

Oral History of
Leon Crandall

Rebecca Schade
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Leon Earl Crandall was born in Park City, Utah on October 23, 1943. He has lived in Park City, Salt Lake, Eerie Nevada, Heber City, Mountain Home Idaho, Summerville South Carolina, and Huntington Utah, where he currently lives. He is the father of three children and a grandfather of six. He served in the Air Force in Vietnam. This is his life's story.

Rebecca: Tell me about yourself.

Leon: I was named Earl after my dad and Leon after one of his friends. I've never had a nickname. My family members call me Leon, Dad, and Grandpa. I have a sense of humor. I'm a real clown. I've played a lot of jokes on people. My dad and I, I had a chance to work with my dad on the job. I worked with him at two different jobs. We worked out in uh..Just East of Calio Utah, and in Gold Hill Utah.

I feel pretty lucky to have worked with him. The best joke I ever played was on him. Him and my step-mother had come down to see me and Sharon and his grandkids. We went fishing and uh...the girls were fishing just off the bank. I didn't do a lot of fishing and my dad didn't either. We just kinda watched them and I said, "I think they rent boats on the other side of the lake, let's get one.

And he said, "O.K." So we went and got one, I didn't know a whole lot about them than he did.. I knew more no doubt. It had a steering wheel and a windshield. He wanted to drive,

the steering wheel cable was disconnected from the motor in back and that's where I sat and I said, "O.K. Sure you can drive."

So then I said, "Let me back it up to get it in reverse back here because there's no controls up there, I'll have to run the throttle from back here."

And he said, "O.K." So I backed it out of the water and I watched him. I turned the motor by hand and he started turning the wheel and I thought, "Oh boy, I got one now."

So we headed across the lake. We was carrying on a conversation. I would turn the wheel a little bit and he'd turn the wheel a little bit the opposite way, then I'd bring it back. And he really thought he was driving the boat. We got close to the other side and there was a cliff there, I throttled up as fast as it would go. It wouldn't really go very fast. But we kept getting closer and closer to the cliff and uh..he was turning the wheel and it wouldn't turn, and he said, "Somethings wrong with this, shut it off!"

And I said, "I can't, the throttle is frozen."

He said, " I can't turn it!!"

I said, " Well We're in trouble!!"

He was getting pretty excited and uh..Wegot right to the cliff and I turned the motor. He found out what I'd done. He didn't think it was very funny. I never heard my dad use language like that before, Like I say I worked with him at the mines. The last words he said to me when he got in his vehicle to go home, and I mean he went straight home, well he said, " don't tell your brothers."

I couldn't wait to get home and tell my brothers, Gene and Rodger.

He called me later that night and said, " Couldn't wait to tell them could ya?"

I said , "No!" He didn't stay mad very long, but that's one of the ones I've done.

Rebecca: What do you enjoy doing?

Leon: The activities I enjoy as an adult are uh...I like to

hunt deer and elk, fish, I have a boat, we go boating. I enjoy vacations too. Camping out, that type of thing. I don't really have a favorite anythin , I guess, I don't even have a favorite movie star. I like them all. There are a lot of things I like.. I enjoy watching 60 minutes, 20/20.

Them type of shows on T.V.. Louis Lamoure would be a favorite author. Favorite season id fall of the year.

Favorite ~~Flowers~~ is tigerlillies. Favorite color is red and orange, fall colors. Football, there are too many athletes on those teams to have a favorite. My favorite animal is the deer.

I never remember not ~~having~~ enough to eat. I like spagetti, bananas, corn chocolate, chocolate chip cookies, Bud Light, and I like Chinese food.

Rebecca: Tell me about your family.

Leon: I never knew my grandparents on my dad's side of the family. his mother passed away when he was three. An Aunt and Uncle raised him and they was pretty strict. We didn't know them very well.

I knew my grandparents on my mothers side uh...He worked in the mines in Park City. And she was a housewife. They had four kids and they lived during the depression. Things was

pretty hard for them when they was raisin their family.

My dad was raised on a farm, he didn't notice it so much. I never knew a great-grandparent. The oldest person in my family would be my grandmother. She was a good person, she never, never let anyone go without. If she could, she'd give you about everything I remember my family discussing World events, Korean War, World war II, them sort of things.

I remeber my grandad telling me to stay away from drugs and in Park City, in the 50's there was no such, no such animal there. I remembered that.

The biggest thing that this country faces now is uh.. drugs and Crime. I remember my parents, and my granparents saying that they didn't know what this generation, meaning mine, I don't know what they'd think of the one coming up now. Bigger cities, gangs. They can't seem to build prisons fast enough to let the people in

Rebecca : What was your childhood like?

Leon: I didn't like doing dishes. That was.. I didn't mind anything else, but I didn't like the dishes I used to read books about Mountain Men, Alaska, Mysteries. I had a red wagon and a bicycle.

Childhood games was hide -n- seek, kick the can, baseball, that type of thing.

Rebecca: What was school like at that time?

Leon: My school wasn' up to.. They wasn't as good as they could have been. Park City, this is before the Boom and that, and Uh.. they didn't have what they got now. The junior high and High School was the same building uh.. classes

seven to the seniors. I walked to school.

Math was probably the easiest for me. Uh.. I just had to pay attention in school and just listen and it came easy for me a lot of the things. English was my least favorite in school. Probably because I had to study, spell and that sort of thing. I didn't have a favorite teacher.

When I was there I played in band and played football a year uh.. P.E. that sort of thing

We all hung out at uh.. Pop Jinks and the Dew Drop Inn. They had, well one place had a jukebox and it was just kinda a place where all the kids hung out.

I haven't seen a lot of my classmates for a long time. They probably remember me as the kid who dropped out and enlisted. I later got my diploma through the service.

Rebecca: Did you ever go to college?

Leon: Uh.. The education, I got my diploma through the airforce.

And uh.. I went to Barber college, Utah technical College for a year. I got excellent grades. My wife's Grandad was the instructor. I would get A's on all the tests all the time and uh.. he never gave mme anything better tahn a C. One time I asked him Why and he said," because I've tarred for a lot of people and you don't even take your books home. You take your books home and I'd give you a better grade, if I knew you'd study them, but you won't" that sort of thing.

I didn't especially like school. I probably liked it best when I quit.

What I wore to school was levis, flannel shirts and red wing

boots. We lived in Park City and it was pretty snowy up there. Shoes was wet all the time. Ruined Shoes so we got boots that laced up and that's what we wore. A lot of the time the snow plow didn't plow where we was. We was the only house in the canyon so the other people got plowed out first because thats where most of the people was, where the population was.

The fads when I was a kid was wdegy shoes, Pink Narrow belts, collars turned up, Typical 50's stuff. I probably started going out with girls when I was 15.

I remember my first date. It was a girls date. A girl asked me to the dance and I went.

Rebecca: How did you start yourown family?

Leon: I knew Sharon when we was little kids. My parents and her parents were good friends, We kinda grew up together. We share the same birtheday. except she was born in '42 and I was in '43. Our first date we went riding horses, I'd known her for a longtime, like I said when we got married. I asked her to marry me and she did. I got married in 1961. In Echo Utah, The jsutice of the peace, My mother, her mother and my grandmother attended.

I was on leave from the service, we went to Salt Lake. The only way I could describe my wife, is that it's the best thing that ever happened to me. She's uh... More cheerful than I am and I admire that. She seems to have more stanima in life things that happen in Life tahn I do. This year will be 36 years next month the 19th of May. I don't know if the advice would be wise or not, but if I wsa to have a grandchild married, I would tell them to work at it, and hang in there,

and don't get discourage, I guess.

Rebecca: And the kids?

Leon: I found out that I was going to be a parent by a letter in the service. When I was there and she was in Park City.

When my son was born, they called me on the phone and told me. I never seen him until he was six months old.

We had three children, Leon, he was born in Park City in September of '61, Jeanice was born in Salt Lake in '67, Darlene was born in '81. Jeanice was born January 9, 1967, Darlene was born August 19, 1981 in Salt Lake, she passed away in October the same year.

The thing that amazed me was how tiny they was when they were little. Jeanice and Darlene, like I said I didn't get to see Leon til he was about six months old. And he was the first experience I've ever had with Little people.

The most difficult thing with raising children for me is I have no patience. Probably irritable most of the time. Most rewarding thing about being a parent is when you get to be a grandparent.

I don't think I spoiled any of my children, but that's what they all say. I was a strict parent. I had to teach each one of them differently because they was different. One would mind and one wouldn't.

The funniest thing I can remember about one of them was Leon when my wife joined me in South Carolina. I lived off base. She got sick and had to get put in the hospital, we had only been there a week. And I had a six month old baby

to take care of and I'd never been around babies before and we had a small bed for him and he would make noises in the middle of the night. Like a growl and I didn't know what the Hell was going on. I struggled through it there with the neighbor lady there. She was really good at keeping him changed and fed. That's where I went to when I had problmes. If she was there.

My son-in-law told me I was going to be a grandparent. I tought that was pretty good, all right.

Some advice for my children and granchildren... Grand-children, get your education, make something of yourselves. And for my children, the best advice I can give them is do what you can for them.

If I had to do it all over again, I'd try to spend more time with my children, be closer to them.

Rebecca: What kind of jobs have you had?

Leon: The first job I had was I throwed hay for a farmer up in Sniderville, just below Park City. We got paid \$5 a day and we worked there from sun up till it got dark. It was dark when we got home and it was about three miles from the house. We worked pretty hard there. The guy came out one day and wanted to know if any of us knew how to drive a truck. I said I did, I learned.

I worked underground, I worked on a core drill, I worked in a machine shop. I just kinda worked where I could get the most money and that's why I'm down here. I live comfortably. I work anywhere from 8 to 10 hours a day. Sometimes 6 days a week. I'm not old enough to

retire. I don't want to be that old, but I'd like to retire. I kinda like to take it easy now when I'm not working and enjoy myself Kinda pay attention to the Grandkids and things like that. I just kinda go through life the way I go through life I guess. My favorite hobbies are 4-wheeling, and being in the mountains, go tinkering with one of my outfits.

Rebecca: Have you won any awards?

Leon: No special awards for anything. I belong to the Veterans of Foreign Wars that post in Price Utah. I was a junior Vice Commander there for a while. That office had a lot of work to it.

I was the Vice President for the United Mine Workers of America for a while. Local 1982 for a while.

Rebecca: Have you ever had any Life-threatening experiences?

Leon: I had a heart attack 10 years ago, I don't know if anything if it was hereditary or not. I walk for exercise. My wife saved my life, I was deer hunting in 1987, had a heart attack in Gunnison Valley. Had it not been for her I wouldn't be here today. I didn't have any grandchildren, One on the way at the time. I got to go to the hospital in Gunnison, I was there about 5 minutes, I guess if that long, I knew I was dying and I did. They had to use paddles to bring me back. I uh... those things burn. You get burns from them.

I've been hospitalized for my back, but never had any surgery of any kind. If I could change something about my life it would probably be loose a little weight, maybe

have a better attitude about life I guess.

I have had experiences of the beyond, I don't care to talk about them. I have seen myself doing things before they actually happen. And in the course of what is going to happen was always bad. Someone gets hurt, dies or something. And when I see myself going into this, I try to change it, and I have I guess or I don't know. I don't usually dream and when I do it's stupid things, I can't even explain them myself.

Rebecca: Are you religious?

Leon: I don't go to church, I belong to the Lds church, I don't go. I believe in hereafter, I believe in God. I don't believe I have to come down here and sit with other people to get there. Maybe I'm wrong, I don't know. There is most definatly an afterlife.

Rebecca: What kind of stressful experiences have you had?

Leon: There have been a number of stressful experiences in my life. I wouldn't uh.. Know wich one to tell ya about. I could tell ya is I got through it by uh.. getting up in the morning, getting dressed and going about the business in life. Work, play, whatever the day was.

I have made some choices that I don't care to talk about I don't know sometimes if I made the right one or not. I won't know for a while.

Rebecca : What wars have taken place in your life?

Leon: My life has seen the second world war, Korean war, Vietnam, and uh.. The gulf War.

World War II was uh.. Something the country had to do. It industrialized the nation.

Korean War was, well they're not through with that yet. I mean with the events going on there, the Cold War and things like that.

Well Vietnam, I think that was a waste. I enlisted the day after I turned 17. In the airforce. I served 2 1/2 years in South Carolina at uh.. Air Transport Base. Cargo people thing like that. I served in Vietnam as the military advisor to their airforce. Advisors I should say, I guess maybe. That was in 1963. My duties was uh.. I transported everything from milk to Nuclear Warheads

In Vietnam we was the advisors to their airforce showing them how to get a transportation system set up and things like that. Uh.. there was things that they wasn't....There were things we wouldn't let them do. We took care of our own wounded and our own dead. They wasn't allowed to drive our equipment off the base. Anything that happened off base, we took care of ourselves too.

Probably the scariest thing that ever happened to me was vietnam. I felt like I had a target pinned on my back. If I was going to come out of there, If I wasn't gonna come out of ther, I wanted to see it coming instead of getting it in the back.

Rebecca: Did anything amazing happen to you while there?

Leon: An amazing thing happened to me was when I was on my way from South Carolina to Vietnam. My wife and I was on a bus, My brother had been in an automobile accident at Mountain Dale Reservoir. And the fellow he was with was killed. We got home and they had the veiwing that night

after we got home. I went to the viewing and this guy had a brother in Vietnam. And he was there, he got from Vietnam, home, quicker than I got from South Carolina, home and he said, "I heard you was going." and I said "Yeah" And he said, "When you get there, look me up."

I looked for him, I went to Mcvey Military Advisors Assaistance Group. They had there, everyones name was there. Never could find him.

One day we came out of our tent and we was going to the NCO Club and a helicopter sat down in front of us. We had a field there, we used to play baseball on when we wasn't workin. We did a lot of work there. This guy crawled off, it was a medi-back chopper with a red cross on it. He got off and he was all muddy and bloody and pretty much for wear. Wanted to know where his ambulance was. We told him they put him down in the wrong spot' They set him down and left, right now. I guess they had other places to go. We told him we'd take him to the dispensory and he'd been shot through the wrist. And we was walking down there. I couldn't make out his name tag and the guy was pretty excited as you can imagine and I kept thinking, "Boy, I know this gut from somewhere." So I asked him if his last name was Gillett and it was and then I talked to him and he remembered who I was.

I was never injured.

Rebecca: What are your political Views?

Leon: I'm a democrat, I'm liberal. My favorite President was

Probably President Kennedy. Probably because I was enlisted in October in 1960. He was elected a little later. I was on guard duty and heard that he had been elected. I was discharged in 1964 and of course he was killed in '63.

Rebecca: Have you ever met anyone famous?

Leon: The Senator from South Carolina, Strom Therman, met him in South Carolina, in fact, I'd took him home a couple of times when he'd come back into Washinton and landed in our airbase.

I've met Dan Blocker. When I met Dan Blocker was when me and my dad was working in Gold Hill. Him and uh.. One of the bosses went to Wenover to pick up some dynamite. We had a truck in from Salt Lake and they never showed up so we kinda spent the night there waiting for it, in the casinos no less. The next day we got back, the foreman, he went to bed. Me and my dad went to the mine. My dad decided that he was going to go to Idapa, so I was at the mine by myself. Motor home pulls up and Dan Blocker gets out, that'll make you rub your eyes. You Know.

I met John Wayne here in Huntington, he was in a cafe. Nobody introduced him to me ya know.

And I knew a guy that was a captain incharge of C47's in Vietnam. They were called "Dirty, Thirty Operations" his name was Newan Clkey. I knew him real well. He ended up running the country over there after I come home. That country over there has changed hands a number of times.

Rebecca: Has there been a time when you were really happy?

Leon: The time and place I felt real happy and glad to be alive

was with my first Grandson, Brett. He was born in November and I had a heart attack the month before. I felt real blessed to be there in front of my daughters house. My wife and I was putting up a sign and balloons. The sign said, "It's a Boy!!!"

Rebecca: What kind of animals do you like?

Leon: My favorite animal is the deer. Pets, I have always had dogs. Cocker spaniel and an Irish setter.

I had a springer spaniel once that got out of the pounds in Salt Lake. And the guy at the mine hunted birds and we didn't. And he was an older guy, hey neede a dog so my dad said "come over and try this one we got." He come over and got it. He took it hunting in an old studabaker, brought the dog back and told us it was the best dog he'd ever had. He said, "It really has a nose on it."

He told us that he had shot a hen by accident, pryed the hubcap off the sudabaker, put the hen in the hubcap and put it back on. He went down the road, had a couple of roosters. He ran into the checking station, out there in the basin spmeplace and he had stopped. The warden wanted to know what he had, how many he'd seen and these kind of thingd. He showed him the roosters, the dog got out and walked to the back wheel that the hen was in the hubcap and went on set right there. And the game warden knew what was there, took off the hubcap and that boy got a ticket. and he said, "but that's still the best dog I've ever had" so we gave it to him.

Rebecca: Who are the positive influences in your life?

Leon: Positive influences on my life were my grandparents.

They was pretty good to me. And I ha some primary teachers them sort of people stick ou in my mind.

Rebecca: Who is your best friend?

Leon: I have a goo friend named Darrold. I've probably known him the longest period of time. I work with him and I left Park City when I was 17 and I went back there and only stayed a year or two, and that, so I've probably known this guy the longest 25 or 26 years.

Rebecca: How is the world different now?

Leon: The world is different in the respect that things cost more. And, of course, there's more to buy. They have made the most important inventions in my lifetime, antibiotics, heart transplants, those things that prolong life.

Rebecca: Where is your favorite place that you have gone?

Leon? Probably the most beautiful place I've ever been to was Hawaii. Phillipean Islands. The longest trip I've ever took was to Texas. I drove the truck down there and back, Come through Louisiana, Oklahoma. Probably the favorite place I've ever been to was outside the park in Yellow-Stone. In Montana, West Gate. I liked that, that would be a nice place to live in the summer time.

Rebecca: Is there anything you've always wanted to do?

Leon: I kinda always wanted to take a ride in a glider, they have 'em up in Heber, never done it. I should do it one day.

I would go up with the paratroopers when I was in the service and 130 has a tailgat. I'd watch them tailgate off the back of it. Always wanted to go with them. I wanted to do it. Then after I was on the ground I thought , " I

wish I probably would've done it." I'm too old for it
now. I don't know if my heart could handle it.