help him through life and getting along with people and achieving and accomplishing and taking initiative to go on and maybe exploit his potential in other ways? Do you think it's a good thing?

GD: Definitely, I do. I think that many lessons of life can be learned from participation in sports. You take teamwork. If you want a good team/winning team you got to play as a team, not as an individual. It's the same way in society, you've got to get along with people, you've got to work with them, and you've got rules to live by. You've got rules sot play by. And you have a good coach that teaches that you've got to abide by the rules then you'll get a transfer to abiding by the laws of the land; it'll carry over. I also think there's a great connection between physical fitness and success. And the mind, when you're in good physical condition, a person does better, is more active, has more vigor and vitality, and ha greater opportunity and greater chance for success in various thing if he's in good physical condition. I learned the lesson in athletics that you get out of it about what you put into it, and that's the way life is. You get out of life just about what you put into it. And it's hard to be successful. You've got to really put forth the effort and have the desire—and work towards those goals. And I think that our youth today need challenges. They need to get put on their own; they need to succeed in something. And many of them do it in athletics, and it gives them confidence; it gives them a feeling that they're worth something. And those who can't succeed in anything; they're in trouble. I think there's a great transfer from athletics to regular—living life the way it should be lived. I felt that this athletic competition made me a lot better soldier during World War II. It really did. I learned a lot of things in athletics that I applied during the war and they worked.

HF: Now that brings up another subject, kind of personal. They refer to you as Captain is it?

GD: Colonel.

HF: Colonel, that's right, excuse me Colonel. I didn't mean to. I don't know if captain or colonel, which is the higher rank.

GD: Captain in the Navy is the same as colonel in the army.

HF: Okay, as Colonel Dixon and I know you've been a chaplain haven't you?

GD: No, that's Dan Hess.

HF: Oh, Dan. Well let's see.

GD: I was the commander of a combat unit in Europe.

HF" But once you came back here locally in the reserve center up here, were you never a chaplain?

GD: No, I was the commander of a reserve, replacement depot for a while, and then the 449th military government civil affairs company that they had up here.

HF: I see. And you're referred to quite often among military people who have some orientation with the service as Colonel.

GD: Well yes, I'm full colonel. I'm a retired colonel. I stayed in reserves thirty-seven years. And it was a good activity. I'm grateful for it and the opportunity to serve my country during World War II.

HF: Isn't that great. Well now, colonel, we'll call you Colonel from here on out rather than Gordon Dixon

GD: Thank you.

HF: And it's honorary isn't it? It's an honor to fight?

GD: It is and there are not many around.

HF: You went on to get and graduate from the AC in what field?

GD: Well I graduated majored in physics, minored in mathematics, had a special in athletics and military science. And I got a teaching certificate to teach.

HF: Well now, when I first got acquainted with you we came down here to Rexburg, you were involved with the Planetarium over here and Astronomy. How did you get involved in that area of science?

GD: Well, there's a lot of physics in Astronomy. It's mostly physics and the transfer is not difficult. In fact I went back to school, and I studied Astronomy at BYU, and I went down to University of Arizona and studied Astronomy. I took a course in astronomy at Ricks College here from old Oswald Christensen who was quite an astronomer himself. SO I've had training in the field too. I've studied broad in college. I studied in Geology and some Biology, in fact I taught Biology at the Idaho Falls High School. It isn't my major field. I had background in military science that I could teach and athletics I've coached everything in high school in athletics, and then I've had a minor in mathematics. I have a minor Meteorology, I worked at the US Weathery over here, I'm trained in that field besides Physics and Astronomy.

HF: You had a real broad background—you do have a real broad background.

GD: Yes, if I'd have put all my effort into one field, I could have got a Doctorate without any trouble, but I didn't. I was pretty broad, because I was teaching at Ricks, and I wanted to immediately apply to my teaching.

HF: Gordon, I surely want to thank you for this interview and opportunity of visiting with you on a specific subject. We could go into other subjects and Astronomy would be one of them. I want to pass this along though. He, Gordon Dixon, and his good wife and companion this year were awarded the most ideal couple referring to family solidarity

and ideal family arrangements and family by the Ricks College in 1981. Now specifically, what was the title of that?

GD: The award they give from the division of family living at Ricks College. Each year they select a couple to receive it who have set forth some ideals that they believe in and teach over at Ricks College in our religion, and it's called the Family Living Award for a Married Couple.

HF: And I think this is—I'm sure that this holds a very, very high esteem, place, in your mind and that of your wife.

GD: It was a great honor.

HF: And congratulations to you as a tremendous contributor to youth and scholarship and a lot of other activities including sports here in the Uppers Snake River Valley.