

Emery County Archives

Oral History Project

James Russell Nelson

May 4, 2011

Interviewed by Dottie Grimes

Dottie: Today's date is May 4th, 2011 and I'm talking with JR Nelson in the archives and we're doing an oral history project focused on the history of schools. Let's start out by you telling your full name, where you were born, when you were born, your parents and siblings.

JR: Okay my full given name is James Russell Nelson. I was named James after my father James Rulon Nelson and Russell after my maternal grandfather who was William Russell McConkie, all from Moab, Utah. I was born in Moab, Utah. My mother had a really bad experience having my older sister in a little house that still exists in Ferron, and so she went home to Momma to have her second child who is me. My older sister is Beth Nelson; she was born in 1946. I was born February the 17th, 1948. I have a younger brother Clyde Nelson who is deceased, who is two years younger than I am. My next sister is Ann Nelson. She is, I believe, four years younger than Clyde. Then I have a brother Mark Nelson who follows Ann by two years. And then we have a tag along brother who is Keith Wade Nelson who I believe was born in 1963. Those are my siblings.

I should mention that my father's first wife passed away, and he married my mother who was the old maid school teacher, and he actually had six children by each wife. Only nine children lived to adulthood, and I was ten, eleven, twelve years old before I realized that my older siblings were only-that we didn't share the same mother. That's how close our family was. Anyway, my father missed dying in the bedroom that he was born in by 101 days. My grandfather Andrew Nelson Jr. actually came to Ferron in 1979, make that 1879 and started the homestead process and actually took out the homestead patent on the farm that I now operate and lived on after six years in 1885. Another interesting thing about Andrew Nelson Jr. is that his picture is here in the courthouse listing him in about 1905 as a county commissioner. So I am, as a county commissioner today, following in his footsteps. That's my ancestry.

D: How wonderful. You said your mother went home to her mother to have you, where was she?

JR: In Moab, Utah, that's why I was born in Moab.

D: Oh okay, so she was living in Ferron at the time?

JR: She was living in Ferron. The family, we all lived and grew up in the same homestead home up canyon road in Ferron. My older sister was born first. My mother and father agreed that it was time to go have the next child in the hospital so I ended up being born in Moab.

D: Who was the doctor that was not a good experience? Or was it a mid-wife?

JR: It was Dr. Turman and I don't believe Dr. Turman was the problem at all. If you saw this house, it was a very small house. In Ferron, directly west of the present day elementary school yard, there is a little house, and ladies in Ferron had their babies there in a smallish bedroom. You would go in and have a baby, and they didn't have the medical facilities that I think you would expect in 1948. Some people think that's prehistoric, but they did have some medical facilities that you didn't get in this little house.

D: I was born in '48 also, and the only one born in a hospital. The hospital was the place to be born in then.

JR: And I was born in a hospital.

D: Can you tell me a little bit about your great-grandfather?

JR: Andrew Nelson Sr. is actually buried in Manti. He was a polygamist in Manti. At one time, he had wives living in mirror image homes on the four corners of a cross road kind of in downtown Manti. It was an interesting old polygamist story. Some of the wives didn't get along; some of the wives weren't happy. When the manifesto came, Andrew Nelson Sr. stayed with his youngest wife. The legend, I guess I heard, is that he said "She needs me the most." The wife from whom I descend is actually buried in Ferron. One of her daughters was married to John C. Lemon who built another homestead up Ferron Canyon and Metta, who was my great-grandmother, came and lived in that home until she passed away and is buried in Ferron. So my great grandmother and all of my paternal great grandparents are all buried in the Ferron Cemetery including my grandfather and grandmother so it's kind of interesting that even though they were from Manti, they ended up being buried in Ferron.

D: I believe I have a copy of the divorce paper of Metta and Andrew in the archives, that's why I wondered why they were divorced--So he didn't have to go to jail?

JR: It was the manifesto and literally Metta, had she have chosen, I believe could have remarried. I don't know that his other wives did or not, I'm just not that familiar with my family history. But I do know that he stayed with the youngest wife. The descendants of the older wives are going, "Yeah right she needed you the most."

D: Wouldn't she have had the youngest children?

JR: Oh yes, she would have. I've even been surprised that my father, who was substantially older than my mother-- father was 47 years old when he was married to my mother who was 26. No, I think I did that wrong, she must have been 28. There's 19 years difference. When I said 47 that's how old he was when I was born, so he would have been younger when they were married, but he was 19 years older. So my father was always old and my cousins--I'm 63 today and my cousins who are my first cousins are

much older than I. The others are in their 80's and many, many of them have passed away because my father was older when I was born.

D: Interesting. So you grew up in Ferron, did you live there all your life?

JR: All of my life and as I mentioned, my father missed dying in the bedroom he was born in by 101 days.

I lived in Ferron until I graduated from high school, and I went away and started working at an athletic scholarship employment. Employment that was provided to me because I had an athletic scholarship to Utah State University. And then was essentially gone until I graduated from college. I was married, had taught school in Monticello for three years, and returned to teach school in 1975 at Emery High School. I tell people that in the history of Emery High School when I retired there were only ten years in the entire history that I hadn't been there. It was the year before I arrived that the Emery High School was the high school. I was in the 9th grade at South Emery Junior High, and then I was gone for four years of college. So if you're adding this up, one year before, four years of college, two years on a mission, we're up to seven and then I taught school in Monticello for three years for the ten years that the high school was in existence that I hadn't been there--the rest of the time I had.

D: That is *your* high school. (laughing)

JR: I bleed grey, gold and black. And I still have the opportunity to go back and participate in high school. I announce their sports broadcast on local television and on the 12th, I'm going in to speak to 9th grade orientation. I appreciate the opportunity to do those kinds of things.

D: Let's go back to your childhood. Tell me about going to school and who your friends were growing up and who your neighbors were and what the school was like.

JR: An interesting thing about my elementary school education is I can tell you who all my teachers were right up to 7th grade, and then I can't tell you every teacher for every class every year. I remember them well.

I actually enrolled in school with--I suspect our class numbered in the mid 20's but by the time we left 6th grade, there were only 17 of us. There were very few boys that were my age. Kind of the ones I ran around with, perhaps my best friends, were the ones that moved away. I was always friends with Robert Larsen who is Leonard and Leola Larsen's son, and he still has a large number of Larsen family members that live in the area.

A really good friend lived through the creek bottom from me and that was Ted Cox who's dad's name was Ted Cox; I believe his dad's legal name was actually Fredrick. He and I played a lot together. And a really close friend, that I hung out with every chance I got, was a kid named Gary Killpack who lived in the middle of town. His father is June Killpack; his parents were June and Katherine Killpack. I believe Katherine was a Snow from Castle Dale. June was a Killpack from the bench in Ferron. I knew June Killpack's parents really well also, even though they were older people.

Both of those two friends moved away. One moved to Idaho and the other went up around

the mid-west a little bit, I think his dad took employment that was really good paying job, If you look at Emery County employment at the time. But the boys that grew up in Ferron that were in the 6th grade were Steven Barton, who was Emery County Treasurer in 2011; Robert Larsen, who I mentioned earlier who is now in Saginaw, Michigan; Don Wilde who lives, I'm not sure where up state, but he comes and visits me once in a while and is a truck driver; and I live up the canyon. The interesting thing is, if you drew a great big X over a map of Ferron, at the outskirts at the ends of all of the X, you have Don Wilde who is about as far east as you could get and still be in Ferron. I lived about as far west as you could get in Ferron. Robert Larsen lived about as far north as you could get in Ferron and Steven Barton lived as far south as you could get in Ferron. Because there were so few of us boys, we literally ended up playing at recess, and we played with the girls. We kind of had a deal, they'd come out and play ball with us, and then there were recesses when we stayed in and danced. I learned to jump the rope and roller skate as good as any girl, and here I was going through elementary school playing with girls thinking "Gee this is dumb, let's go play ball somewhere," not realizing that even the dancing was teaching me rhythm and foot work and making me coordinated. Probably the best thing I could have been doing at that age to be an athlete was play with the girls, roller skate and jump rope and dance. I never really went through an awkward, uncoordinated stage, and I blame it on the fact that we played with the girls.

D: That's great!

JR: I attended Ferron Elementary. I know that kindergarten was a six week process. They split us in half, and half went in the morning and half went in the afternoon. I still remember getting graham crackers and milk, and I thought I had my throat slit because even as early as Kindergarten I was beginning to, against my mother's wishes, stopped drinking milk. I've never been a milk drinker even though I grew up on a dairy and graham crackers were never my favorite. So in Kindergarten I thought I was picked on because I had to drink milk and eat graham crackers.

? Christensen was my kindergarten teacher. As I said before, my classmates probably numbered in the mid 20's, and then as they grew up and their parents grew up, I think employment at the time was very very limited in Ferron and Emery County. A lot of them moved away so there were only 17 of us. My first grade teacher was Ida Conklin. I still remember stories of Ida Conklin. As a kid, I really admired my teachers, and I always had a soft spot in my heart for them because they were such an integral part of my life. My second grade teacher was Ida Behunin, and I think about the time I inherited her, she quit being Ida Behunin and is May Behunin Jorgensen's mother. She taught me second grade. Third grade was Velma Peterson, who I knew outside of school because her husband was a local dairyman. I, of course, grew up on a dairy and there were quite a few dairies around Ferron in those days. I just remembered Velma Peterson as more than just a teacher.

Fourth grade I was blessed to have Fern Christiansen and just dearly loved her. Now I liked all of my teachers-- I didn't have one that I didn't like--but I don't know whether it was in the fourth or the fifth grade that Fern Christiansen's husband was killed in a hunting accident. I remember how broken hearted we were, and they let school out. I didn't go to the funeral. For some reason my mother didn't feel like I should go to funerals when I was a little kid. But I was fortunate enough then again to have

Fern Christiansen in fifth grade, but because we were such a small class we did end up with some sixth graders. The classes one year in front and one year behind me were really large classes so one year they split us with the kids older than we were so I had Fern Christiansen for fourth and fifth which was fifth and sixth graders.

Elaine Ralphs was my sixth grade elementary teacher. We attended school in a building that was on the southwest corner of the school lot in Ferron. It was a two story building that no longer stands and frankly when I was there in 1950's it needed to be taken down; it was old then. I think originally it was the high school, and then they built the new high school so it was really old and dilapidated, as was South Emery High School when I arrived there as a seventh grader. It was a very old building then. They had a little tiny cracker box gym, it was just way too small.

D: Do you have any pictures of the elementary school?

JR: I do and if I were to search, I could find pictures of the elementary school.

D: So some of the boys in your class left, so there were only a couple of boys in your class?

JR: Yes, there were four of us at the end. We had another student that was with us from Clawson. His name was Paul Dexter, but Paul had some learning disabilities and was actually a year or two years older than us and without the modern screening facilities and understanding of learning disabilities, he was main streamed and really didn't participate with us. I think he not only had learning disabilities, but I would also classify him as having social disabilities, so we didn't play much together.

I spent my elementary years playing with the boys that were younger or older because there were so few of us--those of us who played ball. Robert Larsen and I were pretty much the ones that were more apt to be playing ball. I have some other really interesting memories. I remember going before school to play on the playground some football, baseball, basketball game and the kids older would be saying, "Now the game's closed, you can't play; you can't play." I talked them into playing and after a little while and I'd show up at the playground and they start yelling, "We get Tiny." That was my elementary nickname. "No you had him last time, we get Tiny." It was very, very good for my self image. I remember how heartbroken I was because you used to have recess for first, second and third grade and then older recess was fourth, fifth, and sixth, and when my friends that were a year older went to fourth grade recess and I had to stay in third grade recess I was really heartbroken. But at the same time, I've got to tell you, I developed some really close relationships with the kids that were a year younger than I was. Some that lasted all through high school.

We were just looking at a picture of our high school basketball team, and Guy Conover was prominent on the front row. He was a year younger than I was, and we both played basketball together when I think he was in the second grade and I was in the third, so I knew him a very long time. Merrill Duncan and I were farm kids together. Merrill still lives in the Ferron area. He lives in Molen, but gee Merrill Duncan and I were joined at the hip as kids. We both had horses and farms and jalopies, and we did farmer kids together--chased cows and we were just very close. Merrill wasn't perhaps as interested

in athletics events as I was.

Seventh grade at South Emery. I remember how old I thought I was to be in high school in seventh grade and have lots of different teachers. I also remember how much I missed recess. I used to sit at a window in reading class and watch my friends play at recess and I was so envious that I couldn't bring myself to read.

D: So you could see the elementary from the high school? So the junior high and high school were combined in the same building?

JR: No, they weren't in the same building; the buildings were separate. The old South Emery High School was a separate building built in the shape of a horse shoe. There were halls down the sides of the horse shoe and then the gymnasium would have been in the middle of the horse shoe. And then there were class rooms all the way around the horse shoe and lockers and offices in front. The lunch room was never in either one of those buildings. When I was in elementary school, the lunch room was directly north of the school block, the present day school block. We would literally run down the sidewalk, that's where I think I learned to be a runner. Frankly there were a couple of girls that I had to really hustle to stay in front of, they could run as fast as I could. We'd run down the sidewalk and run into lunch in an old building that was just north of the school block and then the school district built a new cafeteria and that new cafeteria and band room sat where the present day elementary school building sits. Then you went from the elementary and the high school to that lunch building. I think they fed the elementary kids first and about the time they were through, the high school kids would come in.

D: So where did junior high fit in?

JR: Okay, there was no South Emery Junior High until 1962, I think. So South Emery High School was a 7th through 12th high school, which I attended in 7th and 8th grades. During this time, and there was a real furor over the election to--the bond election, I guess, whether or not to make one high school and people fought it. One of the things that the bond did was to eliminate the elementary school in Emery. The Emery people said you take away our school, our community will die. It wasn't necessarily true but I think it did have an affect. It lost the elementary school in Emery City, South Emery High School became a junior high, 7th, 8th and 9th grades. Then 10th, 11th, and 12th came to Castle Dale to attend Emery High School, and that began in 1962. In that year, I was the very first class, first 9th grade class to attend the junior high school in all of Emery County history.

D: How did you feel about that?

JR: In many ways I really, really liked it. It kind of and I think modern 9th graders would feel the same way, I got to be the older kid for a change instead of being the dumb freshman, I was THE freshman. We then had junior high basketball and baseball game, and, to me, that was like manna from heaven--to be able to have basketball games that were designed for 9th graders. I wonder some times if it had stayed

a high school if I could have made the junior varsity as a 9th grader. I'm arrogant enough to think I would have, but you know we sacrificed that for so many more benefits. And the educational opportunities were so much better than they ever could have been at a North and South Emery High School situation--with more kids they just had more programs. And with some exceptions I think they took the best teachers from those two high schools and sent them to Emery, and we got the best of the best.

The other thing I have often thought is we grew up in separate high school thinking "You know, this is when I will be playing varsity basketball; this is when I will be on the varsity baseball team."

Well now you had two high schools who all thought, "I'm going to be on the varsity basketball team." and there were 15 or 20 kids who thought that. They were playing now for maybe 20 total positions and the competition was furious--I mean athletically Emery High School was an instant success.

Football was a completely different story. I actually, as a farm kid, was so busy in the Summer I didn't understand summer football. Some of my friends came and told me, "Yeah we're playing football," and I thought, "Gee, I wonder if I ought to play football." But I was so ignorant of the protocols of football and how the game is played, I actually went to football practice when school started and was surprised to discover that the football players went to a huddle where they organized their plays as they still do in 2011, but then every kid went out and played in the same spot for every play. Boy when I was growing up, we took turns being the receiver, the lineman, even the punter, the quarterback, whatever it was. We all took a turn doing it, and I was so ignorant at football.

D: Was everybody in the same boat though, not knowing football?

JR: Yes, no one was really a good football player. We had a kid move in who had played football who was really helpful to the team. A guy named Tony Aragon, and I believe he came from Colorado and had played high school football before and really taught us a lot of things. My fondest memories of Tony Aragon are in track. He was a senior when I was a sophomore. There are some really funny stories. We used to wear what we called a girdle, it was the hip pads and the tail bone pads--there was a guy playing football--you know, we'd never even seen a football uniform. The first thing the coach had to do was teach us how to put our pads in and out, put our pads on. I mean, we just didn't know it. Things that now you learn--boy if you don't know it by the 5th grade, you're getting a late start. A young man was playing football, the coach asked him, "How are things going?", he said, "Oh you know these pads, I'm getting the hang of these pads, all but this one in front, it is killing me". He had these huge wounds in his thighs because he was wearing the girdle backwards and had his tailbone pad--he thought he needed to protect the other side more. (Laughing) And this pad, it was wide--it was wearing his thighs out! He was getting killed wearing his pads incorrectly. (laughing)! I don't think that's a completely uncommon story. We didn't even have game pants. We had practice pants and we had a jersey that we wore in games. That only lasted one year but the first year we played football, we actually played football around the area and didn't have a real league. They were all practice games. Emery ended up playing the junior varsity. They played the junior varsity at Carbon High School, and I remember what a big deal it was when our high school team finally beat Carbon's junior varsity. We played East Carbon; I don't believe Green River had a team--they may have, but local football teams were played as practice games. Football had a hard time getting going, but that was the only sport--the other sports--we arrived

at Emery High School and we were instantly competitive.

D: So the first year the high school was built, you stayed at the junior high for 9th grade. So you had the whole school instead of sharing it with the other three grades.

JR: The other interesting thing is--okay, add South Emery in the 7th grade, attending then were Emery community and Ferron, so the Emery kids came in, and so the 7th grade was only Ferron and Emery kids. Then in the 8th grade we got, I think we got Castle Dale and Orangeville, but I know we had them by the 9th grade. In the 7th grade they had what they called a junior high tournament and the teams that participated were South Emery--and these were 7th and 8th grade teams--Orangeville had a team, Castle Dale had a team and Huntington had a team. I have very, very clear memories of this tournament. The first game, South Emery played Orangeville. I was a 7th grader and I played on this team, and I stood proud of that. The deal is, I was really tall. I happened to be taller than any 8th grader.

D: You weren't tiny any longer?

JR: Oh wait, they called me "Tiny" because I was the tallest kid.

D: Okay.

JR: They were calling me "Tiny" in the 4th grade, and I was as tall as the 5th graders. I've always been tall. Yeah, they called me "Tiny" and that's like a really fat guy named "Slim." I hear somebody say, "Hey Tiny, how are you doing?" I know it's a voice from my elementary days. I want to tell you that the 8th graders were Jay and Clyde Sitterud and a kid named Steven Cox who were unbelievable basketball players, and a guy named Ward Huntington, and I don't know who the other guy was but these kids could play basketball coached by Jim Peacock who is Elaine Ralph's brother. I had a bit of a history with him. But on the Castle Dale team were these two amazing twins that were just unbelievable, Jeffrey and Jerry Bott. Ray (?) Jeffs played on that team, and I don't remember who the others were. Well Orangeville defeated South Emery/Ferron, Castle Dale defeated Huntington so the next night Huntington and South Emery/Ferron played and then what an amazing game! Bott twins from Castle Dale and the Sitteruds from Orangeville. How many years ago? 40 years ago or more and well, 50 years ago or more, and I remember that like it was a couple weeks ago.

D: From other histories I've done, they've said that they stayed in their towns through the 8th grade so their elementary would go to the 8th grade. So Huntington went to the high school and Ferron went to the high school but the rest of the towns stayed in their town elementaries until the 8th grades but they had these athletic programs?

JR: They weren't really leagues as they are today, it was just once a year we'd get together and have a tournament from all the towns. There were four teams. By the time I arrived at Emery High School and we had the sophomore tournament, Green River came in. Green River, Carbon, Emery and Notre



Dame--and frankly Notre Dame was a competitive high school. I can tell you that from the time that Emery High School came into being, they (Emery) won the sophomore tournament between Carbon and Emery County. As a matter of fact, they were laughing about the sophomore tournament all-star team, and they literally gave little trophies and MVP awards out at these tournaments and the very first year that Emery High School participated in that, when the votes came in, all five of the all-tournament players were from Emery. The coaches got together and said, "Hey, we can't do this, we've got to have somebody from these other teams." And so they did put other school's players on the all-star team. I remember doing that as a sophomore and being so proud to be on the all-tournament team.

D: Did you miss football and did you know why you didn't have football or even know that you didn't have football?

JR: We knew we didn't have football, we knew why we didn't football. You can look in the history and find out the year that it stopped. They used to have these believe it or not records in the news paper and one of them that came out, it was so humiliating was the worst beating that any football team ever took. I believe it was 107 to nothing but it might have been 107 to 7, Carbon High School beat South Emery, but in that game, a kid was killed, another kid had a broken leg or arm. They said, "Hey, we just can't play football anymore". We played football, but it was touch football, we threw a football, we punted a football, we played a lot of football, but we did not understand the rules; we had no idea.

As far as missing it, no, we were too busy playing basketball and baseball and track. Track was huge. Phillip Nelson, who was the coach, was literally a gifted track athlete who participated at BYU, so we did track, and we were good at track. And again, if you were going to compete--if you didn't attend South Emery of course you attended North Emery--and you weren't about to let those South Emery kids out -run you or jump you or throw you ,so when they combined us, North Emery, South Emery kids and pulled them into one school, man the track program was phenomenal. I remember as a sophomore...this is a personal story but I'm going to tell you anyway.

D: I want all your personal stories.

JR: I had a hernia repaired in the 9th grade and I actually missed either the last or the last two games in my junior high league. Of course in those days to have hernia surgery was major surgery. Today it's laparoscopy and I don't even know if you get stitches; they put a band aid over your wound, but I couldn't do anything for six weeks theoretically. I started being active as soon as I possibly could, and I arrived at the track season and jumped 5'8". Which they said, "Oh my gosh, we've got this 9th grader that jumped 5'8." You know, I felt really bad that that's all I had jumped was 5'8," but the other interesting thing is I set the junior high, high-jump record. It was interesting that the next year or two, my brother broke that record, and then I jumped 5'10".

I came to the high school; I played football; I really, really had a great basketball experience. I played junior varsity basketball and actually got in some varsity games. I had played in some varsity games and was in great shape. You wonder about the strange things that twist your life that make your life what it is. My entire baseball career, I either played 1st base because I was tall or I was a catcher. I

played center field but frankly it was too boring out there, and I was a big tall kid and as a catcher, a ball didn't get by me--I mean, if it was high I went up and got it--I just knocked the ball down. I'm bragging again, but I was an incredible catcher, I did very well at it. I loved being a catcher; you were constantly involved. I could hit the ball, but I went to the high school and I think there was a bit of a feud between the coaches which is tragic because after I left, then you could participate in track and baseball, but at that time you had to choose--are you in track or are you in baseball? The track coach and the baseball coach softened up enough that by the time I graduated, some baseball players did come and run in some event in track even without going to track practices.

I'm telling you all this to lead up to the fact that as a sophomore, I was really in great shape. I had never really owned a mitt because as 1st baseman it was a long scoop thing that you could reach high, so I used the team's 1st base mitt or the team catcher mitt, so when I came to high school, I didn't own a mitt. I asked the football coach--I really liked both of these coaches. The football coach was the track coach. I might as well name them. Ray Butcher was the football coach and the track coach, and Gary Bliss coached basketball and baseball. I asked the football coach, I said, "Have you got any use for a guy that can high jump 5'8"?" and he goes, "5'8", I think last year we jumped 5'10". " (laughed) So we went out, and I began high-jumping. I was fortunate enough to jump with one of the great human beings on the planet, a guy named Jade Sitterud. He's Sandra Jeff's brother who lives in Castle Dale...just one of the finest human beings I've ever known. And he got to watching me and gave me a few pointers and pretty soon here came the track coach and he said, "If you'd do this and this and this, you could jump better." He kind of lined me up with some things I ought to be doing and the first day out at track practice, I jumped 6 feet. Well I went to a lot of track meets, and I did really well, but I went to the Richfield Boy's Day--I think they still have this track meet-- and as a sophomore I set the new Richfield Boy's Day high-jump mark at 6'4" and I'm going, "Oh yeah!" The state record was 6'4". So if you can envision me straightening my eyebrows and walking around like a peacock--okay, I jinxed myself because the coach had me in a relay, and this was towards the end of the track season, I ran my leg in the relay and when I was running off the track, I stepped on the edge of the track, and I sprained my jumping ankle. I didn't even qualify in Region, I couldn't jump for Region. I did not make State.

D: I bet that broke your heart.

JR: Yeah!

JR: I want to tell you some stories about track. After the State Track Meet, Tony Aragon, in particular, came back and cussed me for being injured. He said, "If you would have been there and won the high-jump, we would have been second or third in State". Here this high school has been in existence for two years, and we are very competitive in track. Again I blame that on the fact that both South Emery and North Emery kids thought they were the cat's meow. We made each other better; I can tell you that. As a junior--I want to talk about track and get it out of the way--I did win the State high jump. My job--I jokingly told my students for years that my job was to quickly win the high-jump and lay around in the high-jump pits on the mats and look at the girls. (Laughing) It got me in trouble because as a senior, we went to a track meet in Carbon, and the irony there is Wade Butcher had coached football and track at

Carbon and then had taken the job at Emery and had been really successful, but he did not want to go back to Carbon and lose to Carbon. He drove buses and told us if we didn't win the track meet, we had to walk home. Well I took care of my assignment and wiped the high-jump, and I've got to brag about this one too--Carbon had mid-European descendants who could jump 5'8" --6" or 8". I let them all jump until they were out. I would pass and not jump until the bar was raised--I sometimes would start at 5'8" and then jump 5'8" in one try and then 5'10" in one try, and then if they went to 5'11", I would skip that. Oh they would go by 2 inches 8, 10, to 6 foot and then they'd go up 1 inch at a time past that and I passed, I think until 5'8", and I jumped that on my first attempt. I was the only one in so I got arrogant and said, "I'll tell you what, let's put this right at 6'5" and if I won--if I could jump 6'5", it will be a personal best; it will be a school record, and I'll be just fine". Well we put it at 6'5" and I couldn't do it that day, I had no adrenaline, there was no excitement in it. Here I am--this is all taking place in the course of 15 mins., maybe at the most and I'm done jumping, laying in the high jump pit and the coach comes over and goes, "Nelson, you got long legs, go run the high hurdles." I thought, "What?", I've never run the high hurdles in my life. Our high hurdler was Dean Nelson, and frankly, his dad was a high-hurdler at BYU, and Dean was good; Dean was very good. But we go to the track meet in Price and Dean was ill and didn't go so, here was the coach, he wanted to win this race--it was me or we were going to walk home. He gave me about 5 minutes worth of instruction, and I figured out how to get down in the starting blocks and get out of the blocks so that I could arrive at the hurdle with the correct leg out in front. So low and behold, here I am in a two team track meet, and they give four places, and I placed. Basically I had to finish the race. (Laughing) So I think after that he said "Hey you didn't look too bad," so we went to Richfield Boy's Day. I was winning the high-jump, and I believe it was at Richfield that I placed 4th or 5th at the huge track meet and the coach goes, "Man, I'm putting you back to the hurdles."

I was at the Snow Invitational, and I think I placed 3rd. So then I went to a football recruiting trip before Region to Utah State University where I eventually ended up, and I did play football there, but I came back and I hadn't been to track practice all week and coach threw me into the--I had to high jump--okay I had to place 3rd in the hurdles at Region to go to State and I did. But the thing is there were two really good hurdlers, one of them being Dean, and I had to be the kid that had no business running hurdles. So I got to go to state and I hurdled. I was a little disappointed because then I had to work on it a little more. I liked this idea of jumping and then laying in the high jump pit but...(Laughing)

We had trials in the high hurdles and I ran this trial that gave me my time and I was done then, I went over and the high jump started. Well this is a state track meet and frankly this was a big deal and there were tons of high jumpers. By the time I had won the high jump and I actually set the state record of 6'5" which I held for a couple of hours. At that time there was only one state record. A guy from a Class-A school came in two hours later and high jumped 6'8". So anyway, I had won the race, won the high jump and I'm thinking, "Well I'm done now," and they called my name over the loud speaker, they said "Report to the starting line." I went over to the starting line, and I and a kid from Bryce Valley who played basketball--I knew this kid, had exactly the same trial time in the high hurdles, and there were only six lanes so they could only put six people in the race. Do you flip a coin? No we raced off again. Well, gee, here I was; I had all this adrenaline flowing, and I was kind of relaxed, and I beat him a long way. Well, I also had another trial run. I don't know if I ate lunch but the next event literally was the finals in the high-hurdles. That's just the way track meets are scheduled.

They actually had to put up two lanes of hurdles so we could race off. First event, then you get high-hurdles out of the way, and then you go to the sprint, and you take the hurdles off the track. It was probably only a few minutes later and here I was still pumped full of adrenaline. I had no pressure on me what so ever, I had the slowest time to make the finals. And they also set you up in length; they assign you lanes. The fastest time is in line 3 or 2 in the middle, the slowest time is on the outside lanes. Well being the slowest guy, technically in the race, I ended up on the left very outside. Another interesting thing about running hurdles is, as hurdlers run over the hurdles, they pump their arms and swing their arms and literally you beat the guy to the side of you, if you're going neck and neck you beat them to death. We used to run those races and laugh about how much we'd sock the guy's to the side of us. Well I only had a guy on one side, and the race started and I could tell you--I have a very clear memory of a dear friend of mine from East Carbon--he was a great hurdler named Doug Hensey (?). I false started, I jumped off too soon, and anyway we stand up and they shoot the gun, and we turn back and he goes, "Now James, James." Everybody called me James, I was never called Jim. "James, James relax, come on we're good." We got down in the blocks, I'm the only guy with nothing to lose. Now here if anybody false started, if you false start again, you're disqualified. No big deal, so everybody is down in their blocks...I have come to this conclusion years and years after the event. I imagine myself I was calm and no pressure, pumped full of adrenaline, they shoot the gun again, and when I get to the finish line, I'm the guy running through the tape. I have won the State high-hurdles! I have never won a race in my life. It is a tribute to being relaxed, to being pumped through of adrenaline. I have never been more dumbfounded in my life. Even Doug Hensey comes up to me and says "What happened to you?" The remarkable thing was our great high-hurdler, Dean Nelson, I think he ends up taking 3rd and the guy that was supposed to win was 2nd. I laugh about that with Coach Dean. I'm going to go laugh about it when I pay tribute to him on Monday for the last time.

D: Is he retiring?

JR: He is retiring. But the hilarity of it is we then had high school field day, they called it. We go out and play a few things, and in the afternoon we'd have a track meet. Well I was running hurdles for the seniors and Dean was running for the sophomores, and he beat me by a full hurdle, that's 10 yards. (Laughing) I cannot even explain it. That's my wild track story. I've got hundreds of wild basketball stories.

Do you have more questions, or should I keep going?

D: Well I want all your stories but I want to go back a minute. You said that North and South Emery were very competitive against each other, and they were all thinking they would be part of the team and so obviously some of them were cut. How did that go?

JR: Uh, there were a lot of broken hearts. There were a lot of, I'm convinced, of hard feelings. But I'm glad you asked me that because I have to pay tribute, as a sophomore--and I sat down on the end of the bench as the only sophomore that dressed with varsity. There were some juniors that dressed and

a couple of seniors who's names I will bless til I die. And one of them still lives in Emery County, his name is Kay Truman. Here's Kay Truman and Dr. Kent Powell who were two seniors, who growing up had expected to go to high school and be great basketball players for their high school, and ended up sitting on the bench at Emery High School. The other tragedy is, they were seniors and the starting team involved the two famous Bott twins who were juniors and the two Sitteruds who were amazing ball players, who were also juniors and Lloyd Blackum who was the only senior who started. And those two gentlemen, Dr. Kent Powell and Kay Truman, treated me like a human being. They were so completely supportive of their teammates, they were just amazing men. They were amazing men.

D: I don't know Kay but I know Kent, and he is amazing.

JR: Kay Truman, his son is the local vet, his wife helps night school regularly, he's just a great man. A couple of juniors who were sitting on the bench: Norman Alger, I was there, Rulon Magnuson--we just had some really great human beings on the team. We were very successful. So here is this high school in their third year of existence, and we go to the State Tournament, and there's this huge 16 team tournament and little old Emery High School, we weren't a big high school by any stretch of the imagination, there were only 300--we never quite made 300 while I was in high school, so less than 100 in my graduating class--we ended up 6th in State. We got defeated by the state champions. The next year when I was a junior, and I'm still bragging, but that starting team with the Botts and the Sitteruds, the next year, I stepped in and was the other starter.

D: So when you went to high school there, it had already been there for one year?

JR: When I was a sophomore, I was the second sophomore class at Emery High School, you are right. There was one year when I wasn't there, that's when the Botts and the Sitteruds were sophomores. When they were juniors, they started--I came in, I was a sophomore. When they became seniors and I was a junior then I was the other starter on that team. I think we had...I'm going to say a better team and I'm not insulting Blackum at all because Lloyd Blackum was a great player but the game focused around Lloyd. By the time these two Botts and Sitteruds had a year of experience we had five guys on the floor and you never did know who was going to be the leading scorer. You could shut one of them down and the other person would go bananas. We had a very, very good team. But by a twist of fate, the way things ended up in the tournament, we ended up 7th, we didn't even place as high. As a senior, I really, really missed the guys who had graduated. But you need to understand that our second team that year were also seniors, Norman Alger, Rulon Magnuson...I can't name them all, if I had a yearbook I could take you through. So as far as the kids who were my age, when I was a senior, I was the only senior basketball player who had played in a varsity basketball team because they all graduated. We were going to be the rebuilding lost year. I played basketball and started with Dean Nelson who was a sophomore, Randy Johnson who had been severely injured and frankly as a remarkable tribute to Randy Johnson that he played basketball. Didn't find out til later, he had a cruciate ligament injury ...and I sat down on the end of the bench as the only sophomore that dressed with varsity. There were some juniors that dressed and a couple of seniors who's names I will bless til I die. And one of them still lives

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I played basketball and started with Dean Nelson who was a sophomore, Randy Johnson who had been severely injured, and frankly, it is a remarkable tribute to Randy Johnson that he played basketball. Didn't find out 'til later, he had a cruciate ligament injury. There is no worse injury that could happen to your knee. The doctor that repaired his, didn't get the cruciate ligament completely attached, and to this day, he walks with a ligament in the back of his knee that is unattached. He played basketball like that and was phenomenal.

Mark Justice played on that team. Lynn Mortenson from Emery, Guy Conover. I don't know if I've named five yet but I was one of those five and Lon Wakefield, he was a great player. We had the losing record, the most losing record for Gary Bliss' stay at Emery High School, we were 20 and 5 when the dust settled. We lost 5 games. The next two years I think they were 24 and 1 for two years. They ended up 3rd place, but the story I want to tell you is with this team of the motley crew, we weren't expected to do anything. We went to the regional tournament to qualify for state. We went to the region tournament and were defeated enough that we had to stay over and play a Monday night game to play off to the end of the state tournament and we did. We played off and defeated North San Pete, qualified for the state tournament, went to the state tournament, and played for the championship. We were defeated by Manti, but we played. We earned our right to be there, and just the way things fall it's much harder to play for the state championship than it is to win it. Frankly the Manti team that beat us. We'd have beat them if we'd have played them the next night, but anyway, that's my basketball life story.

D: So tell me, there was a lot of competition between North and South Emery High Schools and so how did you feel about joining up with them.

JR: I can't even express into words how positive I felt about that. Including the fact that if you were a little bit of a miss-fit or you didn't quite fit in with the in crowd or maybe you were shunned for some other strange reason, you put these kids together at Emery High School and low and behold I found this really cute girl from Huntington and married her. (Laughing) I mean, that was so common.

D: So it was a put down like 'you come from this little tiny town'...

JR: No, the rivalry went away and we were Spartans, we were no long Rangers or Bulldogs. We became the Spartans and I have to tell you I absolutely loved those kids from North Emery and the things is we knew them, we'd been playing ball against them. You know we were in the city little league baseball since we were 8, 9 and 10 years old so we knew who they were, we knew them by name.

D: But they had always been kind of your enemies...

JR: They had been our enemies, and it was a ferocious enemy. I highly recommend people that listen to this to get Dr. Ed Gerry's book Farewell To Poplar Heaven and read a chapter, The Only Game in Town because it was the only game in town. I mean, I have as clear a memory of North and South Emery High School basketball games and the rivalry was unbelievable. And the other interesting thing is you'd have people from Huntington--North Emery who married somebody from South Emery, well that didn't stop them from being a Ranger fan and they'd sit in the middle of the Ferron people and root for North Emery. It was ferocious; I mean you had to have police protection there.

D: Do you remember any fights?

JR: No but I remember a story that I'm dying to tell you. I remember during the big bond election when things were shaking out to create Emery High School, the last time North and South Emery played basketball was at South Emery. Here I am, a little 6th grade kid, I ran home and milked the cows to get my funds to pay my 50 cents to sit on the stage to watch this big final game. At half time--and I believe South Emery won that game, and I think Ken Stilson played in it, and I know Roy Stilson and Ross Huntington did. I can tell you that at half time, a kid named Lake --and I wish I could remember his name because he was a great theater person under the direction of Sam Singleton-- but they had a skit or a warrior, these battling tribes who had fought. They hated each other forever and this Lake kid dressed up as an Indian, and I know there were other people in the skit. The fans participated; they had tom toms and drums, but this kid danced around as they spoke on the public address system, and they told this story of these tribes that hated each other and they finally decided they were going to have to be friends and they buried the hatchet. And I can tell you the hatchet got buried.

D: What a neat thing to do.

JR: I don't know who invented that but I have deep suspicion of Sam Singleton. I don't know who the Lake kid was but I remember going to the play, he was just a remarkable actor.

D: Was that just at South Emery?

JR: It was at South Emery and Sam Singleton taught at South Emery, and this Lake boy was a South Emery Bulldog, and they did this skit to bury the hatchet, and it was buried.

Next Thursday I'm going to speak to the 9th graders and one of the things I'm going to say is "You no longer are Cougars and Bulldogs, you are now Spartans, that is behind you" and that is the truth, it was gone. Oh there was a little issue with South Emery boys and North Emery boys dating the South Emery boys girlfriends, and the other way around. (Laughs) You know, it all shook out in the end. So many of my classmates married somebody from the other junior high. Now I tell the same story of Carbon and Emery. There is a big Carbon and Emery rival athletic event, and the next day in school I'd say, "So how about those Carbon guys, you'd never date a stinking Dino." And they say "No, not me." So then I say, "How many of you have parents from Price". And there were classes that were half the class had a parent who graduated from Carbon High School. My wife is one of four siblings, I am the only in-law who is from Emery County, the other three are all from Price. So here Huntington brothers and sister all married someone who graduated from Carbon High School.

D: So who did you marry, and how did you meet her?

JR: Linda Guymon, and I literally met her--she swears this is a true story and I have no alternative but to believe her--we met as sophomores about the first week, so we kind of knew each but we didn't know everybody. They held class elections and I was elected sophomore class president. She was sitting by her cousin, Dana Guymon and turned to Dana and said--when I went out so they could vote without me being there--she turned to Dana and said, "I'm going to marry that one." Low and behold (Laughs) yep, I



dated her all the way through high school, and I'm very happy she was right. That was really cool, but I'd say that's representative of what was taking place in the dating world.

Even better, things like classes, you got VarLynn Peacock from North Emery who if you were my age, what a remarkable teacher at Emery High School. Not only as a teacher but later as a colleague. If you know Neil Peacock you'd understand the same scenario--just really important people. Bob Swinburne was Mr. Math. I really hated the fact that Bob Swinburne became the principal because he was the world's greatest math teacher. Later Bill Jorgensen. Bill Jorgensen would have spent his life at South Emery, Bob Swinburne at North Emery, VarLynn Peacock at North Emery, and we would have missed the Johansens. Grace and Eugene Johansen both taught at North Emery and talk about a dynasty, they had forensics speech and drama championship actually literally sold out for decades, and the South Emery kids would have missed out on that.

D: You call them a dynasty, were they the royalty of the teachers?

JR: Uh no, they had programs that won state.

D: But how did the teachers react to the...

JR: I have to tell you that my sense is in the beginning there was a real animosity. I know there was a big animosity over who was going to be the principal. Brad Jensen, principal at South Emery was good friends with Orson Peterson and they had actually talked together--Orson was then the superintendent. He had, as the superintendent, organized which teachers would go to Emery High School and which ones would stay at the junior high. They couldn't take them all, but had promised Brad Jensen. Low and behold he went to board meeting, and I don't know what happened, but it was A.G. Kinder.

There was an amazing wood shop teacher named Sorenson, he taught people like me who are not creative or artistic at all, and I made some amazing wood things even a night stand that I used even after I was married. But he went in, and A.G. Kinder put down the handbook from North Emery and this Sorenson guy stood up and left, and did not teach at Emery High School. There was some animosity.

D: Why was that?

JR: He was--well first of all, he grew up in Ferron, South Emery graduate.

D: Kinder was going by North Emery...

JR: Kinder was from North Emery. Frankly I don't think it made any difference to me personally, but I really wish this Sorenson wood shop teacher would have stayed. Now we had some great shop teachers, don't get me wrong. Rue Ware came in and taught shop. I don't know when he arrived on the scene, but this man was good. But I really feel like they took the cream of the crop and took them to Emery High School.

D: What about the principal, Jensen, what happened to him, did he leave the area?

JR: Bradford Jensen, no, he retired as the principal at San Rafael--no make that--I think he retired from South Emery Jr. High School, I don't believe he ever went to San Rafael Jr. High.

D: Was he disappointed?

JR: I think he was, he was a good principal. But I have to tell you I have nothing but complete respect for A.G. Kinder. I thought he was an excellent principal, he ruled with an iron fist, we lived in terror of him so we behaved. He called me and cussed me once in error, I didn't deserve it but I was okay because I liked him as a principal. I felt that way also about my other teachers. I've got to throw in here Bryce Wilson,--Mr. Music and an amazing singing teacher, but if you were at South Emery you would have missed him. We had good music teachers at South Emery, one of the few was Lavell Johnson who was killed in an accident, so we lost our band teacher in one night--in the Fall of the year, for heavens sakes. He was taking peaches up state to actually sell them, and he was killed in an accident. So can you hear me being completely sold on combining the high schools?

D: Yes, I can. But what about Phillip Nelson though, I know...

JR: I really felt bad about Phillip Nelson not going over there too. He was an amazing track coach. He was my track coach, and I think the deal was that they kind of decided not to take either one of the coaches. I think they worried about rivalry. The one that didn't go was a Vernon Roundy who was at North Emery. He went to South Severe and became one of the best Severe County coaches in history.

D: Now Phillip Nelson stayed with the junior high, and he worked through it. He was a great guy, I think. But Roundy left? His feelings were hurt?

JR: I think he was insulted and left, I'm guessing.

D: That's what I've heard.

JR: The crazy thing is, they got in one coach named Doug Hunt. So Doug Hunt coached, basketball, I don't know who did wrestling, baseball, track, he was THE Coach. Well with 150 kids you can do that when you're not playing football or wrestling, but if you're going to be now a competitive high school... The very next year, they hired Ray Butcher and Gary Bliss. They both coached football. Ray Butcher was the head coach, and during the winter, it went to Gary Bliss and Bill Jorgensen in basketball, and Ray Butcher was wrestling. I don't think we'd ever seen a wrestling mat before, so we took wrestling from outer darkness to a competitive sport. Then in the spring we there was a division of track and baseball as I mentioned earlier.

D: Doug Hunt, how did people feel about him being brought in from the outside?

JR: He was quite successful here, he was quite well liked, but he was a crazy man. He threw fits--he was an interesting character. He was campaigning heavily the first year to have the school colors be brown and maroon. Okay now, are you getting a picture of this? Because you could stick a football in a brown and maroon uniform and you'd never know where it was, you couldn't see it. So you understand the insanity there. Thank goodness it became grey, gold and black. Yeah, he was an interesting character. I can tell you also--you were asking about hierarchy of teachers, the Johansen's were very forceful people. They did not sit idly by in faculty meetings. They were very strong willed and consequently feuded occasionally.

D: I've gotten a lot hints from a lot of people like that but nobody would come out and really say anything.

JR: I'm not going to mention a single name but I will tell you this, after graduating from Emery High School, I was only gone--okay 10 years after my class graduated I was back at Emery High School. 10 years in my career is not even a third of it, so you hear me say that I taught school with the Johansens for years and years, and once in a while they'd get in a rant in faculty meeting, and those of us that knew them would just go, "Oh well," and we'd go about our business. Every once in a while we'd get a new teacher who would fight back, and I'd be going, "What are you thinking?" (Laughing) "Leave it alone, when faculty meeting is over, you're going to go in your classroom and everything will be fine." They would spout it off-- yeah, I had to train a few new teachers. They sprang a little hard--sometimes a little insulting at you . When I deserved to be insulted, I was insulted, but I think it made me behave. You know if they were right, they were right ,and I recognized it. And if I thought they were wrong, I was smart enough to not fight back.

D: I think that's what Bill Jorgensen said.

JR: Yeah, we just...water off a duck's back. But we recognized how incredibly talented they are. I've got to tell you, I didn't have Mrs. Johansen, I don't necessarily regret it, but I feel like I was a little bit shorted perhaps. But I can remember things Eugene Johansen taught me 40 years ago. I can stand and sing all the verses of the National Anthem, and I still cry when I do, and it's his fault, and I know it. He was just a remarkable man.

D: That was my understanding too is that they were great people but they had opinions and felt like they were right and that people needed to listen.

JR: Can I tell you a great Johansen story that has nothing to do with teaching.

D: Sure.

JR: Here her son, Scott Johansen, is an attorney, is well educated. My connection with Scott goes back to

Snow College when I arrived--married after my mission. I don't know if he was the president or the vice president of Snow College, but Richard Williams was the other officer so I knew them at Snow College. He eventually was appointed to be a judge, and Judge Johansen gets a lot of respect. He's dressed in his robes when he walks into the courtroom, and somebody says, "Will you all please rise," and then he tells the bailiff "There won't be any hats worn in my courtroom;" people show respect. Well he took his mother with him after she retired to hold court in the Uintah Basin somewhere and went up there, and they did this-- and he's sitting in his robes, clacked the gavel down and is ready to start court. His mother walks over to the side, grabs a waste basket, takes it up front and says, "I want your gum." (Laughing) He spit out his gum, and she took the waste basket back and sat down.

D: Now that sounds like her.

JR: That's my Grace Johansen story, I didn't see it, I've only heard it, but it has Grace Johansen written all over it. She didn't put up with that kind of stuff. I saw Gale Kinder watch a kid walk down the hall with his shirt untucked--now if you can imagine a dress code that you can't have your shirt out in modern times-- there wasn't a shirt tucked in at the high school worn by a male. He told this kid, "Tuck that shirt in". Well the kid tucked his shirt in and Kinder watched him walk...there is a corner where there is glass at the old office-- they've extended it since, but he said he watched this kid and this kid as soon as he walked past him, started untucking his shirt. Kinder whipped around that corner window there and kicked that kid's butt. I saw this, and he didn't even touch the steps, he landed down over the steps there by the office there. But by the time he landed, he had his shirt tucked in. (Laughing) That's the kind of discipline we lived at Emery High School, and we were better for it.

I have to say a word about vandalism. I taught at Emery High School for 34 years and the thing that really shocked me when it began to be prevalent was vandalism. When I attended Emery High School, we came from these old dilapidated should-have- been- torn-down buildings since 1st grade. We arrived at this beautiful new--we were just awestruck with how amazing this school was. My goodness you could look at the clock and watch that second hand go right around up to the 12 and every single class the bell rang, it was so amazing! Now if you would have damaged our high school, we would have killed you. Now I use that term loosely, from 1966 killed you and not 2011 killed you. We did things and got away with things that we would be put in jail for in modern times. We loved our school.

D: Tell me about your impression of that new school.

JR: I was awestruck. They had tile floors; it was beautiful; it was new; they had windows; the gym was advanced. By the time we got the new gym, we had the smallest most outdated gym in the state, and when we were playing, again it was the only game in town, and we were very, very successful. They filled the bleachers in that old gym as full as they could get it and had two or three rows at the ends of the court, not directly under the basket because some architectural nightmare had to put the vent out in the gym, and all it was, was a place to get injured. If you go to the old gym, the walls are flat and then right under the basket, the wall comes out and protrudes into the play way too far--stupid things. Anyway, I know for a fact that Superintendent Orson Peterson went in and saw the gym and said, "I knew we

should have built a bigger one". It was, I'm going to say three, four, five times the size of the gym in the old high schools, but we packed them in.

D: But you thought it was great.

JR: Literally if you go flying out of bounds, you'd land on somebody, they'd catch you and throw you back in. Oh we thought we were cool to have crowds that big.

D: What about lockers, did you have lockers in your old high school?

JR: Yes and frankly I don't think the locker situation changed much. By the time I arrived in the 7th grade the lockers were updated and pretty decent. The exciting thing about lockers is once I figured out I had my eye on this cute girl from Huntington, we arranged it so that my locker was the tall one above hers and I could take you up and show you where those lockers were. They are not the same lockers but I could take you where those lockers were, which is kind of bad if she was mad at me. (laughing) I'd have to hide out and wait til she left. (laughing)

D: So you graduated from college and got a job at Monticello knowing you wanted to come back to Emery?

JR: I really didn't realize how bad I wanted to come home, and I have to tell you another story that I'm ashamed to admit. I farmed without complaint with my father until probably I became a senior, and then I had this scholarship/employment offer at Utah State University in Logan. I went up and built mobile homes right out of high school, but I remember having a little tussle with my dad, you know we were disagreeing over something, "Well you better take a good look at me" because he wasn't going to see me again. Oh brother! I'd only been gone two weeks when I was so homesick I couldn't function. I mean it was a literal physical deal because I was so homesick, and I basically realized the error of my ways. I had taken a scholarship at Utah State and not taken one at CEU in Price, that was too close to home, it was just a junior college. What was I thinking? In retrospect I'm glad I didn't go there, but to tell the truth, I should have gone to CEU.

D: So your wanting to get out of here, was that your fight with your father or was that a general feeling?

JR: I was too big for Emery County, and I have to tell you, I have seen that in my career as an educator thousands of times. I think most of those kids that couldn't wait to get out of Emery County were a little homesick once they left, and they couldn't wait to get back. The tragedy is we can't take them back because we don't have employment for them. I and my dad were never really close; I indicated that he was quite a bit older, as a matter of fact, he was 47 when I was born and...my brother and I were quite close and got along well, and I was always close to my mother.

D: What house did you grow up in?

JR: I grew up in my grandfather's old homestead house.

D: That's the one that is similar to the Lemon's house?

JR: Yes, as a matter of fact, the family legend is that there was a competition there. And when Metta came to live with her daughter at the Lemon house, they actually built her a little section on, so the Lemon house is larger, essentially larger.

D: I read that they were the same floor plan. They came over together, John Lemon and Andrew as brother-in-laws.

JR: Homesteaded basically across Canyon Road from each other.

D: That's neat.

JR: I would have traded them homesteads, but it's a little late for that.

D: Now when he came here, was your grandfather a Presbyterian because of his father?

JR: Yes. Now my great grandpa actually served an LDS mission, converted two young ladies that he brought back to Utah from Denmark with him.

D: And he was a pioneer from Denmark, right?

JR: Yes and the wagon master, when he arrived with these two young girls, said, "I'm not taking you across the plains with two unmarried girls, you've got to marry them." So the wagon master performed the ceremony, and he was married to these two girls, and he had two wives in Manti before he left. The oldest wife Metta was my line. And then, I think I've told you personally before, the legend is Andrew

Sr. was excommunicated for drinking and playing cards. I have always doubted that, but that's all I know about it. But that side of the family became agnostic; they kind of got attached to the Presbyterians, and Andrew did come to Ferron as a Presbyterian. He did not come because Brigham Young sent him, but he was well aware of the land over here and came and was instrumental in getting that Presbyterian church built on the hill in Ferron and the cottage that sits underneath it.

D: Was he Presbyterian then all of his life?

JR: Yes he was, I don't believe he was actively Presbyterian, but he did participate, he donated to them. My father graduated from the Presbyterian school at 8th grade there or maybe it was 9th but then he attended Carbon High School where he graduated high school.

D : I listened to Dennis Nelson's history that was taken several years ago.

JR: Dennis Nelson and I are relatives, we descend from different wives. It is interesting that at one time in Ferron, all four wives were represented. Phillip and Dean Nelson, that's father and son come from one wife, I come from Metta and Dennis Nelson descended from another wife.

D : Dennis Nelson said...I just transcribed it. He said--about the story of your great grandfather-- he said that he did play cards, he loved playing cards. He was disfellowshipped because he was playing cards, and that made him turn against the church and he joined the Presbyterian church that he'd been part of in Denmark.

JR: Those were his origins as my understanding.

D : In Dennis Nelson's history he said Andrew's family took his disfellowship status to the Church Headquarters, and they said this was unjust, it was too harsh and they restored everything to him--but probably after he was dead.

JR: Yes, he was restored, and my oldest brother Conrad Nelson, who is a half brother to me, and I feel like I'm shorting the family if I don't list them. But Conrad, I have read the letter that he wrote to the First Presidency asking if they could seal Andrew Sr. to my great grandmother, Metta and they were granted that. By the time we got all the records computerized, we found out that Metta and Andrew were actually resealed or sealed in the temple several times, there were several members of the family who were anxious to do that. Some members of Andrew Nelson Jr.'s family, still to this day, are antagonistic towards the church. There are as many agnostics as there are faithful members. I've heard stories about how hard headed Andrew Jr. was and other people have said, "Yeah he's just like his dad." These were evidently very stubborn men, and my wife even says, "I see Andrew Nelson in you," when I'm being really hard headed. (Laughing) But my aunts were talking about my grandfather driving a stallion down to the creek--and it's a "crick" in Ferron--and breaking the ice to give this horse a drink. When he didn't want to go out on the ice one of the sisters said, "Well did he get the horse out there to drink or not?" My other aunt, the sister wife said, "Oh, you didn't know your dad." In other words, yeah he got him out there; he didn't take no for an answer. I suspect they are hard headed, and they made fun of the Mormons. Andrew, and I forget the other man involved, were making what is now the South Ditch and Canal, and they were using a fork of a tree limb, I don't know how they had it prepared, but they were moving dirt with it. They were blading the dirt with and using a beer bottle full of water as a level and had written in their journal and laughed about that they weren't like the Mormons that tried to get water to run up hill. They were getting the water to run down hill. (Laughs) They made fun of the Mormons, but I think they had good working relationships. And the truth of the matter is half of their relatives that were in town were very faithful members. The man that baptized my father was a Victor Nelson who was a relative and of course a very faithful if he was Bishop Nelson.

D : I wonder how your father came to join the church?

JR: My understanding is that he--and I need to back up to the Presbyterian school. My father got very good grades, my sister Silvia has his report card. He got very good grades but really a low grade at Bible, so he didn't do well in their church class that I suspect was required in this school, and his father died-- I believe in 1911, I need to check on that to be sure of the date, but it may have been 12--I don't know but before his teens, and my father then was the younger brother, he was the 10th child. There were several little brothers and sisters, they kept the farm and kept it going and he eventually bought the farm from his sisters and some of the sisters wouldn't take payment they said, "No, you've earned it." He grew up--his friends were LDS and they were having a baptism in the creek and Victor Nelson was-- I think that's his name--was baptizing people there, and he said, "Rulon you haven't been baptized" and he said, "No I haven't" and they baptized him. He kind of was a member in name only but was in fact married in the temple to his first wife Metta Alliman (?) and was married in the temple to my mother later but had...I don't know whether I should list them in order but Conrad was his oldest child and then I believe Corene (?) who died as a young girl--I think of scarlet fever. It went up Ferron Canyon and every family that lived up the canyon lost a little girl. Richard B my other uncle, they all lost a little girl. So Conrad, Corene, Monty who grew to adulthood, Sylvia who is my oldest living sibling, and then there were twins that were born and his wife was so ill that. The twins were born prematurely, and they died one day after another, and then his wife died the next day too. My mother suspects just from the records of how this disease progressed and how it behaved, she thought she had leukemia or something of that nature. She just was not healthy in the birth of these children, and it did take her life. And I need to say here, and I'm almost embarrassed to mention this, but I found out that between my half brothers and sisters' mother and my mother my dad had actually been married for a short time to another lady. I found out when I was 18 years old. I was so upset and didn't know who to talk to so I went over and I talked to my girlfriend. I said, "I just found out my dad has been married three times." And her reaction was, "Oh no kidding? You didn't know that?" She knew, and then I was really upset. I didn't know that; it evidently didn't last very long. I asked my oldest sister about it once, and she said that her memory--all she could remember--it was just a mean relationship, so it didn't last long. I couldn't figure out why when I--I was milking cows with my dad and we were really getting along well right after my mission--it was only two months and three days before I got married, but we were talking and my dad was telling me how to get a divorce! It was the week I was getting married, and I thought, "Why are you telling me this?" (Laughing) He was giving me advice on the best way if I needed a divorce, I've always laughed at that. I've happened to be married to the same lady for 45 years.

D: Interesting, isn't it?

Okay, I want to go back to the consolidation of the schools and how the rest of the town felt.

You guys were excited, and how did the town feel? You were talking about when they were preparing the bond and so forth, what else was going on?

JR: There was real animosity at this bond election, but I felt personally that the community united behind Emery High School when we all became Spartans, just the way that the students did. I don't think there was animosity among people, I mean there were still things that aggravated them. Even when I



was coaching there were some people who were really upset because the basketball team was from the south end of the county. I laughed about that when I heard, "You only put people on the team that are from the South Emery area." I howled with laughter because there was a time when I was coaching basketball when I had one kid from the south end, and he moved in. The whole team was from the north end of the county; everybody that played a significant role.

D: So do you think the parents had more trouble than the kids with this merging of the schools or were they ready?

JR: Uh, I think once they saw how good it was; that it folded together--there was still the animosity even in the junior high school competitions--not like it was when it was a high school, but it was still there. There was still this little rivalry, and I think the community tried to keep it alive more than the students themselves. I'm going to compare it to the Carbon High School, Emery High School rivalry that has developed, I'm going to say in the last 15 maybe 20 years. I never did feel that rivalry. When I was a kid our rivals were Richfield, we hated the Richfield Wildcats. And there is Coach Dean Nelson married to one. (Laughs) But we hated Richfield, and I just couldn't somehow transfer that rivalry to Carbon. I sort of feel like the adults in the county had kind of the same attitude. They could focus it against each other, but once we became one, I can't feel the same where we're all together in this.

D: I moved into Elmo in 1975...

JR: The year I started at Emery High.

D: ...and my children were little then, and I didn't hear a lot about it then, but as they got a bit older and getting ready to go to high school then it was always, "Oh they won't make it because they're not from South Emery". So see that was still going on. I had no idea at the time that there was ever a South Emery High School and a North Emery High School so I didn't understand and coming from Salt Lake City it seemed so ridiculous that these little towns were saying, that's one place and this is another.

JR: I kind of laughed about that. Another thing that was uniting, and I have to put this in here, there was one Emery Stake, and we knew...I think they carefully had...you know the stake president was from Castle Dale and they had a counselor from south Emery and a counselor from north Emery. I don't know who the president was, but I know the counselors was Frank Hall from Huntington and Rex Brotherson from Ferron. Give me a minute and I'll remember who the stake president was. Even when they took the Huntington Stake away, and it was the Castle Dale Stake that we were a member of, even then they made sure to get counselors and high council from the different communities.

D: When I moved in, it was President Curtis...

JR: See President Curtis was the president who interviewed me, Frank Hall interviewed me to go on a mission, but I can't remember who was president before him.

D: I mentioned this to Kent Powell as I was talking to him and he said that he thought that it was few individuals that hung on to it but mostly they agreed.

JR: I would have to agree, and I think the few individuals, if they were alive and middle age today, would have been that small minded still about the things that go on at Emery High School where you've got to be from Castle Dale to play a lead in the play or some foolish thing like that. It simply was not the case. It was funny to me, and I laughed about it because I had gone all the way from having my whole basketball team from the north side of the county to most of the team from the south side of the county. It was hilarious to me that they had such short memories. I remember getting criticized because we had lost some games, and frankly I really enjoyed coaching when our team wasn't supposed to do very well and did, because I took credit for that. I was arrogant over it, but when we were really good and then stumbled, that was really painful. Then I was a worthless jerk. The attitude is if the kids are playing well and if you lose, it's the dumb coaches fault. (Laughs)

D: Let's go to when you started in high school, I want to hear your stories about teaching. You moved in and what were you hired to teach?

JR: I came to Emery High School to teach English and Spanish. VarLynn Peacock was spread way too thin. Spanish class was too big so they gave me a Spanish class, and I'm absolutely ashamed at how poor I was at teaching Spanish. No let me explain that to you by asking since you speak English are you qualified to teach English? That's why I was teaching Spanish. I had never sat down in a classroom and studied Spanish; I did not understand the...

D: Did you speak Spanish?

JR: I spoke fluent Spanish, and I served a mission in Mexico. I had been to what was then called the LTM, you spent six weeks learning the language and six weeks learning six very set word for word lessons that we memorized and gave. I had never studied Spanish. But I'm going to brag again, I learned to speak Spanish proficiently enough that I had a Mexican companion who was Anglo who lived in the Mormon colonies. We were actually assigned to be companions because we played semi-pro basketball together. Wrap your mind around that in 2011, but in 1967-8, the Olympics were in Mexico City, and we played semi-pro basketball and you'd be shocked at the publicity we got. I should let you photograph my scrapbook, it is amazing.

D: I would love that.

JR: But the Mexican kid spoke Spanish, I mean he grew up in Mexico. He actually came to Utah and graduated from BY High, BY High School and ended up playing on the Mexican Olympic team, he was an Anglo. He and I looked a lot alike, we were about the same size and after the dust had kind of settled from our basketball games we were teaching in a couple of different homes, they confused

me with the Mexican. They thought that I was the Mexican and he was the American. He actually had dual citizenship but his ecclesiastical vocabulary was not as accomplished as mine because he went to church in English in the Mormon colony. And today if you go to the temple, it says The House of the Lord in English on the Mormon Colony Temple in Casas Grandes. But anyway, in street level Spanish, he murdered me, I sounded like a hick from Utah. But ecclesiastically speaking, they thought I was Mexican. I had a trainer--the irony is his name was Elder Trainer. I had a trainer in the Language Training Mission that I'm giving the lesson to and he said, "Stop, stop, stop. Hey come here, and I want you to hear this." And he called people in to hear this kid, and I started giving this memorized dialog, and he said, "That's how the Lord teaches Spanish here".

Can I put church stuff on this tape?

D: Oh you bet.

JR: I was set apart to be a missionary by Bruce R. McConkie, he was a shirt tail relative. He and my mother were first cousins. When I arrived up there, and they were assigning us, I asked the guy, "Will you send me to Bruce R. McConkie we're shirt tail relatives?" When I got in there, he knew me, "You're Ruth's boy! Oh you were the basketball player. You're the guy that ran track." He put his hands on my head and blessed me with the gift of tongues, and it worked. I sat in those classes going, "Why can't these people get this, they just taught us that yesterday?" But he didn't bless me with the gift of memorizing. When I had to start memorizing, I started skipping breakfast and trying to memorize what I had to pass off that day, but I had the gift of tongues.

Okay, that's the end of my Spanish speech, back to teaching. That did not make me a good Spanish teacher, I taught Spanish one year, and I was terrible. I should apologize to everybody I taught Spanish to. But I taught English; at one point when the high school grew, I actually sold my prep grade and taught English seven periods a day. There was a time that I taught seven Honors English classes. I did not live in the real world, everybody that was in the class was there because they wanted to be. They were anxious to learn. They'd beat up their own mother for one more point in my class, and I had such an incredibly wonderful experience teaching school. When the school started shrinking down, and I had to go back to teaching main stream classes, I had to come back into the real world who weren't so highly motivated. Another really interesting thing--I can't believe I was this lucky--I arrived at the school when we could issue English credits from classes, and the students could select the class they were taking. You could take Honors English or you could choose English that was Novels; you had to take a Writing and a Literature Class. So you could take Writing I, II or III; you could take Short Stories, Novels, Western Literature, Comic Literature, Poetry. They had all these choices. I taught British Literature under the umbrella of which I taught Shakespeare's plays, and I loved Shakespeare. I think I taught kids to like Shakespeare.

D: Oh you did, I know you did.

JR: I just can't even explain how lucky I feel to have had that opportunity, to teach something that I love to people who loved being there.

D : Everybody I know loved you as a teacher. I have to tell you that my youngest son signed up for a class, I can't remember what it was, from you, he was a sophomore and it was all seniors. Sam Grimes... He had struggled in school with ADHD, and the schools were having problems with accommodations for that...

JR: It was really difficult when it was first identified, we didn't know what to do with it.

D : Yeah and so I was trying to work with the school and see what we could do to help him because he felt so stupid, and he went into your class and you said, "Are you sure you should be in here, this is a class of seniors and they've all had writing classes. Nnever mind, I will walk you through every step of it if I have to."

JR: I remember the words I said, "I will take you by the hand and lead you through".

D : That elevated his self-esteem, I can't believe, that just made all the difference in the world and he got good grades in your class.

JR: I have to comment on that story, and I don't remember Sam specifically, but I remember exactly when I started teaching sophomores. Now at Monticello High School I taught 9th and 10th graders, I was so shocked to come to Emery High School and jump into juniors only; it was a totally different breed of animal. I mean by then, they had their feet on the ground, they knew what they were doing. It was not a shock to have homework; I loved teaching juniors. Well then we started...and again he was there when you could choose your classes--well he comes in and chooses a class from me and frankly I hadn't taught sophomores. I taught another sophomore who came in and yes I said, "Are you sure you should be here? Aaaa, don't worry we'll get you through this." But I had sophomores who came in and said, "Gee I don't know if I can take this". I even had a parent come in and say, "I'm really worried, I've got a sophomore in your British literature Shakespeare class, she's been a pretty good student, I hope she's not going to mess up her GPA." She ended up being the top student in my Shakespeare class so I did kind of have to repent and come to grips with the fact that sophomores were human beings too. But it didn't take me very long to learn, and I'm saying that--can I say another thing why? If you listen to this tape, you will hear me jumping all over. I tell people I have ADHD too. I can't focus on one thing because my mind travels to all of these things. While I've been doing this history, I've been reminded of stories that I've been delighted to tell you, and they have nothing to do with what we're talking about. But I think I kept kids entertained and focused on me, and I'd even say, "Stare at my nose." And I had the same stories that I'd tell at the same place every year, and if you had to repeat my class, oh no, here is that story. (Laughing)

D : Well we did have an accommodations meeting, and you came in there because he was struggling in a lot of the classes. He couldn't take a timed test, things like that that you know all about now but then...

JR: We didn't know.

D: They didn't know much, so we had this accommodation meeting and you said, "Why are having this? He's a sophomore in class of seniors and he's getting an A, what are we doing in here?"

JR: I'm not surprised that was taking place, but the thing is too that sophomore tended to be idiots, well the biggest idiot in the class was me. I'll tell you a story of Neil Peacock, he said, "I was giving this test and somebody was interrupting my class so bad that they finally asked me if I could get this person interrupting the class out so they could do their work" so I left. (Laughing) And I'm a little that way, I was full of hot air and horse manure and kept things moving and I think students...

D: That's not the only thing, it's because you cared about the kids. He got a good grade out of you because he felt like you cared about him so he wanted to try, there was a whole different...

JR: I worried about them. I guarantee you he earned the grade. I used to say, "I wouldn't give my own mother a grade." They come in the first day and I'd say, "So what's your grade today?" and they'd go "Well an A, I've got an A." I'd say, "You have zero out of zero points, you're getting an F, from here on you're going to build a grade." And they did. If a kid was failing, I usually felt like it was my fault too. There were some kids frankly that you couldn't work with but if a kid was willing to try for it, I'd work myself to death for them.

D: I just wanted to tell you, I know you've heard a zillion times that you're marvelous.

JR: I appreciate that but since you brought that up I'm going to tell you something that I did learn. I didn't even know what dyslexia was when I was studying to be a teacher, but I discovered that there were kids who had dyslexia and I discovered it was a real issue with them. So then the next thing that I'd do, and I gave a lot of notes and I tried to teach note taking. If I knew a kid was dyslexic, I'd watch that kid, I'd make a statement and watch that kid take notes. When he'd stop writing and look up, I talked again. I had to do that to accommodate dyslexic kids and I discovered that. I had a mother come in and tell me, "Hey my kid's starting to have trouble in my class, he's dyslexic." I go, "What? I didn't know this." So I then watched that kid and sometimes I even felt like I'd go around it in my lecture, I would lecture to one or two kids, I had to train myself to lecture to the whole class. But if I had a dyslexic kid, basically he got my lecture and the rest of you can listen in and take notes. That was something I had to train myself to do because I didn't understand it. The attention deficit, if you're full of life and having fun--if a kid kind of loses attention, he'll miss out on something everybody else is laughing about and I think that helps keep their focus too.

D: I am very grateful to you.

JR: Thank you.

D : So tell me some stories of school teaching.

JR: Do you want me to tell you my Bill Jorgensen stories? Very fun and frankly it's a good thing it took place in the 70's and 80's or we'd both still be in the penitentiary. We had this very friendly rivalry. He was so funny, and I like to think that I was funny, and we recruited kids to do strange and funny things. Even Michael Mower, who sits in the State Capitol Building and has an office next door to the governor, participated in these. The funny thing is, a kid would come in my class and be on my side and a couple of periods later you'd go in Bill Jorgensen's class and be on Bill's side. But strange things...

D : How did it get started, do you know?

JR: I don't know. We were always just goofing around, and we were always such good friends. We played basketball on the same county league teams and adult teams, and he was an assistant coach when I was playing basketball in high school. We were just really good friends. I don't know, we harassed each other--we made fun of each other.

D : Was Grace Johansen teaching when you were...

JR: Oh Yeah and she thought we were disgusting. (Laughing) For example we ran some wires around the classroom where you couldn't see them and put steel wool and if you put steel wool across a battery it will spark, it will literally catch fire and burn. Well in this book we put steel wool, wires on each side of the steel wool and fire crackers in the middle in Bill's room and we tried to get it to go and it wouldn't go and pretty soon he goes, "I smell something burning." And finally one of the kids that was helping me but they were in his class and waiting for the fire crackers to go off, crawled up--and we had them up above the closet in those old classrooms. I stored stuff illegally there. Anyway, they caught us but somehow they got fire crackers to go off above my closet.

Michael Mower was small in high school and I had Michael Mower unlock a window and then when Bill went home for lunch we went outside, opened the window, put Mower through it and he went and stacked all of his books up against the door so when Bill came and opened the door the books fell on him. (Laughing) He used to give quizzes--you need to know that Bill Jorgensen is an amazing math teacher, I mean we won state math contests for life. He'd give the kids a quiz, they'd take the quiz, turn in their scores and then they tore their quizzes up in little tiny pieces, put them in the garbage can. A kid knocked on the door, opened the garbage can and threw the garbage can on me with all these little pieces. So I had a little kid that worked at the shredder over at the mining office and he went and got a garbage sack full of shredded computer paper when it was all hooked together and went through printer in one piece and was folded, we put that--when Bill went home for lunch-- we got in his room, and we put that shredded computer paper up to the point when we got the yearbook people to take a picture of it, I sat in Bill's desk, and she took a picture at the doorway, she had to move the stuff that was hanging from the lights to see me to take a picture, that's how full it was. (Laughing)

I went in my classroom once, opened the door and turned around to unlock the door because I opened the door from one side and unlocked it from the backside and I saw something out of the corner

of my eye. When I turned around my desk, that you could not move, was hanging from the beams with a lariat. (Laughing) I had to get help, it took half a dozen big strong boys to lower the desk and carry it back where it went, I can't even imagine how they lifted that. I turned around and here is my desk, eye high, the feet on the legs of the desk are eye high to me.

The funniest thing I did--I was the track coach and I had a starting pistol. They were designed-- the cartridges that you shoot-- are designed to put out a lot of smoke so you can see the smoke and start a stop watch without waiting for the sound to get to you, and I can't remember what day it was-- I don't know what he'd done, but I went in and I said, "I've had all I can take, I can't take it any longer, I'm sick of this." I pulled out the starting pistol, pointed it at Bill and shot it, and it was loud and there was a lot of smoke. Well Bill saw me up there, and he was going to push away from his desk and without planning this at all--you couldn't have planned it to happen this well, Bill pushed himself away from his desk and his chair tipped over so just as I shot, Bill fell on the floor. A kid was at his desk getting help --he was from East Carbon and he said, "When people shoot people out at East Carbon, they're real bullets." He jumped from the desk and he had to have covered 10-15 feet and slammed his head into the blackboard, and Bill then starts crawling back up and looks over his desk, and he's laughing so hard and I'm laughing so hard I can hardly stand it and students were panic stricken! One girl dropped out on the floor to the side of the desk and knelt down with her hands over her face. And then when she saw that he was alive, and I was laughing and Bill was laughing. She was so mad that she wanted to kill us both. That's the worst one, if we did that in 2011, we'd have to go to the penitentiary. (Laughing)

D: I wanted to finish up with this story because Bill told me what had happened is Swinburne had come into the lunchroom where you were playing ping pong and said that he had read in newspaper about somebody that got mad at the principal and said, "I can't take this anymore." and shot him. And Bill said, "When I saw JR stand at the desk, and I saw this crowd of kids behind him, and then he told pulled this pistol out, it just clicked, I knew what he was going to do so as soon as he pulled that pistol out and shot, I fell dead."

JR: I have to admit it was very, very good. Another story, and this is a better story than was the event itself, but this is Tammy George Lucero, who's the county official in Uintah now, came to my door with a big beautiful lemon meringue pie ,but she came in and had this glint in her eye. She walked in my classroom, and I had a podium that I taught behind and a table at the front and for some reason I just didn't feel comfortable with her carrying that pie. She didn't have it in two hands like she was going to set it down; she had it turned over with her palm on it like she was going to throw it. So I started dodging her and low and behold, she threw the pie. I hate to admit it, but I had an Afro in those days, and she got the pie kind of in the side of my Afro so I ran to the door, (Laughing) I was going to go clean up and down that hall was outside waiting for me to come out with my face full of pie. They were disappointed that I was quick on my feet on that day. I think Bill had promised her five bucks for it. He hired her to pie me, and it didn't work.

D: It sounds like you had so much fun. The kids, I know had to have loved that.

JR: We got in trouble, not for shooting him but for all of the shredded computer paper because it took two classes an entire class period to clean it up. Mr. Swinburne told us it was probably time we made a truce so we didn't do anything that bad after that. We had too much fun before that. Another interesting thing is he had his students--he had a very artistic math student who would draw pictures of me, fat with a chicken leg in my hand and tried to name me Jelly Belly, but it didn't stick very much. But that picture ended up in the yearbook. It was an extra credit in Bill's class. It was so funny, I hung it my class. It stayed up there for a couple of years and made a yearbook or two. A caricature of me with Coach Nelson and my coaching uniform and an Afro but eating a big chicken wing or probably a turkey leg I guess.

D: So you coached the track team and Bill also coached?

JR: No, by the time I got to Emery High School, Bill--I think I became an assistant coach, and Bill retired from coaching. I was only assistant coach with Ben Arnold for one year and then didn't start coaching until 1980. I came in 75. I coached track during those years. I helped coach football. I was an assistant football coach for years and years and coached track for years and years. I coached basketball, I think from 1980. I believe I was a coach in 1990 too, so for about a 10 year period. I think my son graduated in 91, I might be wrong, it might be 90. I didn't coach when my son was a senior so that was my basketball coaching career. I coached track after that, I drove bus a little to the meets and the games and things. I coached and was the athletic director for long enough that the Utah High School Activities Association gave a lifetime high school association athletic pass to people who had coached or been in athletics for 25 years, and I qualified for that easy. So I have a lifetime pass to high school tournaments, and if they are league or playoff games, I have a pass to get in. I use it a lot.

D: How cool. One more question I wanted to ask about something you said. When you went on your mission, you and this guy were semi-pro basketball players, how did that come about, what does that even mean?

JR: Well we played in a very competitive basketball league in Monterrey, Mexico. Some of the players were paid, and they were paid to go around the country and play. Now we couldn't go so therefore our team didn't go anywhere. At one time, our coach was trying to get permission for us to go to Chihuahua which was about 24 hours by bus; it was a long bus ride. That didn't happen but the story is this John Hatch played basketball in the summer Olympics in 1968 and in those Olympics, they kept calling him John Hatch the Mormon kid, and our mission president who was Robert E. Wells, later became a member of the seventies, was an authority after he served as mission president, was a real publicity person. This John Hatch got assigned to our mission and spoke Spanish. He was at the Language Training Mission only long enough to learn lessons, and the mission president sent me--I played freshman basketball at Utah State--and another kid in our mission named Larry Thorn had played freshman basketball the year before, then this John Hatch came in who had played on the Olympic team. The three of us joined this semi-pro team, and I still remember the name, they were the Cats. (Speaks



Spanish) which means Technical Improvement Center, it's a school and we were the Mountain Cats, and we won, we won the league.

D: This was something your mission president assigned you to do?

JR: Assigned us to do, yep, and the thing is the headlines in the sports section when Elder Hatch arrived in our mission were "The Mexican Olympian has arrived at Monterrey". And boy after that, it was "The Mormons and John Hatch, or The Mormons." We won the league, we were undefeated and the irony is, I was so out of shape and hadn't played basketball for so long and neither had Larry Thorn that we were ineffective to begin with. We were out of shape, and we didn't play well. I told the mission president that I wish I was in shape because I am so stiff I can hardly walk, and if I were in shape, we'd do better. But we played the National School of Physical Education. They came from Mexico City to Monterrey to have a tournament in a great big gym. I am going to say it's the size of the Carbon High School gym. It was not as nice as the Emery High. There was standing room only; you couldn't even get in it. And we defeated that team three nights running. It made tons of money; it paid for them, you know we don't get paid, we're missionaries. Then they brought--it might have been the Mexican, not the Olympic Team but the Mexican National Team to Monterrey. I think they had these publishers thinking they could make a lot of money doing this, we beat the National School of Physical Education. But in came the National Team, and we couldn't beat them. (Laughing) They were better than we were. I remember guarding a guy named Melton Brinkerhoff, now that name is Scandinavian, but he was just as Mexican looking as you can be. He was 6'8" and probably weighed about 240. I was 6'5" and my best mission weight may have been 210, I lost a lot of weight because I became ill. We couldn't compete with the national team.

D: That sounds like a dream to go on a mission to play basketball. (Laughs)

JR: It was unbelievable, and if you think about that in 2011--I don't think you're even allowed to play three on three. You can't play full court, so it was amazing. It was a lot of fun. I've told my wife, we've had such a great life, we cannot complain. We're retired, we have money.

D: That's great and now you have a job that I can tell you're throwing your whole self into...

JR: And it drives me nuts, there are some days that I wish I were somewhere else. (Laughs)

D: Thank you so much, I really appreciate talking to you.

JR: Thanks for having me; that was fun.

