

Emery County Archives
Oral History Project

July 7, 2011

LouRee Whimpey McGill

Interviewed by Dottie Grimes

With Virginia Bryant present

(LouRee and Dottie and Virginia are cousins)

Conversation already in progress when recording began.

LouRee: Dad's 86 and Mom's 81, and they are both doing really good, just doing their thing in Orangeville. Mom's oldest daughter lives next door and so they are the helpers and the runners, you know. Mom still drives a little bit, just to church and the post office.

Virginia: Did you start calling her "Mom" right away?

L: Yes. Pretty much. That was just the easiest thing to do. It wasn't "Ruth," no. It felt weird at first, but we just made an agreement to do it—that they would just be Mom and Dad.

Dottie: Okay, we're going to get started. Tell us your full name, when you were born and who your parents are:

L: Okay, LouRee Whimpey McGill, April 9, 1949. My parents are Louis Whimpey and Ruth Whimpey—should I back track and say Louis Whimpey and Donna Pettey Whimpey.

D: When did Donna die?

L: Donna died October or 1960. And he married Ruth Robertson in June of 1964.

D: Then you lived with your grandmother...

L: I lived with Lloyd and Clara Pettey in Ferron until Dad married Ruth, and that's where I went to South Emery High—Junior High School. It was a junior high at that time.

D: Do you remember any teachers from the junior high?

L: I remember Mr. Snow, Miss Pyper (P.E. and English) and the Home Ec teacher? I'll remember her name later.

D: What elementary schools did you go to?

L: I went to Cleveland Elementary—that's where I started school—and we moved to Price for a short time—a year is all and I went to Harding Elementary.

D: When did your mom die? Were you living in Price then?

L: Uh-huh. We were living in Price, but we had only been there for about 9 months.

D: Do you remember when your mom died and all of that?

L: I do. I remember when Marsha was born, and she just never got better after that. She was nursing and she thought she had milk glands that were swollen, and the doctors just told her that's what it was. She was just sure she would get better, but she never did. Marsha was seven months old.

D: Did the cancer start spreading while she was pregnant?

L: That's what they say, that the pregnancy just accelerated the cancer. I don't remember her ever being well after that. She would be in bed and then she'd be in the hospital, and then she'd be in bed, and then Margaret (her younger sister) would come down to stay and help.

Anyway, then we moved to Ferron, and my dad traveled back and forth on weekends.

D: Did you enjoy those years?

L: We did! I was talking to an old friend—she lives here in St. George—and we got to talking and I told her that I loved going up to her house and playing at her house, because it seemed like a normal house—a normal family with a mom and dad and brothers and sisters. We could do anything. That was Nancy Albrecht in Ferron. Her dad was the bishop at that point in time in Ferron. At my house is was, “Okay, you can't run around; you have to play quiet.” We knew we had to be more subdued around Grandma and Grandpa. Grandma had to go to work everyday at the school lunch kitchen, and Grandpa's health wasn't very good, so we just couldn't be wild Indians like kids are.

D: And the house always had to be...

L: ...immaculate. We had our chores before we went to school, and everything had to be in it's place, and I think that was for both of them.

D: I remember the beds had to be made perfectly with the pillows rounded.

So then you went to junior high in Ferron.

L: South Emery Junior High.

D: And you hear that the two high schools are going to be merged. How did you feel about that?

L: I thought it was going to be exciting. It would be one bigger school, and I just remember anticipating that—and it would be modern—brand new everything!

D: And North Emery was very old.

L: They both were. North Emery and South Emery were both very old schools, and they had 8th through 12th grades in them—maybe even been 7th grade.

D: And so you started into high school in the 8th grade?

L: It might have even been 7th grade, but yes, it was a junior high/high school situation because there was not a junior high.

D: So how was that to go to school with high school kids?

L: I remember that just walking around, seeing those big kids was very intimidating. And when they left, we got to be the big kids. I must have been a 9th grader if your time schedule is right. I must have been an 8th or 9th grade when they exited the school.

D: Do you remember J.R. Nelson or James Nelson? Was he your age?

L: J.R. was a year older than me, maybe two. He had a younger brother named Clyde.

I thought I went to 9th grade when the school opened and then went to the new school the next year.

D: But you were excited about it. Was everybody excited? All of your friends?

L: Oh, yeah!

D: Why?

L: Just the size of it—a bigger school.

D: You had to be bussed to school.

L: And maybe that was part of it; we had never been bussed anywhere, and so that was going to be exciting and fun.

Oh, this is one of the reasons I thought it would be fun, I just remembered: I had lived in Cleveland and so I thought it would be fun to merge back with those friends from Cleveland and Elmo who I had gone to school with.

D: Do you remember any of their names?

L: Rolane Allen, DeAnne Larsen, Kent somebody; his big sister use to baby sit us, and Scott Allied, Bobby Litster, Flora Dawn Nelson, Laura Sue Johansen, Angelia White. I can see faces, and I can remember where they lived right along the streets, but I can't think of their names—oh, David Zwalen—but, I remember that was one of the reasons I thought it would be exciting to

merge the schools.

D: Did you know Bernice McMullin?

L: She's related to me through my dad's side.

D: That's right. I was telling her that I stayed with you in the summertime when you lived in Ferron, and she said, "Now, how do you know LouRee?" And I told her that you were my cousin, and she said you were her cousin too.

L: Her dad was my dad's cousin.

D: Who were your girl friends in Ferron?

L: Nancy Albrecht—because I was the tallest girl in my class and she was tall!

D: You were the tallest?

L: Yes! I was the tallest girl in my class in grade school! So when I moved to Ferron and there was Nancy and she was taller than me! She was my same age. And then I quit growing and I was the shortest girl forever and ever and ever.

D: And Rebecca Nielson and Gayla Guymon—Gayla Jensen. Do you know her?

L: Married to Lamar the cop?

D: He was the sheriff for 35 years. He won't let me interview him because he said, "I was expelled from that school!"

L: Oh, he was a stinker!

D: Tell me about it because I want to know what some of the kids did and what they were like.

L: I was so surprised that he became the county sheriff because he was just a stinker. And then when he and Gayla got married, I couldn't believe it because he was just wild. It's just not what I would have thought. But of course they got married and have had a great family, and this, that, and the other. I just thought it was so weird. But I was only 16 at the time, and one of my friends was getting married--that's what I mean by weird.

V: How old were your parents when they got married?

L: My parents? Mom was 16 and Dad was six years older than that, so 22.

I'll tell you some boys I went to school with: John Nielson, his dad was the dentist in Ferron; Chuck Killpack, he was part of—the Killpacks were huge in Ferron. They were good

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friends. Jon Crawford, I believe they still live in the county, and he's my age; Garth somebody, and Tommy Burton--those were some of the boys in Ferron.

D: What about Dean Nelson?

L: He was one or two years younger than me. He might have been Robyn's age. He was from Ferron. He is Coach Nelson's son.

D: So you and your girl friends were all excited about the new school?

L: I guess we were--after the sensation of the Beatles. [laugh]

D: That was the number one...

L: Yes, it was very exciting.

V: Was your dad a WWII vet?

L: Yes he was.

V: Have you done his history?

D: No, I haven't done World War I vets. That was when Shirley was over the Archives, and her project was Women on the Home Front of WWII.

V: Well you should interview him.

D: I should!

So when you got to school, how was it? Did you see any separation between North and South?

L: I think, for a while, yes. I think it had integrated pretty well by the time I got there, but there was still "them and us." I think you still tended to congregate with your friends from your own school.

D: What about name calling and all that? Did it continue?

L: I don't remember any of that, but I think there were names affixed to kids from North Emery and South Emery.

D: What about the teachers?

L: They brought teachers from both schools.

D: Did you have Mrs. Wiild? I hear comments about her from everybody I interview.

L: Oh, yes. Lucinda. She was a task master, and nothing was ever good enough for her. I think she made it a habit of making us unpick things and resew them just for the heck of it.

V: So you would hate sewing for the rest of your life.

L: Yes. And tailoring, and making it with wool, and cooking and cleaning up. We all had to take home-ec.

D: Did you like her?

L: Yes. I got along with her okay.

D: What teachers were your favorite?

L: I had Mr. Wright for English. Each year he would produce a Shakespearean Play. If you were in his English class, you could be in it or help with the lights, scenery, and production. I got to be in "A Mid-Summer Nights Dream" my sophomore year. I believe I was a forest nymph or something like that. That was such a great experience. I liked Mr. Peacock, chemistry. He was a great teacher. I took type from Mrs. McClenahan. I was terrible at type--still am. Shelley Sitterud and Kathy Price were on the type team and I would have given anything to type like they could. And they did short hand, as well. I never did learn that fine art of communication. I liked Mr. Jorgensen. He taught science and I was interested in science. He was one of the younger teachers who hadn't learned to be mean and strict yet. Everyone liked him a lot.

D: You didn't call him Mr. Bill at the time?

L: No, it was just Mr. Jorgensen. And our funny little P.E. teacher Mrs. Johansen; she was a hoot and a holler. She made P.E. fun, but her legs were about as short as nothing. She would wear those culotte pants, that's what she always wore everyday in different colors. We all had to have these great P.E. uniforms; we hated them; they were yellow, one-piece jumpsuit style with a belt. We had to wear them. I'm glad you reminded me of those or I would have forgot about those wonderful suits. We had to dress for P.E. every time. You had to shower, and when you came in to shower, she would stand and mark if you had showered. Occasionally Mrs Jo would be busy somewhere else when the P.E. class bell rang. We'd all hurry and run in, throw on some deodorant and start to dress. She would then come into the locker room with her clip board and start asking who had showered. We all said "showered." I'm sure she knew.

V: Did you have to have them ironed every Monday morning?

L: Yes. Everything had to be ironed and ready to be inspected on Monday. You could wear them all week if you wanted to, and some did--others took them home, but you could wear them all week. You had to declare if you had taken your stuff home. But she was a hoot.

V: Sounds like the military.

L: Yeah, it kind of was, that's how they did it way back then. There was nothing loosey-goosey about that P.E. thing.

D: Do you remember any of her advice or anything she said?

L: No, but she had a funny laugh. She had a very unique way of getting on the auditorium stage. She'd start running at the top of the auditorium and take a flying leap onto the stage. We would all hold our breath until she made it. Sometimes standing and sometime not. Most times it wasn't too graceful and the culotte shorts came in very handy. She would just laugh and role onto the stage. Each year Mrs. Jo and Mr. Willson, band and chorus teacher, would do a combined Stage Production class that was a favorite of the student body. I took it my junior year. The play that year was "My Fair Lady." I played the part of Mr. Higgins' housekeeper, Mrs. Pearce. Glen Hansen was Mr Higgins, Geraldene Stanton was "Eliza." Now that was a fun experience. As a class we traveled to Provo to see the movie. That was a real treat--BUS TRIP! Mrs. Jo was also in charge of the cheerleaders and the drill team.

D: Were you on the drill team?

L: One year I was on the drill team. We had to have long dresses; we had to kneel on the floor and have them measured so they touched the floor, so they were all the exactly the same and something, something. They were plain dresses that we used to walk across the floor in formation and cut and cross. I guess we had music, I don't remember.

D: Or drums.

L: Yes. Probably drums or music, and then the other two years I was at the high school I was cheerleader, so I was not in drill, but she was over the cheerleaders.

D: What was your cheer outfit like?

L: Well there again, one year I remember them being longer, almost to our knee, sleeveless, yellow-gold, black with a gray insert in the front. They were homemade; everything was homemade.

D: Who made them?

L: I don't remember. I think someone was appointed to make the stuff so they would all be the same. And I think someone made those drill dresses--well, I wouldn't swear to that--they may have ordered those. There were so many of them. You could be in Pep Club and Drill Team if you wanted to. All you had to do was say you wanted to.

D: That was one of the concessions they made with the merge.

L: Whoever wanted to be in drill team, could. Very, very different now, but it was just kind of a formation, you got to be part of. You sat in a certain place so you could cheer. That was it; it was Pep Club. And then during half time, whether it was basketball or football, you got to do your drill.

D: So she was one of your favorite teachers?

L: I liked her! She was fun to kind of talk about a little bit--"Oh, Mrs. Johansen..." She was fun.

D: Did you have her husband?

L: I did. Mr. Johansen taught Political Science. He also taught English. I had him for English. I remember him teaching some math classes to, because I remember having Algebra from him, and I did like him, yeah. He was really fair and all of that.

D: They didn't call him Papa Joe while you were there?

L: No. He was Mr. Johansen. It seems like we did call her Mrs. Jo, but I don't think it was ever to her face. I don't think it ever was. I think it was always Mrs. Johansen.

D: Do you remember the influence they had on the school?

L: No, they were just a married couple. Everybody really liked them. I do think they had a big voice, especially her. She had that little bit of clout about her. They both had big voices, for sure.

D: Do you remember hearing about the school colors being chosen?

L: I do remember hearing about it and the name and the school song being written, but of course, that was before my time, so I don't remember any of the particulars.

D: Do you remember any other favorite teachers?

L: We had a coach that came in for a short interim--Coach Bliss. He was a transplant. He came down just for two or three years. He taught English. I don't think he knew much about English, but I had an English class from him, and got probably got my first "C" ever. I don't remember really liking him. It didn't seem like he was into anything except coaching, but he was a good coach, and teams won while he was there coaching.

D: They went to State?

L: Yes.

D: Were you aware of the fact that your whole education was better because of the new school?

L: I think so, yeah. I do remember thinking that if we were in little South Emevy and North Emevy, you just didn't have the opportunity for classes. And it's so much better now. When Paula (her sister who is secretary at the high school) talks about what they have now versus what we had--unbelievable. It was much better with the combined school.

D: How big was your class?

L: About 80 give or take a few.

D: Do you remember going on bus trips or field trips?

L: Only for cheer. Only for baseball, football--just sports. I was not in band. I was only in band in junior high school.

D: And who was your seminary teacher?

L: Brother Law, who just passed away. There was another seminary teacher, but I don't remember his name. He was a great seminary teacher, but I had mostly Brother Law.

D: Well see? You have lots of memories. Do you remember any stories? Something happening? Kids getting in trouble? Anything like that?

L: I don't remember kids getting in trouble. I think it was in high school, we had a student die. I think she died of leukemia. That was our first experience with somebody our age getting something like that and dying. It was a girl.

D: What about Lamar? You said he was kind of wild. What did he do? Was he a "greaser?"

L: No. There was not that name...they were like drinkers, just kind of the partiers and wild versus those of us who went to church and went to seminary. There were those who went to seminary who didn't care if they were in seminary, but it was a good way to get out of another class. We didn't have drugs or anything; it was just alcohol and tobacco.

D: Did any kids drive to school back then? Anyone have their own cars?

L: Oh yeah. Mrs. Johansen's nephews that lived with them. I can't think of their names-- oh yes, one was Brent Williams. Oh yes and a very tall guy from Lawrence had his won car, a hot GTO. I think Brent had a Chevy Chevelle. I do remember one thing about the cars. One night up one of the canyons, probably Orangeville, a group of us were with Brent Williams and another boy who had his dad's Chevelle and we raced side by side down the road...wow what a rush. However, it could have been very different had we had a wreck. I'll have to ask my sister Robyn about what she remembers about it. She was dating Brent at the time and she was with

us. I think the other guy was Jon Crawford that had his dad's car. That's what I'm remembering now. I don't remember anyone else having their own car. It was a new status in the school to own your own car, and that's why I remember these two guys. If anyone drove to school they probably brought a family car. --Wait here is another car memory--when I was a sophomore I dated Craig Nielsen, and he had his own car. A black and white one that I thought was very cool. That was a fun time. He drove to school everyday. That car gave him a bit of status. And my friend Teresa could always take her mom's car. I was in Orangeville at the time, and she could always get her mom's car. Actually that was because she was always late and missed the bus. Probably on purpose.

D: Where did she live?

L: Teresa Curtis. She lived across the street in Orangeville.

D: What about Stilsons that lived across the street from you?

L: Valynn is a year older than I am, so we didn't have any interaction other than passing in the hall. Most classes were according to your age. Very few classes were together age-wise, so no. She was just a friend across the street. Shelly Sitterud was my really good friend in Orangeville. She married a guy from Northern Utah.

D: I just transcribed an interview with Courtney Guymon, Lamar's brother, and he hated South Emery. So it's interesting to me that Lamar married a girl from South Emery. He was from North Emery and married a girl from South Emery, right?

L: He did. And Gala had just started 11th grade, and Lamar had graduated. He's a couple of years older than her. I think when the schools were separate--huge rivalries.

I do remember J.A. (her uncle) always refing the ball games and going from Grandma's house, down and around the corner and going to the ball games, and that was awfully cool that J.A. was a ref.

V: Did Irene (J.A.'s wife) live there too--in Ferron?

L: Irene was from Orangeville. Her parents lived on the highway in Orangeville, kind of where the Church Mine road is, that's where she lived. Now she's the one that could tell the tales, and she could remember too.

D: I'm friends with Jan Petersen, and she was Irene's friend.

L: J.A. was a few years older than Irene.

D: Do you remember how new the high school smelled?

L: Oh yea, I loved it! It was great. And having been in the old, old, with the radiators, and the old

windows that pushed...you know the old everything, the old gym, the old curtains. Yeah, it was great.

D: Do you remember anything about the cafeteria?

L: Ooh! I thought they had good food. Everything was great.

D: Did you think it was big?

L: I thought it was huge. It was huge. And now they've added on, and on, and on, and it's not even huge, but it's huger [laughing]. In fact after I had gotten married and we traveled back to see the family, I'd look over at the little school and I'd think, "I thought that was a big school. It was awesome." And now it's much bigger, of course.

D: Well how fun. You have fun memories.

L: I do have good memories of high school; I loved high school.

D: Well this has been fun. Thanks for talking about the school.

L: I'll think about it and if I think of any more stories, I'll let you know.

End of Recording