

VOICES FROM THE PAST

RIGBY, IDAHO

By Omar S. Cordon

February 19, 1968

Tape # 41 A&B

Oral interview conducted by Harold Forbush

Transcribed by Louis Clements

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Upper Snake River Valley Historical Society

(This 17th day of April, 1984, a reel-to-reel tape which contained the following interview is now being copied onto a C-90 Cassette that we may make more assessable the interview with Mr. O. S. Cordon formerly of Rigby.)

HF: Brother Cordon, it is with a great deal of satisfaction that I, an attorney here in Rexburg, invites you and welcome you to my office on this rather late afternoon of Monday, the 19th day of February, 1968, that we might orally interview you on historical events of which you know or of which you had personal participation in the early days of the settlement of Rigby and of Jefferson country. Now in doing this I would like to refer to a few questions. As I ask the questions then you are invited to answer them and elaborate as you see fit. This is your tape and we appreciate keenly the cooperation which you are showing in making this tape interview available. We'll start off them by asking you your full name, the date and place of birth, and a brief sketch of your own family. A little of the pedigree of your parents and grandparents as well.

OC: I appreciate cooperating with you on this worthy endeavor. I would like to say that my full name is Omer Samuel Cordon. I was born August 7, 1885, at Willard, Box Elder County, Utah. I had four brothers and three sisters. My older brother was Alfred C. My older sister Agnes M. My next sister was Mabel, next was Sarah. Then I had brothers, George and Clarence. There was one baby brother Herbert, who died in infancy. My father and mother are of English descent. My Grandfather was evidently a great debater. In those arranged for, many times he asked to take the Churches side in making those debates. They were not married over there but later as he, my grandfather immigrated and my grandmother migrated as a girl, they found each other over here in Utah and were married. With the result that there were two brothers and one sister in their family. He was the second child. He had two brothers younger than he. My grandmother on my father's side, her maiden name was Emily Pridmore, she being the one of the family that joined the LDS Church. They lived thee in Willard where my father was born. As he grew to manhood he married Sally Agnes Call, also a girl born and raised in Willard. My Grandfather Call, on my mother's side, was a son of Searle Call, who was very close to the Prophet Joseph Smith himself. He did very much to assist him and guard him in the troublesome times he had in Nauvoo. But he was named Omer Call. He had a twin brother named Homer Call. In some places a lot of people who had heard of Omer and Homer Call. That Omer Call is my own grandfather. They were very sturdy people. They owned and were successful as success went in those days. They accumulated considerable ground around that section. He and his twin brother lived and worked together. They farmed all their lives together and divided up the proceeds of their investment and their work in the fall of the years. They owned and were successful as success went in those days. They accumulated considerable ground around that section. He and his twin brother lived worked together. They farmed all their lives together and divided up the proceeds of their investment and their worked in the fall of the years. They both had and large families. But reading and studying of two families, I have always marveled at how they must have been very good people in order to be able to hold out and be friendly and be able to continue on under that condition. At the time when my father and mother were married, the land around that part of Utah, Willard, was pretty much all taken by the older men. They had to get out and look for something away

somewhere in order to get a place to make a home. Before this time, they had Willard F. Rigby of Rexburg, who had a contract to get out the ties for something away somewhere in order to get a place to make a home. Before this time, they had William F. Rigby of Rexburg, who had a contract to get out the ties for the narrow gauge railroad from Enable Rock to Butte. The camp was in Beaver Canyon. They came up and worked for him. They were going back and forth from Beaver Canyon on back home to Willard. They passed the Snake River Valley. They had heard about it, of course, and they were curious to stop off and look it over a little bit. By the time they got through with that job they had decided to come over to the Valley and stake out claims with the idea of making a home. They did this about 1884. In the fall of 1885 they moved their families to what is now Rigby. Outside of family or two before them, I'd say Bill Jones and W. W. Parks they were the first settlers in that Rigby section. Right north of Rigby was where the first homestead was.

HF: You mentioned that your folks came up here in 1885 in the fall of the year. I understand that you were just an infant at this time. How did they come up here? What were conditions like when they arrived in the area? How was the first winter spent? Some of the conditions as they then prevailed in Jefferson County or at that time, of course, at that time it was Brigham County, wasn't it, with the county seat at Blackfoot? You make your comments on this matter.

OC: We arrived in the first of November. I've heard my folks say that they had the winter before them and they had five dollars in money in their pockets. There was little store established. They had moved, people had settled the Lewisville District a year or two before and there was a little store down there. That's where they used to go to buy what they had. They got a little, what they called a tick. In order to get by for the winter they allowed them to have a little credit. There was nothing here but sagebrush. The country, all of it, was covered with sagebrush. There were not roads or anything. They had to find out where the lines of their places were then try to make the roads in harmony with it on the section lines. They lived, my father and mother and some three or four cousins of my mother. The Tall boys, my father's brother, were in pretty close to that first company. They lived pretty close together and they used to meet together in the little old one room log homes they had. They met quite often in their way of entertainment. That's all they had in these little one room log homes they first winter they were here.

HF: Now you mentioned that the most populated area was at Lewisville. Did you go down there to church? When did they first establish a settlement or a church there at Rigby? Then I'd kinda like to know what you did as a young boy in growing up, in work, school, and experiences?

OC: The first organization in Rigby was a branch of the Lewisville Ward. Up until this time they attended church down to Lewisville. They had a small organization down there. But in May of 1886 there was a ward organized in Rigby. John W. Taylor, one of the apostles of the Church, made the trip up here to effect that organization. My father, George A. Cordon, was installed as the first Bishop with Josiah call as one counselor and Dan Robins as second counselor. They had not yet established a meeting house. They

held their meetings in their homes. I remember, as a boy, going across the country to the Robins house and to our place and to other places. They changed about in holding their Sunday meetings. But I guess about the next year, about 1886, there was a man, I forget his name now, but he had a homestead filing where the Rigby town site is and was originally established. He got homesick and wanted to go back to Utah. SO the men there gave him his filing fee back and he returned to Utah. They were misinformed, evidently, on how they could prove up on this land for a town site. They were told that the Probate Judge could prove up on this piece of land and have it designated and get title to it for town site purposes. But they put up the meeting house the first year. There was a man with poor character who lived in the community by the name of Jack Robinson. He found out sometime that the thing they were trying to do about having this probate judge hold this property and get a title to it wasn't legal. So they went out after they built their church. They went out there one morning to go to church and this Jack Robinson had moved his family in and jumped their claim. He set on the Bishop doorstep with his gun and told them no one would be allowed to go in. My father was the bishop of the ward. He's told me what they had to do to get rid of this man, to get him out of it. So they had to pay him \$500 in money which in those days was a terrific amount of money. So my father had told me how he worked sweat to accumulate and get together that amount of money to pay that man off. So he would move out of the church. After they got rid of him, they had one of the men there, Josiah Call, filed a desert entry on this piece of land. Then they were able to get water on it at this time. They proved up on that town site of Rigby under desert entry. So if any of you are down to Rigby to buy property you will not in your title that all land has gone through the name of Josiah Call, who was the man who filed on it and proved up on it for the community.

HF: That was very interesting. Now with reference to your early life as a youth, as it was lived in the Rigby area, do you have much in the way of opportunity to go off to school or attend some type of school in the Rigby area?

OC: They had established a school just as quick as they could start. My father happened to be the first teacher in Rigby. As soon as I was old enough, which was about five years old, I guess, I remember attending this school. An education in those days was a kind of a far fetched proposition. It was not taught very much. They kids were not instilled with the idea of going to neighborhood, about that time they established that Ricks Academy here. My father and mother being desirous of their children have an opportunity for some education, some schooling, sent my brother and I to the Ricks academy. I think about 1901 and '02, possibly.

HF: Now, you say this was about 1901 or '02? What can you tell us of the physical plant there at Ricks? Did they have such as, was there a campus or did they hold school some other place?

OC: I am not sure of this, but it appears that the ZCMI owned the building east of the corner where the Bank of Commerce is today. It wasn't right on the corner but a building or two up was where Mr. Flamm built the first rock stone building there on main Street. It was on up a building or two where ZCMI had a store. It had a front on the north and one

bank had opened up and there was more room in the back. There was there they held the school the years while I was here. The next year after I didn't get back they moved up on the hill where the old administration building now stand and they moved into that. The Flamm Store, the upstairs was used for, they had a stage in it, and used it for all the plays they had. That was where they did their dancing. The first year I was here, Ezra Christiansen, it was his first year at Ricks College. I remember that very well. And as education had not been promoted very much in the minds of the pupils, after I got through with those two years here, I had to leave to farm in the spring and late in the fall. When a person got old enough to get a job, why that's what he did. That's what came first, was working, in order to help to maintain the family. That's what happened. There was no school in Rigby or anywhere in the country, I don't think, except the Ricks Academy that had any classes graded in any way. They used to call them the Readers, Third Reader and Fourth Reader. You went to the Third Reader, Fourth Reader, Fifth Reader, and on up but there was nothing to graduate from. There was no school in order to do that.

HF: Now as you finished schooling. I supposed, within the next few years then you had an opportunity for marriage. Had you prepared yourself in farming or in some other trade or occupation to pursue in the support of a wife? Appreciate having you tell us along this line.

OC: Well, in those days there was plenty of land and most all of the boys had in mind a piece of land to farm. Of course, that is what I did when I first got married. My first wife was Ruth Chandler. She went to school at Ricks Academy here a year or two after I did. I was called on a mission right after we were married. So we didn't get a chance to set up house keeping until I returned. Our first endeavor to live along and to make our own living was north of Rigby about a mile.

HF: now in recapping this, you were married, you said, to Ruth Chandler. Who were her folks and where were you married? Then you were called on a mission and we would like to know where and by whom were you called and from which stake? Now those are quite a few questions.

OC: My wife, Ruth Chandler, was the daughter of J. J. Chandler, a very noted school teacher in those early days. I was called to labor in the Northern States of Mission with headquarters in Chicago. I did my laboring principally in the state of Indiana. Indianapolis was our headquarters in the mission.

HF: Now after you returned from your mission and you established your home just north of Rigby, did you make your livelihood in farming? What date was this that you had returned from your mission and had started your livelihood? What were some of the conditions of the land and the territory by this time?

OC: Upon my return from the mission field I made arrangements to run my fathers farm. It was in the north of Rigby. The land was all under cultivation and a good farm. It raised a variety of crops. I raised hay, grain, a few potatoes, and milked some cows. Farmed

with horses, of course. We were very successful as farmers. That's what I did for the first ten or twelve years of my life as a married man. At that time, about 1913, I got the idea of homesteading a piece of land back in the hills. Which I did. It was southeast of Idaho Falls about twenty miles. It was called the big Bend Willow Creek. I proved up three years after that time, about 1916, on 320 acres of that land up in there on dry farm. It happened to be a good location and a good piece of land. I no more than got that land proved up in there on dry farm. It happened to be a good location and a good piece of land. I no more than got the land proved upon in the fall of the year until my wife was to be confined with our fifth child, which resulted in her death. She had infection the morning after the baby was born and she never recovered. Never hardly got out of the bed. But she died a lingering death for about thirty days. Our doctor profession in those days knew very little about infection with women. A woman that was confined that way and had infection, she was just about dead as far as they were concerned. Of course, this was a great blow to me. It left me at thirty years old with five little kids under ten years old. Alone without a wife.

HF: This would indeed be a terrific blow for a man with five children to take care of and no wife. What was the course of your life at this point then?

OC: To my great surprise, my father became sick and had to be released as Bishop. He had been there and served for thirty years. He was put in, in 1886 and he was still a Bishop in 1917. In as much as he was to be released, my wife hadn't been dead yet sixty days, and I was chosen to be the Bishop to take his place. I'd built me a home the year before and we did have a small farm the south side of Rigby. When they asked me to be Bishop, they asked if I could arrange my affairs to take care of it. Of course, if I was going to take it I would have to do that. I told them I would. It meant a reshuffling and changing of my whole life plans. There I was with a family on my hands, no mother, and twelve hundred people in the ward to look after. But I could tell you many testimonies of how the Lord will take care of people if only they will trust in Him and do their part. It was not very long after this, just a few months. I didn't know what I was going to do. My wife being gone, I couldn't very well do as we had done before and move back up there in the summertime. So I got my cousin, Leo Cordon, and his wife to come and stay with us during the wintertime. In the summer I took them out the ranch to work for me. But it seemed that there were three or four years of bad drought weather. So the crops were quite poor. So it didn't make it possible to go ahead and hire the help and maintain the family, take care of my church work on the income from the farm. But the job of postmaster of Rigby was offered me. It was put out on a platter without even asking for it. I say the Lord sure took care of me. I accepted this job of postmaster which gave me an opportunity and time off at the right time so that I could look after church job. For nearly thirteen years that continued on until they changed president of the United States. In those days when they changed the president they changed all the postmasters which meant that I was out.

HF: You might tell us the names of the children of your first marriage and after that the second marriage you entered into, your wife's name and some of the genealogical data there if you will please?

OC: My first child was born while I was on my mission out in Indiana. I'll never forget the anxiety I had while I was walking through the country in the summertime when he was born. How anxious I was to get where I could get in touch with somebody to find out something about what had happened. But he was born and was seventeen months old the first time I saw him, which happened when I returned from my mission. My wife, Ruth, met in Salt Lake City. That was my first time I had seen my oldest son, Louis, his name was. When I came back from my mission, the children then started to come along. Theo, the second boy was born in Rigby on the home we built out there in 1909. A daughter Gladys was born in 1911. In 1913 Bill was born. That's my fourth son. Then in 1916, September, Ruth was born, named after her mother. Her mother gave her life for her birth.

HF: Now about your second marriage?

OC: Of course, my baby Ruth, being very small and I was still trying to run my farm and take care of my Bishop's job. The cousin of mother Ruth wanted to take the child down to Malad. There was a couple down there who had never had any children and they wanted to take her. With the understanding that I could have her back when I wanted her, I let them do that. So they took baby Ruth down to Malad. She grew up there for the first fifteen months with a very wonderful couple that gave her a home and gave her wonderful care. In the next spring after this, Gladys even went down there and they took both the girls and took care of them and relieved me of the responsibility. I had the three boys to take care of and with the help of their grandfather and grandmother, my father and mother and Ruth's father and mother, we were able to get along. But you can see my position. It was a matter of business with me that if I kept my family together I had to have a mother for them. So as I was going down to Malad to see my girls, Ruth and Gladys, I constantly, every time I went, I ran on to another fine young lady. She was thirty-four years old and had never married but a wonderful girl. She had a lot of talent and had been on mission. She had held about every position in the church in that country. I'd had a lot of changes to get married in the store there in Malad with the woman that had baby Ruth. Of course, every time I went down there, she was there and I met her. Then the woman who had the baby was trying to effect a match between us anyway. And, of course, it all helped out. I was rather susceptible to the idea because if anyone needed a wife and a mother to the children, it was me. In November of the next year, after Ruth died in September, we were married. Phoebe Thomas, her name was. A very wonderful girl. It happened to be during the full epidemic. Meetings were closed down. The temple was even closed down. But she had been on a mission and I'd been on and we had our temple endowments. So in we could be married in the temple without having to get our endowments. So I made an appointment with the temple presidency in Salt Lake City and we went down to Salt Lake and were married the day before Thanksgiving in 1918. That was the year the flu was on. They were dying around the country like flies. The only honeymoon we had was a stay over night in the Hotel Utah. Inasmuch as there wasn't a jewelry store in Malad, and I'd been down there a little while, before this time. I'd had no chance to buy her a wedding ring. She didn't get one till after the ceremony. We walked down Main Street in Salt Lake City and I took her into a jewelry store and she picked out the ring she wanted. We bought it and put it on her finger and away we went. I put it on

for her. We had an accident going down that morning to go to the temple. I struck a rock along side the road and knocked of the spindle of my front wheel. This made it necessary to get the farmer close by there to get up and take us down to Collingstown to catch that train into Salt Lake City in order to be there to fill our appointment for marriage. Of course, we had to bring the part back and get a blacksmith out of Collingstown to come up and help us put the wheel back on. Then we proceeded back home. But in the transfer of the goods we had from one car in to the other, this man's car brought us up and our car set on the hillside while we were gone, Phoebe's hat was laid on the side of the road. W went off and left it there. She was a very proud girl and she had paid top price, fourteen or fifteen dollars in those days for a hat, not discovering that we had left it down on the roadside until we had arrive home. It was too dark then to go back after it so we waited until morning. Charles, Phoebe's brother drove me down to the spot, and sure enough there it lay by the side of the roads we had left it. There was a time of rejoicing when we returned with that wedding hat. We've had many a good laugh about it. She came home; imagine the predicament of a young girl who had turned down a good many marriages, offers of marriage. She had set her stakes very deep that if she ever got married she'd never marry a man with children. Then I came along with five under ten years old and offered her my hand, she accepted without hesitation. I couldn't understand and she couldn't either. But we talked about at many a time and I used to console her by giving her the idea that she was supposed to be mine, that the Lord had a hand in it. I still think he did. In due time in a year or a year and a half, why Barbara, her oldest daughter was born. She was very, very happy with this daughter. She was red headed and a wonderful baby. Always gave us very much happiness in the home. A couple of years after this she had a son born, Charles. The two children made things complete for her. In spite of the five other children who were not her own, she treated them all in such a way that you'd never know what they all belonged to her. I have said many a time that, that's a tough spot for any woman to get into the position was place in when she accepted my hand to come up here and be my wife. But I have thanked the Lord many times for all the ups and downs we had, heartaches and things that we were able to stay together and see things through and get them all raised, married off, and on their own. Which is a wonderful accomplishment. I don't think any woman can get into a tougher proposition than to be wife of a man with children that way and have to raise them up that don't belong to her.

HF: Now would you kindly tell us something about the achievements of your family? I think it would be fine if you mention to whom they married, who their partners were, their maiden names and what your boys and your girls have achieved in life to this date.

OC: I have a family of children that I am very proud of. They haven't been perfect but they have given me, they haven't given me very much trouble in raising them up. My oldest son married a little girl by the name of Martha Barlee from Kansas City, Missouri. He happened to be out there when he was a young man and brought her home. They had four lovely children who have grown up and all married and off and doing well. Theo, my second boy, took out his doctors degree in bio-chemistry. He is now, and has worked for twenty-five years worked for the U. S. Department of Agriculture in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in a large experiment station there. He married a girl by the name of (tape

skips here). They had three children, two sons and a daughter, all fine kids. All married and doing well.

OC: Evanis, they had a family of six, four girls and two boys. Fine kids all around. The oldest son is at the present time on a mission and a district president state of Iowa. The girls are living in different parts of the United States. The family is growing up and are all doing well. Bill, my third son, is an engineer professor down at the USU at Logan. He took out his degree down there when he went to school and went to work for the Reclamation Department for nineteen years. Then he went for the Portland Cement Association of America in Chicago for a couple of years. Finally he landed back in Logan his old school where he took his own studies. Bill has developed on the side of line information on the mixing of concrete. Not only the mixing of it but the treating of it and the handling of it. He's become quite famous. He's called on to visit around the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere. He is just home now from a trip over to Japan as a delegate to this ISC, International Concrete Institute. He is just home from that. It was a wonderful experience for him; he and his wife went over to Japan. This deal has made him a lot of money. Bill has made more money than any of the rest of us. He wouldn't appear to be a money maker either, but he has a good head on him and he's used it. Ruth, my second daughter, is a mother of six and lives in St. Anthony. They have two boys in Ricks College at the present time. Both are making straight "A"s every time they get their card. We are proud of that. One of them has a scholarship with the Utah Power and Light Department. The other has got a lot of help from other sources but their both fine boys. The older boy has been on a mission and he is now in school to pick up the engineering school. Then we have Barbara, she's my oldest daughter by me second wife. She's a college graduate from USU, has her BS degree in child development. She's taught school but after she got around to it, she married a farmer, Leonard Ellis, out at Anise. He is one of the best, well to do farmers down in that section. Not only his done well, but he knows his business and tends to it. We have Charles, he's my youngest son. When he got out of high school, the first thing he did was go to the army, the Second World War He finally wound up making the Army his career. He retired nearly two years ago as an army engineer and has the rank of Colonel. At the present time he is located in Massachusetts. He likes that country to live in and so he went back there to get away from so much traffic he had in California when he was down there. These kids are wonderful. The money that I have spent in schooling for my children I figure was very well invested. I am very happy that I was able to do it. I am happy that the Lord gave me these kids that have heads on them to go ahead and do things. They are able to learn and able to apply things. They are able to learn and able to apply things in this life.

HF: Well, that's wonderful. One, I'm sure, gets a tremendous and satisfaction at one's family and it would appear that your boys and girls have done very well in their education and also other fine activities wherein they have engaged in rearing good boys and girls. Now about your own personal activity, functions, the positions of responsibility which you've held as you've grown older. Would you kindly tell us of these?

OC: My life has been pretty busy. It has been spent pretty much from a church standpoint. I've never run for an office, I've never held a political office. I was never

convinced that you could mix religion and politics very well though I've had many an invitation to run for political office. As long as I was either Bishop or Stake President I felt it was maybe better if I kept out of it. With the result that I have never run for public office. My life, and has been right up till now, has been engaged in spiritual activities. Twenty years as a Bishop, eight years as Stake President, and twenty-one as an officiator in the Idaho falls Temple. I was one of the first to be set apart for that when the temple opened. I had the honor of taking a part in the first cast. The part of Adam and Eve, my wife took, for the first session when the temple opened it's doors. For twenty-one years since that time have taken a weekly schedule, two days a week, or one night and one day over all that period of time. It's been a great satisfaction to labor in the church, a labor of love among the people.

HF: Now if we could turn some of the actual knowledge and eye witness account on your part of some of the early developments of the area. For example, the railroad as it was laid up through the Snake River Country. The Utah Power and Light Company and some of the highways and maybe the canals. The irrigation projects. Let's have you tell us some of your early experience or knowledge as to how these were developed and about when they were developed?

OC: As I stated this country around Rigby and all up through here was covered with sage brush. From one to three foot tall, some places more than that. That sage brush had to get water on it to irrigate it before they could raise the crop. I remember as a little boy, very small, my father clearing the first land. It was done with a grubbing hoe. He would grub the sage brush and I would carry sage to a pile with the idea that if I could get a big pile during the day we could have a big fire at night. Later on they conceived an idea of ding a better job on that. They got a railroad rail, you understand they are very heavy and they have some sharp edges. They put a team on each end of that and dragged it across the sage. Many times one railing would do the job. If it wasn't they'd go aback over it again. That way would loosen the sage up; put it loose on top of the ground. Then we'd have to pile the sage and burn it before it could be plowed. This entailed a lot of work. I remember as I grew up, it took us a number of years before we got that farm, 160 acres, all under cultivation. Right at the beginning it was necessary to get water out. In the early days, if you follow the history, the people who came into the Rigby section all wanted to get over on the island. That is the land between the south Fork of the Snake Rive and the dry Bed branch of the river on the south. The idea was they could get the water out easier there than any place else. Which was right. They had to dig these canals. They had to dig them with a tongue scraper, a slip scraper. Many a time I rode a tongue scraper, a slip scraper. If you know what they are, you know that when they are coming around empty they dump and come around the fill up again. There is a little place in there where a body can ride on it. As a little boy, I would follow around behind and jump on and ride the scraper as it went into the canal to dig the canal and bring it up on the bank. I had been many a day, as a little boy, watching them men, working with them, so to speak, riding the scrapers around in order to fill these canals so they could get the water in to raise their first crop. Every community had a canal out of the river. For instance, people in Rigby had one. People in DaBelle had one. People in Grand had one. People in Lewisville had one. People in Menan had one. People in Lorenzo had one. That's the way it went. Each

community would go together; it was always a cooperative proposition. They would give stock out in the canal in the amount of labor that each man had performed in bringing that canal to completion. They are pretty much operated that way today. The canal companies are formed and they take care of a small section of the country. They did in those days and they still do. They have their different heads on the river. You've heard talk I imagine of the Great Feeder Canal. In the early days when they first came in here, they tried to fight the main river alone. It was more than they could do, this small group of people. So they conceived the idea of all going in and putting in the cooperative feeder gates and run it down the Dry Bed and then take the canals out of the Dry Bed. The Dry Bed, before they dammed the water and put into it used to go dry in the summer when the water went down. Today, the Great Feeder canal Company is the largest irrigating canal in the world. That is the report that we get. I remember as a small boy when we dedicated the Great Feeder Canal. That was a cooperative proposition of all the canal companies doing in on it. While your canal companies are composed of individual farmers forming in a corporation and operation that way. Now these various canal companies own stock in the Great Feeder Canal which is the course of water from the Snake River proper is regulated and put in to this canal in the old Dry Bed. Then the canals make their head from this. Makes a wonderful system of irrigation. When you take South Fork of Snake River, for instance, and see the canals that come out of those mountains there, and how it spreads out over the Valley and down through the country. It is really a marvelous thing. That same thing happens in other sections with other rivers. There is the Teton River, the North Fork of the Snake, but the South Fork is the largest of any of these and there is more water than come south of it than any of the rest.

HF: Now as I understand, this diversion is made from the South Fork before and at a point above where the North Fork joins the, where the two rivers join there at Menan? It's above the juncture of the two forks, isn't it?

OC: That's true. Its way up the river, up the South Fork, above what they call the, it goes right on back to Jackson Hole and up through the country to the Park.

HF: Now could you tell us a little something about the coming of the U. P. Railroad on up the floor of the valley? Maybe the other power line, the Utah Power line coming?

OC: I was fifteen years old when the railroad came through. Just a nosey boy. I never, I had a little time off from helping my father. I was up around the works where they were building the grade, laying the ties, reading the rails, and getting ready to go. They'd push on up the country as the grade was made. They would push the ties and the rails and then the work train would go over it. I remember they had the home camp in Rigby there for a while till they got up just north of the river at Lorenzo. We used to walk up to Lorenzo down to Rigby. It was a wonderful thing for the Valley to get that road in here. It has swerved our people very wonderfully. For a long time it was the means of traveling to. Course the last few years they have got other ways of doing it. The automobile with good roads have kinda put the railroads out of business of hauling passengers.

HF: Now do you recall the power company, the Utah Power and Light bringing its lines up here? When do you recall that you first had electricity in the Rigby area?

OC: My father was the Bishop of Rigby and he used to like to be the first to get water in the house. That was by a private well. He had the first home lit up with electricity in the city of Rigby. That first year or two when the power came in, they put a motor on a wagon and hauled it around and did the thrashing with an electric motor. Course it wasn't long till they decided that a steam engine was better for that and could handle it easier so that was what followed through no the electric motor proposition . That was a wonderful day when we got the power in here.

HF: Do you remember about what year that came in?

OC: I would say, as I remember now, about 1908.

HF: Now the early days of Rigby, let's talk a little bit of how this town was formed, after whom it was named, and about when the first post office was started there? Who was the first postmaster, something about Rigby? I think you mentioned there's a little contest as to whether Rigby would be the country seat or somewhere else. So if we can start out with a little of the background of the town of Rigby.

OC: As we stated earlier in this interview, the town of Rigby, the original town site, was a desert entry proved up by Josiah call. The lots were measured off and sold, he sold them out. He's the man who got the tile from the government for the community. I don't know much of the details of how that happened. The first meeting house was moved into by this man, Jack Robins, after jumping the claim they had on this 160 acres for a town site. But they got him straightened out and paid him off and got him out of it. They got a different filing on it. They added to their church. They got a church as long again as the other one was. They always kept a bowery on the north side of it for summer, 4th of July and 24th celebrations. They would go out every year and replenish the places with new cottonwood, with new willows, for shade. Along about 1900 they completed the first meeting house just west of the old building, the old log church, which stands in Rigby today. The rock church down in the northwest part of town is, one section of that is the original first church put up in Rigby. As a young man I helped to haul the rock and sand for that building which has been added to two or three different occasions. So what we got now is a pretty good church. It has taken care of the needs of the people for a good many years since we added to it. But now they are thinking of tearing it down along with the stake tabernacle and putting one big building up that is more adapted to the conditions and need. The building next to it to the east is the stake office building. That was put up in about 1909. The big tabernacle was erected about 1915 which has served the people of the community in very fine shape. Along with that we have the 2nd Ward building over in the east side of town. It has served as the 2nd and 3rd Wards for a good many years. When I was first put in as Bishop of Rigby there was one ward and it had twelve hundred people. Inside of about two years it was divided into two. While I was in the stake presidency some twelve, fifteen years, no twenty-five years after that it was divided into four wards. Now today it has still been divided again and we have five wards in Rigby.

The newest addition in Rigby is the 1st and 4th Wards down in the northwest part of town, which is a wonderful building and a credit to our community.

HF: As we move along to the end, do some names, who have had a real part in the building up of Rigby come to mind? Names who were influential in the church, who were influential in building up the community, the civic, as well as, the political conditions of the area? Men and women who were big names in the early days in the Rigby area?

OC: Well we had in those days was my father, George A. Cordon, who was the first Bishop and served for thirty years. Josiah Call was the man who put the filing on the town site and proved up on that and got it so we could have it for a town. R. K. Holm was in the Bishopric in the early days. He raised a large family and while his family has all moved away they were very influential in assisting in the production of the country. Whenever there was any public work to be done, I remember as a boy, he always drove nice horses and he was the first man on the job. Hauling rock or hauling sand or what ever it was necessary for the project. There was A. W. Osmond who was a successful man. He was a honey man and a farmer. James S. Mason, another man who raised a large family and did wield power for good. J. W. Hart, many of you will remember. He was a leader and president of the stake. He was a Senator from Idaho. He was a leader and owned a bank at one time in Rigby. George E. Hill had a large family. He was a secretary of the Quality Store Company. He did a lot to promote new things. I remember the Commercial Club, Boosters Club, Chamber of Commerce, and all those companies that I personally was mixed up with. These men that I speak of were always there to assist in the ... W. H. Jones, William Rhodes, William Olsen, and many of those leaders were among our best farmers. They were men with a lot of ginger. They were in it, of course, to get themselves and get more stock in the canals but they were there first to work on the canals and they were there last to help finish. These small communities around Rigby were just wards out in the country. Like LaBelle, Clark, Perry, Bybee, and are all gone now and come into bigger centers. Ririe has taken over several of them. Rigby has taken over several of them. Some of them were disbanded and went into larger places but it has all been as a matter of growth when this thing has been down owing to conditions that have developed different to what they were when they were organized.

HF: Now turning to the area which we know least about in Jefferson County is out around Market Lake. Presently called Roberts and Terreton. Why don't you make a little comment about Market Lake? Wasn't it the terminal narrow gauge track out there at one time?

OC: Don't remember that, no. But I remember that it was one the first railroad that went through the country here. That's on that narrow gauge from Eagle Rock, or Idaho Falls, to Butte. My father and his relatives, who were the first settlers in Rigby, worked on there for a man by the name of William F. Rigby. Now I might tell you were Rigby got it's name. It was from this man, William F. Rigby, who lived in Rexburg and Teton Basin. He had the contract for getting out the ties on this railroad, this narrow gauge railroad, from Eagle Rock, or Idaho Falls, to Butte. He lived and operated out of Ogden. My father and these men came up with him, six or eight of them. They were living at Willard just

his side of Ogden. They got a job with him and came up here and worked for him upon Beaver Canyon getting these ties out. When they come to, right after this, they had settled over in Rigby they needed a name for the place. They thought so much of this man who had hired them, he was a wonderful man; they thought so much of him they just happened to have been working for him just before this. He was fresh on their mind. They decided to name it after him. Be he never, William F. Rigby never lived in Rigby. But he was a member of the stake presidency and a wonderful fellow. The men who worked for him liked him very much and that is how they come to name it after him.

HF: What comments would you make about Market Lake, out there on this railroad track?

OC: Market Lake, if I understand the history much, was an old state coach station. There was a lot of natural grass out there for their stock, their horses. They had there a station for the stages before there was any railroad run up through there. Some men by the name of Adams and some other ran a lot of horses there on this meadow. They used to winter them out there and run them out there year round. On out to Terreton, on out in Jefferson County, in the early days was not located because there was no water for it. There was Mud Lake out there but there was no way to get the water onto the land. The land was all higher than the lake. It wasn't mountain country so they could put in dams. So it wasn't until the government put in a pumping system there to raise that water and put into out so that they could get it out into the land before anything was done with it. There was just a few scattered settlers in there that had places in there. They just eked out an existence with a few horses and stuff running around. But come to the farming part of it, nothing was done with it until the government got this pumping system here. Market Lake is what is known as Roberts. For some reason there was some man by the name of Roberts who had a little something to do with the community over there that I am not prepared to tell you. Through some nook or crook, they changed the name from Market Lake to Robert after him. But just why, I am not prepared to say.

HF: now turning back to your own life, the latter part of your life, so to speak, as you lived in Rigby, you were engaged in private business there, were you not, before coming to Rexburg? You might touch on this and the later part of your personally life as we close the tape.

OC: In 1958 Phoebe, my second wife, died with a severe stroke. I was very thankful that the Lord took her the way he did, in as much as she had to go. She up and went to the bathroom by herself at 6:00 in the morning. At 8:00 in the morning I tried to rouse her and I couldn't. I called the Doctor and he discovered that she had had a very severe stroke. So we hurried up and took down to the hospital in Idaho Falls to see if anything could be done. But she died in three or four hours. Course that left me, an older man, all alone. Back where I was once before without any wife. I had a house but no home. I decided at that time that I didn't want to be married anymore. I didn't have any family but myself. But the longer I went the more I discovered there are a lot of things I wanted to do yet and I couldn't do it alone. So with a little help form some others, I worked up enough courage to ask a certain fine lady to go to dinner with me. It was the first time

that I broke in. After a fine courtship of several months it blossomed into a marriage of myself and Mary Ellen Fisher, Mary Ellen Widdison of Rexburg. In 1960 we were married and I have lived up here since that time. After I was vacated from the post office, I put in two or three years, it is pretty hard to adjust. When you come to change your entire work, when you are getting along in years, if you've never done it you don't know just what are up against. I drifted off into the insurance business. I have often thought that I hated to leave the post office but it was the best thing I ever did. I got into the insurance business and had an office on Main Street for twenty-five years. It was part of the bank lobby, the door east of the bank door there it used to be. I sold life insurance for Beneficial Life and had a general insurance business. I had a good business. It made me quite a little money. Enough so that I have been quite independent the rest of my life. But when we decided to get married this last time I tried driving back and forth but that didn't work out. When I should be down there I was up here and vice versa. So I sold that out to a family by the name of Rowan from Ririe. He still runs it. To have something to do, for here or four years now I have operated the Eligent Collection Agency. To keep me out of mischief and to occupy my time.

HF: Now as we close this tape, is there any message you might wish to give rather extemporaneously to your boys and girls, your grandchildren. You have live, I note, a life of almost around and doing things and carrying a business, a responsible business as collection work is. I think you are very, very alert. You've seen this whole country grow up from almost little or no population to the thousands that now occupy the large towns and cities as we know them here in the Upper Snake River area. We would appreciate any comment which you would like to make as we close this interview?

OC: I'd like to comment just a little on the athletics of the community. We didn't have any except we used to get together and fight a little bit and wrestle. But I was always pretty husky and could take care of myself. But I used to like to play baseball and I was a member of the baseball club of Rigby for a long time as a young man. We played ball in all these communities up and down the line from Pocatello north to Ashton. I usually played behind the batter as a catcher. Just as a moments thought, I would like to give in closing a little something I think might be good for all of us. It's a little poem that I think has a lot of virtue in it. It's one I have quoted a lot of times at funerals and other places. It goes like this:

“Do you wish the world were better,
Let me tell you what to do.
Set a watch upon your actions,
Keep them always straight and true.
Let your thoughts be clean and high.
Off this sphere you occupy.
Do you wish the world were happy,
Or do you wish the worked were better, wiser?
Well, suppose you make a start,
By accumulating wisdom on the scrapbook of your heart.
Do not waste one page on folly,
Live to learn and learn to live.

If you wish to give men knowledge,
You must get it err you give.
Do you wish the world were happy,
Then remember day by day.
Just to scatter seeds of kindness,
As you pass along the way.
For the pleasures of the many,
May be ofttimes traced to one.
As the hands that plants the acorn,
Shelters armies from the sun.