

Melba Meacham Ortiz

Layton, UT

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, TODAY IS WEDNESDAY, MAY 15TH, 2024. MY NAME IS TORI FAIRBANKS, AND JOINING ME TODAY ARE MELBA MEACHAM ORTIZ, AND HER DAUGHTER, WENDY ORTIZ. WE ARE AT THEIR HOME IN SYRACUSE, UT, AND I AM INTERVIEWING THEM FOR THE VERDELAND PARK ORAL HISTORY PROJECT.

TF: Thank you for joining me today. Before we start, I just want to be sure that I have your okay to record this interview.

MO: Yeah.

TF: Great. Could you start out by telling me your full name, when and where you were born, and also your parents' names?

MO: My name is Melba Meacham, and my married name is Ortiz. I was born in Rock Springs, WY, and I lived there until I was about six or seven. Then, we moved to Nebraska, because my dad lost his job because of WWII. It was the very tail end of The Depression, so we moved to Nebraska, and from there, we moved to Bountiful, UT. We lived there for about a year and a half, then we moved to Verdeland Park.

TF: What year were you born?

MO: 1935.

TF: And what were your parents' names?

MO: Clarence Meacham and Jeanette Putnam Meacham.

TF: And were they from Utah?

MO: My mother was born up in Woodruff, UT, and my dad was born in Logan, UT.

TF: I'm from Cache Valley. It's a good place. Is this a picture of them? (points to a picture on the wall)

MO: No, that's my husband and I.

WO: (pointing to a different picture) These are her parents here, and this is when they were younger.

TF: Okay. What did your dad do in Rock Springs before you moved to Nebraska?

MO: He worked in a furniture store doing upholstery.

TF: Okay. Then you moved to Nebraska, Bountiful, and then Verdeland Park after that. Did you move to Verdeland Park because your dad got a job at Hill Field?

MO: Yeah.

TF: What did he do there?

MO: I believe he was a preservation packer.

TF: What is that? Do you know what it involved?

MO: I think what he did was preserve parts for airplanes, and I think they were preserved by the way they were packaged. But I think he was on the Base first, then he went to the Navy Depot in Clearfield. And I think that's where he retired from.

TF: What did your mom do? Did she stay at home?

MO: Yes.

TF: How many brothers and sisters did you have?

MO: There were seven of us, and my mom's last pregnancy was twins.

TF: And where did you fit in?

MO: I'm the oldest.

TF: How many girls and how many boys were in your family?

MO: There were two boys and five girls.

TF: What are some of your memories as a child before you moved to Verdeland Park? What were some of the things you enjoyed doing while you were growing up?

MO: Well, I don't remember too much about Rock Springs, but in Nebraska, we used to walk from our house to school every day. We did that in Rock Springs too. There was great big river that went down past where we lived, and there was a bridge that went over that river that we would cross on our way to school.

WO: Did you go to a one-room schoolhouse?

MO: No, it was a regular schoolhouse with different grades in it. But the place I remember most is Verdeland Park, because when we moved there, I was ten. And you'll see in those pictures, but the lanes between the houses were really wide, and we used to play Andy-I-Over the House, and all the different games like Red Rover. And we played softball. Someone would hit balls up into the air, and it seemed like they would hit 500 balls before you could have your own turn at bat. But we just did kid stuff like that.

TF: Somebody else I interviewed said that all they had to do was go out the front door of their house with a baseball and a mitt, and within a couple minutes, they had a baseball game going. Is that how it was for you as well?

MO: Yeah. Well, the only baseball diamond they had at that time was down at Layton Elementary, and we used to play softball a lot at the diamond behind the school.

WO: So, you guys would walk from Verland Park all the way over to Layton Elementary?

MO: Yeah, sometimes.

WO: Wow.

TF: So, you were ten years old when you moved. Was that in 1945?

MO: Yeah.

WO: When we were looking at pictures, I thought you said it was 1946 or '47, it was probably 1945 or '46. I think you were probably ten when you moved, but you were turning eleven. So, I think it was probably in 1946.

TF: Melba, do you remember the winter of 1948? That was probably when you were twelve or thirteen.

MO: Well, I remember we'd walk along where the sidewalk was supposed to be, and all the snow from the street was pushed up against everyone's mailboxes like this on the side of the street, and there was only about this much space between the mailboxes and where the snow went down, where you were supposed to walk. It was awful. And every car that went up the streets in Verdeland Park left tracks, and if you got stuck in those tracks, you were locked in. You couldn't get out! (everyone laughs) The ice would freeze in those tracks, and they just became ruts.

TF: Did they clear the streets during that time?

MO: I think they used some kind of bulldozer or something, and they just ran it up and down the street, so it was clear enough for you to drive on. But they never cleared it down to the pavement. But anyway, our school was over where the Layton City pool is now.

TF: Did they ever cancel school when the snow was really bad?

MO: I don't remember it ever being cancelled. We just had to trudge through the snow. (laughs) We had to be careful as kids. Sometimes, the snow came up to our knees.

TF: I'll bet. Well, going back a little bit, do you remember what Verdeland Park was like when you moved there? Was it a place you were happy to move to?

MO: Since we'd already moved so many times, by the time we moved there, I don't think it really phased me, even when we had to walk everywhere. When my mother had the twins, my

parents got an extra big baby buggy, and that's what we brought our groceries home in. We'd take the buggy down to the store and fill it up, because we only had one car, and my father used that to get to work. So, we walked everywhere.

TF: Do you remember the name of the grocery store?

MO: Well, as you come down off the bridge, there were couple of small places, and a home right next to it them. Well, there was a little mom and pops grocery store there, and that's where we bought our groceries.

WO: Which bridge are you talking about?

MO: The one that goes over the freeway.

WO: Oh, where they used to have Kings, and the drug store, and all that?

MO: No, not on that street.

WO: Which one are you talking about then?

MO: Where the White Church used to be, you'd come straight up past it. And now, the freeway is there underneath.

WO: Oh, on Gentile.

TF: Yeah, the one that goes over to Main Street.

WO: So you would go over to Main Street. Was the mom and pops store on Main Street?

MO: No, it was back this way.

WO: Oh, it was on the east side of the bridge.

MO: Yeah, before you go over the bridge.

TF: I've heard a few stories mentioned about Adams Market, and Kowley Drug.

MO: Yeah, those were on Main Street too. I do remember Kowley Drug. At one time, right there where the light is, there was kind of a place for teenagers where you could get a malt, and ... what would you call a place like that?

TF: Like a soda fountain?

WO: Yeah. It became Dee's, and now it's Pace's.

MO: No, it wasn't that far. It was right there where the light is on that corner.

WO: But that's kind of where you're talking about, right across the street from where the White Chapel is.

TF: Was it kind of like a drive-in, or was it more of a like a drugstore?

MO: It was kind of like a drugstore with a soda fountain. It was right here, and then Kowley Drug was down on Main Street, going that way. But I remember walking down to that soda fountain place. I can't think of its name. But we did a lot of walking, and we'd go in that place sometimes. But then an optometrist moved in there, and that's where we had our eyes checked, and got our glasses, and everything like that later on in life.

WO: I remember the optometrist that we went to was over by where Layton Parkway is, not by Gentile.

MO: At first, it was on Gentile, then it moved over there.

TF: While we're kind of on the subject of groceries, do you remember if different trucks would drive through Verdeland Park, like with vegetables, or fruit? Or do you remember an ice man?

WO: Oh, tell her about the Bamberger. You used to take that all the time.

MO: Yes. Where the freeway is now is where the Bamberger used to be.

WO: She used to tell us stories about how every summer, Grandpa would take them on the Bamberger down to the orchards in Bountiful to pick cherries, all summer long.

MO: He had cherries from early in the season, to the very late ones, which were orbs and Lamberts. I still remember that.

WO: You'd get done picking one kind, then the other ones would be coming on. You just kept picking all summer long.

TF: Did you ever ride the Bamberger to Lagoon?

MO: I can't remember doing that, because Mother and Father didn't let us do that very often. What I remember most about the Bamberger was riding it to Bountiful to pick cherries.

TF: When you moved to Verdeland Park, did it take you very long to make friends?

MO: I was kind of older when we got there.

WO: And she was shy. She got held back in school when she was seven.

MO: I had one good friend who lived in that area, and her [last?] name was Kent. But I don't remember too many other girls, except the ones in school that were all more popular than I was.

But we walked to church, because the White Chapel was right there. A-Court went this way, and I can't remember if C-Court was on this end, but the church was over there. And then there was D-Court, and N-Court was that way. And then there was E-Court, and that court was big. Then there was G-Court.

WO: Which one did you live in?

MO: G-5

TF: Do you remember who some of your neighbors were?

MO: I don't remember specific names.

WO: Where did Phyllis live when Uncle Russell met her?

MO: She was living with her grandma.

WO: Do you remember where?

MO: I not sure, because I was married by then.

WO: Oh, I didn't realize he was that much younger than you. He said he met her when he was twelve years old while he was doing his paper route.

MO: I don't remember them being together until they got serious when they were both older. I used to have a double skirt that she wore. She gave it to me, and one side was gray-red, and when you turned it inside out, it was more red. You could wear it either way. But you know that house up on Fort Lane? You go up Fort Lane, and then you go down like that, and there's a house there. I think that's where she lived.

WO: Uncle Russell said she lived in Verdeland Park.

MO: Well, maybe she did, but I thought she lived up there, because that's where some relatives of hers lived.

WO: Didn't you tell me that the Trujillos used to live in Verdeland Park too?

MO: Yeah, they did. There were two Trujillo families that lived there. And let's see if I can think of anybody else. There was someone with the first name of Roger. What was his last name? He lived right across the street from us. There were two boys who were about the same age, and Russell played with them most of the time.

WO: If you look at this picture of when you were in sixth grade, will that help you remember some names? Here is one. Do you remember any of these kids?

MO: The Thurstons used to live there.

TF: I've heard that last name.

MO: That's my sister in the picture, and this is me.

TF: How old was she, and how old were you?

WO: They were just a year apart. My mom got held back a year in school because she was so shy. They used to do an exam at the end of the year, and they would bring the kids into the classroom and tell them to answer certain questions. But my mom was so shy that she wouldn't talk to them much. So, they thought she was behind her grade level, and they held her back a year. So, she was in the same grade as her sister, and they ended up being in the same class.

MO: But anyway, there was someone with the last name of Jensen who lived in the park, and there were LaVonne and Shirley Lougee.

TF: How do you spell that?

MO: L-O-U-G-E-E. And. There was a Jeanetta, but I can't remember her last name. She was a big girl—she was taller than me, and her hair was all the way down her back. I always liked her hair. And then, there were also the Whitesides.

WO: (shows another photo) If we turn this picture around, you have some names of the kids written on the bottom.

TF: Is this a picture of the Miss Layton Contest?

WO: No, this is a stake mutual gathering.

MO: Yeah, there were the Worthingtons ...

TF: Is it okay if I take a picture of the those names?

WO: You can definitely take a picture. That's not a problem.

MO: This is the family who lived in that little house on the corner of where I told you the grocery store was.

WO: And here, you've got the Bakers ...

MO: I don't remember them, but there were the Nebekers, and the Adams family. And have you heard the last name Schroeder?

TF: I haven't.

WO: (looks at another photo) What is this picture from?

MO: I think that's the Golden Gleaners.

WO: They used to have the Golden Gleaners in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, before it became Young Women and Young Men.

TF: I have never heard of that before. What were the Young Men called?

MO: I don't know. But this girl's last name was Rampton. And there were also the Shoals.

WO: You have all the names written down here. (Tori tells them about the museum's program to scan and digitize photos)

MO: On the back of this photo, it says, "The North Davis stake mutual gathering." And this photo shows the traveling assembly I was in when I was in River Heights and Logan.

TF: Did you live in River Heights?

MO: Yes.

TF: That's where my dad was born, and that's where he grew up. I love River Heights.

MO: I was there during my last year of school. And this is a patch from a play I was in.

TF: These are wonderful.

WO: I was scanning this before you came. I got a picture of this, because this was from when she was in fifth grade, and it was taken in front of the school. And my mom had some other pictures of when she was little bit younger. I can scan those too, because it doesn't take too long.

MO: This one is when I lived in Rock Springs in first grade, and this one is of my twin sisters. They were the last ones born—Mary and Martha. And that's me right after I got married.

TF: So, you were ten when you moved to Verdeland Park?

MO: Yes.

TF: How old were you when you were married and moved out?

MO: I got married in 1955, so I was twenty. We went to Michigan to meet his family, and then we came back and lived in G-Court. I think we lived in two and four. I can't remember for sure, but the two units faced each other. One was a two-bedroom unit, and the other was a one-bedroom.

TF: And did your family still live in Verdeland Park at that time?

MO: They did.

TF: What do you remember about the unit you grew up in?

MO: It was a three-bedroom unit, and it was small for a large family. The kitchen was in one corner up in the front, and then right here, there was a little alcove-type thing that you went through when you went into the kitchen. And the door was right here. But in the other house, it was right here. That's how close we were.

TF: Could you hear your neighbors? I've heard people say the walls were thin.

MO: Most of the time, we didn't, because we were the noisy family, living in a three-bedroom unit, and on the other end was a one-bedroom unit. So, they wouldn't have had kids like our family. We were very noisy. (laughs)

TF: How did you split the rooms if there were two boys and five girls?

MO: The boys were in the back bedroom. There was a bed and a cot in there, and one of the girls slept in that room with the two boys. Mom and Dad had the first bedroom that came out of the living room, and the bathroom was right there too. It came out of the living room. And then

there was a bedroom across from Mom and Dad's room, and that was the girls' room. There were three of us in there.

TF: Do you ever remember feeling like it was too small? Or did you just feel like that's what you knew? I've heard people say that it wasn't so bad, because they were close to their siblings in that type of environment.

MO: Yes.

TF: Did you have a fridge when you first moved in, or was it an ice box?

MO: We had an ice box.

TF: Do you remember the ice man who used to come around and deliver ice?

MO: Yes. And then after that period of my life, we put the ice box in the back room with the boys, and I remember when my brother would get mad, he'd beat up the door and poke holes in it.

But anyway, we all ate in the living room, because there wasn't enough room for us in that little dinette, or whatever it was called. So, our table was in the living room, and it went this way. So when you came in the door, you'd have to go around the table and go in the hallway, then go back.

I remember canning a lot with my mother every year in that kitchen, and it wasn't very big. (laughs) There was the stove, the sink, and the cupboards. And there was a small table she used when she made bread, and it was a little lower than the cupboards, so she could mix it easier. And on the other side was the refrigerator, and. So when we canned, we were always trying to get around each other. I remember sometimes we canned fruit into the wee hours of the morning, and that was fun.

TF: What were some of the foods you canned?

MO: Peaches, pears, and beans.

WO: She also did pickles.

MO: Yeah, she did butter pickles, and dill Pickles.

WO: And cherries.

MO: Yeah, my father loved cherries, so she'd can those, but none of us kids ever liked cherries like my dad did. They were okay fresh, but I didn't like them canned.

TF: I agree. I didn't like canned cherries much when I was growing up.

MO: We also did apricots, and while Mother was in the kitchen canning apricots, us kids would take all the nuts outside, crack them, and eat them. Apricot nuts are good. And she canned apples sometimes, and tomato juice. I can't really think of anything else; but I remember that that took up most of the summer.

TF: Did you do peas?

MO: I don't think we ever canned those. We always ate them straight out of the pod. And if my mom ever made anything with them, it was a gravy-type stuff that she'd put on mashed potatoes.

TF: Was it kind of like a white sauce?

MO: Yes.

TF: My mom used to make something like. I remember that very well. (laugh)

MO: I think my mom called it creamy vegetables.

TF: I think my mom called it our creamy peas. (laughs) It was never my favorite, but we ate it.

MO: Yeah, whatever food goes the furthest to feed you.

TF: Right. Well, that reminds me of a few other questions. Did you have a garden in your yard?

MO: No. As I remember, where we lived in Verdeland Park, we couldn't plant a garden, because of everything between the lines of houses. Some people had clotheslines or they had their cars parked there. So even when we played softball, we had to be careful where we played, just to make sure we didn't run into anything.

I remember one Halloween, I came out of the house wearing my costume and was running between our house and the next row of houses, and I forgot that somebody had a clothesline there. They had the thing that came out of the ground to hold the clothesline up, and I ran right into it. Oh, did that ever hurt!

TF: So if you didn't have gardens, did you get most of your fresh produce at the grocery store?

MO: Yeah. And Mother was always looking for farmers who were selling fruit. And if she wanted something that she could can, she would order it through people like the guy I picked cherries for. She'd order it, pay them for it, them take it home and count it. That's what she did with her peaches, pears, and apricots. She just found farmers who were selling their produce.

TF: That reminds me of another question. The ovens in the units were really small. How did your mom make it work with seven kids, cooking with that very small oven?

MO: Our oven was a little four-burner, and the burners were really close to each other. So, it didn't have that middle thing, like most do today. And it was gas. When mother was fixing meals or candy, the kids had to stay out of the house, because she did *not* want us getting underfoot!
(laughs)

WO: That would have been the stove. What about your oven underneath the stove?

MO: It was small too, but I remember that Mother used it to make six or seven loaves of bread at once.

WO: At the same time? Wow. She must have known how to put them in there just right.

MO: She did. The oven was like a square. So, she'd put four loaves in it, then she would put three loaves in square pans, the kind you'd use to make meatloaf. And she'd take them out of the oven, and we'd come home from school, and the bread was still hot.

TF: There's nothing better than hot, fresh bread with melted butter.

MO: When we got home from school, at least two loaves would disappear. (laughs)

WO: Mom used to make us homemade bread too, and it's so funny because when I was little, I was always jealous of the kids who had Wonder Bread, when I was the one who actually got homemade bread. And now, I am so jealous of everyone who gets homemade bread. (laughs) There's just nothing like homemade bread, especially when it's still warm.

TF: Right. Well Melba, tell me about the tub in your unit. Do you have any memories of the tub?

MO: It was on one side of the bathroom, close to the outside wall. And Mother would make us bathe in that tub the same way they used to, in an old barrel bucket. She would heat the water up—

WO: She actually heated the water and bring it in?

MO: No. We had heated water that we could run into the tub, but she didn't like changing the water for everybody.

WO: Oh, so literally, the "don't throw the baby out with the bathwater" idea. Now I know where the saying comes from. (laughs) They always washed the baby last, which doesn't make

sense to me, with all that we know about germs now. I mean, Dad and Mom got to go first, then all the other kids got to have the dirty water. (laughs)

MO: Yeah. But our bathroom was small.

TF: Was your bathtub made out of cement?

MO: No, it was ceramic, or something like that. And it had little legs.

TF: Okay. I always ask about the bathtub, because it seems like some people have very distinct memories of their cement bathtubs, and how they had paint them. Some people have said their tubs were like sandpaper. But then others moved in later, like in the late '50s, and their tubs were ceramic, or whatever they were made out of.

MO: I don't have any specific memories about the tub. It must have been covered with porcelain.

TF: And what color was your unit?

MO: Well, it was two different colors during the time I lived there. There was a big corporation that owned all of those, and they come in every so many years to repaint every house. But the color I remember the most was kind of a peach color.

TF: There is actually still a unit from Verdeland Park that you can see as you drive on Main Street, from Layton to Kaysville. It's in front of a trailer park, and it's that same peach color.

Tell me about playing in The Hollow.

MO: My goodness. The Hollow—

WO: I remember that. It was between Central Davis and the pool. If you went down to the pool area, there was a big field behind it, right? And you said the school was there. But The Hollow went down and came back up on the side of Central.

TF: I didn't know it went all the way to Central.

WO: But Central wasn't there at the time.

MO: Yeah, I was going to say it probably wasn't at the same time, because some parents didn't want their kids children going down there. Sometimes things happened there that weren't good. So, I just went through it.

TF: So you never played with friends there?

MO: I never played there, because I didn't want to get caught down in there. My brothers played there though.

TF: Did they get in trouble for playing there?

MO: Half the time, they just didn't tell my parents where they had been. So, Mother didn't know where they had been, and neither did my dad. And they just didn't ask. (laughs)

TF: Do you remember hearing stories of kids playing down there and getting in trouble, or anything like that?

MO: Not really. I just knew that Mom and Dad didn't like us going down there. Sometimes, you could take a little shortcut where the White Chapel was, and you'd come out right at the back of the church.

WO: Yeah. The Hollow goes along that whole area.

TF: Where were some of the other areas you would play? I've heard about a sand hill, and the field you mentioned earlier.

MO: When we lived there, Fort Lane had big irrigation ditches that were on the east side—

WO: That was before all the houses were there.

MO: Yeah, and that whole area was farmland. But we'd mostly play in the places where we were allowed to. And then, they started building all that other stuff around Verdeland Park, in

Fort Lane. George [Ronnennenkamp?] was the only one on the west side, and everything else around there was farmland.

Then on the other side, where the road comes up, that's where that green house was.

When we lived in Verdeland Park, an older lady lived there. I can't think of her name, but I used to visit teach her. She lived in one side of the house, and they made the other side of the house into a rental for families that had maybe one or two small children. That's where my brother Russell and his wife Phyllis lived when they first got married.

TF: Okay. What were some of the things you used to do during the winter? I've heard stories of kids on tubes or sleds, being pulled on a truck in the snow, and different things like that.

MO: I just remember that we mostly just played there between the houses. Sometimes we would be snowed in. But other times, we would just put the kids on the sleigh and push them around. But winter was bad. I hated winter. (laughs)

TF: Did you ever go sledding? And did you have a certain area that you liked to go?

MO: Well, I think we did when we lived in Rock Springs. I have a picture of my mother pushing us four little kids on a sled down the driveway. But I don't remember too much about winters. I just hated winter, especially the winter of '48. It was terrible.

TF: I've heard that Verdeland Park had a lot of diversity, with people of different colors, different religions, and things like that. Was that a different experience for you? Or had you experienced diversity like that before?

MO: I'd experienced being around people of color before, because the railroad ran right by our house in Rock Springs, and we had to cross the tracks, then cross the bridge to get to school. But because the railroad was right there by the river, there were a lot of hobos who had been riding the trains, and they would be hungry, so Mother would always feed them.

When we first moved into Verdeland Park, there was a Black family that lived in the unit just on the side on the other side of us, and my brother used to play with them all the time. So to me, that was just natural.

TF: Do you remember their last name by chance?

MO: No.

WO: Did this girl Josephine belong to that family?

TF: No, she was a Trujillo. They were Hispanic. Unfortunately, she passed away. Her family lived in the first house by the White Church. But Josephine's mother was like a second mother to me.

TF: I can't remember her name, but I've heard that she was just wonderful.

MO: Yeah, she was a peach. And her and her husband did a lot of missionary work.

WO: So how is Dave related to that family?

MO: He was Josephine's younger brother.

TF: Oh, that's right. Josephine came first, then Carol, then Sam. Then there was Dave and Olivia.

WO: My mom babysat them.

TF: Really? Do you have any memories of that?

MO: Well, Dave was ten years younger than me, so I was ten when he was born. And when I'd go to their house and he was still in diapers, I'd chase him around to make sure he didn't go out in the street. And I'd help Josephine. They lived on that busy corner, so you had to be careful.

WO: How old was he when he started coaching you?

MO: I don't know. Ten years younger than I was at the time. (laughs) Let's see, I was trying to remember. It was after I graduated from high school.

WO: In the earliest pictures you have of him, he looks like he's about 17 or 18 years old.

MO: It could have been before he went on his mission.

WO: So you would have been 28 or 29. It's just interesting to me you babysat him, and then later on, he ended up coaching you.

TF: Was he difficult to babysit? When I interviewed him, he said he was always running away from his dad when he got in trouble, and that that's how he got to be a really fast runner. (laughs)

MO: Well, his sisters and brother helped with him.

WO: You were just an extra person to help keep an eye on him.

MO: Yeah. And I remember Sam, his older brother, didn't look much like Dave at all.

TF: Another thing I wanted to ask was if there was much interaction between people who lived in Verdeland Park and those who didn't.

MO: I think in the beginning, when Verdeland Park was first put in, most people belonged to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, and I think there were four other wards besides the First Ward. There were the First, Second, Third, and Fourth Wards. The Second Ward was way, way down here, and the Fourth Ward was right by that elementary school. The Third Ward was up on the hill in East Layton. But because we were all in one stake, we got to know each other, because we went to meetings, and we went to this and that. I was the primary president at one time.

So, we all just pretty much knew each other until they started disbanding Verdeland Park. Then it was hard to get to know people, because different stakes formed, and took those wards.

I remember when we first moved to Verdeland Park, I used to have to go to Clearfield for stake meetings.

WO: Okay. That's why it was the North Davis stake.

MO: Yeah. I played basketball in that church there. And we also played basketball in the Third Ward building up in Cherry Hill. And I also got to know some people from going to school with them, but not a lot.

TF: Was there any interaction between people in Verdeland Park and people outside the Church? Like if you went shopping somewhere? I've heard people say that Verdeland Park was kind of its own little community.

MO: Yeah, it pretty much was.

WO: They were pretty tight knit.

MO: Once I start seeing all those faces and remembering all the families that used to live there, I remember them better. I can see people's faces, but I can't remember many names. There was a family I knew that lived in J-Court, and another family in D-Court, or something like that. But I don't remember their names.

WO: It's a lot bigger than I thought it was when I was younger.

MO: My cousin Larry Pitchford married a girl I used to tend all the time who also lived in that court. My Aunt Ellie had a place where she had pianos, and it was north of Kowley Drug. They lived in the place north of there, and I used to go and dust, mop, and clean everything after my lessons with my aunt.

But I don't remember much interaction, other than in church, and sometimes in school.

But I wasn't a busy-body. You know, my sister should be telling you all of this.

WO: (to Tori) I was just thinking you need to talk to my Uncle Russell because he probably has more stories.

MO: He used to mow lawns for people, and not just in Verdeland Park. There was one family, the Willey's, who lived down there, and he did their lawn. And there was another lady down where the wedding reception place is—the Chantilly. There was a family who lived there, and he used to go and mow their lawn too. So, he did all that, in addition to delivering all those newspapers.

WO: Yeah, and he loved to run. He told us he ran a lot.

MO: My dad was a mile-runner, so that's what Russell wanted to do too. He really liked running.

TF: Was your dad in the military?

MO: No.

TF: Okay. Tell me where G-Court was.

MO: You know where that road comes up, and then it starts to go around?

TF: Yeah, Wasatch Drive.

MO: Well, there was one little court right there, and then G-Court was right in here, where the high school is.

TF: Okay, I know where that is.

WO: That's why I always thought Verdeland Park was just where the high school was. That's what Mom always talked about, so I always thought was just there. So, as she's talking about all of these other courts now, it's like, "Gosh, it's a lot bigger than I ever thought it was."

TF: Yeah, I never realized how big it was myself until I started doing this project and actually interviewing people.

Melba, do you remember there ever being daycare there?

MO: No.

TF: Okay. I read somewhere that there was a daycare, but some people have said they don't remember that.

MO: I don't know. They could've put one in after I moved out.

TF: Yeah, I really don't know for sure either.

WO: So, you lived there when you first got married too, right?

MO: Yes. We were living there when I had the first two of you kids.

TF: Okay. Do you have any memories of the pool?

MO: Let's see. They put in the pool after they took out Verdeland Park Elementary, and it wasn't a big one.

WO: Was that the same one they have there now?

MO: No, that's the one they put in afterwards. I don't know if you remember that or not.

WO: No, I don't.

MO: The big one that's up there now ... right over where the kids play is where the smaller Verdeland Park swimming pool was.

TF: I didn't know there was a separate Verdeland Park pool.

MO: Yeah. It was there until they put the bigger one in.

TF: I had no idea there was a smaller one.

MO: And it seems like when they the big swimming pool in, they would still let families rent the little one.

WO: That's the one I'm talking about—the old one where you used to go in, and there was a little house right there. The pool was there behind it. Not the Surf and Swim, but the one that was right next to it. The one you're talking about is the old one. I don't think there was one there before that.

MO: Maybe not. But like I was saying, families or wards could rent it. And they walked in and used the pool, had barbecues, and just had fun.

WO: Did your family swim there when it first opened?

MO: I don't remember for sure. It might have already been open when we moved into Verdeland Park.

WO: I don't think it was, because you went to Verdeland Park Elementary School.

MO: Then maybe the school was in front of it.

WO: I think it must have been where the parking lot is.

MO: I could show you if we were actually there. All I know is that it was all in the same place.

WO: But you don't remember when they actually put the pool in?

MO: No, probably because I didn't swim.

WO: Oh, that's right, you didn't.

MO: I don't know about my sisters, but my brothers swam all the time. The only time I remember going swimming was when we lived in Nebraska, and I was little enough not to know that you should shut your eyes when you go under. So, I could see everything underwater. But when I got older, I couldn't do that.

TF: Do you have any memories of Riata days?

WO: She has a picture of it right here: July 4th, 1953. That's her. I think this is when she was with the other contestants for Miss Layton. They were in the parade. In fact, my mom has the newspaper article about it, and I have it scanned.

TF: Tell me about the Miss Layton contest.

MO: Well, if you wanted to be in it, you just entered. You didn't have to be elected, or anything. But I think they had a flat-bed truck to pull the float, because I remember we had to climb up to get onto it. But that was all down at Layton Elementary School.

TF: Did you go to Layton Elementary, or did you go to Verdeland Park Elementary?

MO: I went to Verdeland Park Elementary.

TF: Do you remember Ruby Price?

MO: Yes.

TF: Tell me some of your memories of her.

MO: I only interacted with her a couple times, but we just loved her. And her kids ... well, anyway, she was wonderful.

WO: Tell us about your interactions with her.

MO: Oh, I just happened to be in the same place that she was a couple times, and we just talked a little bit.

TF: Were there ever any ghost stories in Verdeland Park? Or were there ever any "scandals"? Do you remember anything like that?

WO: My mom isn't someone who gossiped. She never really got into that. So, if there was ever stuff like that going on, she probably just thought, "I don't want to be a part of it."

TF: Right.

MO: I don't remember anything like that. My sister is gone now, but she got in trouble in Verdeland Park once. There was a boy there, Jimmy Hoy. He also passed away; but his wife's name was Francine—

WO: My Uncle Don Grant was best friends with Jimmy—that's what they said at Jimmy's funeral—and he used to talk about him. There was him and Jimmy, and there was another guy.

But they were all really good friends, and Don was the one who married her sister. He's in that picture—[recording skips around, dialogue becomes unclear]

MO: But he was an airman, and he took care of the planes. But I came home one Sunday, and all those girls who are in those pictures would bring airmen to church meetings with them. Well, one of those Sundays, they asked me to sing. I sang a lot when I was younger; but my future husband saw me up there, and he told me after we were married that he told his friend, "That's the girl I'm going to marry." But he hadn't even met me yet.

WO: Tell her how you two actually met.

MO: Well, we used to have Mutual—

WO: It was like Young Men and Young Women.

TF: Right. We had that in church when I was growing up.

MO: But we played softball at Layton Elementary School, and one night after the game—all those girls played softball with me, and the guys who were tagging along decided they wanted to go up the canyon and have a weenie roast. I can't remember who I rode with to get there, but I was up there with all of them, just having fun, and then it started getting late. So, I said to some of the girls, "I need to get home. It's getting late." So, I was asking around to see if anybody could give me a ride home, and Sam volunteered, and that's how I got home. [recording pauses as equipment is fixed] But anyway, he took the other girl in the car home first, and I heard later she was really upset that he wanted to take me home last, because he wanted to find out where I lived.

WO: Because you were beautiful. Did he ask for your phone number?

MO: I don't remember that part. I just remember that when we went on our first date, my brother Russell was with us. But our relationship just grew from there, then he eventually asked me to marry him.

TF: So, was he from Michigan?

MO: His family was. His father was a minister for their church. [more dialogue becomes unclear because of technical issues]

WO: When they were ring shopping in Ogden, my dad pointed out a ring and said to my mom, "What would you do if I gave you one of those?" And she said, "Nothing, because you're not a member of the Church, and I want to get married in the temple." So that's what spurred him into investigating the Church, because he was like, "Okay, I'm going to figure out what this is all about."

My mom was so adamant about it. And who was the guy that taught him? I think it was Anaya, or something like that. Did he also live in Verdeland Park?

MO: Yes. But the thing was, when it came time for Sam to be baptized, he wasn't too sure about everything they were trying to teach him, because they spoke Spanish. Anaya was a member of the church, and I think he gave a talk that night during the night service. But Sam said, "I want to talk to him." So, we set it up, and they talked. And when he came out, he said, "Okay, I'm ready to get baptized."

The thing that was bothering him was the priesthood, because if our church was true, then that meant his father wasn't teaching the truth. But anyway, he was the only one in his family who joined the church.

TF: How did his family react when he joined?

MO: Well, at first, he told them over the phone, and they were kind of chastising him. So at first, it was kind of hard, but I always told him, "When I get to know your family, they'll accept me." And they did.

WO: One of the first times she met his parents, his father asked her all kinds of questions to find out how much she really knew. And when he found out that she really knew the Bible, then he was like, "Okay, maybe she's all right."

MO: He was like, "You understand it a little differently than I do, but you still understand it." So, we were all close when we went to visit them. I loved his mother. That's a picture of them up there on the other side. (points out a photo hanging up)

TF: Another question I had is when you moved back to Verdeland Park when you were married, was there a lot that had changed from the time you'd grown up there?

MO: Not that I can really pinpoint. It was during a period of time when you just got married, then you started having kids like everyone else. But my grandpa died during my junior year of high school, so I didn't get to graduate from Davis High. I graduated from ... what was it called?

TF: Was it South Cache in Cache Valley? My uncle might have gone there around the same time as you. His last name was Earl.

MO: [unclear] But I remember there was a Patty Earl who used to catch for me when I pitched in softball. Are you part of that Earl family?

TF: I think that's another Earl family.

MO: Okay. Her father also used to umpire for us when we played.

TF: Okay. So, were you in Verdeland Park when they started moving all the units and disbanding it?

MO: No, that was after we moved.

WO: (Gets out a school photo) Tori, would your uncle be in this picture? This was the 60th class reunion for South Cache.

TF: What year was this?

WO: I think it was in 2014?

TF: My uncle passed away before then. But I think he was probably in the class just a couple of years after your mom.

Well Melba, do you have any memories or stories about Verdeland Park, or just growing up in general?

MO: Mostly, when I think of the time when I first moved there when I was ten, up until the year before I graduated, I remember playing marbles. We used to love playing marbles. we played the game where there was a little hole here, a little hole here, and another one here, then one in the middle. And the object of the game was for you to knock them out of there. (laughs) I got to be pretty good at that, and sometimes the boys would get mad at me, because I was so good. (laughs)

WO: They were like, “Go play with the girls.” (laughs)

MO: Yeah, I was a tomboy.

TF: I love that you were a tomboy, but you still followed your parents’ rules, like not going down to the to The Hollow. (laughs)

WO: She was a very obedient child.

TF: Well, is there anything that we haven’t covered that you would like to include?

MO: I just don’t know exactly where Verdeland Park Elementary School was. I know it was around ... it went in like that, and there were some houses right there. But it had more cement in it than other buildings. And it seems like [unclear]. (recording stops)