**Kristine Murdock**

**Layton, UT**

**An Interview by**

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**Layton City**
**and**
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**MY NAME IS TORI FAIRBANKS, AND I AM HERE WITH KRISTINE MURDOCK AT THE LAYTON HERITAGE MUSEUM IN LAYTON, UT. TODAY IS TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14TH, 2023, AND I AM INERVIEWING KRIS FOR THE VERDELAND PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.**

**TF:** Tell me about growing up in Kaysville.

**KM:** Well, I did grow up in Kaysville; however, I got a bicycle around 1960 when I was about ten, so I started venturing into the next town over, which was Layton, where there happened to be cute boys. So my friends and I went to Layton a lot. And once they built the Fort Lane Shopping Center in '62 or '63, it was game on, with all the time we spent at Layton Drug.

But right across from there was Verdeland Park, and although I didn't know a lot of kids who lived in Layton at the time, I did know some who had moved from Verdeland Park to Kaysville, and they would tell me stories about how diverse Verdeland Park was, and how it was like this big, happy family. And the people there were from all over. They had different backgrounds and different religions, which is something you never saw in Kaysville.

So to me, Verdeland Park was fascinating, and that's why I thought I wanted to live there. But my dad told me how lucky I was that I didn't live there, because it was a government housing project; but I never saw it that way—ever. I guess I saw it with romantic eyes. I know the homes weren't really nice inside, but all the kids were always outside, and they were always having so much fun. And to this day, they all have all these wonderful stories that all center around Verdeland Park. They can tell you exactly which court they lived in, like J-Court, or C-Court, or whatever. So I always thought it would be neat to live in a court, even though I didn't really know what a court was. (laughs)

**TF:** What kinds of stories did they tell you about Verdeland Park?

**KM:** Well apparently—and I'm assuming this was at the same pond in Layton Commons Park where the ducks are now—a lot of activities and fun things happened around that pond after dark. Back in those days, you didn't have to come home until nine or ten o'clock at night. Your parents did not want to see you during the summer, from sun-up to sundown, even in Kaysville. You could go home for lunch if you got hungry, but otherwise, they wanted you out of the house.

We did a lot of fun stuff, but we didn't really cause any trouble that I know of. I'm sure there were a couple of kids who were troublemakers or bullies, but we just rode our bicycles everywhere, because bicycles were the thing. But I always thought it was interesting that the units at Verdeland Park were different colors. They were all faded-looking, but some were pink, some were a turquoise color, and some were a yellowish-gold—you know, all the '50s colors. I was like, "I want to live in a pink one." (laughs)

**TF:** So you really wanted to live in Verdeland Park?

**KM:** I did. When I was a kid, I asked my dad several times, "Why can't we live in Verdeland Park?" And he would say, "Consider yourself lucky that you don't." (laughs) And I think I might have already mentioned it, but when everyone started moving out of Verdeland Park, they built Wasatch Heights subdivision right up here, with the little flat-top, brick homes. So, people were moving out of Verdeland park and upgrading so they could get their "forever homes."

At the same time, a new subdivision in Kayesville was being built just down the street from where I grew up, and it was called Happy Homes. So then I got on the bandwagon and started saying to my dad, "Forget Verdeland Park—I already know I'm not going to live there. But why can't we live in Happy Homes?" And he said, "Kristine, we're not moving to Happy Homes. We're going to stay miserable right where we are." (laughs)

**TF:** He actually said that? (laughs)

**KM:** Yes. My dad had a fun sense of humor.

**TF:** What was the draw for you, with Verdeland Park? Why did you want to live there?

**KM:** It was so different. It wasn't anything like anything I'd ever seen before. There were people were from different backgrounds, and it wasn't like that in Kaysville. Everybody was the same. And I was always kind of a rebel. My mother would say, "Don't go to Verdeland Park. There are all kinds of people over there who aren't 'our type.'" But that made me want to go even more. And that's where I found several of my Hispanic friends that I still love to this day, like Charlie Garcia, and Floyd Trujillo. I would've eventually met them at Davis High School, but because I had my bike and I went to Verdeland Park, I was able to meet them before high school. So I would go around looking for kids who looked and acted different than me, because I wanted to know about them and their differences.

And there were also a few Black families I thought were really nice as well. There was one particular family, the Spinks, who were very athletic. They had a lot of kids, especially boys, and they were all really nice. There were twins, Irven and Iven, who were a year older than I was.

In '61, '62, the Spinks family wanted to move out of Verdeland Park, and there was a duplex that became available for rent in Kaysville, just a block from my parents' home. Well, word got around Kaysville that the Spinks family was going to move in, and there was a petition that went around saying they didn't want the Spinks to move in, and everyone was signing it. And I just remember thinking it was so sad. I tried to put myself in their shoes, and I would be crushed if my friends didn't want me to live by them. But I guess it was a big deal for people in Kaysville, so the Spinks family ended up staying in Layton.

**TF:** The Tuckers, another Black family I interviewed earlier, actually dealt with the same thing in Layton.

**KM:** In Layton? Really?

**TF:** Yeah.

**KM:** Wow.

**TF:** There was a petition that went around the neighborhood they moved into, and I think only a couple families refused to sign it. So, the same thing went on here.

**KM:** I think it was such a big deal to some people back then. I mean, as a little kid, you don't really understand what's going on, but as you get a little older and you realize what's going on … it reminds me of an old western movie I watched where they were driving people out of town on a rope, at the end of a horse. It was such a vigilante mentality.

**TF:** So the sentiment your parents had was, "Don't go to Verdeland Park, because it's a bad place."

**KM:** Verdeland Park was a bad place to them. My dad actually worked at Hill Field with all these same people, but he didn't get along with them, I guess—I don't know. But anyway, Verdeland Park was just part of a world that I never got to be a part of. I just feel like I missed something, and I don't even know what I missed. It was like a whole era.

**TF:** Did you see your parents' sentiment towards Verdeland Park shared by other families or your friends?

**KM:** Yes. In fact, my friend Vicki, who moved in next door to us from Verdeland Park when she was about five …my parents knew that her family came from Verdeland Park, and they told us we shouldn't play with them. Well, it was mostly my mother who said that. It was like she thought we shouldn't play with them because they weren't as good as us—because they'd lived

in Verdeland Park. That was the impression I got as a kid. But that just made me want to go play with them more. And I will tell you, to this day, Vicki Lynn and I are besties. Her family was so kind and nice.

**TF:** Do you think that sentiment existed because some people from Verdeland Park didn't belong to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints? Or was it maybe because they weren't as well off, economically?

**KM:** I don't know. I mean, most of the people I knew in Kaysville—the dads especially—worked at Hill Field, so they were in the same boat as people who lived in Verdeland Park, except they were born and raised in this area. So, they already had family to live with while they tried to find a home of their own. But if you came from out of state to work at Hill Field, where were you supposed to live, especially right after the war when there was a shortage of everything?

When my parents were first married and my dad got out of the war, places to live were so scarce that they had to live in a converted chicken coop, right off of Main Street in Kaysville. So they were almost, like, a step down from people in Verdeland Park. After the war, people were trying to live anywhere they could. So I would say that Verdeland Park people were doing pretty good at that time.

**TF:** I've heard the sentiment that maybe people who lived on farms in Layton and saw themselves as hardworking individuals didn't like the kids from Verdeland Park, because they all just ran free and got to do whatever they wanted. That kids in Verdeland Park weren't viewed as disciplined and hard working.

**KM:** Like they didn't have work ethic?

**TF:** Yeah.

**KM:** So maybe Verdeland Park was seen as a larger, city-type environment where kids grew up on the street. I can see that. And I think that was my big draw—I just liked to run free.

**TF:** What was it like to grow up in an area where so many people were employed by the government, and so many people you knew were tied to the military? Do you think that was a unique environment to grow up in?

**KM:** Since I didn't know anything else, I would say yes. I think almost every dad in my neighborhood worked in Hill Field. And when I became a teenager, the moms started working there too. It was like the place to be, and the place to work. It was like, "You don't work at Hill Field? You work at the bank? Oh yeah, I guess there is a bank here." (laughs) And then most of the kids I grew up with worked at Hill as well. It was like a generational thing. But I never worked there because I wanted to be different. I got a job at the phone company instead. (laughs)

**TF:** What did your dad do at Hill?

**KM:** That's a good question. If you asked him, he'd say he drank coffee all day behind my mom's back, pushed paper around, and got paid a lot of money to do it. And he'd say that's what everybody else at Hill Field did as well. (laughs) I don't remember his exact title, but I do know he worked behind a desk, and he did not like any of the bosses, because they did even less than he did. I remember at dinner time, he would always vent. He would be so stressed out from work—and drinking coffee behind my mom's back so she wouldn't know—(laughs) But he just always wanted to vent at dinner, so we had to hear about his bosses, and how awful they were.

I'll tell you a story—and I truly believed this when I was a kid—we would go to Heber City a lot, because that's where my parents grew up. Well, we'd get to Parley's Canyon, and there would be a truck pulling some random horse trailer in front of us, and my dad would say [jokingly], "I can't believe my boss is always in front of us, every time we go to Heber." And I

thought, "What a coincidence!" I thought that for several years until I realized that I was looking at the backside of a horse trailer, and my dad was trying to tell me that his boss was a horse's behind. (laughs) I really fell for that at first. I just thought, "That's amazing. He must be from Heber too." (laughs)

**TF:** Tell me about your first and second husbands. They were both in the military, is that correct?

**KM:** Right. My first husband, Alan McCallum, went to Vietnam, because it was during the lottery. All of my friends were panicked, because if your number came up, then you went into the Army, then you went to Vietnam. Well, Alan's family had always been Navy, and he thought his chances of not getting drafted probably weren't that great, so he enlisted in the Navy. When you go into the Navy, you go to boot camp and, depending on how well you score on your test, you find out what your actual job will be. Well, he got very high scores, so he got to be an electronics technician.

He served on two different aircraft carriers: the USS Oriskany during his first cruise, then the USS Constellation on his second. and they were both in the Tonkin Gulf. During his first cruise, he did go off-ship and spent most of that time in Da Nang at the airbase, jamming radar on the airplane.

My second husband was a little older. He was in Vietnam in '66 or '67, and he was in the Marine Corps. He was right by the DMZ, and he was a tank gunner. He saw a lot of people get killed, and he was hit as well. He was awarded two Purple Hearts. He was a big, tough Marine. But when he came home, he still wanted to do that same type of work, so he started working for the Montezuma County Sheriff's Department. He was a cop and a detective for many, many years.

Alan, on the other hand, went to work at Hill Field when he got back from Vietnam. He used a VA loan to go to college, got a degree in chemistry, and became a chemist on Base. So he made pretty good money.

**TF:** How did serving in Vietnam affect both of them?

**KM:** They both had PTSD, Larry especially. It totally changed both of them.

**TF:** Was PTSD recognized at that time?

**KM:** No. And I knew something was wrong when Alan came home after his first cruise in Da Nang. He wasn't the same person I married. He was never his jovial self after that. I didn't meet Larry until later in life, when PTSD was finally a recognized condition. But both he and Alan were diagnosed with it and were on 100% disability.

**TF:** I know you lost at least one classmate, Kenny Eckman, in Vietnam. Were there any others?

**KM:** Well, Kenny was the only one who was actually in our class; however, being the historian for our Davis High class of '68, I decided that I wanted to hear everyone's stories, and get photos, and everything like that. It was a three-year project. I went around and talked to all the guys from my class, and I got both horrific and wonderful stories. And that's when I found out what all those young boys with sweet, innocent faces in our Davis High yearbook really went through. They experienced some horrific things.

**TF:** Tell me a little about Kenny.

**KM:** Kenny was such a nice guy, and he was quiet. He grew up in Layton, so I didn't know him as well as I would have, had he grown up in Kaysville. But I met him at Davis High School, and I remember that he didn't come from a rich family. He got a new coat for Christmas one year, and he was really excited about it. But there was another guy at school who everybody

knew was poor, and Kenny gave him his coat. His mom was not happy about it, but once she realized why he gave his Christmas present away … well, everyone thought that was nice of him. But that's the kind of guy he was.

He also had a girlfriend, and he would have done anything for her. He was a sweetheart, and he was such a small guy. It's still so hard for me to even picture him over there. His parents told me that he was KIA [killed in action], and they were going to ship his body back, but they couldn't find it at first. Well, Kenny's dad, Joe, worked at the base, and he had some connections. So, he raised a big ruckus. Like, "Where is my son's body?"

It took several weeks, but they finally found his body, along with several other GIs, just sitting on a platform in a warehouse, kind of lost, I guess. So his body was brought back. But anyway, his full name was Kenneth Wayne Ekman, but he liked to be called Kenny.

**TF:** How old was he when he was killed?

**KM:** He was born in 1949 or '50, so he was just 18, because he quit school to join. He volunteered to go to Vietnam, and he was killed in July of 1968, right after our class graduated in May. He left school a little early, joined the Army, and was already grown up before we even walked for graduation, wearing our caps and gowns. He was really young. He was just one of so many sad stories.

**TF:** Well, one more thing I wanted to ask: was it hard growing up in Kaysville, where everybody belonged to the same church, and everybody seemed the same?

**KM:** To me it was, because I was a kind of a rebel. If I was a follower and bought into whatever I was told, it would've been easier, but I started asking questions way too early, and I wasn't getting the answers I really wanted. My father was a huge coffee drinker, and my mother didn't know. She would say that anyone who drank coffee was evil—that they didn't know what

they were doing. So my dad bought my silence with candy bars. I thought my dad was a good guy, but he drank coffee, so I was very conflicted. And this was right before I was baptized when I was eight, when I was told that everything I did was going to be recorded. I can still remember thinking, "I'm going to start getting black marks in heaven. As soon as I take this plunge into the water, it's going to be one, two, three, four. Kristine's got black marks everywhere."

So I went next door to Vicki Lynn's house, because her parents drank coffee, and I said, "Vicki Lynn, pour me a cup of coffee." (laughs) I had my first cup of coffee at the age of seven, because I didn't want it held against me after I got baptized.

I thought the LDS Church was very good, though, as far as the family values, and I loved all the fun stuff we got to do in primary and mutual. I'm a good, honest person. They did teach me a lot of good values. But my mother just didn't want me to do anything different than what the church taught. And the thing about my mother—bless her heart—her personality was black and white. She had zero gray. It was either right, or it was wrong. There wasn't anything in between, and I always thought that was very sad.

I had a friend named Mary Romero, and my mother didn't want me to play with her, because she was not LDS. She went to the Catholic church, and she wasn't white. But the Romero family was the nicest family you'd ever meet, so I never understood why my mom forbade me to go inside Mary's house. I went inside her house by the way—I just never told my mom. (laughs)

But it was things like that that bothered me, because I would say, "I want to like everybody unless they give me a reason not to. It doesn't matter what their background is." But that wasn't the way my mother was brought up. She was raised to believe that you just don't associate with people who are different than you.

My dad was a lot more liberal. He would say, "Just go do it, but don't tell your mother." (laughs) I was a daddy's girl, if you haven't figured that out yet. I mean, I *was* the only girl … (laughs)

But anyway, I'm sorry I didn't actually live in Verdeland Park, and that I couldn't tell you more. I do have friends who lived there, so I'm going to call them and see if I can get them to talk to you. (Kris and Tori discuss more people to interview, recording stops)