

Jack Arguallo

Morgan, UT, via phone

An Interview by

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LAYTON HISTORY COLLECTION

Verdeland Park Oral History Project

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**Layton City
and
Heritage Museum of Layton**

GOOD MORNING, MY NAME IS TORI FAIRBANKS, AND TODAY IS MONDAY, JANUARY 13TH, 2024. JOINING ME TODAY VIA PHONE INTERVIEW IS JACK ARGUELLO FROM HIS HOME IN MONROE, UT. I AM INTERVIEWING HIM FOR THE VERDELAND PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

TF: Good morning Jack, thanks for joining me. Before we begin, I just want to be sure that I have your okay to record.

JA: Yes.

TF: Okay, great. I'm looking forward to doing this interview today. If you could just start out by telling me your full name, and when and where you were born, and we'll go from there.

JA: Okay. I was born in Ogden, UT, in 1957.

TF: And what were your parents' names?

JA: Floyd Arguello and Ruie Arguello.

TF: How many siblings did you have?

JA: I had thirteen siblings.

TF: And where did you fit in?

JA: I'm number nine.

TF: My husband is the youngest of nine, so that's a good number. Where did you fit in, as far as your responsibilities in the family? You weren't really the middle child, or the oldest or youngest.

JA: I didn't have many responsibilities until my two older brothers went into the military, then I got really busy.

TF: What conflict would they have served during?

JA: They joined the military just before Vietnam War.

TF: Was your dad in the service as well?

JA: He was. He served in the Army, and he was wounded in WWII.

TF: What theater did he serve in?

JA: In Europe.

TF: What did he do for the army?

JA: He was a cook. He was out in the field a lot. That's where he got wounded.

TF: How did he get wounded?

JA: He and another guy were hit with a tank shell during a small in northern France in 1944.

TF: Wow. Did he stay out in the field after that, or did he come home?

JA: They sent him home.

TF: Did those injuries affect him for the rest of his life, after he came home?

JA: No. His brother was wounded and came home crippled after the war, but my father was fine.

TF: That's good. Did your parents grow up here in Utah, or did jobs bring them here?

JA: My dad's job at Hill Air Force Base brought them here. They were both born in Colorado.

TF: What did your dad do at Hill?

JA: He was an electronics technician. He worked on missile guidance systems.

TF: Did your mother work there as well?

JA: No, she stayed home to raise us.

TF: That's one of the hardest jobs.

JA: Right, especially with that many kids.

TF: So, you were born in Ogden. At what point did your family move to in Layton?

JA: They moved to Layton—to Verdeland Park—when I was just over three years old.

TF: Tell me a little bit about your childhood. What were some of the things you enjoyed doing when you were growing up?

JA: We were pretty poor growing up, but I had my brothers, so I always had somebody to play with. A couple of my brother-in-laws would take us camping too, and I always enjoyed that. Later on, I took my own kids camping, and now I take my grandkids and great-grandkids camping. But like I said, when we moved to Verdeland Park, we were pretty poor, but everybody who lived there seemed poor. But I didn't really notice at the time, because we were all about the same.

We moved to N-Court, and those homes were double units, with a home on each end. And we had no room. I think after we were there about three or four months, they moved us over to L-Court and put a door in the middle of the two units so my family could have both sides.

TF: Really? I've never heard of them doing that to a unit.

JA: That finally gave us enough room, once we got both sides.

TF: How many total bedrooms did that give you?

JA: I think there were three bedrooms. My sisters took the back half of the unit, because there were eight of them, and my mom and us boys had the front half.

TF: Tell me what else you remember about your unit.

JA: We lived over where the swimming pool is now, and we didn't spend too much time inside. We were outside pretty much all the time. Verdeland Park was a big place, and we knew lots of people there. We'd run around until dinner time, and that's when we had to be home. But I had a really good childhood. I really enjoyed Verdeland Park. We moved out of Layton after I was in second grade, then we moved back when I was in seventh grade, and half the people I

went to school with were still there. And my older sisters married a couple of guys who lived there when we did.

Ruby Price was my teacher in first grade, and when I came back ten years later, she still knew my name. She knew all of her students' names. She never forgot.

TF: I heard she was really good with names.

JA: Yeah. I didn't think she would remember my name, but she did.

TF: Tell me what she was like as a teacher.

JA: She was just a really good. I really enjoyed having her. I talked to her a year or two before I retired from the city—I hadn't seen her for probably 20 years—and she told me that Verdeland Park had the first integrated class in Utah. I didn't know that at the time, because none of that ever mattered to me. We didn't know anything about racism.

But she was a great teacher, and later on, I'd stop by and talk to her, just to see how she was doing. She actually lived to be quite old. But she was a really, really good teacher.

TF: Do you remember anything about her husband, Ralph?

JA: I do. He actually still worked for the city for about a year after I started. He drove the street sweeper and swept the gutters. When I started working for the city, I started in the Parks Department, and he worked in Public Works; but he retired about a year after I started. But I knew him just a little bit. I used to talk to him about fishing, and things like that.

TF: That reminds me, where did you go camping when you were growing up?

JA: We went all over. My one brother-in-law loved to fish, so we'd just go anywhere there was a river. We'd go fishing up by Pine View in Croydon, over at Willard Bay, and just any place we could find fish. And he also hunted. When I got older, we hunted a lot together.

TF: Before we talk about some of the things you liked to do outdoors with your friends, do you remember anything about the tub in your unit? I've heard a few stories about the cement bathtubs.

JA: Oh, yeah. The water got cold really fast in the winter. So we had to get in and out fast. My mom would usually put us into the tub in batches of four. Four would get in, then get out, then four more would get in. And she'd change the water for four more of us.

TF: I'm guessing those were really quick baths! (laughs) So by the time you lived in Verdeland Park, did you have a refrigerator, or was it still an ice box?

JA: We had a refrigerator.

TF: Okay. Tell me about some of the activities you used to do outside with your brothers. Did you play in The Hollow?

JA: Yeah. It was right next to our home, so we played there a lot. That's actually where we played most of the time. We'd play Army, and build forts, and things like that.

TF: Did you ever build tree houses?

JA: My brothers and I never did. I had an older brother who fell out of a tree and broke his neck a couple years before I was born. So, we weren't allowed to climb trees at all. If we got off the ground at all in a tree, my mom would come unglued. (laughs)

TF: When he broke his neck did that affect him, mobility-wise?

JA: He died.

TF: Oh my gosh. Yeah, I can see why your mom didn't allow you to climb trees.

JA: Right.

TF: Well, what were some of the other things that you enjoy doing outside, besides playing in The Hollow?

JA: Well, we were allowed to play outside until after dark. It wasn't like it is today. You didn't worry about kidnapped, especially in a neighborhood like ours, because everybody knew everybody else. And we played lots of games like tag, hide and seek, and kick the can. All summer long, we'd play until 10:00 or 11:00 at night.

TF: I miss doing things like that. I think my generation was kind of the tail end of playing night games. I grew up in the '80s.

JA: Yeah, they can't do that much anymore.

TF: No. Is there anything else that sticks out to you about your childhood?

JA: Well, there were a couple of places there where people built their own fire pits, and my brothers and I would go out there sometimes to make hot dogs. And we'd be out there with 20 to 30 people.

TF: Fire pits are always fun.

JA: They are.

TF: Do you remember your other teachers' names at Verdeland Park Elementary?

JA: In second grade, I had Mr. Evans, and at the end of the year, I got the best report card in the whole school. So, I was walking home, and everybody was stopping me, wanting to look at my report card. I wish my mom would have saved it; but I was really proud of that.

TF: That is definitely something to be proud of. And did you have lunch in your classroom?

Or did Verdeland Park have a lunchroom?

JA: Well, they had a serving room, and we'd go down the hall with our trays to get our food, then we'd go to our desks and eat.

TF: And you moved out of Verdeland Park when you were in second grade?

JA: Yeah. That was in '66.

TF: Okay. I think by that point, they were starting to move units out, is that correct? It seems like the city bought the property in '62 to build the high school.

JA: Yes. And I was one of the ones who helped make Layton Commons Park, where Verdeland Park once was.

TF: Oh, really? Tell me more about that.

JA: I started working for the city back in '78 or '79 in the Parks Department, and they were making a park around there. And by that point, there was only a couple Verdeland Park houses left; I don't remember what the city was using them for. But we ended up moving those out too. The city had already sold a bunch of them off. Some people bought them and made them into cabins. In fact, the guy I worked for over in the shop when I started had one of them over in Kamas. He put it there to stay in when he went hunting. And I knew a couple other people who bought them and took them up there as well.

They built the units in sections, so you could take them apart and move them really easy. I don't remember if they were originally built for soldiers coming back from the war or what, but I think that's what I heard—that they were low-income housing for soldiers coming back from WWII.

TF: Tell me about the process of turning the area that used to be Verdeland Park into Layton Commons Park.

JA: Well, we moved the houses out, we went in and cut some trees down, and we hauled a lot of dirt. We also modified the creek going through The Hollow, so it would be nice and pretty and straight. In some places, it would flood out, and it was really swampy, but we cleaned that stuff up and hauled a lot of dirt in, and we just built the park. We did a lot of tractor work, and that took quite a while; but the city offices were built there, and we were working on the area behind and

beside that. We extended the park clear down by the library. Nothing on that side was done when I started. Or maybe it was in the process, but it wasn't finished.

TF: When you moved back to Layton when you were younger, did you attend Layton High School?

JA: Yeah.

TF: Where did you move when you left Verdeland Park?

JA: We moved to Ogden, and then we came back to Layton about halfway through my seventh grade year.

TF: What part of Layton did you move to when you came back?

JA: We moved up on Hill Field Rd, right by the mall, and I went to Central Junior High.

TF: Do you remember anything about the canteen at Central? I heard it mentioned yesterday on Facebook.

JA: Yeah. I remember two of my friends breaking into it and stealing some candy. (laughs) But we used to go down there and get in line at lunch time, and we'd buy candy.

TF: There was also some discussion on Facebook about there being an archery range, or a bunker by Central, and there was some debate as to whether or not those were in the same building as the school itself.

JA: There was an armory there, but I don't remember a shooting range. The canteen was down in the basement of the school, and there were some other rooms down there, but I don't know if there was an archery range. Back in those days, they didn't mind having archery ranges in schools. (laughs)

TF: Right. I guess that's changed a little bit. Tell me some of your memories about winters when you were growing up.

JA: I remember it would snow a lot. I don't remember ever getting out of school for a snow day, but I remember walking to school and grabbing onto the bumpers of cars when they would pass. We'd try to slide down the road, and half the people would get out and scream at us, and the other half would just pull us as far as we wanted to go. (laughs) We did that all the time.

It was fun because there was a lot of snow then. I live in Central Utah now, and there's hardly any snow here. I moved here with a plow and a big snow blower, but I sold them the second year I was here, because I never used them. I mainly just use a broom to sweep the snow off my driveway.

TF: Yeah. We've wondered about buying a snowblower in the past, but we've never gotten one, because there hasn't been enough snow.

JA: Do you live in Layton?

TF: Yeah, about a block east of the high school.

JA: You buy one because you need it, and when you need it, they sell out in about two days.

TF: Yep, that's usually how it works.

JA: I see that happen all the time.

TF: I grew up in Cache Valley, and I miss all the snow we used to get. Whenever it snows here, I hope we'll get a lot, but we never do, compared to what it was like growing up in Cache Valley.

JA: When you shovel your driveway, as you're facing the road, you should always put all of the snow on the right-hand side.

TF: Oh, because of the snowplows?

JA: Yeah. If you put it on the left side, the snowplow will put it all right back on the right side. It always does. I've told a million people that over the years. When I'd drive around and

plow, they'd cuss and yell me, and I'd just say, "If you put that there, you're going to have it right back anyway. (laughs)

TF: Do you remember anything about the diversity in Layton when you were growing up? People have told me it was quite different from places like Kaysville, and I've heard a lot about the diversity in Verdeland Park.

JA: There were a lot of Black families there, and there were Hispanic families. I'm half Hispanic, but ... I don't know. It just didn't seem to make any difference. We just played with everyone when we were kids. My best friend in kindergarten was a black kid named George Newby. He lived a court or two away from us in Verdeland Park. But when I was little, that's just the way it was. That stuff didn't matter to me.

TF: I've heard people who attended Layton High say they enjoyed it because of the diversity, versus some places like Davis High that was more white. Do you remember diversity sticking out to you more when you were older, or not really?

JA: Well, I don't remember any problems with it. I mean, there were some kids I didn't get along with, but for me, it wasn't tied to race.

TF: That's cool. What are some of your memories of going to Layton High?

JA: It was a pretty good school. I really liked it. There was a small orchard across the street from the school where some kids would go to smoke. And what else? Sometimes my friends and I would go hang out at the football field at night. And some of the kids had cars, although I never did. But some of them did, and we'd go hang out with them sometimes.

Melvin Manning was the principal when I was there, and a lot of guys didn't like him, because he did his job really well. I got expelled a couple times. (laughs) But it was fun. I really liked it there. The teachers were good.

TF: Did you play sports growing up?

JA: I didn't.

TF: Okay. And this was probably before your time, but do you have any memories of the Bamberger?

JA: I don't, but I lived down on Fort Lane, and there was a hill in my backyard that the Bamberger used to run on. And one time when I was digging around, I found some wheels that belonged to some of the Bamberger cars. I didn't know what the Bamberger was until I found those, and I figured out that's what they had to be from.

TF: Do you have any memories of Main Street—like the stores you used to go to?

JA: Yeah, I used to go to Kowley Drug. I remember I'd just started working for the city when Kowley Drug got robbed. I think there were two or three guys holding hostages, and we were all across the street.

And I remember when that oil place over there caught on fire and burned. There was a big gas truck full of fuel that caught on fire, and it almost burned the whole place down. We were probably way too close when that happened.

There, also used to be a Chinese restaurant down there, and there were a couple of them in Fort Lane Shopping Center that we used to go to too.

TF: Did you ever go to, like, Sills Cafe?

JA: Yeah, we went there a lot. I went to school with Kim Sill. When I worked for the city, we'd go in there for a break every day. But when we were high school kids, we'd sometimes go there, because you go there and drink a cup of coffee for four hours. Nobody ever came to check on you, to see whether you were supposed to be in school. (laughs)

TF: So *that* was the place to be. (laughs) Do you remember who any of your neighbors were in Verdeland Park?

JA: I remember the Arandas. Jesse and Peggy Aranda were the parents. And there were some Romeros that lived there as well—Ernie Romero. I could remember a lot of them if I wasn't trying to think about it, but now I'm drawing a blank. Don't get old. (laughs)

But I still have my first-grade picture with Miss Price, and I can still name half of those kids.

TF: That's cool. Do you have any memories of the 4th of July?

JA: Not especially. They had some fireworks we'd always watch, but that's about all I remember.

TF: Tell me about working for the city. You worked for the city for 36 years. Tell me any memories you have from that.

JA: I started there mowing lawns, but I was also a mechanic before that, so they had me fixing stuff like lawnmowers, and trucks in the Parks Department. And then, they had an opening in the public works for a mechanic. So, I moved over there, and then after about ten years, my boss retired as the shop foreman, so I took his job.

They built the new city shop up on Fort Lane, and when they built that, we moved over there—the water department, the street department, and the sign department, the sewer department, and the mechanic shop. And when I moved up there, they made the position of fleet manager, so then I took that job. And I also worked for a few years at the Ogden City Police Department as a reserve patrolman. So, I was doing two jobs. But working for Layton City was good work. I really enjoyed it.

TF: Do you have any memories of working for the Ogden Police Department?

JA: Oh yeah. That was a fun job. (laughs)

TF: How did Layton City change over the time that you worked there?

JA: Well, when I first started there, the pay was really low, but the benefits were always good. But they would go statewide and look at the highest paid cities and lowest paid, and by the time I had worked there for about 20 years, Layton City actually ended up doing really well, as far as pay, when compared with other cities in the state. But probably in the last six to eight years, it really dropped. At least it had the last time I was there—I haven't been there for ten years—but we hardly got any pay raises, so we lost a lot of good people who went to work for other cities.

One of the workers we lost actually made more at Kaysville City than he was making at Layton City, and he was doing the same job. I'm not sure what happened there, but I was close to retiring, so I don't want to complain too much. It was just time to retire.

TF: Yep. Just wash your hands and be done. Well, do you feel like Layton City was a good place to raise kids?

JA: Oh yeah, it was a great place to raise kids. Back then, there weren't many people there; but by the time I retired, I think there were around 75 or 79,000. And there are probably more than that today. But yeah, it was a good place to raise kids.

TF: When you retired, what took you to Central UT?

JA: I'm a firearms instructor, so I train people in shooting. We also ride ATVs down here, and we can do that just out of our driveway. I have some property in Morgan where we can ride ATVs and shoot as well, but we have to load up our trailer and go up there for the weekend. But here, I can just take off out of the yard, then come home and get in the hot tub, and that's much better for retirement.

When I used to work in Ogden, there were all the gangs, and graffiti, and stuff like that. My wife worked there with me too, and we just decided we didn't want to be around that stuff anymore—that when we retired, we wanted to be out where it was quiet. When I was in Ogden, I actually worked gangs for a couple years, and I just wanted to get away from that stuff. I wanted to be done.

But for about five years, I also used to take proctor kids—troubled teenagers—and have them come stay with me. That worked out really well. A lot of them still keep in touch with me.

TF: It's really good when they have a mentor in their lives. Well, I think that's all the questions that I had. Is there anything that we haven't covered in the interview that you would like to include?

JA: No, I think we're good. And if you have any other questions, you're welcome to call back. (Tori and Jack discuss putting a digital photo of his second grade class online)

Well, I really appreciate you taking time to do the interview today. It was really fun talking to you.

JA: Well, thank you very much. I'm glad you're doing this stuff. It brought back a lot of memories.

TF: Thank you for sharing your stories and memories with me. I really appreciate it. Have a great day.