

This is Kathy Roghair and I am interviewing Dick Nelson. Today is February 18, 1992 and we are in Eden Wyoming.

Kathy—Do you remember how your parents first heard of Eden, Wyoming?

Dick. As far as I know they heard of it from a Land Development Company in Omaha, Nebraska and they came up here and bought land from here and they advertised in Omaha, Nebraska.

Kathy: Ok, so they were

Dick: That was my dad?

Kathy: Were they farming in Nebraska then?

Dick: Dad was. Mom was more in Colorado.

Kathy: Did he meet her up here then?

Dick: Yes.

Kathy: Do you know when they moved out here?

Dick: I think Dad came out here in 1921 and Mother a year or so later I think, I am not sure. She came up here to teach school.

Kathy: Oh she did? That was my next question is why they came out here.

Dick: Yea, that is why they stopped. That is why a lot of them stopped here in the Valley because of the schoolteachers—it seemed like, in the old days.

Kathy: Do you know or did they ever talk about their impressions of what it was like when they first moved out here? Did they like it?

Dick: Oh! Not really. Just beginning country you know and Dad developed it out of sagebrush. He developed a little section at a time and he had about 240 acres to start out with. No, it was 160 acres and then when we got my grandpa's place it went up to 240 and then uh. Actually my Grandpa, from Omaha, he bought it first but Dad followed him right out here at the same time because he said he came out here to kind of protect my Grandpa's investment. My Grandpa bought eighty acres and then my Dad came out at the same time and bought 160 acres. So they started out with that and then his brother came out and helped my Grandpa and Grandma and helped himself to get started out here.

Kathy: When was that, do you remember?

Dick: About 1921 I think, somewhere in there.

Kathy: Ok, So what was it like when you moved out?

Dick: Just sagebrush.

Kathy: Was it? Were they one of the first ones out here?

Dick: Ooh! Pretty much so. There were other people's projects already started, you know before they got here. The old Eden Valley Irrigation District. But uh. No. There weren't very many here but they weren't the first ones here either. Fiscus, Dearth's and Trovoton were ahead of and I don't know who else.

Kathy: There must have been a few if she taught school then. What grades did she teach?

Dick: Well, She taught the—what there was I guess, the first four or first six or whatever there was up here where Van Meter's house is was. That little log house there was the first school and that's it up there now. They moved that up to Farson when they consolidated and that is the house where Frank Webb used to live. It is the first one on the right as you go into the school. That was the first school. It is a log house underneath the siding.

Kathy: Ok. What was it like when you were growing up here?

Dick: Oh! I don't know. Not much difference then now, really, I guess. Went to school on a school bus just like the kids do now, you know. A lot smaller school bus. They used to have one school bus and they had two trips. They would pick up one group from the south end and then, divide it up. Well. We weren't consolidated with Farson then. It was just Eden Valley—Eden end of it went to school here. And they would pick us up in this little station wagon-van thing. They would pick us up and dump us off and that was all. Practically all through High School it was the same way. Although we got a bigger bus it was still two trips for Eden and then Farson didn't have a High School so they uh, they bussed their kids down here to go to High School in that, well in that where Van Meter's house is now. That was Eden School. High School. What I remember about that School bus was, it was kind of a like a panel body deal station wagon with a kind narrow high sided deal. Kids could stand up in it. It was so crowded we had to stand up some times in it. Girls sat on —there were two seats facing each other on each side, one on each side and the kids faced each other. Girls on one side and boys on the other and then the left overs stood in the middle until we got off.

Kathy: Were there a lot of kids here then:

Dick: Well it was such a small bus. But that was it. George Tressler was the bus driver. Yea. His place is where Ryan's are now.

Dick coughs :

Kathy: So did your Dad have any problems with the farming here? He had to plow it with the sagebrush?

Dick: Oh! He had uh problems with horses of course.

Kathy: Oh, he did!

Dick: He didn't have a tractor. Well he had an old Fordson tractor, but that was before my time. I don't remember the old Fordson tractor but in 1938 or 39 he got the first Ford????? (He is coughing a lot and Kathy asks if he needs a drink or something.) He had a disc plow he pulled with horses and he farmed with horses for years and years. Most people did hay with horses.

Kathy: How many acres?

Dick: That is when when started haying with tractors in 39, somewhere in there I think.

Kathy: So did you have the irrigation. Did you have the water here back then too.

Dick: Oh Yea! It was different canal system and they redid it after the Second World War. But they had the canal. (Not distinguishable. Dick is coughing.)

Kathy: So did your Dad build this house then?

Dick: Yea, he built it in 1928 and I was born in 1927 and lived that first year in that little log cabin out here. My folks lived in that at first. It was one room and it had a cave in the middle of the floor for food, you know, store can goods and stuff and it was just one room. And then in 28, well that was what they were living in when I was born and in 27 and then in 28 they got this house built and then moved into it.

Kathy: Do you have any brothers and sisters?

Dick: I have one brother. Bob. He's retired in Oregon now.

Kathy: So have you seen a lot of changes around here?

Dick: Well, it is pretty much the same except the government came in after the Second World War and developed a lot of land. Cleared it of sagebrush and sold to farmers all cleared and stuff and new project, new canal and reservoir, plus the old reservoir and then they consolidated the schools and now they send us up to Farson now both of them and uh, it seems like the last few years the thing that has changed to me is that there are more people coming in but they are working in town, smaller acreage. Used to be just farming and nothing else here but now it is people live on the farm and work somewhere else, it seems like, it seems like to me.

Kathy: Why did you decide to stay?

Dick: Well, my folks came out here and always planned on, I don't know nothing else to do I guess. They stayed and then when I got old enough to farm I always figured on using this as a stepping-stone. Getting out of debt and moving on but I never did get out of debt enough to move on, I guess. You know to have a down payment onto something better and bigger and now I don't care to move. This place has been home for so many years. Sometimes my Dad, I don't know, just determined to stay. Just determined to make it. No matter how bad it was. It was bad during the Thirties, of course during the depression and uh, which I don't remember much about of course.

Kathy: Did they have a rough time?

Dick: Yea. Really hard. Apparently not as bad as maybe other people. We were always so poor anyway. (Laughs)

Kathy: Yea, how do you like living in Eden then?

Dick: Oh it is alright. I always wanted to----- somewhere else like in Walton Colorado but I am too old too change.

Kathy? I guess that is it then.

Dick: I don't know what to say.

Kathy: Ok, could you tell me more about the school?

Dick: Well, when I first started school there was two rooms—tape skips—then when I went to Rock Springs High School—tape skips—four rooms and uh had two high school teachers and two grade school teachers, and one of the teachers, during the second world war she got called back to teach because she had quit for years and then during the second world war they kind of got short of teachers or something, they were hard to get so she took correspondence courses to get refreshed on here accreditation and stuff like that and she taught uh the second ???grades I guess—fourth through eighth . Indistinguishable.

Kathy: Did she enjoy teaching?

Dick: Well yea, she taught. She was teaching in 45 when I went to the Navy and then it was—when I got back home she had quit and I went to college and we didn't have REA or electricity then for all those years. I don't think that electricity came into until after 1950, somewhere in that neighborhood, so we didn't have running water in the house or a bathroom or anything until I got out of college.

Kathy: You were telling me before how much it costs?

Dick: Oh! When Dad built this house, framed it with \$1500.00 he had. The living room wasn't finished inside and it wasn't insulated. Still isn't insulated really and uh, \$1500.00 and that was the cost of the house. Mom, she came up and she was a schoolteacher of course and Dad met her and she was boarded down and Dearth's (Ivan Dearth), out neighbor down here, and Dad courted her. Dad came up here from Omaha with an old----- touring car with a roadster with a canvas top. Quite proud of it. He used to ride up fourteen-mile hill without shifting gears down and he was quite proud of it. I don't remember riding in it. Before I got old enough to remember (indistinguishable)

Kathy: Did you guys always have to go into town and get groceries?

Dick: Yea, used to, in the old days when they had the dairy here in the Valley, Milk trucks would---tape skips----for a bus and they would go to town and shop and then when the milk truck would come back in the evening why then they would come back with he milk truck and bring our milk cans back and drop off cans in the evening. And all through High school that was one of the best ways of if you needed to go to town was to just ride with the milk truck driver and back home again. And it was a pretty good deal. I don't know if sometimes they would pay the milk truck driver fifty cents or something Like that, or a dollar. I don't think it was a dollar. Even fifty cents. The milk truck driver used to haul coal out here for everybody too. All the _____ and the grocery stores and stuff like that on the milk truck. The Eden Valley Dairy.

Kathy: Did you have a lot of milk cows?

Dick: Uh: About fifteen or so was all we ever had when we were milking by hand.

Tape Skips again and at this point the tape ends and according to Kathy's notes he agrees to reschedule another interview.

Second interview:

This is Kathy Roghair and I am going to interview Dick Nelson. Today in March 2 1992 and we are in Eden, Wyoming.

Ok! We are going to try this again since some of it got cut off the last time.

Kathy: Ok, Had you Dad ever been here before he moved out here.

Dick: No.

Kathy: Never had. Do you think it was what he expected it to be?

Dick: No.

Kathy: It wasn't?

Dick: No. They showed of corn and stuff being raised out here and had pictures of corn and stuff out here and of course we don't raise corn and he—

Kathy: Oh:

Dick: And he was from Nebraska so he was used to corn and stuff and he expected it to be a little more like Nebraska, I suppose.

Kathy: Yea. What did he raise?

Dick: Same as here. Alfalfa and small grains. Alfalfa, You use the grains to the alfalfa started.

Kathy: How long did it take to plow up all the acres?

Dick: Well, I don't know. He did a little bit every year. I don't know how many years it was. Quit a few I think. Probably did twenty or thirty acres a year, something like that. Maybe forty but that was about it, I think.

Kathy; Oh. Did he have to pay for the irrigation water like we do now?

Dick: Yes, I wasn't as much but they paid for it. I don't remember what it was but, I remember when the government, just before they gave the project over when the water was coming through the old system before they turned it into the new system I think it was \$1.00 an acre. But I don't know what it was before that. Maybe it was forty cents, as low as forty cents, maybe.

Kathy: Today it seems like the Valley revolves around the school. All the social activities and stuff. Was that so back then also?

Dick: Oh yea. More so back then than it is now because there wasn't any churches in the Valley. They had the Sunday school in the school and uh, it wasn't really church—Sunday school and the Christmas programs and plays were in the church—I mean the School. Dances were held in the School and uh, everything was held in the School, until they built the Community Hall. They Built the Community Hall during Roosevelt's term back in the Thirties so after that they had the School plays and stuff like that in the Community hall. Before that they used to have, uh, when I was a kid grade School was two rooms. I told you, remember. And in between those two rooms there was a folding door so you could open up the two rooms into one room and that is where they had dances and stuff in there, but between the two rooms they put a little platform up and that was stage and they had their little plays on that little stage between the two rooms. And then they sat in the one room and the stage was between the two rooms.

Kathy: How often did they have plays?

Dick: Oh, maybe once a year besides, plus the Christmas programs. Not like now. They were a little less than now.

Kathy: Do you remember when the Churches first came? Which one was first?

Dick: This log cabin was the first that I know off. The one that the Episcopal Church is in now. I think it was built in the Thirties sometime, but I don't remember just exactly when. That was the first one and then I think the Baptists were the ones that started next and then the Catholics and the Mormons after that.

Kathy: Ok, so that is, I was going to ask what did they do for entertainment?

Dick: They had a lot of dances. My folks played in the band. They were the band of the Valley. My Mom and my Dad and Clarence Jensen and a couple others. They were the band and they had dances at least once month or so and sometimes every two weeks. They didn't have any TV or anything, but dances. My Dad was a American Legion Member and they had a Legion Meeting once a month and we would always go there. It seems like the American Legion was always sponsoring the dances and stuff like that so he was in the orchestra and when they had dances everybody would go to them of course. The families and everybody. Kids would go to sleep and the parents would dance. They didn't have any whiskey or alcohol in the inside either but. They may have had some out in the car maybe, but none inside.

Kathy: Yea. I was going to ask you if you could tell me more about the Eden Valley Dairy?

Dick: Oh, it was started by members here in the Valley. My Dad wasn't really a member of it. They bought stocks in it. Bob Greg and Ivan Dearth, Ed Sass and Dwight Joslin I think and a few of them bought stock in it and they built kind of a co-op deal and then they built the dairy in Rock Springs where they processed the milk and uh, when they needed milk they would get it from extra guys like my Dad. Sometimes you could sell milk and sometimes you couldn't. But it was a hard one because the dairy wasn't making that much money. Sometimes they were three and four months behind on their pay checks to the farmers and it was hard. Dearth used to have the most cows and Bob Greg. They were the two main dairymen. They had a lot of cows. Dad never had, fifteen head was the most he ever had. Usually about ten head, and it used to be situated there, oh, by the Bank court building Rock Springs, there, right across the street from the old First Security Bank was where the dairy was, right across the street there in the same block as the Bi-Rite Drug Store is now that is where the Dairy was.

Kathy: Do you remember what years?

Dick: No, I don't remember.

Kathy: Ok,

Dick: Possibly the thirties and forties I know.

Kathy: Would your dad have livestock?

Dick: Yea, one time he had three hundred and some head of sheep and then a few dairy cows and that was it, and then he had horses of course to farm with.

Kathy: He had three hundred sheep?

Dick: Yea, at one time.

Kathy: Was that profitable back then or about like today?

Dick: I don't know, no more than it is now I don't figure. The dairy was perhaps the most moneymaking deal even though it was always behind. It was a monthly paycheck. It was always handed out month-to-month it seems so that dairy was the best.

Kathy: Then why did it shut down then?

Dick: Oh, it wasn't making that much money and they sold out interest to Hearst Dairy. It was a competitive Dairy there privately owned by Hearst across and then we started shipping to Hearst, And it was in Rock Springs there too, and then I don't know how many years we sold to them there Not too long. And then Cream-Of-Weber bought them out and we started shipping down to Ogden and then over to Rawlins and -----
----- . And that was the best years for the Dairy was when we were with Cream-Of -Weber. We joined then sometimes after—oh, about 1949 we joined the Cream-of -Weber and that was the best dairy. They treated us good. We made more money there and then when they talked us into going to Denver we went down hill and didn't do any good in Denver.

Kathy: Last time you were telling me about riding to town on the milk truck. That was about when it got cut off.

Dick: Oh yea, the milk truck was like a-- it wasn't a covered van or anything like that. We shipped milk in ten gallon and five gallon milk cans and when they, when the milk truck was built it was a two sides on each side and you put the milk cans in the rack on each side and then in the middle of the truck was a big main compartment. And they loaded up the cans in the morning when they were heavy and put them in the main compartment down below and when they dumped the milk and washed the cans they put them in the upper side compartments. And so then they could haul coal and groceries home to the grocery store and then people used to use the milk truck as a bus. A way or transportation to get to town. And then even milk truck driver sometimes would even offer and in fact, he used to even pick up stuff that people would order. If you wanted something in town and he would pick it up for us and bring it out. And we worked it that way.

Kathy: And I was wondering too. When did they build the new highway?

Dick: The one now? Oh! Do you remember Mom? In the sixties I think. Maybe they started in the fifties but I don't think they finished up much before the sixties.

Kathy: Why did they change the spot?

Dick: More room I guess and less winding. You know where it was before by the Wells? I guess they shortened it up. A new right of way, I guess.

Kathy: Ok, I was wondering. You said too that your Mom and Dad lived in a one-room log house.

Dick: Yea, Out here. We made a garage out of it

Kathy: Ok, Did he build that himself?

Dick: Yea, he used to go up to the mountains with the horses and a wagon and haul poles out of the mountains with the horse team and a wagon to build it.

Kathy? How long did it take them?

Dick: I don't know. It would take a couple of days to get up there and then a couple of days to come home and then a day or two up there getting logs. But they really got more poles than logs. They weren't that heavy although my Grandpa's log house was bigger poles and logs. But really that log cabin that I lived in was more of a pole size log. They went into what they used to call Bear Trap where they used to go in to get them. And uh, went up with a team and a wagon and hauled them that way. We built a log barn, a dairy barn with hauled logs too that they hauled out of the mountains with horses and wagon. It just had a straw roof on it. And in the spring when the snow would melt or when it would rain it would rain for a week after. Laughs. The roof would leak.

Kathy: What did they heat with?

Dick: Coal. Stove in the living room most of my life.

Kathy: And what do you heat with now?

Dick: I got a stoker-matic now with the coal that is ----- . And the kitchen stove was coal too. And it wasn't until propane came in after 19--, well we were a little later maybe but the first, boy, I don't know when we got our propane stove. Forties. Late forties I guess we bought our first propane stove. Electricity we didn't have until about 1950 or something like that. 49 I guess it was. No. The REA came in. We had a big light plant when we first went to dairying in 1949 and then we were a couple of years

that way and then the REA finally came in and then we had electricity after that. So that was the first time. It wasn't until 1950 that we had water in the house and stuff like that.

Kathy: Did that make a big difference then?

Dick: Oh, yes. Made it handier. Especially taking a bath, sitting in that big round tub----

Kathy: Well, do you remember a really bad winter?

Dick: There was a bad one they say in 1927-28 but that was when I was born so I don't remember, but in 1936 there was nearly as bad a one I remember and that winter I remember we went to school with a horse sled. The folks would haul us down to the corner down there, Harrison's corner with a horse and sled and they would pick us up and take us to school there from there. Sometimes we wouldn't get home, well, I remember one night. Well, most of the time we got home. Once we stayed overnight at Van Meter's house. We didn't make it home because of the blizzard. But that was the worst one until 1949 and then 72 or something like that was the next one. The first bad one I remember was 1936 my dad went to the Veterans Hospital and my Mom and us kids and the hired hand were here alone and, Winter didn't start until after February I think it was when winter got started but, boy, it blew and really got bad in hurry and once it started. That was the first bad one I remember in 1936.

Kathy: Did you have propane then?

Dick: No, we didn't have propane then. That was still coal.

Kathy: Do you think you are able to cope with it a little better now?

Dick: The weather?

Kathy: Yes.

Dick: You have a big tractor and you got your modern car and stuff now and my folks—it was hard to go anywhere because the heaters in the cars weren't very good in those days you know and use a salt sack to try to keep the windshields clean so you could see through them and stuff like that, you know. They weren't too good of cars. My folks had a 1928 Hudson and a 1933 Pontiac and a Grandpa had a, I don't know what year Model A and that was about the size of our car travel. Until the Second World War he got a Ford pick-up -----The first new car that I remember that he had. The first new vehicle since he moved out here. Everything else was used up until then. They got that new pick-up after the Second World War. They started making cars. During the War they didn't make cars and then after the Second World War then Dad got the pick-up. Before that we just had the Model A's and the 28 Hudson. It was a pretty good car. We had a Terrapane. That is what we called the Terrible Pain. And the Pontiac, we had a 33 Pontiac, nice running car but you had to push it to get it started all time. It wouldn't start by itself. You had to push it to get it started. We used to haul our coal out of the

milk trucks and horses. Put the cans on the side rack and haul the coal out in the bottom part. It wouldn't pass health inspection nowadays, I imagine, but that is the way it was. They would haul groceries to the stores all the time in the milk truck too. Stores would get their groceries through the milk truck hauling them out.

Kathy: Like the Farson Merc?

Dick: Farson Merc, mainly. The Eden Store too, yea.

Kathy: How long has that been here? The Eden Store.

Dick: It's has been there quite awhile. Down there where Buckendorf's are. That is where it was. Dill's built his after for the Post Office. Now they moved it from down there in the late fifties I guess it was. Before that it used to be at the Wellington's store there by the Buckendorf's. That Duke Wellington had a store there and of course the Farson Merc was up at Farson all the time.

Kathy: Did they have a lot of groceries there?

Dick: Oh no, It was a supply I guess. People still like to shop in town. People out here didn't get to town that much and you could trade eggs for groceries and stuff. And a lot of times the Farson Merc would take grain and stuff like that to pay the grocery bill. Pay with grain and then he would sell the grain or you could take eggs in on groceries and stuff in like that. Of course, very few people bought milk in those days because everybody had a milk, some milk cows and their own chickens. So they didn't have to buy eggs, or buy, milk or buy meat. A lot of people gardened perhaps.-----

Kathy: Was you Mom able to grow a garden.

Dick; Yes and No. It got discouraging. At the first they did but towards the end there it seems like it freezes out. You try it and it ends up freezing out and it isn't worth the effort it seems like. Some people grew more. My folks didn't grow that much. Back in the thirties, back in the depression they grew turnips and they got so sick and tired of eating turnips that they wouldn't eat them any more.

Kathy: Well. I guess that is it then.