THE FORGOTTEN FRUITWAY: FOLK PERSPECTIVES ON FRUIT FARMING ON
THE PROVIDENCE BENCH, 1940-1980

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

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by

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At one time, Providence, Utah, was well-known for its fruit production, especially on the north and south benches, but changes in population growth patterns, technology, and local economy have dramatically reduced reliance on agriculture and have completely eliminated fruit farming on the benches. In order to capture a slice of Providence history which is quickly disappearing from public memory, this thesis relies on a series of interviews I conducted with former workers on the fruit farms in the Providence bench area. Through their memories of their work and childhoods, I set out a folk history which focuses on family and worker relationships, gender roles, and work techniques. Throughout the entire body of work, I pull from a variety of genres and themes within the field of folklore to answer my research question of what fruit farming entailed and the importance it played in the lives of the farmers, their families, the workers, and the community.
I begin with sections of historical ethnography in order to transport the reader into a time past and to convey the nature of these farmers’ and workers’ lives and occupations. The voices of my informants have a large role in shaping the history through their commentaries and personal narratives about this period. I continue with further textual analysis of the informants’ personal narratives about work and childhood, using theories of children’s folklore and oral narrative to discuss trickster tales and their role in my informants’ lives and their life histories. This analysis further focuses on power relationships and gender roles, while acting as a collection of occupational and children’s folklore as revealed through my informants’ interviews. I also draw on psychoanalytic interpretations of gender roles within work. I also discuss teenage relationships, flirting, and jokes about sexuality during this time period through this theoretical lens. My analysis concludes where it started: with the stories and their nostalgic themes, drawing the body of this thesis back to a discussion of life, land, and family and the nature of the stories told about these themes now. Throughout, this folk history relies on the present to understand the past, and by way of the nostalgic quality of all of the stories told by my informants, the past defines the present.

(219 pages)
PUBLIC ABSTRACT

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on the Providence Bench, 1940-1980

Amy C. Maxwell

As a whole, Cache Valley, Utah, residents have experienced dramatic changes in population size and economy over the last century. Providence, Utah, was once characterized by the farmers that worked the land surrounding it. The importance of agriculture has especially declined due to expanding urbanization. Despite these changes, Providence residents are aware of and celebrate their history. The purpose of this thesis is to add to the official account of local history. I attempt to capture a segment of the agricultural economy that often goes uncelebrated in current histories—fruit farming. Alongside the oft-cited sugar beet and pea production was a rich, small-fruit-and-berry economy, at one time a large part of Providence’s identity as an agricultural community.

The main body of my research relied on interviews with farmers’ children and those who once worked for them as adolescents and teenagers. Although the scope of this project was not large enough to include interviews with all of the farmers on the bench, the hope is that the conglomeration of the stories from this select group will be true to the experiences and community that once existed up on the bench, and that the results can be enjoyed by future Providence residents as the current generation passes on. This work is also applicable to and intended for those interested in the agricultural traditions of the past, which have declined across Cache Valley, Utah, and the nation.
DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my parents, Harry and Patti, who always encouraged me to aim higher and keep learning, while inspiring me with their own creativity and curiosity. They passed on the heritage of education and hard work given to them by their parents and grandparents. Also to my grandparents, Eddie and Win Peterson, who continue to be two of my biggest fans and hugely supported me throughout my education. Finally to my husband, Jeff, who gives me a reason to work and live.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to first thank Dr. Steve Siporin for his unfailing encouragement of and enthusiasm for my project. His insistence that I take my time and do my best work led to a product that I feel proud of. Also, thank you to Brad Cole and Lisa Gabbert for their direction, advice, and input, which shaped and completed this project. Many thanks to Robert Parsons for his help navigating the Fife Folklore Archives and introducing me to Providence’s history and people.

This project would never have gotten off the ground the way I had hoped without Jacob Thomas and his mother, Janalee. Thank you for speaking up when I asked my classmates if they knew anyone who had picked berries. I am incredibly grateful to the others I interviewed for opening their homes, memories, and hearts to me. I truly hope I did their stories justice in the pages that follow.

And finally, a huge thank you to my husband, Jeffrey Howard, without whom my thesis may have still been a tangled mess. Thanks for acting as a sounding board and editor along the way, not to mention personal chef and housekeeper in the last few weeks of drafting.

Amy C. Maxwell
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Ten minutes south of Logan, Utah, home of Utah State University, lies the town of Providence. It’s the model of modern suburbia, with new homes set on quarter acre lots and the promise of construction. Despite the growth, at the heart of the town lies the memory of its roots in the forms of historic homes and buildings and a pioneer chapel. The homes give off a vintage flavor not only through their style but also the acre-large plots attached to them. These are not the product of recent sprawl. This downtown area of Providence is the section of town that is still recognizable to many of the town’s aging citizens.

Providence, Utah was first settled in 1880 by a group of Mormon settlers relocating from the Ogden area (Providence History Committee 1974, 10). They cultivated the land and set up commerce and industry in the area over the next several years. “Anxious to fulfill the prophecy that ‘the desert shall blossom as the rose,’ farmers such as Wilford Woodruff devoted extensive energy to developing apples, peaches, and pears suited to the Utah climate” (Cheney 2012, 35). In accordance with the suggestion by LDS Church leaders, the first fruit was introduced into this area soon after the pioneers were settled, with a number of varieties of fruit planted in the city (Historical Society of Providence 1949, 155). The residents easily found wild strawberries in the surrounding canyons as well.

The first large-scale commercially grown fruit was planted by F.C. Rossiter and Adolph Baer. They “found that peaches could be raised successfully on the Providence bench. Sweet cherries, prunes, apricots, and pears were also grown. Others who planted
orchards were Joseph A. Smith, A.M. Matthews, and the Baer Brothers” according to the first history of Providence, *Providence and Her People*, published in 1949 (Historical Society of Providence 155). “The ground was virgin soil. Fruit pests were unknown. Trees grew to perfection,” so the fruit flourished in the area. By 1949, the fruit industry had already had ups and downs, including problems with prices from middlemen. Local farmers formed a succession of organizations in order to combat extremely low prices offered by commercial buyers and competitors. Despite financial challenges, “Providence became known as the fruit and berry center of Cache Valley” (Historical Society of Providence 1949, 157). The high fruit production was accompanied by an extraordinary amount of sugar beets grown in the area. During this period, Utah was the third-ranked state in sugar beet production, with Cache Valley being the highest beet producing county in Utah. It was a region built on agricultural production.

When the second history of Providence was published in 1974, the primary fruit growers were Joe Baer, Melvin Bitters, Jess Zollinger, Bill Heckman, Ren Jensen, Grant and Morris Mathews, Edna Mathews, LaVar Mohr, Royal Gessel, Bud Kohler, Floyd Newbold, Jay Checketts, Norm and John Ream, and Laval Morris. Over time, there continued to be numerous challenges to local fruit production including blights, which attacked the berries and other fruit, and social changes, which reduced their work force (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). In the end, the farms were no longer profitable, so farmers sold their land. It was often their children that enjoyed the monetary success of those transactions. In the 2009 edition of the history, so many changes had taken place that fruit growing was essentially only carried on commercially by the Zollingers, who planted their orchards in 1904 (Historical Society of Providence 1979, 284) as well as
privately in individuals’ gardens. This is still the case upon the writing of this thesis. Cache Valley farmers also no longer produce sugar beets either, a former staple in their production. The decline in these crops is representative of a widespread decline in all forms of agriculture in the area as the population grew, local industry changed, opportunities expanded, and land became more valuable than the crops produced on it.

Reminders of Providence’s agricultural history still remain mingled among the new houses. The last remaining orchard is Zollinger’s, operated by Ron Zollinger, the grandson of the original owner. At one time the family produced a variety of fruits, including berries, but in the second generation of ownership, they switched primarily to producing apples and nursery plants because of the blights and other challenges affecting the health of their crops. The cost of labor and maintenance also became an issue, as Jake Zollinger explained, “The management wasn’t really viable for that small of an operation,” (May 15, 2014, telephone conversation with the author). The land where many farmers had their farms was up on the Providence bench, an area to the east of the nucleus of the town, below the mouth of Providence Canyon.

The catalyst for my project was a series of photos taken by Russell Lee in 1940 for the Farm Security Administration (FSA), now housed in the Library of Congress, which I discovered while doing research on Cache Valley history. The goal of the FSA was to revitalize rural, agricultural areas through a variety of programs. His photos were part of a nation-wide project by a number of photographers. These images are the largest photo representation of Cache Valley, Utah, in the largest collection of print materials in the United States. Among photos of other, more prominent agricultural activities of the Cache Valley area in the Library of Congress’ archives are photos of berry picking and
other small fruit production, representing on a national level the historical importance of berries and small fruit to Cache Valley. Regionally, it is not Cache Valley that is famous today for growing berries and small fruit, but rather Bear Lake, to the north, known for producing raspberries, and the Brigham City area, to the southeast, famous for peaches, cherries, and other small fruits, but these crops were at one time more important to the residents of Cache Valley than they are now, especially in Providence, where fruit was even part of their identity.

Highway 89, which runs north from Ogden through Willard and Perry to Brigham City, is commonly referred to as “The Fruitway” because of the many family-owned fruit stands which line the road. It is still a favorite destination for people in the area interested in purchasing fresh, local produce. Providence may not have ever been as prominent a fruit center as this area, but it too received traffic from buyers coming from places like Ogden or across the border in Idaho. My project began as a way to collect memories about this area, which is so altered that people have forgotten the place that fruit and agriculture have in its history.

The captions for each of Russell Lee’s photos include some variation of the following: “Because of diversification of crops, no migrant labor is needed or used in this section of Utah” (Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division). There were a large variety of crops, and there was a large workforce, as the teens in the area needed work and found it on the local farms. Hence, I chose to interview children of the farmers who lived and worked on the Providence bench, a hub of fruit production in the town, as well as some of the workers whom they hired to help in farm management and harvesting. I conducted the interviews in their homes or places of business, asking them
to tell me the stories they remembered of their childhood and work. The details were often difficult for them to recall since they are now in their seventies, eighties, and even nineties, but the stories they did remember were unique in experience yet uniform in theme. Each of them came from different homes characterized and shaped their parents’ interests and occupations, and they themselves had distinct talents and interests. Even the experiences of their youth differ enough to remind us that each individual runs his or her own course in life. Nonetheless, the essence of their shared experience is articulated through the themes which run through the details of their stories. They are bound as a community by their financial struggles, their gardens, their daily toil, and their appreciation for what Providence once was. Each understands what it was like to live there at that time, and through their stories, so can those unfamiliar with the conditions they describe.

**Ethnography of a Neighborhood**

The Providence bench was well known as an area full of orchards and fruit farms, as it was visible throughout the valley. Although the bench is now covered in houses, at one time it was covered in trees and berry bushes. Those verdant views may have long disappeared, but the time when they existed still dwells in old photos and in the memories of those who worked on the farms as youths. One girl who worked for Floyd Newbold gushed over the “beautiful patches of berries. The foliage and the berries were just beautiful!” (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013). It was a place of work and play, as many children explored the area above the farms which led into the canyon.

The north bench is accessible by taking Center Street up towards the mountains (Bankhead 2013). That area includes everything north of 300 South. The steep climb
clearly signifies one’s arrival. The south bench, much bigger than the north, is best approached from 100 East which turns into Canyon Road. This bench runs from about 200 East to Hillsborough (1300 South) (see fig. 2). The houses are newer than the ones downtown and have less yard space, but the half acre lots harken back to their building thirty to forty years ago. The steep ascent made the land less desirable by settlers as was its distance out of town, but the seclusion of the area makes it ideal for wealthy home owners. The view from the bench is remarkable on a clear day, with prospects of the entirety of Cache Valley (see fig. 1).

Figure 1. View of Providence from the top of the bench, just below the deer fence.

Because “[farms] were conceived of as self-sufficient family units, yet tied to the community through shared religious beliefs and market economy,” each family is both a separate entity and part of the whole (Cash 1996, 245). Through an understanding of each family unit, we understand the context for each person’s memories, but through their memories, we can also conceive of their neighbors and friends who were also in their neighborhood.
Figure 2. Providence City map, 1975. (Providence History Committee 1974, back cover)
Two of the first people I interacted with were Wes and Art Bitters, the two sons of Melvin and Joyce Bitters, one of the major producers of berries on the south bench. Wes currently lives in the home he and his brother grew up in, which was built in in 1904, by his reckoning. The home was built by his grandfather for Wes’ grandmother’s father before they were married. Melvin and Joyce moved in around 1940 when the house became vacant, so it’s been in the family since its construction.

Melvin Bitters got into the fruit business after considering a non-farming career. When he got married in 1937, he decided he would rather be his own boss and work outside, so he bought his parents’ five acres and an additional five acres to raise strawberries. He also grew raspberries and dewberries, as did many other farmers, and later produced apples.

His parents, Hyrum and Edith, were born and raised in Logan and moved to Providence in 1912, so the land Melvin owned went just one generation back. Hyrum was an entrepreneur and dabbled in a number of enterprises before settling into raising strawberries with his son. "He did so many different things with animals. He raised chinchilla, mink and chickens, and beaver, and, I don't know, all kinds of stuff," Art Bitters remembered. “He raised bees and honey. [Took it] up to Bear Lake with a team of horses. He had some wild experiences” (2013). Hyrum’s interests seem typical for a man in those days, trying to make a living off the land.

Despite his many talents and projects, Hyrum was always connected to fruit farming. A history of the Bitters family which Art has in his possession reads,

My father [Hyrum Bitters] was a carpenter, but his first love was growing things: strawberries, raspberries, dewberries, gooseberries, peaches, pears, cherries, apples. Always a garden….They even had a small strawberry patch at her death at
80 years of age. She picked faster than any other pickers. She would climb taller when they would pick apples. (DeMond, Fuhriman, and Davis 1998, 43)

“Yeah, they were workers,” responded Art when we read these passages together. “Of course, my mother, she's about the same deal. She’d pick fruit all day with the pickers and then sell it in the afternoon, try to sell the fruit” (2013). The Bitters’ grandparents and parents did not have a corner on this characteristic. Themes of hard work came up over and over again in their interviews and in my subsequent interviews, showing that work was generally valued by members of the community.
Some of the people interviewed are still just blocks from where they grew up. Some, like Wes, left for a number of years and have since moved back to the area. Many of their associates have left the area permanently but are still tied to it through their memories of hard work and picking fruit.

Figure 4. “Orchards, along with North Bench foothills, east of Spring Creek Road.” (Providence History Committee 1974, 253)

Another set of siblings I interviewed were the children of Sara Hyer Baer and Aaron LeVon Baer, or Sara and LeVon. Clotille Baer Liechty, Elooise Baer Toolson, and Lex Baer are three of their seven children from whom I was able to collect stories. Their dad, LeVon and his brother Joe, owned much of the property up on the north bench (see
fig. 4)—eighty acres, according to Lex. Clotille remembers that her dad and uncle bought the land from their father and split it (Liechty 2013). LeVon’s land was bigger than Joe’s, but LeVon is not listed in the 1975 list of farmers because he passed away in a car accident in the early 1960s. They grew the whole gamut of crops including berries, apples, peaches, apricots, pears, cherries, cantaloupe, sugar beets, and hay.

LeVon was a wonderful singer and sang in the local glee club. Clotille remembers with fondness the strawberry wine he used to make and serve when his choral friends would come visit. He was a hard worker and hard on Lex. Sara came from a polygamist dairy-farming family from Lewiston. She took care of the home and was very quick at milking cows.

Skarlett Mathews Bankhead and Shayne Mathews were yet another set of siblings I interviewed. They also have three other siblings. Like the Bitters and the Baers, the Mathews are descended from early settlers of Providence. Hopkin Mathews was one of the original founders of Providence, a staple in the repertoire of local historical figures for school children and historians. Shayne and Skarlett’s father, Morris, was a great-grandson of Hopkin’s, and all of the Mathews that were in Providence early on were descended from him. Grant Mathews, who also farmed on the bench, was a distant cousin of theirs.

Morris Mathews was a great lover of horses, and was one of just a few men in Providence who were skilled with training and riding. He passed this love and his skills onto his son. He was not planning on taking over his father’s farm, but his younger brother, Justin, died in a tragic tractor accident shortly after returning from the service and getting married. As such, Alma Mathews needed help on the farm and turned to his
other son to help him. Shayne recalls Morris being away during the weekdays at another job, but he would help on the weekends.

Skarlett, fourteen years younger than Shayne, works for the City of Providence. Her memories of her father and his farm are different than Shayne’s because of this age difference. She only remembers the end of his farming days, showing how even within families, memory is based on differences in birth order and experience. The communities and families within Providence were not stagnant through these years but were constantly changing and shifting in response to larger economic, social, and technological factors. Although her memories were different, she adds a deeper understanding into the decision to leave fruit farming. Each person’s perspective, though varying, leads to a more complete picture when placed on the landscape of the collective memory of others that lived during this time period and acts as a reminder that the past was not a stationary slice of time.

Harvey Mohr, son of LaVar Mohr, also remembers working on the farm with his Dad. He was a school mate of Wes Bitters, and their land was close to each other. Although the scope of this project prevented me from locating and interviewing members of every family that farmed on the bench, each of these people’s stories paints a picture of the community of famers up there. They remember working with the other farmers. The workers I interviewed also knew the families on the bench and describe where their farms were. “Norm and John Ream were up there with ‘Ole Peg,’” meaning Peg Bankhead (Christensen 2013), and many of them recall working with Royal Gessel. Each of them brings their memories of the families that formed the fruit-producing enclave on the bench.
Personal Narrative and Folk History

My goal in this thesis is, through these collective memories, to create a folk history of this small portion of the Providence community, documenting a piece of Providence history that is no longer widely celebrated though once quite important to the people there. Through this history, I show that although this account comes from normal people with a variety of interests and occupational backgrounds, their stories of the past come together in a cohesive whole. The nature of this whole represents the importance of value transmission in all phases of life and how personal histories, while acting as instruments for transmission, simultaneously reflect and capture this vital transmission process in everyday life.

As I collected and analyzed experiences of these fruit growers on the Providence bench from the last century, I focused first on domestic berries and the contexts in which they were harvested and soon learned how much richer and complex these fruit farms were, as many farmers produced much more than berries, and more people were involved in the entire process than I realized. I asked my informants about farming techniques, their own experiences working, the home and family dynamics, and growing up in general, in an attempt to grasp what life was like for them as children and teens and the role their work played in their lives, family, and community. In the interviews, we found and explored the intersection of family folklore, foodways, material culture and occupational folklore as they told their childhood stories.

The primary mode for understanding these types of folklore was through personal narrative. Personal narrative is an effective way to understand a person’s familial construct and his or her world view. “One way to learn more about the family and the
everyday is through listening to and documenting people’s oral narratives about their lives and their families. These narratives reveal the ways people construct and see the family through their own experiences” (Jeannie Thomas 1997, 13) In many cases, the interviews were the first time the stories were told or, if not, they were not told frequently. The tellers extracted these stories from the far reaches of their memories in some cases, with a satisfaction and delight that was contagious. That moment of remembering was one of epiphany and illumination. “I do remember one thing!” they may have said, or “I remember that now!” as their memories came back to them like old friends, making their families and farms almost tangible as speaker and listener shared in the nostalgia of the experience. The stories may not have been nostalgic in theme themselves, but their transporting quality created a sense of longing to be there again, a joy in reconnecting although their childhoods were characterized by hard work. Though the narrators described scenes of hardship and back-breaking labor, they were able to laugh in the next moment as they recalled funny moments of pranks and tricks that lightened their moods and expressed family dynamics and personalities of the speaker, their family and friends.

Although Jeannie Thomas laments that “[personal experience] oral narratives have not received the attention and academic respect they warrant because they often violate commonly held notions of what constitutes a “good” narrative,” (1997, 8) Webber and Mullen argue for the validity of studying “little narratives” as a worthy and preferred analytic approach (2011). They explain that across disciplines, the study of narrative has gained popularity over the last quarter century, but that the tendency among scholars is to lean toward the “grand meta-narrative,” fitting stories into researchers’ own preconceived
research plans. In an effort to follow this lens of analysis that they suggest, I relied heavily on the patterns and themes that emerged from the stories themselves. I echo Jeannie Thomas who says that “sometimes someone telling a story is not entirely certain of its meaning, and aspects of the narrative and even the ‘meaning’ may change at the next telling” (1997, 15). This leads to possible misinterpretation, so she makes it clear in her work that the analysis is “[Her] interpretation, not the interpretation.” I too offer a possible interpretation to the themes and meanings I discovered with the understanding that my informants or readers may view them differently.

The chapters that follow attempt to pull out commonalities and even make generalizations, but part of the difficulty in completely representing this group of people is their variation. As Steve Siporin said of a project documenting Alaskan history from community memory, “I realize now that I mistakenly, even unconsciously, assumed at first that community implies homogeneity—that a community is a group of people who are all basically the same. Surely that can’t be true. Although much is shared…in a true community there is room for difference too” (Siporin 2003, 83). My hope is that through the variety of voices found throughout the following chapters, an accurate picture of life in Providence at the height of the fruit industry will satisfy those who actually lived during that time.

Although this project started in response to the photo series by Russell Lee, in an attempt to understand what once was produced and lived in Cache Valley, in the course of my research, it went further and became a response to the newer edition of Providence’s authorized history. Fruit farming which was once celebrated and widespread enough to merit a full chapter in the 1974 version of the history now is
reduced to a few pages in the 2009 version. It may one day become a paragraph or sentence as the official history naturally grows to include and emphasize the more recent past.

This collection of personal narratives from my interviews represents a folk history which, like all folk histories, exists marginal to this institutionally accepted history. Henry Glassie explains that although the idea of folklore and history often stand in opposition to each other, the former often being considered synonymous with lies and the latter synonymous with truth, the two disciplines complement each other in a surprising and beautiful way (Glassie 1987, 188). Glassie is a strong advocate for using folklore to understand the past. Formal histories usually focus on the history of the top tier of society or the powerful. Even in a small town such as Providence, the history is determined by a committee of local historians and associated with elected officials and government. It therefore, focuses on select portions of the community and by necessity discards the historical day-to-day. It is the old families that receive the most attention, and due to space issues, those who did not found the community cannot be reported on in depth. Even in a small community such as Providence, “To serve our vast neighborhood, we will have to construct a history for every society,” (Glassie 1987, 192) or in this case, each section of Providence’s agricultural community, in order to understand the everyday existence of the people there.

Writing ethnographies of such small portions of local society is a fragmentation of public history, but the parts still remain a cohesive fragmentation as they become context for better understanding authorized versions of the public history, and the public history acts as further contextualization for historical ethnography. In this process, these two
components of the historical account complement and ground each other in what they each lack, be it larger social and spatial context on the one hand or detail and lived experience on the other. In this way, detailed historical ethnographies serve the audience in the same way as hands-on living history museums or historically immersive destinations such as dude ranches, transporting participants into a different realm of experience, one they cannot grasp as the context is no longer widely available in the present time. These kinds of experiences are quite popular tourist attractions because the audience craves the day-to-day experience in addition to knowledge of historical dates and facts.

“Academic historians,” Glassie states, “should have stopped to study folk histories, from them learning ways to arrange a history that can account for the whole of the human condition.” (Glassie 1987, 191). He explains the nature of folk histories and why they are often left unstudied:

If folk history is concerned with the powerless, we understand why its key figures are not great men so much as they are types, important more for their embodiment of eternal virtues than for their performance of notable deeds. They endure, yet in enduring they exhibit immense power and creativity. They make homes, win life from the sullen earth, and sweep the heavens with their poetry. But these are not the powers historians mean by power, so the little heroes of folk history are left powerless and folk history is judged to be bad because its actors are insignificant. (Glassie 1987, 191)

This idea of the figures in folk history as types with their own brand of power is where the intersection between personal narrative and folk history becomes readily apparent. Through personal narratives about history in such a local context as Providence, there are rarely stories of grand feats or great adventures that would be recorded in history books. Rather, my informants tell stories of day-to-day living and working which weave a tapestry of the nature of human existence during this time period in which they grew up,
an existence characterized by transmission of values, practices, and world-views as illustrated through their stories. This is what students of history need, and in some cases, crave, and what keeps accounts of history based in popular reality.

In Glassie’s own groundbreaking folk history of Ballymenone, Ireland, he explained that local history is passed on through stories which are held and told by a select group of local men or “historians” (1982b). In my own research, I found this to be true for each farm and family as well as the larger township. A number of people referred me to other people who would know more, a common practice for those who feel underqualified to represent their own history, due to the commonly held notion of the “historian” as one who holds knowledge of dates and facts rather than experience. Janalee Thomas gave me Wes Bitters’ name, the “historian” for the Bitters farm legacy. He in turn referred me to Elizabeth Brown, the leader, in his memory, of the fruit pickers they employed, who had seen many years in the berry fields. When I interviewed Clotille Baer Liechty, she apologized for her lack of knowledge and gave me over to her sister Eloise who “knows much more than [she]” (Liechty 2013). Others referred me to the local historian, Ken Braegger, who has been instrumental in putting together the recent editions of Providence and Her People and has written an abundance of articles on Providence’s history for the Logan, Utah, paper. He could be said to be the one responsible for “keeping the truth,” just as the old men in Ballymenone (Glassie 1982a, 10).

But I chose not to interview Mr. Braegger for this project, nor did I visit the Zollingers, whose apple orchards in neighboring River Heights are the final remaining semblance of a Providence gone by. Their stories are an integral part of the official history, and their voices are often heard as the experts on the subject at hand. Therefore,
this thesis is a place for those who do not have their stories told in the mainstream histories and celebrations, those that would otherwise be passed by for more well-known bearers of history who have been instrumental in preserving Providence’s history already. My informants bring their experiences to the table to add to what is already well-known.

Like Glassie’s informants in Ireland, the history contained in this thesis, “arrives as small stories, as fragments intimately a part of the onflow of conversation” (1987, 189). And just like “in Ballymenone hundreds of discrete tales represent a limited set of categories that interlock into a unity” (Glassie 1987, 189). This unity is apparent through the common experiences of each member of the community at hand and the shared themes and values that run through each of their narratives which will be discussed in the following chapters.

**Explanation of Chapters**

About the importance of folk history in the larger context of documenting histories, William Butler Yeats wrote, “The history of a nation is not in parliaments and battle-fields… but in what the people say to each other on fair-days and high days, and in how they farm, and quarrel, and go on pilgrimage” (1889, xvi-xvii). In this same spirit, the first two chapters of this thesis are largely ethnographic, capturing the feel of life, work, and sociality among fruit farmers, pickers, and their families through the combination of voices of my informants. In these chapters I document material culture associated with their work in addition to customs, as material culture studies are an essential method for understanding historical folk practices, belief, and life (Glassie 1987; Reid 2012; Schlebecker 1977).
The first chapter is an ethnographic analysis of the relationships between the farmers on the bench, the trials, techniques, and successes they shared. I discuss the role of competition and collaboration in their farming and social interactions with each other. This chapter relies heavily on “another interesting type of family story: the parent’s story that is told more completely or told only by or through a child—the parent’s story that, in some sense become the child’s story” (Jeannie Thomas 1997, 9). The next chapter, “A Community of Pickers” documents and explores the experiences of teenage female workers in the berry patches. I discuss the material culture, work techniques, and social customs of these workers and their place in the local economy.

The next two chapters blend ethnographic history and folklore analysis in order to better understand human nature in relation to social norms associated with childhood and agriculture, which were categories apparent in the interviews. Specifically, chapter three is a presentation and analysis of the stories I collected when I asked about pranks and jokes at work. This chapter examines the role of tricksters in children’s folklore as expressed in the narratives. The stories expose some of the power struggles between children and their parents and siblings in a work environment that is also their home environment. I then move in a different direction with chapter four, which digs deeper into divisions of labor based on gender roles, using a psychoanalytic and metaphorical approach to understanding possible interpretations for the reason behind these divisions, which were carefully preserved in the narratives.

I conclude with a chapter that echoes the original ethnographic goal, in which I tie the themes of community and nostalgia into the context of cultural transmission, a concept which lies at the heart of this entire work. This concluding chapter brings the
focus back to the narratives themselves and the rhetorical function the storytellers employ in looking at the past to comment on the present. They exhibit an understanding, if unconscious, of Glassie’s definition of history as “the attempt of an individual to remain truthful to the past and useful to society” (Glassie 1987, 190). In so doing, these narrators become Providence historians themselves, giving their personal histories relevance to their present selves, their families, and the larger community.
The Farm Security Administration was conceived during the Depression with the idea that governments and people can improve the human condition. “The Farm Security Administration in the America of the Roosevelt era,” explains Sidney Baldwin in his history of the organization, “represented an historic attempt to preach hope to [the poor] of this country, and to exploit the promise, the power, and the possibilities of politics in securing salvation from the human suffering, social injustice, and economic waste of chronic poverty” (Baldwin 1968, iiix-ix). This organization received harsh criticism for being supposed “propaganda for a socialist-, even communist-leaning administration” at the time (Cohen 2009, xii), but the agency was “dedicated to changing the face of rural America” (Cannon 1988, 3). These photographers documented social history through their images.

The photos taken in Utah are especially interesting because Dorthea Lange, the first photographer who traveled through Utah in 1936, captured poverty and economic failure in parts of the state whereas Russell Lee, the photographer that arrived in 1940, documented recovery and economic success in the form of “new homes, productive orchards and fields, farmers purchasing and operating farm machinery, and crop-marketing ventures” (Cannon 1988, 7) His purpose was to document the positive influence of the FSA, so he was encouraged by Roy Stryker, the director of the project even to stage some of the photos if need be. “Lee complied, furnishing unctuous shots of incredibly enthusiastic meetings of FSA-sponsored cooperatives” in Mendon, a town
across the valley from Providence (Cannon 1988, 7). Cannon argues that although these photos were somewhat staged, the emotion behind them is not completely false. These were prosperous times in Utah, right before the Second World War, the same time that many of my informants were getting established. They may have needed the help of the government in the years previously, but their farms were succeeding and they had replaced government with community, a support network that had been established by the earliest settlers in the area. “An economically tumultuous era may have shaken social, religious, political, and economic tradition, forcing compromise and adjustment” Cannon asserts, “But at the end of the decade, traditional patterns of voting, working, and socializing were reasserting themselves” (1988, 8).

This chapter focuses on these patterns of working and socializing. Robert McCarl suggests collecting occupational folklore by observing “cultural scenes” (1986, 71). Since, in this case, the “cultural scenes” necessary to capture the experience of working in the fields in the 1940s through 60s are unavailable, we instead can understand the occupational culture through the collected narratives of those who lived those scenes. So instead of photographs, I use narrative to identify similar patterns of community and as vignettes of social history. In these narratives, the children of the farmers, who could have just as easily been the subject for Lee’s photo log had he chosen the other side of the valley, verbally painted the scenes of their childhood, a unique sphere where occupation meets the larger community. Although many of the farmers had additional jobs, their lives were deeply connected to the other farmers whose land lay near theirs and to the help they received from the neighborhood kids.
Their stories weave a tapestry of family, community, dysfunction, nostalgia, competition, and struggle through which people’s interactions and values are illuminated. Discussing the interactions between adult farmers during this period in Providence’s history is tricky since the perspectives for this research derive from the memories of their children and young workers. But it is clear that many of the farmers on the bench brought their pioneer spirit into their work because of their tendency for collaboration in the face of hardship. These ideas harken back to the concept of transmission. As goods and services flowed in and out of these farms, a secondary transmission of mutually beneficial community aid also needed to exist.

Through analyzing the roles people took on, an understanding of the community dynamics within the family and in the fields unfolds (Toelken 1996, 56). The attitudes people placed on gender and work also become clearer. These interactions between people in the community were defined by a balance between cooperation and competition. A spirit of community and cooperation had to exist, especially in early times of settlement when it was necessary to rely on each other to get through difficult periods. As a small example, Ike Christensen remembers his father giving berries and other garden produce to widows who did not have the means to provide such things for themselves. There was a necessary sense of interdependency. In this chapter, I will specifically discuss the relationships between the farmers and their wives which allowed for mutual success through a synthesis of cooperation and competition. These relationships also demonstrate a collision of gender roles with family and occupational folklore.
Water and Sales: A Community of Farmers

As in all communities, each individual played a role. These roles were defined by gender, occupation, family, and group affiliations (such as religion or social groups) but tended to be fluid depending on personal preference and situation. Because individuals are shaped by their geographical and cultural environments, one of the first steps to understanding the farmers and their community is identifying and contextualizing the region in which they lived. In Michael Hoberman’s study of regional identity in the Sawmill Valley, Massachusetts, he suggests that a definition of “region” by size alone is impossible and irrelevant as regions vary widely in scale (2000, xvi). Instead, he asserts:

Any convergence of landscape and culture can constitute a region. A region…is a place where people share a common body of narrative knowledge, some but not all of which derives from a shared geography. A region is a place whose inhabitants have inscribed a set of (often shifting) borders, both physical and psychological, and have applied those borders in order to separate those who belong in it from those who do not. (2000, xvi-xvii)

I do not know that I would go so far as to say that the Providence bench constitutes a “region,” but it does fit this definition. Cultivating land up on the bench had its own difficulties and advantages, and the people who lived and worked up there shared common life experiences and interactions. But this area lies within the town of Providence which lies in Cache Valley, its own distinct region of Utah. Hoberman also considers the Sawmill Valley within the larger regions which encompass it and adds, “An individual’s sense of regional identity, understood in this way occurs within a concentric and often overlapping array of regions which vary in size” (2000, xviii).

The bench area can be viewed with this same lens. The farmers had a variety of identities that shaped their interactions with each other in the field and in the larger entity of Providence. They were shaped by their larger regional identities as farmers in Cache
Valley, as the descendants of Mormon pioneers. Within this region of the “Mormon West,” an area settled during a period of Mormon (LDS) expansion (see Meinig 1965), in a town settled by Mormons, the farmers up on the bench were a specific community of their own, connected by the piece of land they farmed. Even more narrowly, these farmers identified as individuals, protecting their own water rights and profits, but because of their larger regional ties to each other, they were also a community, coming together when any individual had a need in order for all benefit.

Many pioneers found themselves in dire conditions upon arrival, and in his historical study of pioneer foodways, Brock Cheney describes the simultaneous bounty and poverty that existed as old settlers stood by as newer settlers fended for themselves (2012, 2-3). Pioneer journals describe lavish food celebrations occurring at the same time that newcomers wrote about hunger and economic hardship. These newcomers were expected to get established themselves, showing the great emphasis by the settlers on eating by the sweat of one’s own brow and the value placed on joy through tribulation and hardship. The interplay between community support and individual strength often created conflict as individuals negotiated a variety of regional identities.

The existence of conflict, or at least hard feelings, between various regions in Cache Valley and Providence itself depends on the person you ask. Some of my informants described resentment between the members of the LDS Providence First Ward and Second Ward stemming from the division of the original Providence ward. The Providence ward had been meeting in what is now the Old Rock Church on Main Street, which the members had funded and built themselves, but when the Second Ward was formed, they were asked to build yet another chapel to meet in. The members of the First
Ward continued to meet in the Old Rock Church (see fig. 5) and did not contribute to the building of the Second Ward meetinghouse. Of course, some only remember there being a social divide between the two groups due to the fact that they did not attend regular church meetings together, a discrepancy in memory which may be due to the passage of time or their own families’ non-involvement in the dispute. If much animosity existed, it clearly was soon forgotten, as it did not pass on to the youth from their parents. This example illustrates that manner in which the strength of the community supersedes any possible conflict.

Figure 5. The Old Rock Church, Providence, Utah.

Individual group affiliation affected integration in the community and overall social cohesion between neighborhoods. During the Forties, Fifties and Sixties, the LDS community in Providence was especially strong, as most inhabitants were affiliated with
the LDS church. If an individual was not a member of the LDS faith, it was pointed out in the narratives. Most of the community activities at this time were church-sponsored, so inactivity led to a certain amount of social exclusion, but as far as inclusion in a professional sense, religion did not seem to affect farmers’ views of each other.

Another division was between the farmers on the bench and the townspeople. The severity of the differences again depends on individual perspective. One woman admitted it was common opinion in town that those who lived up on the bench were “nerds” or unpopular. Mostly, though, the social divide existed between those who worked on farms and those that did not. Joan Lofthouse remembered being surprised in a conversation with an old friend much later in life when the friend labeled her childhood-self as a “white slave girl” because she worked so much harder than them as children. Speaking about the youth in Providence, Shayne Mathews conceded that he “always called them ‘town kids’ ’cause they were--[laughs] I thought they had it easy. We were always on the farm and they got to do other stuff. But a lot of those kids that worked in town, their parents owned property outside of town, so they were working on farms too. It was very much a farming community.” According to Mathews, they all attended the same school and went to the same church, so the only apparent difference between them was that families like the Mathews lived “in the sticks.”

Another regional rivalry may have existed town to town in Cache Valley. One man from Wellsville, a town on the other side of the Valley, said he felt animosity towards him for being on the wrong turf during the period in which he courted and then married his wife who had grown up and was living in Providence. That may have only been his experience as it did not come up in other interviews, but my primary
interviewees were all originally from Providence. Records of animosity between towns shows that this may stem from the fact that as water ran down from the mountains, each town progressively got less water as farmers closer to the mouth of the canyon took more than their share, a conflict discussed below. Mendon was one town that lay on the “honest” end of the irrigation system (Toelken 1989, 13-14).

Within the community, farming, being the independent and competitive venture it is, allowed for a number of conflicts to arise. As with most desert settlements, water has always been an essential part of the history of the communities in Cache Valley. The strain that water put on the community as well as its importance are evident through the vast amount of personal narratives and legends on the subject which occupy the Fife Folklore Archives at Utah State University. In the first edition of Providence and Her People, the authors devoted a whole chapter on the history of the irrigation and sewer system (Historical Society of Providence 1945). In the following two editions, one published in 1974, and the most recent version, published in 2009, the chapter remains (Providence History Committee 1974; Parson 2009). The issue of water extends even beyond farming and is a relevant concern today as the population of Providence grows, putting strain on available resources (Providence History Committee 2008).

Barre Toelken describes the unique nature of the irrigation system in Utah which still runs in parts of Cache Valley today. It was originally spearheaded by Brigham Young upon the Latter-day Saints’ arrival in the Salt Lake Valley. “As founded by Brigham Young,” Toelken writes, “Mormon irrigation practice originally vested the ownership and distribution of water and water rights in the Church, for the benefit of the collective community” (1989, 5). Water practices changed slightly over time, and now
“the typical system is an irrigation ‘company,’ with individual ‘shares’ and ‘rights’ which are intertwined with those of others” (Toelken 1989, 5). Each share is associated with the land it waters, and the assumption is that the share is to be sold with the land, but that is not always the case, so some land owners would have more shares than others. One hugely positive consequence of Brigham Young’s vision of the water in “the Mormon West” was that it avoided the poverty associated with other areas of the Western United States in which water rights were given on a first-come basis (Toelken 1989, 8-9).

Figure 7. Water flowing from Providence Canyon, Spring Creek.

On the Providence bench lands, the system was not much different than other areas of Utah. Art Bitters described in depth his family’s experience with the irrigation system.
The water would come down an irrigation system. I remember they had a Spring Creek Water Association, and the members of that, they'd have certain number of shares of water, and based on your shares, you'd get to have a longer period of time….

[Dad] had water, at least, I would say, twice a week. You'd rotate though. The hours you'd have would rotate. Sometime you'd have it in the morning. Sometimes you'd have it in the afternoon. Sometimes you'd have it at night, and so it wouldn't be the same all the time. They'd make up the schedule, the Water Association would make up a schedule at the beginning of the year, and you had a little [unintelligible] chart that'd tell you when the water would come. And depending on if you had more shares of water, you had more opportunity and more time to be irrigating, but I don't know how many shares we had then, but it seemed like at least twice a week he was irrigating.

ACM: And the shares were based on how much land or how much--

AB: You could buy shares. Sometimes when you had--when you bought the land, it would come with a certain number of shares of water. And sometimes you wouldn't have any water shares with a piece of property, and you'd have to buy it from somebody else. That's what happened to a lot of people who would buy homes or that would buy property and, uh, the farmer would sometimes sell his water rights and sometimes he wouldn't. It just depends what you are entitled to with the land you bought. (2013)

In this arid climate, they made the most of the water flow they had, dividing water turns up at all hours of the day in order to maximize each person’s share. Because the watering turns were pre-determined, each farmer had to accept the schedule and take advantage of his allotment even if that time was in the middle of the night. Art Bitters described why this was his least favorite chore growing up:

AB: You'd have to get up every couple hours and reset the water in a different place. So it was just a long night.

ACM: Well, how often would you have to do the irrigating at night?

AB: Most of the time the only time I had to do it was when my dad was working at one of these secondary jobs. And so, when we had a year maybe when the crops didn't come through in the strawberries, and, uh, he was called to do that, then I'd get the chance to go up and do some of the night irrigating. And it wasn't all that often, but I remember it well. [Laughs]

ACM: What was so bad about it?

AB: Oh, I don't know, you just--you'd just get to sleep--You'd have an alarm clock. You'd just sleep in the truck or in the car and just be up there. You'd get out and set the water, get it running down all the different furrows. Then it seemed like you just barely got it set and you'd just lay down for a minute and the alarm clock would go off again and you'd have to go out and do it all over again. Just
every couple'a hours, and if you didn't do it that way, you wouldn't get [everything] irrigated. It wouldn't get watered. You just didn't get enough sleep is all. It wasn't hard work or anything. (2013)

Lex Baer explained that he used to take his dog out with him to irrigate at night because of the rattlesnakes. Overall, it was an uncomfortable, sometimes unsettling experience that they all had to participate in at one time or another.

Despite the communal nature of the irrigation system and their shared experiences with it, Toelken describes the tensions that arose when members of the community took water out of turn. He also notes that in this theocratic community where sharing and giving were considered a Godly quality, anger and violence over water were generally accepted. He describes a few choice examples which illustrate this:

A student of mine, newly arrived from the east, rented a small house in a rural area not far from Logan; one day as she and her husband drew several buckets of water from a strange ditch that ran through their front yard (it filled up with water now and then, unaccountably), they found themselves confronted in their own yard by an angry man with a rifle who ordered them away from “his” water. They ran inside, called the sheriff, and when they described the situation, a deputy advised them to stay indoors until the man left, “and don’t steal his water anymore.” (1989, 12)

Toelken continues, “Bert Wilson recalls that the only time he saw his father get violently angry was when he caught a neighbor stealing water (taking Wilson’s water turn) and chased him across the fields with a shovel, trying to hit him” (1989, 13) He cites numerous examples where water rights take precedent over both Christian charity and the law. Taking into consideration the absolute necessity that water was to crop survival, and thereby, to the farmers’ families, as well as the pains that each farmer took to stay within the schedule, anger over someone else going out of turn or blatantly stealing water seems justified.
Among the farmers on the bench, these same tensions often existed, but did not
turn to violence as many narratives describe. Art Bitters further clarified:

Well, I can remember sometimes when people got pretty upset about not getting
what they though [was] their share of the water. Water some years was pretty
short, and when there wasn't a lot of water to go around, yeah, there were
sometimes people's tempers got pretty heated about you know "Somebody stole
my water, and I'm gonna--". Never came to any blows that I can remember, but,
yeah, there was some strong feelings sometimes about somebody taking
advantage of the water….And when the water was, some of those years when the
water was kind of scarce, uh, you'd be--I heard a couple of cases when somebody
would be irrigating down the line and somebody'd put a dam in and cut the water
off and you'd have to chase up and see what was happening with somebody else
taking his water. But as far as I know, we [laughs] never had anybody come to
physical blows, but there was some strong feelings about people not being too
good about sharing their times. So—. (2013)

They were a tight-knit group, which is apparent in the way they resolved their conflicts
without violence, and further they understood each other’s need for water as they all
farmed the same crops; but they also needed to take care of their individual welfare. The
water turns were determined in order to benefit the entire community. Their folk
enforcement of these turns occurred quite naturally as they protected their individual
rights. Shayne Mathews, son of Morris Mathews, also described his experience with
water tensions as follows:

There would be problems with water from time to time. I don't remember any,
what I would call, serious conflicts with any of them that way. I remember the
water was on a schedule up there, and so I remember getting up at one and two in
the morning to go get the water and get the--and try to set it before we got it and
bring it over and stuff like that because you'd have so many hours to run water
and things. And so once in a while there'd be some problems with water.
Somebody would take it at the wrong turn or something like that.
….Most of the time it was accidental. Once in a while you'd find that kind of
regularly, your head gate wouldn't be clear down and somebody would be taking
all of the water that should be coming to you. And that happened a little bit, but
usually it was an accidental thing where somebody got the wrong turn. (2013)
Again, he describes the general understanding of human error and need which was resolved in a mostly peaceable manner in this small region of Providence.

Although irrigation was a nuisance to the kids assigned the chore (and likely the adult farmers themselves felt similarly) especially when it required sacrificing sleep, the diligence of the boys in maintaining the irrigation schedule aided in allaying any possible confrontation between their parents and other farmers.

With a number of fruit and other types of farmers up on the bench (and across the entirety of Cache Valley), one would expect there to have been competition between the farmers to find buyers for their harvests. Fruit production in Cache Valley originally found a large market in the mining operations in Idaho and Montana, where the farmers could sell their wares at exceptional prices (Historical Society of Providence 2009, 23-24). Fruit production continued to be a profitable industry as evidenced by the number of farmers that took it up.

Farmers generally spent the afternoon hours peddling their wares and delivering orders to stores, leaving wives and children home to sell fruit to individuals who stopped by. LaVon Baer was quite the salesman, according to his children, actively building relationships with the store owners he sold to. Farmers generally sold to the same stores, so Eloise Baer Toolson does not remember much competition between farmers themselves to sell in certain locations, describing the understandings between the farmers and the local merchants as “Gentleman’s agreements” (2013).

In the 1950s prices for fruit dropped dramatically for a number of reasons including problems with middlemen. Wesley Bitters remembers his dad being one of the first to start in the berry growing specifically. His parents were never rich, he said, and
they probably never made more than $6,000 to $7,000 per year, but the berries were a
successful crop, so others with land on the bench started their own production. Wes
blames the oversupply of fruit for the dramatic drop in prices. This drop came at a time
when berries were steadily gaining value. “And I think berries, I could be wrong in this, I
can't remember that well, but I think a case of berries probably in the 40s started out for
$2.50 and by the time we got into the early 60s, they were….maybe $8 a case.
Dewberries were twelve; they were expensive,” Wes recalled (2013). The exact numbers
have become hazy over the years, but the problems associated with slipping prices have
not. Wes explained that “because of the overabundance in the supply, the stores could
haggle. And so all of a sudden, people were selling berries for $2 a case” (2013). This led
to negative returns on production. “Well, you couldn't pay a picker. You couldn't pay for
fertilizer and, uh, developing your crop for two dollars a case” (2013). In response, the
farmers banded together to form the Cache Fruit Growers Association in order to regulate
prices and, in some cases, remove the need for a middleman (Historical Society of
Providence 1949, 156-157). Wes recalled a different name than is recorded in
Providence and Her People, but he remembered the action plan they created and the
impact they had during the time they were in operation.

They agreed that any berries they had surplus—that meant that any berries that
was not going to be sold to a person who had ordered them—they would not take
them to the store. They would take them to a location over in town, uh, and this
location was in back of the Capitol Theater, on the back side of the Capitol
Theater [now the Ellen Eccles Theater], that parking lot, and that's where the
Cache Valley Berry Association was. So all the farmers, after the day's picking,
those that they didn't have orders for, they would take them over to the
Association. Then if any stores wanted berries, they would come down to the
Berry Association or have the Berry Association deliver the berries to the store.
That way, we controlled price. And we'd say, "Ok. I'm sorry. There's no more
haggling, the price of the berries is $2.75 a case. If you want 'em, fine. If you
don't, that's fine with us, but we're not going to go ahead and sell our fruit cheaper than what it's worth. (2013)

Because his father was only growing berries at this time, it follows that Wes would be mostly concerned with this history of berry production during that period and alter details of the group as his father interacted with it to fit his own experience. Harvey Mohr also remembered this co-op:

It was the one out by the old courthouse on Main Street. And there was a basement entrance in the back. And all us local farmers, when it was berry season would pull back there and take all the berries down and they then would distribute them out to stores and dealerships, kind of the co-op thing. I don't remember what we called it. (2013)

His memory adds to Wes’s account by showing the actual distribution of the berries. The Association took an active part in the distribution of farmers’ good instead of being merely a type of farmers market. The Association eventually failed, but it alleviated the problem for a short time, and farmers continued to find buyers through other means such as the Cache Commission Company or resorted to selling their goods commercially to canneries (Historical Society of Providence 1949, 156-157). When the California berries entered the market in the 1960s, there was no action that could save the local strawberry farmers’ business as customers flocked to this new commodity. Everyone agreed that they were flavorless, but they were much cheaper.

Shayne Mathews explained that in the case of “peas and such, Del Monte bought them all. Grain would sell to mills in Logan” (2013). Sugar beets also fit this category, as farmers sold to the sugar factory in Lewiston while it was in operation. Selling commercially generally seems to have been a more lucrative move since the demand was more constant than filling individual orders. “As far as the fruit,” he said,
we kinda all developed our own clientele. And we had customers that bought peaches from us for as long as I can remember, as long as I was living up there. And would come back, they just--We never really advertised or anything. They just knew that's where we were. And the other farmers up there had the same kind of [situation]. Sometimes [we] sold the apples commercially. (2013)

Because Mathews’ family was not involved in selling berries, he does not remember any problems with their pricing, but the reliance on repeat customers to sell fruit was common among all the farmers on the bench.

The Mathews and their neighbors gained clientele by word of mouth. Shayne described the long gravel lane up to their house that customers may have missed without guidance. His mother painted a sign to point their customers in the right direction. “She was kind of arty too....It was a guy pointing up in there and said 'Mathews' Peaches'" I remember us having that” (2013). He supposed that others had similar signs in place.

Harvey Mohr’s family had a sign also. He remembers that while he was growing up helping on his father’s farm he built and painted a number of signs for selling fruit. “Seems like most people would make a sign to stick out [in front of their houses],” he said (2013). To him the signs didn’t represent competition since in those days there wasn’t much traffic along the road. They also mostly they had repeat customers that came to buy produce. “Except for the cherries which were more commercial,” this was the method his family also used to sell most of their fruit (2013).

As the fruit industry became harder to maintain, farmers switched to commercial products. The Bitters were “fortunate to have switched to apples” ten years before the berry market bottomed out (W. Bitters 2013). The Mohrs sold cherries commercially, as did the Mathews after Shayne was grown and had left the house. Cherry-growing was not part of his farming experience, but it was for Skarlett, his younger sister by about 15
years. The families had to diversify and adapt with the market, an inevitability their collaborative efforts could not avoid.

Overall, fruit farming was hard work from planting to maintenance to harvest to selling. The farmers were unified in the same kind of struggle they faced each year combatting the dry climate and the cold winters. Everyone shared stories about irrigating and all had fears of late freezing temperatures. The Bitters as well as other farmers lit bonfires on cold nights to keep the fruit warm, and the Baers sprayed the fruit with water so the water would freeze and not the fruit. They also all combated the same plant viruses that would spread across the entire area, especially affecting the strawberries and raspberries. And they all understood and were connected by the need for a second job when harvests came up lacking. It is these connections that bound them together as an occupational folk group and as a community.

**Sprayers and Starts: Community Support**

One practice that embodies community is the gifting and selling of starts within the community. When the pioneers came, as stated in the introduction, they were instructed to plant fruit, specifically. None of those I interviewed definitively knew where the plants their parents grew originated, but they speculated that the pioneers brought non-native fruits and vegetables with them. This idea is supported in part by Cheney’s work. Records and diaries show that it was common practice for settlers to bring seeds from their homelands or other areas (2012, 27-28). They also would have had to order away for new varieties over the years, as Brigham Young did in order to receive “peach pits and apple seeds” (2012, 27).
There had to have been a combination of sharing, bringing, and buying for the early settlers of Providence as there was in the Salt Lake Valley. Lex Baer remembers his father ordering their plants from a nursery in Ogden. Ike Christensen, when asked about the origins of the plants in his parents’ garden, informed me of another method,

You didn't order anything. You'd go to the neighbors. With raspberries, they have-Come Spring there's a lot of raspberry starts coming off from the roots. So you'd cut 'em off and bring them home and plant them. That was how you propagated the species from one field to another. And we--I still do that today. My neighbor bought some raspberries, and uh--good ones, and so that's the kind I grow. And the name of 'em, I don't know, but they're good berries. (2013)

In gardening and even in subsistence agriculture in Providence, a common way of getting berries and other fruits when starting out was to ask for a start from a neighbor.

A common practice among gardeners, the farmers on the bench also helped each other by exchanging starts for berries. Art Bitters explained that “people would come and buy plants from [them] sometimes when they wanted to get, you know, some starters” (2013). Strawberry plants “throw out a runner” each year: “And you'd just go through, and you'd dig those up, and they'd sell them to people. And that's probably where my dad got his original ones, from my grandfather. But I don't know...where they got the original ones” (2013). Speculation based on common practice at the time would suggest they bought them from local farmers, as Harvey Mohr believes his father did, or ordered them from a nursery like the Baers most likely did according to Lex’s recollection. As these plant starts and seeds transfer from one person to another, they weave a tapestry of trust and community. Although out of the scope of this project, mapping a history of each farmer and gardeners’ plants would likely demonstrate the network of their relationships with each other.
Farmers also tapped into each other’s methods and fruit varieties. This method applied especially to the strawberry fields because the plants only bore fruit for two or three years. Harvey Mohr and his father rotated the varieties they produced in their acre-and-a-half field between Marshalls, Casugas, and Utah Shippers. He also spoke about the runners in regards to sharing successful methods with each other: “Most of the fruit growers would—if they had a good variety or something working well—[save the runners]” (2013). The Baers, on the other hand, grew mostly Marshalls, according to Lex’s memory, the sugar-packed jam berry that was not hearty in cold temperatures. Wes Bitters remembers his father Melvin searching for a berry better for their climate and being one of the first to plant Linda Delicious instead of the Marshall, a berry that was sweet, yet heartier than the Marshall. Melvin then shared his new-found discovery with others on the bench who also started growing it. Although those I interviewed did not plant that variety themselves, there could certainly have been others on the bench that did, but the important point is that the farmers were planting similar varieties and were open to sharing ideas, strategies, and plants with each other (2013).

Another item that symbolizes the relationships between farmers was machine equipment. On Morris Mathews’ farm, along with apples, they “raised alfalfa, grains, barley and wheat” and “oats once in a while” (Mathews 2013). During his lifetime, Shayne has witnessed quite the progression of technology. Early on, they used binders to gather the wheat into bundles.

This was a time when everybody worked together because there were only a few threshers in the valley. And we’d hire a threshing machine to come…When he would come up, then a lot of the neighbors would come and help us ‘cause we would go out and haul those [threshed] bundles in…At that time we were still hauling with a team of horses and a wagon….That was a time when you’d get a
The difficulty of the harvest prior to modern technology called for more manual labor; hence, the farmers’ need for support from each other. Although paid for their labor, the services rendered by pickers for farmers is in part that ideal, communal cooperative feel because the laborers come from a smattering of family and friends, members of the community instead of migrant strangers from other parts of the country.

It was also commonly understood between them that the farmers would assist each other when machinery broke down. For example, if a tractor broke, it was imperative that they receive help as the timing of planting and harvest were so exact, and repairs were so costly and time consuming that they would miss vital parts of the season without any aid (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). In opposition to water relations, where self-concern keeps the entire community in check, the sharing of machine equipment and labor when situations were dire, helping keep individuals afloat, was based on a sense of community welfare and empathy.

One of the sets of photographs that Russell Lee took captured this spirit of collaboration through images of farmers using a sprayer owned by a cooperative set up by the Farm Security Administration (see fig. 7). The farmers on the bench did not need such a government program to aid them in mutually supporting each other. Speaking of Royal Gessel, Lex Baer elaborated on the importance of congeniality for the people on the bench, “He was kind of a loner, kind of a different guy. I got along with him. ‘Cause if you’re raising fruit, you kind of have to do some things, or you should, to get along with the other guy” (2013). One of the benefits of “getting along with the other guy” was the use of farm equipment or help when help was scarce. Through analyzing the use and
sharing of sprayers in the area, we can see how any possible tensions were settled through collaboration. These sorts of reciprocal services also fostered a sense of occupational community on the bench. Ironically, water, this thing which gives life, is what drives people apart, but the use of this machine which delivers death to pests through harmful chemicals brings people together.

![Figure 7](image.jpg)

Figure 7. An example of the wooden sprayers that could have been used by the farmers on the Providence bench. (Russell Lee, Members of FSA (Farm Security Administration) cooperative sprayer. Cache County, Utah, 1940, Utah State University Special Collections)

Of this type of cooperation Shayne Mathews recalled:

I don't remember a lot of problems up there with the neighbors. We all got along pretty well. As a matter of fact, it was, you know--We would help each other because--like we used Royal Gessel to spray for us sometime. Melvin Bitters sprayed for us sometimes because he had some fruit trees and he also had some strawberries up there. And he would come over and spray for us sometimes. And Mel was a really fun little guy. He was just a great guy. And there was a guy who
I haven't mentioned named Floyd Newbold. He lived further up along towards the canyon. And he had fruit trees, and occasionally he'd do things like spray for us or--And so we did different things and we might help them with something they were doing. Everybody got along pretty good up there. It wasn't like you see in a lot of places where it was, you know, the neighbors get together and "We'll do yours today and--" But there were things that maybe somebody would have a piece of equipment that maybe somebody else didn't have and if you needed that, you could usually borrow it, or he'd come and do whatever you needed done for ya. It was that kind of a thing. We had our own rig to spray with, but especially when Dad was gone a lot, he would just hire the other guys to come and spray. That way us kids weren't spraying the fruit and maybe spraying each other [laughs]. (2013)

Although keeping chemicals away from kids did play a role in this arrangement, there’s a sense of propriety and tradition. Those with more experience and maturity were in charge of the spraying. It did not matter if the equipment belonged to them or not. “Because of the chemicals and because of the whole feel there,” Mathews explained. “They would keep good track of it” and “would make arrangements for the whole summer” which ensured the spraying got done properly by a single person, which would have also been a favor to those who were full-time farmers and didn’t have extra income from any kind of part-time job (2013).

Harvey Mohr’s father worked part-time for LeGrand Johnson Construction. Born in 1941, Harvey is “the same age as Wes [Bitters]” and was in his same class at school (2013). He explained well the process for spraying as well as the relationship he had with Melvin Bitters’ when he came to spray for them:

Wes’ dad had an old wooden sprayer. That we'd get him ta--We'd get him ta come up and then Dad and I'd sit on the back of it and we'd spray all our fruit trees right around off the end of the tractor and then we'd spray our fruit. We'd fill it full of water and pesticide and, uh, spray. We didn't oft--We didn't have to spray strawberries very often. Once in a while you'd have a wet spring and we'd get mildew in 'em, but basically not I guess. (2013)
Melvin came and obviously helped drive, but the two Mohrs also participated, making it a team effort between the farmers.

Figure 8. Another example of the use of the sprayer. (Russell Lee, FSA (Farm Security Administration) sprayer in action, 1940, Utah State University Special Collections)

The Mohr’s had a similar relationship with other farmers on the bench.

“Newbolds lived right by our 4 acre piece...on the bench. On Providence Canyon Road, going up...He had a sprayer too. He'd spray for us once in a while” (2013). This kind of cooperation happened quite a bit, Harvey agreed. But there was no kind of code or formality involved with it.

Just ‘it's time to spray’...You'd have to spray for apples two or three times a year and you had to know right when to spray. So when it was time to spray, why, [Newbold'd] spray his and, you know, would say--He'd give us a call or
something and say, ‘Got my sprayer, if you want a spray, you'll—’ And I think we paid him, you know. We paid him to come spray use his sprayer. (Mohr 2013) It seems that the farmers who owned the sprayers kept track of the appropriate time to spray (see fig. 8). They knew who needed their services and made sure they were taken care of. In this sense, spraying turned into a second business venture, which was, again, mutually beneficial for the parties involved. Farm equipment in this sense played a dual role, as an opportunity to build relationships and as a way to earn extra money for those who needed it, but in both cases, the business relationship was secondary to the personal relationship formed through having someone help with spraying because of the cooperation in actually performing the service.

**Women, Children, and the Family Garden**

Just as the farmers needed each other to maximize their success, each person in a household contributed to keeping the family running. Family cooperation and conflict was a common theme throughout the narratives I collected. Women were an integral part of the farmers’ community as were their children. As would be expected and was common in other parts of Utah, the mother was typically in the home caring for younger children, doing household chores, cooking and cleaning, and often doing gardening or other subsistence farming tasks. Mothers had to work hard in order to provide for the family.

Lex Baer said of his mother: “She did everything. She was a great cook. She bottled, of course, all kinds of fruit. She helped with the selling of the fruit. She just took care of home” (2013). Mrs. Baer sold fruit to people that would come to their home to buy it, while Mr. Baer took charge of peddling the fruit to local grocery stores. The other families had similar arrangements. Lex continued, “We’d always have a lot of fruit at home and she would sell that and she bottled hundreds of bottles of fruit. Very good. She
was a very good cook” (2013). This was a typical response from children about their mothers or the women they worked with on the farms, but at least two of the households I talked to had mothers who had full-time jobs on the side out of necessity.

Lex, Clotille, and Eloise Baer’s mother grew up on a dairy farm, so she was a faster milker than the rest of them. As such, she often helped with the milking, but she did not take part in the harvesting or planting. This extended into the garden space as well. "We had a garden, but usually she didn’t do the garden. Usually it was me, my dad and so on,” said Lex about her role (2013).

The garden is an example of a space where gender norms were more flexible, where household tasks meet the physical labor of the field. There seemed to be no specific gender assigned to that space. Father or mother could be in charge of it. Son or daughter helped maintain it. Joan Lofthouse’s father and mother “did grow a large garden...Actually, it was my father that grew them. I mean, [mother] helped, but he was the one that loved the garden” (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). Here it was a matter of personal choice and passion.

Another woman recounted a memory of her mother’s role in the gardening (see fig. 9). Her use of “they” most often which suggests that neither parent was necessarily “in charge”. She recalled:

Every year [my parents] planted a big garden. I remember that….They planted everything. We had all kinds of vegetables. And one thing I remember is they would plant the little green onions. And I remember my mother going out there and crawling along the ground on her hands and knees pulling the weeds out of those little tiny green onions. They had a huge garden. And mother canned the produce for winter and stored the potatoes. So we always had—our garden was always the harvest for the winter. (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013)
The garden itself was often a space where anyone participated, making it more of a family affair. The garden harvest was usually used by the mother in bottling and food storage, but the result was a product of physical labor, sustaining of the family, as men’s work was outside of the home. The hard work in the garden and in the kitchen after the harvest was essential in keeping the family fed throughout the winter when work and food were scarce. The canned preserves also served as a treat throughout the winter when fresh fruit was not available.

The role of daughter on the farms was also fluid, confusing established gender roles. The amount of work done in the fields outside often depended on birth order for both males and females. Art Bitters, for example, did not spend as much time working with the berries as Wes did because he was younger, but he did spend time working with
the apples as he got older. He was less inclined to work, though, and speaks about it with less fondness than his older brother. “When I was about ten, eleven, twelve that was when they were doing a lot of the fruit growing. They'd get up about six and start. Or earlier, five or six. As soon as daylight started. And they'd pick until they got finished about noon…So I would just goof around while [they worked]” Art says (2013). But he made it clear that he was contributing while at home, doing the things his mother might do if she were there. He would “mow the lawn…weed the garden, just stuff around the house. It wasn't city living. It was all country, so everybody kinda did a little something around the farm related to the farm” (2013).

The reverse was true for Joan Lofthouse as a younger daughter in her family.

We worked hard growing up. Just because that's what you done to survive as families. And I didn't think much about it. I was the fourth girl in our family, and by then my father had decided he needed help outside instead of all of us doing dishes. So me and one of my other sisters were outside, and consequently we learned to love the outdoors. The others didn't. They didn't want to get their fingers dirty. [Laughs] (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013)

People were expected to work hard, but when help was needed people were called upon to fulfill a variety of roles. Joan and Art’s comments also illustrate that although family obligation was king, children also had a choice in their level of participation.

Sociality on the Bench

The farmers on the bench got to know each other to varying degrees through work and socializing. In my interviews there was the sense that work was work, but on occasion, people formed friendships with each other and had a good laugh when taking a break or shooting the breeze. For example, Royal Gessel was remembered by most as “a real jolly kind of guy,” “kind of a character” (Mathews 2013; Mohr 2013). He was a part
of all of their lives because of his unique personality and the location of his farm. Location was, of course, influential in the relationships the farmers created with each other. “The Jensen kids worked a lot on their farm over there. But their dad was usually there,” said Shayne Mathews (2013). “He worked part-time too, but he was home a lot and helped them on the farm. They're the ones I associated the most with because they were about a quarter mile from us and farming all the time.”

Mathews’ association with them actually extended beyond working in the fields:

We lived up there on the South bench of Providence, and it was a couple miles down to the school. So even in grade school, the county didn't have busses, but the neighbor—one of the neighbors, for a long time it was Sister Heckmann, Mrs. Heckmann, that lived across from us. They had a car that they'd pick us up and take us to school in. And then Floyd Newbold had a little Jeep wagoneer and we rode in that. He picked up the high school kids. And grade school too, a lot, so it was either Heckmann's or Newbolds that were picking us up. So, the kids we were all riding those little busses and stuff together. (2013)

In this sense, the cooperative spirit extended beyond the fields into day-to-day life and sociality. Another woman actually remembered this about Mr. Newbold when describing how she remembered him. Although she felt he had a reputation “for being Scotch” (or stingy), he was, in her opinion, still a good person as demonstrated through the sacrifice of his time and money every day during the school year (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013).

This same woman whose family lived in town described the intimacy shared between the women on the bench:

My family was friends with the other farmers on the bench. Yeah, they were. In fact, my mother was in a little club with all those ladies up on the bench that had farms. Yeah. They had a little club, just a little club to get together just that little group. And, uh, they would meet maybe once a month and have a dinner together, the husbands and the wives with that little group…. And they were all wonderful cooks. Oh! Wonderful cooks! They all raised big gardens. Wonderful cooks. Oh! They would put on a wonderful big feed when you went to have dinner because
they were all wonderful cooks. And they were all homemakers. I don't think any of them--I don't recall that any of the women in that group ever worked out of their home. I think they were homemakers, every one of them. (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013)

They gathered for dinner mostly during the colder winter months due to the busy nature of the planting and harvest seasons from late spring through part of the fall. Each woman was hostess in her turn, and the children were never invited. These dinners were quite the affair for the families and her parents enjoyed the lavish fare immensely. She has memories of all the women gathered around in the kitchen, sharing news about pregnancies and their families. “Well, I’m pregnant,” they would say. These were times when the farmers and their wives could get together and celebrate, taking it easy when work was scarce. Because of the wives’ association, they feasted on their labors from the earlier harvest, sharing in the bounty (depending on the year, certainly) that they all worked hard to achieve (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013).

The association of that group of women extended beyond cooking and eating together. Around 1947, a few of the mothers, including Ona Newbold and Rhetta Jensen, decided to have their daughters all take dance together, sharing carpooling duties. The care over each other’s daughters continued even later in life, as the woman above remembers,

Another thing that they did which was very, very nice, all of those mothers, when they would have a daughter get married, then all the women would get together and quilt a quilt for that daughter. So, yeah, they did. Now, it so happened. Well, they did that for several years for the daughters. And then, I come along and I was getting married and they came to my mother. I got married in the middle of the summer and they came to my mother and said, “We can't quilt in the summer. We just can't make a quilt. (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013).

But the busy summer months did not deter this group of women from looking after one of their own. Instead of quilting a quilt for her, they all pooled their money and bought her a
nice set of china. Her mother and father did not associate with this group as much once their children had left home, but some of the friendships on the bench remained strong throughout these people’s lives. Shayne Mathews also remembered his parents associating with their neighbors along with a few couples from in town. “As a matter fact,” he said, “Mom, up until the day she died, was really good friends with Rhetta Jensen that lived up there and Opal Naylor and some of the other neighbors up there” (Mathews 2013). The feeling of camaraderie was obviously not limited to the men that felt connected by their work, but existed among their families.

Despite any tensions that may have existed between farmers on the bench due to water or competition in sales, the shared experiences of identifying as a fruit farmer or a farmer’s wife on the Providence bench connected and unified them. This collective identity pushed Providence into a prominent position as a leader in fruit production during that time. They had built up a rich enclave of support and mutual understanding both in their families and as a group which enriched their lives and guided and lifted them through difficult periods as farming families. There is no surprise, then, that as each farmer sold his share of the land when agricultural production was declining and the land values rising, that the bonds of community that were there also started breaking down. The face of the Providence bench is drastically altered from the time when these farmers were there, a reflection not only of the changes in local economy but also of the disintegration of these farming families’ community ties.
CHAPTER 3
A COMMUNITY OF THEIR OWN: BERRY PICKING
ON THE PROVIDENCE BENCH

The berry fields were a unique place on the farms in the Cache Valley area. Much of the farm work was traditionally a man’s responsibility where women were typically, though not universally, expected to be in the home, caring for children. Although men played a dominant role in farm management and ownership, women and girls also made essential contributions to their family’s well-being. Everyone worked together, as discussed in the previous chapter, to make the household function, as households in these farming communities were much more complicated than a standard household in Providence today. Cows had to be milked, gardens had to be cultivated and tended, meals had to be made, and grain had to be harvested. For a family in small-scale agriculture, everyone was a necessary member of the body of workers. Families were often large to support the amount of work that needed to be done, and sons, daughters, and wives took on the burden of running the farm when fathers had to take on second jobs.

This contribution extended beyond chores to financial support. Many of the people interviewed for this project grew up post World War II, their parents products of living and working through the Great Depression. Life was not easy, and teens and adolescents contributed in any way they could, getting work wherever they could. Not everyone had to, but many found work on the local farms. This chapter documents and explores one agricultural niche that is distinctly female in designation. There were not many ways for young girls to earn money in the fifties and sixties, so they turned to picking beans or fruit. The berry fields were primarily planted and tended by men, but
when harvest came, these same fields were a social club and testing ground for teen girls who flocked to the place where by their skill alone, they could make as much money as they could anywhere during the summer, gaining a bit of independence and camaraderie in the process. Just like the farmers on the bench, the girls that worked together formed bonds of friendship and community with their fellow pickers, often the farmer’s children or wives. The relationship between the pickers and the farmers was also important, as the system of pay generated elements of competition which mutually benefitted the pickers and the farmers in ways similar to those discussed in the previous chapter among farmers.

In interviews with men and women alike, the common response concerning gender roles in work was that men’s work was in the beet field, hauling hay, or doing the irrigating and planting. The only workers that really did the berry picking were girls from twelve to eighteen or young boys in some cases. Older boys did help with larger fruit picking like apples or peaches. When asked why this was the case, some responded that the work in the beet fields especially was just too hard for a girl. Interestingly, these people were mostly the girls that had actually worked in the beet fields or hauled hay. Girls and boys alike picked apples, cherries, and beans. Women and young boys were sought out as berry pickers, on the other hand, because of their small hands and feet which were less prone to accidentally damaging the berries. Generally, women were described as being overall more careful with the tender fruit, and fruit was typically considered women’s work even though “it’s not that no boys picked” (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013).

As such, picking fruit was a common summer job for many young girls in the Cache Valley area for at least half of the twentieth century. An early documented
example comes from the Farm Security Administration (FSA) photos taken by Russell Lee some of which show teenage girls picking what look like dewberries. The caption does not clearly state where these girls were from, but he took many of his photos in the Mendon area. Even my cousin, who grew up in Logan in the nineteen-eighties and nineties picked berries, but in the Bear Lake area since berry production in the Cache Valley area had declined significantly as had other agricultural forms.

Figure 10. (Russell Lee, Pitching hay on farm. Cornish, Utah, 1940, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

But at that time, the summer and fall of each year were full of work as each crop came on (or was ready for harvest) at its own time. Planting and maintenance started in late spring, as Cache Valley has a fairly short growing season. Each type of berry came on at different times during the summer. The strawberries were first, during June, then the raspberries and dewberries which, depending on the year, lasted until the end of July or into August. The first hay crop came on around the first of July and then two more crops were ready in succession after that, in four-week intervals (see fig. 10) (Christensen
The cherries and peaches were later in the summer, and the apples were ready in late summer/early fall. The beet harvest was in the fall, and like the potato vacation in Idaho for the potato harvest, Cache County school children were let out for two weeks for the beet vacation (see fig. 11). In the midst of these harvests were harvests of other crops like cantaloupe, watermelon, grapes (see fig. 12), pears and various vegetables.

Figure 11. (Russell Lee, Sugar beets waiting to be unloaded, 1940, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

Among the agricultural chores available, there was a hierarchy of work according to desirability. Topping and digging beets was the hardest, so if a girl worked in the beet fields, the fruit work seemed like a break. When I asked Clotille Baer Liechty what her favorite part of the work was, she let out a long, hearty laugh, deeply amused that any part of the work they did could be labeled “a favorite.” “I don't know,” she said, “The fruit part would be more favorite than out in the hay and the beets....It wasn't so hard and
so dirty. It wasn't so physical” (Liechty 2013). Each fruit also had its own drawbacks, but harvesting peaches and apples seemed to be preferred overall among young people who worked all of the harvest seasons. The trees required spraying and irrigation, but the harvest was never something anyone really complained about. Clotille greatly disliked the irritating fuzz that would get down their shirt when they thinned peaches, but it still did not compare physically to other jobs (Liechty 2013). The apple harvest even became a fun family gathering each year for the Bitters when Wes and Art both had children who could help (A. Bitters 2013). Janalee Thomas only worked one season on the apple harvest, but she described the differences between working in the berries and working in the orchards.

It was more of a physical job, as the fruit was heavier, and the act of picking took a little more athleticism as we were in the trees and on ladders. It was faster work too, and we could pick a whole tree in an hour or less, and move to the next. Unlike berries, all the fruit on a tree is ready at once, so we would pick it all, and not have to ever revisit that tree again. I think we got paid
by the hour for this work. (Janalee Thomas 2013)

Eloise Baer Toolson also explained that the fruit was heavier and the bushel baskets large, so it took a great deal of effort to heft them (2013). In general, the tree fruits had similar processes as described here. Cherries and peaches both ripened at the same time and took just a few days or a couple of weeks to harvest. There were many workers involved, and the process was speedy.

Within the fruit, the berries were the most challenging for various reasons including the added care they required, as they were fragile. Depending on the species of berry, the characteristics of the plants and berries differed; consequentially, the harvest and care of each type of berry had its own challenges. For example, strawberry plants, are low to the ground, and planted in close rows (as were most crops). Janalee explained the toll that strawberries took on the pickers’ bodies because of their height,

It is the most grueling of the picking, because you have to squat down on the ground to pick. And yet you have to be careful not to step on the plants or squash the berries….The position for picking was a low squat over the plants with the right foot in a row aisle, and the left foot in the aisle on the other side of the plants. Down the row you would go, squatting all the way. Occasionally you would stand up to stretch, and oooohh. . .did the back and legs feel stiff! (2013)

Elizabeth Brown agreed with Janalee, “The strawberries were the buggers. That was hard on your back” (2013). The workers were motivated to keep working, but the longer they stayed down, the harder it was to stand up.

Along with individual challenges, every fruit had specific tools used in the harvest. The implements of berry picking depended upon the type of berry. In the dewberries and strawberries, which grew lower to the ground, the pickers used a carrier, commonly referred to as a picker, picker box, or a carrier. This contraption consisted of a wooden frame with a handle that stood about two feet high (see fig. 13). The frame held
the berry crate which contained six wooden cups, in two rows of three, for the berries.

The picker box was placed in front of the worker in between two rows or over the plants

![Image of a worker picking berries with a picker box]

Figure 13. An example of the wooden picker boxes used. She is probably picking dewberries. Notice the holes cut into the fingers of the gloves. (Russell Lee. Young town girl picking berries in Cache County, Utah. Because of diversification of crops, no migrant labor is needed or used in this section of Utah 1940, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

and was moved as they picked the berries. Wes Bitters explained that the design of the picker boxes was “so you wouldn't mash the crop” (2013). He explained one method using the picker box, “You'd walk down in between two rows. And what you should have done was pick half the row here and half the row here [pointing to either side]” (2013).

When each picker finished a row, they would take their box and walk down past the other pickers to an unoccupied row and begin again.
At the end of the strawberry season, Janalee Gale remembers “[gleaning] them for a day or two, and then it was time to move to the raspberries.” Only the best workers were invited back to pick the Bitters’ raspberries. The Newbolds did not even let their teenage workers pick the raspberries; they were that precious (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013). They instead employed older women. Janalee considered herself “fortunate…to be asked to stay on the crew for a couple years in a row” (Janalee Thomas 2013).

Raspberries on the Bitters’ farm were also placed in cups and cases for sale, but they did not use the picker boxes. Instead, “[they] wore a belt around [their] waist and to this [they] attached an ice cream gallon bucket with a handle” when they picked because the height of the bush itself made bending to drop the berries unconducive to keeping them fresh as raspberries are easily crushed. The pickers also could not grab many of them at a time for the same reason (Janalee Thomas 2013). The buckets were then only filled two-thirds full in order to avoid damaging the fruit. Janalee Thomas explained, “Then we would have to go out of the row to the cases (which were by where Joycee supervised) and dump them into a case assigned to us. On a good picking day it would take about four trips to fill a case” (2013).

The raspberries put less strain on the back because they were taller bushes, so the workers could stand. Their height and thickness also offered some shade from the sun. “It is like entering a jungle. You step into the row and you disappear. Sometimes the only way to find another person is to watch the bushes wiggle,” wrote Janalee who preferred working in the raspberries because “the work was less grueling” (Janalee Thomas 2013). Despite these advantages, these berries presented a unique set of obstacles to successfully
removing the entire crop; as Janalee explained, “If you have ever picked raspberries, you know that they like to hide. They hide behind stems; they hide behind leaves” (Janalee Thomas 2013). Another girl shared the responsibility for locating and picking all of the ripe raspberries on the bush. In this case, the work seems to have been a bit more collaborative. “The berries that I couldn't see from my side due to the "hiding berries," were able to be seen on the other side. We could watch and help each other” (Janalee Thomas 2013). When they were unable to reach a berry, they could inform the other picker of its location so they could then pick it. Wes Bitters did not like the raspberry patch for this reason. They were the hardest berries to pick, and customers were not willing to pay the price the farmers felt these berries were worth. This was most likely because many farmers grew them and quite a few people had them in their own gardens.

The dewberries, on the other hand, were more uncommon because very few farmers grew them, so people were willing to pay for them. The most obvious reason for this rarity was the struggle to care for the plants and to harvest the berries. They were bigger than strawberry plants, but still low to the ground, and they had long vines running out of the main body of the plant upon which the berries grew. Each person who described dewberries immediately explained how horrible they were to pick. Ike Christensen abhorred them because:

They were miserable. Even watering them was miserable. You'd get them all around your legs. The little stringers go out all over and, uh, you couldn't cut 'em off because your berry would grow on them. And as you'd irrigate them, and I'm talkin' when you was little maybe nine or ten, you'd always stumble into a vine, and it would wrap around you. They were sticky things. I don't mean little. They were like a cactus-type thing. They were the stickiest. [Indicates a length of about an inch with his fingers] Half inch to three-quarters inch sticker on the thing, and frequently! But they was a good berry, a very good berry, but you earned 'em. You earned every one you'd pick. (2013)
All described the thorns as being monstrous, some even indicated a length of an inch and a half, usually demonstrating with their fingers and wide eyes how daunting those thorny bushes truly were and vindicating their dislike for growing them with their own tales of this legendary thorn bush. They were wonderful berries for jam, though, so people paid to be free of the hassle of having them in their gardens. The Christensens, for example, only kept the bushes for two years in their garden before deciding it was not worth the trouble. Dewberries are still available today, but are less common than the blackberry. They are similar to a blackberry but are longer and larger, and they ripen earlier in the season (Summerstone Nursery).

The clothing associated with each type of fruit differed based on the obstacles the plant itself produced. Pictures of pickers from the 1940 photos by Russell Lee depict a typical “uniform” of long sleeves and pants or overalls with a wide brimmed hat or scarf covering the head. Wes Bitters still has an old picture of his grandparents in the strawberry patch, his grandmother wearing similar garb—loose long pants and shirt and a wide-brim hat. In the next generation, the clothing seems to have changed, most girls not remembering ever wearing a hat at all. Joyce Bitters did wear a hat, as her mother-in-law did, so wearing hats in the sun may have been customary for older men and women. Janalee remembers “working on [their arm tans],” showing that long sleeves was also no longer the norm during the heat of the day (Janalee Thomas 2013). Because they worked in the cool of the morning, the girls often wore jackets in the mornings and then shed their outer layers as the sun came up.

Raspberries and dewberries required long sleeves because of the thorns. Janalee explained that in the raspberries, “long sleeves are worn as a protection. Your hands
however, must remain un-gloved. For you need the agility and tenderness of bare fingers to get those little berries without squishing them or dropping them” (2013) Dewberries had such long thorns that gloves were also needed (see fig. 14). One woman described the typical garb,

The dewberries are like a thorn bush. They had a lot of thorns, and so we had to wear gloves on our hands and cut the fingers out of the gloves so we could feel the berries. We had to wear those kind of gloves to pick the dewberries, but we made more money off of a case of dewberries than off strawberries for that reason, because they were harder to pick. (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013)
There were other physical marks that one was a berry picker. Elizabeth Brown said that she would “smell like a strawberry all the time in the summer. Always! The strawberries made me kind of sick” she said, “because you're in 'em, you're kneeling and if you get [them] smashed on clothes,” you would smell like them. “You either had them on your pants or on your hands. Or--I kind of--strawberries were not my favorite fruit, but then I learned to love them” (2013). This was a common problem for the pickers. Another woman remembered her hands being stained red from the berry juices all summer and her fingernails the color of tar. She “learned much later that lemon juice will remove all the stains, but [she] didn't know that then” (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013). The embarrassment over the state of her hands made that one of her least favorite memories of picking.

Being tan was another sign of being a picker. Joan Lofthouse remembered tanning very easily and loving the sun. Janalee Thomas also loved the sun because “In those days getting a sunburn was like a point of pride. The worse the sunburn the better the story, and the more the pride” (2013). They never applied sunscreen or wore a hat, as mentioned earlier, but Janalee continued, “Occasionally we would wear a bandana scarf around our hair, but never a hat to keep the sun off. We worshiped the sun and a sunburn meant we were ‘outdoorsie’, and ‘athletic’.” Most women did not remember getting sunburns, but “The worst sunburn [Janalee] ever got was picking strawberries.” While she was working, the skin of her lower back was exposed from the squatting. “At the end of the shift my lower back was scorched!” she said. “I got the largest and worst blisters I have ever seen on a sunburn. Agh!!!! Always after that did I make sure my t-shirt was
long enough to cover all skin when bending and squatting.” Being in the sun came with a price although they enjoyed the bronze look from being outdoors.

Farmers needed a number of pickers to help in their berries as in Figure 15. The Mohrs hired half a dozen workers and the Baer used up to a dozen. The Bitters’ fields were so large that they needed between fourteen and twenty-four workers. As explained earlier, the berries ripened a little at a time, so pickers came each morning, except

Figure 15. (Russell Lee, Young people from Logan picking berries for farmer in Cache County, Utah. There is no migrant labor used or needed in this section, 1940, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)

Sundays, to pluck off the newly ripened fruit. Generally on the Providence bench, the hired girls came from Logan and even more came from Providence. Farmers found their pickers through word of mouth. Farmers with children relied on the labor of their own children, but they needed outside help as well. They could inquire with friends or family
if their working-age children wanted work. Once hired, those teens enlisted their friends to come along. When they would graduate or find another job, one of their siblings or friends would take their place. Eloise Baer Toolson emphasized the scarcity of jobs for teens in those days saying, “They didn't have a lot of places they could work,” which made the jobs they were able to get precious (2013). Farmers often used the same pickers each year, in part, because they did not have to train fresh workers, and also because the kids found it difficult to find anything as good elsewhere.

The common practice in those days was to go “pick up your help” because family cars were rarer then (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). When the berries came on, farmers or members of their families made the rounds to pick up the teenage girls that had been hired to help. The usual routine was an early pick-up, around 5:30 or 6, before the sunrise. It was difficult for teenagers to get up that early, especially in the summer because they would spend the evening playing outside with their neighborhood friends, but if they did not get up, they lost their chance to work (Brown 2013; Janalee Thomas 2013). Many pickers cited this requirement as one of the most character-building components of the picking experience. Floyd Newbold picked up his pickers in his station wagon. The Baer sisters picked up their help in their pick-up truck although they remember being too young to drive. The Mohrs, Gessels, and Bitters also picked up their pickers in a truck.

The experiences of the pickers depended greatly on who was driving them. If Mr. Newbold came to pick up the girls, there was little chatter between them although he was described as being generally friendly. The Baer girls remember picking up their help with a little more fondness, and described the manner in which kids amused themselves riding
to and from work. “The kids that picked fruit, I know, they would sing loud silly songs as they were riding.” Eloise also remembers them vying for the best spots on the truck.

“[The old pick-ups] had headlights and they could sit on the fenders. I can remember them saying, ‘Well, they sat on the headlights for three days, and it’s my turn!’ Or they’d like to sit on the end of the pick-up and dangle their legs, you know. Then they could yell and sing.” When she discovered that I was not old enough to remember this style of truck, she explained further. The headlights “had a big fender, that little groove in. Wouldn't happen now, would it? There was a little groove that they loved, so one kid [was] sitting on each side. And it was safe, I guess. They'd all choose the headlights. They'd all take a turn sitting on the front headlights” (Toolson 2013).

Harvey Mohr, whose mother picked up the girls each morning, remembered similar scenes of singing, happy girls:

> You know, today you can't ride in the back of the pickup. And I'll never forget pickups just full of girls. You know, feet dangling off the sides...and up the canyon they'd go, or up the hill they'd go and pick....They were always happy. Giggly. Seemed like it to me. I don't know. Girls are girls when they are young, you know. They're goofy. I mean when they're young, you know how they are. (2013)

Even though it was hard work which started early, they enjoyed singing and playing together, making work as an enjoyable experience as it could be.

Although they enjoyed singing and playing on the way to and from work, each picker was also there to work hard (at least according to their reports). All of the farmers made sure the picking was done properly but often left the workers to their own devices during the picking time. Attitudes of the farmer towards the pickers showed despite their absence, so even though the experiences of pickers were uniform in the type of work and the process for picking, the overall experience depended on the type of personality and
approach to supervising the farmer and his wife had. One extreme was the farmers who were more reserved, less chatty and who never brought treats for their workers. The farmer’s wife was at home tending children or doing other duties, and the farmer had other matters to attend to.

The other end of the spectrum seemed to coincide with breaking down of the solely-a-homemaker role in small or childless families such as the Bitters and the Gessels. Joyce Bitters had two children and the Gessels had none at home by the time my informants were working with them. Consequently, they were the only adult women those interviewed remembered seeing out in the fields working. Of Mrs. Gessel it was said:

She would interact with us, and she was very pleasant. And, in fact, the two of them almost seemed like they looked alike, or they were very well paired. But she would just make sure—and do it in a loving kind [way]—that we were doing it the right way. And making sure we were picking the ripe ones and not the green ones, and I guess in a sense she was there kind of as a supervisor but didn't seem like a demanding boss. She was just there and helped pick too. (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013)

Joyce Bitters had a similar role, but because of her work in the Young Women’s organization through the LDS Church (a group for girls ages twelve to eighteen), she had a more intimate and friendly relationship with the pickers out of the fields and in them. On the Bitters farm, the workers were more like a family, giving theirs a reputation for being more fun than other farms. Joyce Bitters worked alongside the pickers and encouraged them along in their work and Melvin routinely provided pickers with treats of ice cream and soda. “Melvin was just such a worker, and Joyce, she would just laugh at us. Cheer us on,” said Elizabeth Brown of their management style.
Where they were available to be working, the teenage children of the farmer or his wife also worked in the fields picking. This led to dynamics between pickers and their supervisors which were sometimes difficult to negotiate. The Baer girls, Eloise and Clotille, although the same age as their picking peers, felt the pressure of family responsibility.

[The pickers] liked being with us, and we liked being with them, and we kind of had to be the bosses’ daughters, so we had to work, but they were always good with us, and we were always good with them. We never said, ‘We're in charge here.’ They knew what they had to do, and we just got our crates with our stuff, and away we went. So we tried to be just one of the kids, but we knew we had to keep working,

says Eloise of their experience with the girls (2013).

The farmers’ children and wives often helped keep track of the amount of berries each girl picked. “Every case we picked we would report to Joycee,” said Janalee Thomas. “She kept a pencil tally all week long of what we picked, and knew who was picking slowly, and who was dilly dallying through the morning.” Each girl was paid once a week, but the day differed from farm to farm. The Bitters paid the girls on Fridays when Janalee Thomas worked there, and the Baers paid them on Sundays. Although it was many years ago, most of them remembered similar payments for the berries. Joan Lofthouse remembered that they earned twenty-five or fifty cents a case, and another woman received thirty-five cents a case if they stayed the whole season for the strawberries. They were paid more depending on the type of berry. “We got paid more for raspberries, I assume it was because they were smaller and it took more effort to fill a case. It seems to me we got either $1 per case, or $1.25. Whatever it was it seemed like good money to me at the time,” said Janalee Thomas, who picked for the Bitters from about 1974 to 1976 (Janalee Thomas, July 18, 2013, e-mail message to author). Wes
Bitters, about twenty-five years Janalee’s senior, remembers them paying twenty-five cents per case for the raspberries while he was at home, showing the effects of inflation on the pickers’ wages. In any case, as Janalee said, the pay was meager, but the pickers felt like they were well paid for their efforts.

The girls most commonly worked to earn money for school clothes, tuition, or books. “[It] seems I mostly saved the money for school clothes,” remembered Janalee Thomas, “Mom and Dad would help us get things in the end if we came up short, but it was a point of pride to try to pay for as much of our own school clothes as possible” (2013). She would also buy fabric which her mom would sew into clothes for her.

Another woman remembers making seventy dollars one summer, a substantial amount of money at that point in time, which she used to pay for school supplies (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013). In return, her father agreed to pay her high school tuition, a common expense for the students attending South Cache, the high school serving that part of the valley. Elizabeth Brown, on the other hand, paid for her own school tuition and supplies (2013). Their earnings also went to recreational activities and special outings with friends. As Janalee Thomas remembered,

We also used our money for things like the county fair. The fair always was in town in August, and if you could hold on to some of your money ‘til then, there might be an extra ride on the roller coaster or something. Lagoon [an amusement park in northern Utah] was another thing that kids’ money went for. (2013)

For the children of the farmers, their parents’ success was directly tied to their own prosperity and fun allowance. Eloise’s sister, Clotille, agreed,

You know, we always felt kind of bad because we always had to work hard and set an example for the girls, you know. We had to pick fast and get 'em done. And then every Sunday they'd come to the house and my dad would pay them. We'd keep track of how many cases of strawberries and stuff. And--but we never ever
got paid for ours. And we always felt really bad, you know. They'd give all this money out to the other girls and we didn't ever get any for ours. (Liechty 2013)

These two girls did not support themselves in school like the other girls, but they were deprived the satisfaction of direct returns for their labors.

The system of pay acted as an inherent motivator for workers whether there was someone to constantly oversee the work or not. The amount of money they earned was directly related to how quickly the cups and cases could be filled with the tender fruit. Because each worker was paid by the case or bushel (and with other types of harvesting by the row), working diligently was a higher priority than fun. “We didn't have time to goof off,” said Boyd Lofthouse of their rural childhoods. His wife, Joan, who picked for the Newbolds and the Gessels, remembers laughing and having fun with her friends, but when it came to work she said:

Mostly I just think we concentrated on picking as fast as we could. We got paid for what we done, and it was important because we had to earn our own school money. And part of the thing was is as we were picking, we were expected out of our paycheck…to pay for a case of fruit to bring home to can for the family storage, or whatever [crop] we were working in. That was just kind of understood that we helped with that. (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013)

Some of these girls had the added burden of direct support of their families as well as the requirement to pay for their own schooling which added to their desire to concentrate and focus on the task at hand. When asked about the songs they sang, some of the hired girls remember singing camp songs, but mostly they remember working and trying hard to keep up. These songs functioned as a break from the monotony as well as a tool for group unification but were secondary in memory to the urgency of getting to the end of each row in a timely fashion.
Despite the fact that not many people could remember exactly what they talked about or what songs they sang, there was laughter and singing as they worked and on the way home. “We passed the time while we picked by sometimes talking, and sometimes singing. We would sing silly camp songs to each other, and with each other.” She recalled singing songs the girls had learned at a Young Women’s church camp held each summer, which they all attended, as well as songs like “Bingo” and “The Ants Go Marching.” “Sometimes Joycee would tell us to stop so we would concentrate more on the picking, but for the most part she just enjoyed our youthful spirits,” she said. Janalee continued, “As the morning wore on we would talk more. If someone was in the row beside us then we would chat with them, probably about boys, or upcoming summer activities or something” (Janalee Thomas 2013). In the example above, Joyce Bitters was understanding of the temporary distraction which helped them continue picking efficiently. As long as the singing and chatting was not a hindrance to their work, it was permissible, but there was a certain amount of serious-mindedness required to pick a greater quantity of fruit.

They also were tempted to eat the berries at they went. “Once in a while you just couldn't resist eating one, or two. . .but smart pickers knew that eating meant that we wouldn't fill our cases as fast. . .and that would mean less money for us, so we didn't eat very many” (Janalee Thomas 2013). Luckily, it was common practice to allow pickers to glean the fields after picking, eating the berries they had missed when they were done even on the farms of less-friendly farmers that never brought treats, so even though they were not “as fun,” they still cared for their pickers and allowed them certain perks.
It was imperative that they work quickly, but it was also requisite that they pick quality fruit for the sake of the farmers. “The canon of work technique is not a law or written set of rules but a standard that workers themselves create and control,” states McCarl (1986, 72). In this case, the farmers set standards and guidelines that pickers were expected to follow, but the workers learned from each other as well as from the farmers the proper way to pick.

The Bitters, for example, were quite particular about the state of the picked berries, as many of the farmers were, specifying that strawberries had to be picked at a certain ripeness with the stems still attached in order to prevent bruising and spoiling. If berries were left overnight, they would rot on the plants as Wes Bitters explained:

Dad and Mom were very particular about their fruit picking. You had to pick the fruit with the stem on it. If you didn't, you didn't work any longer for us. You had to not bruise the berry. You couldn't throw them in the case, you had to actually set them in the case. Ah, they were really--really sticklers. And the kids who picked for us, uh, and everybody in town said "Well, if you're gonna pick for Bitters, you know, it's tougher than you've picked for the Mohrs, or the...Newbolds and so forth because Dad was so particular about his crop. (2013)

Melvin Bitters also felt strongly about not “cheating anybody,” meaning he made sure his pickers filled each of the cups to brimming, rather than the low level found in the grocery stores today (W. Bitters 2013). In order for the berries to be competitive at the stores because of the amount of producers, they needed to be high quality (Toolson 2013).

The work hours and field rotations were based on this principle of quality. The pickers came to work early, starting around 6 or 6:30 in the morning and leaving by 11:30 or 12 because the cool weather was better on the berries. Had they picked in the heat of the afternoon, the berries would be more easily bruised or otherwise damaged. Janalee Thomas explained their field rotations:
We never picked green berries, but waited until they were beautiful red…. We picked the same patch every other day, that way the berries that weren't ripe on one day would be ripe the next picking. The days in between we would pick an alternate patch. So most weeks we picked at least 4 days, occasionally 6 days if the berries were on full swing and there was no time to lose. You can't let berries sit for extra days, for if you do they will over ripen, and turn to mush. (2013)

Heat and over-ripening were not the only dangers to the berries during the harvest. Wes Bitters explained the importance of watering correctly:

Strawberries require to have...a lot of water; they had to have rocky soil for good drainage; strawberries do not like to go ahead and sit in water-logged land. They wanna get to drink and get the water out of there, so that's why the Prov bench was so very good for strawberries is it had good drainage. Um. Another problem with picking strawberries, you had to rotate your watering. The plants needed a good shot of water about once a week while they were in production. And so you had to water so that--it was a couple of days before you let the pickers in because you couldn't let the pickers in that field after you had watered for at least two days because it was too muddy. And also, you would kick mud up onto the berries, and you get a muddy berry, unless you wash it, you've got to go ahead and sell it. He was very, very particular. Also on rainy days. Dad would not let his pickers pick on rainy days because the strawberries would mildew because you would pick the strawberry and put it in the cup and if it was wet, within three or four hours, it would start to mildew. And so that was another problem you had to work with, and you'd hope during the six weeks of production, that you wouldn't have rainy weather because that would really cause havoc with your crop. (2013)

Mud, bruising, and mildew all negatively affected the aesthetic qualities of the berry.

There were many factors that went into the picking system in order to produce the best, most competitive berry.

It was in the best interest of the girls to pick as quickly as possible, and it was in the best interest of the farmer that all the berries were picked, showing the underlying collaborative nature, after all. For the farmers themselves, cups full of quality fruit were their life’s blood. They needed to be full and in good condition to be competitive. This tended to be a struggle between the half-hearted picker and earnest farmer. According to Janalee Thomas, the pickers were constantly given reminders to be thorough in their
work. One of the Joyce Bitters’ oft repeated lines in the raspberry patch was, “Be sure to look under their petticoats!” to remind them to look for the hidden berries. She did not just use this mantra, but also showed them through example how their work should be done.

As far as making sure we got all the berries, sometimes unknown to us, Joycee would sneak onto our row in the raspberries behind us, she would glean what we missed. Suddenly she would appear in the row from under the branches, and if her bucket had a lot in it, that meant we weren't doing a good job, and she would kindly scold us, and tell us to be sure to look more thoroughly: get down underneath and look up into the bush and most importantly, “Don't forget to look under their petticoats!” (Janalee Thomas 2013)

Wes Bitters agreed and elaborated:

A lot of girls, both on the strawberries and raspberries would only pick what you had in sight. You always had to pick up the leaves in both the raspberries and the strawberries to see what was underneath because a lot of the berries were right there on the ground. And that was very, very important because the berry that was on the ground would only last at least one day after it was ripe. After one day, it would start rotting on the bottom where it touched the ground.....Losing berries were critical because that was all money, and that was very critical, that they always lift up [the leaves]. Take your time. Don't rush now and just pick what you can see. You've got to go ahead thoroughly and make sure you picked every ripe berry on that plant before you move to the next one on both sides. (2013)

It was imperative that the girls pick all the ripe berries and be cautious in their picking technique. “I remember Joycee yelling at us in her high and funny voice, ‘DON'T SQUASH the BERRIES!’ Janalee recalled of Joyce’s coaching the pickers as they worked, encouraging precision and productivity. Elizabeth Brown also remembers Joyce’s kind encouragement as they worked. The demands of the famers for quality and quantity were mutually beneficial although they may seem to solely benefit the farmer.

Janalee Thomas realized “as an adult looking back [that] those berries were [the Bitters’] livelihood. ‘Don't squash the berries!’ was a perfectly professional plea, and one to be expected to protect their interests,” but as a young woman, it was a plea she and her
work fellows did not fully comprehend. Janalee, along with the other girls “would mimic her voice” when she gave them such reminders. Here the imitation demonstrates their comfort with their boss. Through teasing, she is one of the girls, brought down to their level as they undercut her superiority. But, in the end, they picked like she picked even if they were not attuned to the level of their concern over the fruit. Janalee elaborated on their relationship and imitation, “We respected her opinion of us, and our work. So…we all knew that we were speaking the words of our leader, and we did it with a smile. I know she heard us, and she would just smile.” If her reminders were not as respected as they should have been by all of the pickers, at least as the girls imitated, they were learning values about consideration and exactness.

Occasionally, pickers tried to cheat the farmers by picking green berries or putting rocks in the bottom. In interviews, the sons and daughters of farmers admitted to other pickers engaging in such deceptive behavior, but former hired pickers did not. It may be implied in the nature of their supervision, which was there to make sure they did not take shortcuts and pick green berries, but they never remembered any blatant acts of dishonesty towards their bosses. This dichotomy in narrative indicates a similar dichotomy in the fields. Most often, the pickers remembered being cheated themselves. Each picker was only to pick the berries on one row of berries. Sometimes they would get to a spot on the row where there were no berries because someone else had picked both sides of the aisle instead of only removing those on her allotted side. “Some pickers would go ahead and pick on the other side. So, we had some fights going on among the girls. Because they'd come back and say, "She stole my berries! She's picked them on my side of the row!” (W. Bitters 2013) Wes explained that the simple solution to the problem
was for each girl to keep up in pace to prevent other girls from cheating her, so even getting cheated by their own group was a motivation for picking faster.

These kinds of arguments did not disrupt their relationships. One woman remembers such a thing occurring, “Once in a while someone would sneak over and take the big berries off your row and put them in their carrier….You'd get up there then there were no berries, so you knew what had happened” (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013). She clarified that they did say something to the offending picker, but there was no lingering contention. Overall, this was not a common problem, and the only issue she personally remembered. “You know. But that happened occasionally….That was the only, I guess, dishonest thing that happened, you know, things like that” (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013)

Janalee Thomas confirmed that “some girls were faster than others. I couldn't tell you why. I was in the middle. I always tried to be extra careful with the berries and the plants, and I always wondered if the girls who picked faster maybe weren't as careful” (2013). If they were indeed less careful with the plants and fruit, they were in another sense cheating the farmer by not adhering to his standards and returning a quality product, leaving some berries behind as waste. It was these types of pickers that Joyce Bitters must have needed to pick after.

The fact that the pickers did not remember these instances of cheating the farmer also demonstrates that they either did not want to represent themselves or their set negatively or the offenders were dealt with in a non-public way. Quiet reprimanding would suggest a sense of care between the farmer and his help, a deeper sense of
community and familiarity than just a worker-boss relationship as in the following instance.

A little incident that happened that really made me feel bad--D'you know, we were picking the dewberries, and we had to use the gloves, like I told ya, and it took a while to get a case of berries. But they were big berries. They were as big as your thumb. Dewberries were long like your thumb and that big around. They were beautiful berries. Beautiful berries! And so I had picked my first case, and was carrying it down to the little shed because we'd pick our cases and we'd carry them down to a shed and put them in the shade until he could come with a truck and put them on his truck or whatever and sell 'em. So I was carrying mine down through the--I had to go down over the hill and then through the raspberry patch (there was a path through the raspberry patch) and take my case to the shed. And going through the raspberry patch, I tripped. And that whole case of dewberries went upside down. The whole case went upside down! And I was just sick 'cause I'd--you know, it takes--took a long time to pick 'em. So I tipped the case back up, tried to put the cups in and I had to pick up the berries again and put them in and so the case didn't look very good when I got it to the shed. And Mr. Newbold seen that case, and so he came and asked me. He says, "Those berries looked kind of mashed, and they didn't look very good." And he wanted to know what happened. And I had to tell him that I dropped the whole case and had to pick it up again. So, yeah, that was a bad experience...I learned from that, you know, to be very careful because when you pick those up the second time, then of course they were mashed. They--it didn't look good. And he could tell that. He knew that....He still paid me for the case, like he would if I hadn't probably dropped it, so he was good that way, but, uh, it was a little scolding, you know. About "be careful with the cases" and "the berries shouldn't look mashed," he said, you know. So I felt bad about that. (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013)

This memory was a difficult learning experience, one where the picker did wrong and hoped her mistake would go unnoticed (even though it was accidental). The tensions between boss and picker that existed then are still apparent through her shame at being reprimanded although she was telling the story many years after the fact. As a boss, Mr. Newbold had standards that this picker was aware of and one can only imagine the depth of his chagrin at losing a whole case of these troublesome, expensive berries. He had to punish her verbally, to be sure it would not happen again, but as a neighbor and friend of her parents (which she explained later in our discussion), he was generous and giving.
Although he gave her the money for the case, she still learned the lesson to be careful with the fruit and did not repeat her mistake.

These tensions between boss and picker that led to a bounteous, quality harvest were not the only competitive pressures in the field or orchards. Harvey Mohr explained:

Oh, there's always competition....Well, to see who picked the most. It was really competitive as far as, yeah—And some girls were just flat better than others. Just really good pickers. Same with picking fruit and cherries. I mean, picking cherries, you get paid by the lug. And you just have a can you'd pick into, you know. Oh, yeah, I think I could beat any of the girls. Any of them picking cherries when we had cherries. We started that a little bit later on, and when the trees got bigger to produce, why, I'd actually go out and work [with the girls]. (2013)

Most pickers did not remember intense competition like this between the members of their groups. Elizabeth Brown mentioned that they probably competed with each other to see who could make the most, but it did not affect her very much. Wes Bitters and Janalee Thomas, on the other hand, both recall a little friendly competition among the workers over who had picked the most cases that day.

My cousin, Geraldine Fuhriman, she set a record of one day of picking twenty-eight cases of strawberries, and that was unknown of because most pickers would put eight, nine, or ten. And Geraldine picked twenty-eight! And mother was just flabbergasted. But mother could only pick twenty-four. She was really upset that her niece had beaten her picking strawberries one day. (W. Bitters 2013)

This instance of competition, interestingly, happened on the farm with the most familial mood in the fields, demonstrating that this competition was a sign of social unity and familiarity, not division. Joyce Bitters was the pickers’ exemplar as well as their friend in collaboration but their boss and fellow picker in competition. “If she thought we were going too slow she would encourage us along with her fun voice, and she would pick along beside us. She could get down in the position better than any of us even though when I picked for them they must have been in their 60s” (Janalee Thomas 2013).
Joyce Bitters’ example of work and technique placed her ahead of all the other workers beside the fact that she was their boss.

The workers who picked the most displayed a greater command of the canon of work technique needed to pick quickly. The demonstration of these skills “[established] a hierarchy of skilled workers based on their individual ability to exhibit that knowledge” (McCarl 1986, 72). Picking more cases meant more money for both the girls and for the Bitters’ family, but the treatment here represents something more—prestige, but there was no way of greatly improving standing. No one that I asked could remember any techniques for picking faster other than to just keep moving. “You just wanted to get to the end of the row,” said Clotille Baer Liechty about her motivation for picking faster. She also felt pressure from her father to work hard (2013). There were no special tricks other than being dishonest which people still remember and talk about, making them legendary in their own way. McCarl continues:

The simplest mundane skills become unconscious reflexes, whereas the more unusual innovations and techniques become near-legendary in the trade. Between these two extremes lie the central, daily technique performances in which the informally learned skills are performed by individuals under the scrutiny of co-workers who evaluate a worker’s status in the culture on the basis of these acts. (McCarl 1986, 72)

For an honest picker, the techniques for picking berries was fairly simple and mundane as McCarl states, but by going through the motions the swiftest while maintaining the proper standard, meaning picking thoroughly without damaging the fruit, the worker earned more money and was well-respected by the farmer and fellow pickers. The competition to see who could pick the fastest in a day is a clear instance of a way that pickers could push the boundaries of the everyday towards obtaining “legendary” status among their peers. Despite constant visual comparisons as pickers moved from row to
row, “Joycee never compared us, or made us feel less than a girl who picked faster,” said Janalee Thomas. “I guess the reward was that those girls just got paid a little more because they filled their cases faster” (2013).

When Joyce, the mother hen over all the picker chicks, was bested at picking the most fruit, her role as dominant female and matriarch was called into question. Although she may have been comically mad about one of her baby chicks outdoing her in competition, she would have been at once pleased by the productivity and fruits of their labors. The competition and complaint at her defeat merely show her playing the role that she is expected to play by the pickers. She is both fellow picker and superior. There may be competition for prestige and money on the pickers’ part, but underneath, the effort is purely collaborative between the farmers and their hired hands.

The general sentiment of the Bitters’ pickers was one of familial admiration and respect. Elizabeth Brown also referred to Joyce Bitters as being sweet and cute and remembered her being a Young Women’s leader. When Janalee Thomas got married, Joyce sent her a set of mugs with a strawberry pattern which Janalee’s family used and cherished for many years. The farm was a part of the Bitters’ identities. The strawberries and other fruit connected them to the girls they hired and worked with, so they became like family. Although Joyce was unable to have more than two children biologically, she was blessed with a multitude socially. Art Bitters confirmed that many of the pickers felt this bond with her.

The one thing that was interesting over the years, even after the picking years were over the girls would always come and see my mom. They’d build up a good rapport, so they’d built up some good friendships from picking together. A lot of the kids—a lot of the girls were in the ward though, so they—she’d see them at church too. But even after they'd grown up and gone away they'd come back and say, ‘Oh! I sure had a good time picking fruit for ya.’ So, I guess they had some
good times. You always remember the—after the fact, it's always—when you're doing something, sometimes it isn't too much fun, but after it's over, it seems like it was a good time you had. (2013)

She was clearly important to these girls, and they were important to her. All of the pickers I talked to formed lasting relationships, some closer than others, with their friends after the hard work was over. The description of Joyce Bitters above is just one slice of their experiences.

Even if the details were hazy because of the passage of time, all of them did remember those friendships. “I don't remember particularly what we’d laugh about,” remembered Joan Lofthouse, “but we would just laugh and have fun. And being with others was kind of a fun thing to do” (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). They had their own occupational culture as any group does today. Jokes, narratives, and shared customs formed their community like in any other instance. “The friendship between all us kids was good. I don't ever remember being upset at any of the other kids. We would tease each other about being late, or looking sleepy, or having a bad hair morning or something, but we all got along well” (Janalee Thomas 2013). Their jokes and teasing are another indication of group cohesion.

Because the hiring process included referrals of pickers’ friends, some of the workers already knew each other and had prior relationships. Joan Lofthouse knew the majority of the pickers she worked with already, but the “girls from Logan didn’t take long to get acquainted with” (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). This was true for many of the pickers, if someone was new to them, it did not take long for them to become friends through the hours spent together in the fields. Farmers often hired the same girls each
year, so they did not have to train them. In this way, their memories of picking fruit always involve each other and they became their own community of pickers.

Some of them chose to be friends with the pickers outside of work even if they were not friends before working together. Joan Lofthouse continued talking about her friends, “We didn't go to the movies all the time, and so a lot of the ones we might pick with we’d play...night games with. It was just something you just all done together. We had softball teams in Providence and quite a few of us would play on those. We were just involved all together” (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). She was fortunate to be able to spend so much time with her friends after completing a work day. The unity in the group of pickers came from the hard work and not necessarily the amount of fun had after. The fun is merely a manifestation of the friendship they already enjoyed. Working hard and being done was connected to being able to have fun. “We looked forward to it being over,” said Elizabeth Brown, one of the best and longest-running pickers for the Bitters. She was more eager for a nap afterwards than any fun that could be had with the girls she worked with.

The Baer sisters did not feel so lucky. They were friends with the girls they picked with and enjoyed the work time together, but they did not have the opportunity to spend time with them outside of work. When the picking for the day was done, the workers went home to their own activities or chores at home while the Baer siblings were required to go back to work on the farm after lunch. Their only family vehicles were a bike they all shared among the kids and the pick-up they used for work, so they were unable to visit and go to activities with their picker friends in Logan.
Despite the circumstances of their social lives, the bond that each group of girls formed lasted through the years. Many of them kept in contact with each other for much of their lives or still see each other on occasion. “Every now and then I see some of them and we embrace, and we say, ‘Oh!’ We'd call ‘em the good ole days, but we say, ‘Oh, didn't we work hard?’ So if we see them we're still friends, but we didn't do stuff….We've stayed friends” (Toolson 2013). When Eloise sees these girls, they take the opportunity to remember the shared experiences they have that still remind them of the community they were a part of. They simultaneously reminisce about “the good ole days” and the hard work they did together, substantiating Art Bitters’ comment that looking back, the most difficult experiences do not seem so negative anymore. We also can see in this example, the way the nature of the work that they did is the glue that held their community together.

Most of the others I talked to kept in contact with the girls in their picking group. Joan’s friends created a tradition of getting together once a year which lasted for a number of years. She still tries to keep in contact with them on the phone. In every case, as they moved away from each other, their chances to meet and reminisce declined, and for some of them it’s been many years since they last saw each other. As they get older, their friends are starting to pass on, taking their part of the community’s memories with them.

Through their work, they created this community of women. They were an essential part of the agricultural process on the bench, one that farmers relied on for many years. But, as the economy changed and less laborious work because more widely available for girls and boys alike, farmers could no longer draw from the teenage
population in Cache Valley, giving their jobs instead to migrant laborers. This was not a negative thing for the farmers. They were glad of the help and their new community of workers also complied with the quality of work they expected. Instead, this shift is indicative of a change in the surrounding population and economy. The same cultural scenes may be gone, but the memories of these girls remain, keeping their work alive through their narratives of the techniques, customs, dress, and fun of their childhood workplace. These are what gave them their identity as pickers and what continues to unify them as a once-community.
CHAPTER 4
TRICKSTER CHARACTERS AND CHILDREN’S FOLKLORE
IN CHILDHOOD MEMORY NARRATIVES

Most, if not all of the narratives I collected through my interviews were personal experiences. Among the descriptions of the ins and outs of farm life and growing up in Providence, my informants recalled specific instances which highlighted the portrait they created of life during their childhood. Although, “unlike most folklore, a personal experience story is not passed down through time and space, nor is it kept alive through variation from one teller to another,” as Sandra Dolby explains, personal experience stories can illuminate other forms of folklore such as custom or belief (Dolby 1998, 504). In this chapter, I leave the ethnographic descriptions behind, but my informants’ voices are still substantial, and act a window into their childhoods. By understanding the occupational folklore and patterns of community-building of the workers and farmers of the time which was discussed in the previous two chapters, we can also grasp the context of the events told by those who were children working in the fields. I discuss the personal narratives I collected through the lens of children’s folklore, showing how these stories allow a snapshot of children’s folklore during the time my informants were growing up (see fig. 16) and how narrative forms learned in childhood still influence adult perception and performance of personal experiences. I first discuss pranking and trickster-like behavior and then conclude in a broader discussion of adult themes in play and pranking. As power and identity are negotiated in the stories that follow, there is yet again, a clear cultural transmission as children learn from adults and from each other. These values and ideas carry on into their narrative forms which they transmit through their telling.
Classifying these narratives into a certain age-based folk group is tricky. The speakers are older people, some nearing the end of their lives, some just leaving middle age, looking back on their youth. The manner in which they would have told their stories right after their occurrence must remain a mystery to us, but a mature perspective as a lens for episodes from childhood is an interesting one. It allows the adult to analyze simultaneously their ways as a child and revel in their childhood experiences as they would have as a child. Their narratives are, of course, told by an adult, consistently containing evidence and appreciation for the valuable effect their family and work environments had on their moral characters. In some cases, the narrators recognized their fault in the situation, showing how age has helped them more fully recognize and understand the attitudes of their elders.

Figure 16. (Russell Lee, Three little Mormon girls with candy, 1940, Library of Congress Prints and Photographs Division)
As an example of the opposite effect, one where the narrator and audience revel in childish misdeeds, Jay Mechling describes the mixture of delight and reproof adults feel upon hearing a clever, yet offensive, rhyme recited by a child. He explains that adults share some of the same anxieties as children (1986, 92). When my first nephew was old enough to do “naughty” things like throw peas across the room and hit his mom in the face, we had a hard time not laughing despite my brother’s pleas not to since we only encouraged the boy. Children do and say things that adults, to some extent, wish they were free to do, but learned social mores keep us in check. This attitude peppers the narratives of older people looking back at their child-selves. They know what they are describing was somehow wrong morally or socially, but they can’t help delighting in how clever they were or how they came out on top despite the possibility of getting in trouble. Sometimes they describe getting scolded but never explain why they were. Perhaps even after many years, they still don’t know or think the punishment unjust.

Mechling classifies “children” as those who have not yet entered the workforce full time in order to include high school or college students in the mix. He explains, “Folklorists have found among college students many of the folk performances and folk customs (taunts, teases, pranks, graffiti, legends, and so on) we associate with adolescents or youth” (1986, 94). With this definition of “children” and “children’s folklore,” it is clear that the stories I collected also fall into that genre. Although these stories have to do with work, the children in them were not yet working full time, as it was quite clear they were employed during summer breaks from school or carried out their daily chores before and after their studies. Because of this clear definition of the group, I will refer to
the characters in the stories (the younger versions of the narrator) as “children” although they were often adolescents or in their later teens when these stories took place.

One of the topics for discussion in my interviews was about pranks and tricks they may have remembered while they were working. These stories could fall into a category of children’s laborlore because like their adult counterparts in the workforce, these child “workers symbolically ‘buy back’ dignity or identity with prank, jest, and other folkloric forms” (Green 1993, 22). With the passage of time, the wordplay has faded from memory, but the horseplay remains because of its dramatic rebellion from the structure of work. Although many did not remember pulling specific pranks during the time they were supposed to be working, the stories that did come out were tales of child conquest and struggles for power. These particular narratives demonstrate the family dynamics at the time, the tension between farmers and their children and between siblings that worked closely together on a daily basis. The children both played at being adults and often asserted their power over their adult supervisors through their pranks and trickster-like actions. There is a subversive quality to these work stories where we see the theme of fearing punishment juxtaposed with the theme of “sticking it to the man,” or asserting power against those in charge.

Hero tricksters have long been discussed by scholars of the humanities and social sciences. They are ingrained in the narratives of nearly every society through time and space. Though these tricksters may be obscene and foolish or witty and wise, animal or human, these trickster figures have much in common. One characteristic in particular is, as Charles Joyner states, “Both the animal and human-focused trickster tales portray the
triumph of the weak over the powerful through the sheer agency of wits” (Joyner 1989, 236).

Indeed, this trickster-like behavior is characteristic of children and children’s folklore. According to Simon Bronner, “the theme of power pervades children’s folklore because, first, children compose a subordinate group in relation to adults, and second, to raise their own prestige children often try to subordinate others, especially younger children ….In playful horror tales, the youngest children are the bravest and most worldly” (1988, 32). One of the ways in which children assert this power is through play and pranking. “Children spend a great deal of their play negotiating rules” and testing their social limits (Mergen 1995, 237). One example of children pushing boundaries from my research comes from Clotille Baer Leighty,

We had a lot of watermelon and cantalope and I know the kids would kinda know when it was my dad's watering turn. You know a lot of times they had to water at night. And course he had so much to water, and so they'd sometimes they'd turn the water off, some way they'd dam it off, and while he was looking, they'd be out there stealing the watermelon, the cantalope [laughs] So you know, but not--just kids, maybe one or two. (2013)

Raiding orchards is discussed by Brian Sutton-Smith in A History of Children’s Play: The New Zealand Playground, 1840-50 as a prank that boys commonly engaged in among other things (1981, 29). He quotes Lee in Children of the Poor as saying, “children like the birds, the field mice, possums, see fruit on trees as something to which they have proprietary raiding rights. Stealing fruit is a great social game” (Lee 1939, 44).

The boys in Sutton-Smith’s examples raided orchards in part for the thrill of avoiding getting caught or escaping before they could be reprimanded (1981, 94). The children in Clotille’s example broke two rules in their play. Not only did they make off with his produce, the kids also dam off some of the water during Baer’s water turn, one of the
worst of the lesser crimes a person could commit. These were acts that most likely excited the children’s sense of adventure through trickery as well as undermined the adult they stole from.

Pranks are one of the few forms of children’s folklore that remain prevalent past childhood into adolescence and even into adulthood. “Thus, the kinds of pranks and tricks attempted and carried out may change as one’s age group changes, but not the enjoyment of engaging in playful deceptions of different, possibly more sophisticated, kinds” (Jorgensen 1995, 215). This idea may be why these stories were the most fun for my informants to tell, accompanied by shame-faced laughter and smiles and most enjoyable for me to hear. Trickster stories “allow teller and audience to participate, in fantasy, in acts denied them in reality and ease the pressures generated by the rule-bound system they live under” (Wilson 1983, 57). In the example above, Mr. Baer ultimately did not care much as long as the kids did not steal too much. He was in a way a willing and understanding participant in their play, perhaps having done similar things as a young boy.

Elements of the Hero Trickster in Childhood Narratives

One of the most common themes running through the narratives besides the difficulty of the work was the essentiality of completing tasks correctly. Through their performances of the fear they felt at making mistakes due to the aversion to reprimand, the informants illustrated the tensions between the pickers and their supervisors or parents. Being reprimanded (which included physical punishment) was one of the worst consequences there could be. Common descriptions included their fathers coming at them
“cussing and swearing” when they broke a rule. These children were forced to live with one foot in an adult world by helping their parents make a living.

The children of farmers learned their tasks by observation and participation. This type of learning included seeing others make mistakes and “get told” as well as suffering the consequences of their own. For Wes Bitters, he'd “heard enough chewing out of pickers to know how to [pick the berries] without getting into trouble,” but for others, mistakes due to youth or neglect seemed unavoidable (2013). Some of the stories I collected involved episodes of actually getting in trouble and the way the kids handled those situations. Because direct opposition to a parent or supervisor could result in punishment or a “tongue lashing,” these children subverted the powers that be through pranks, tricks and hiding. Children of farmers found difficulty in balancing work and play. These ways of acting out were a way of restoring some balance and asserting their power.

In some ways these narratives resemble trickster tales, in the sense that the hero of the tale uses wit to overcome opposition from an authority figure. The trickster reverses social hierarchies as opposed to the trickster type who is sinister, nonsensical, or obscene. In their work analyzing children’s stories, Abrams and Sutton-Smith concluded that the development of trickster stories told by children is an essential part of socialization. Use of the trickster “both heighten[s] children's flexibility about social roles, and increase[s] their explorations of novel responses,” allowing them an opportunity to experiment with their responses to unknown situations. The authors even give evidence supporting Bugs Bunny’s trickster qualities. So, from an early age, children use trickster stories that vary in complexity as they grow older, narratives whose use continues on in that complex
form into adulthood (1977, 47). Because “tricksters are so ubiquitous” not only cross-culturally, but also in American children’s narratives, I would suggest, like Jung, “that they reflect an archetype buried in the mind of all human beings” which my informants employed in their personal narratives (Carroll 1984, 105).

In their analysis of their research, Abrams and Sutton-Smith use the “the plot outcome typology of Pierre and Elli Kongas Maranda” to illustrate the development in children’s trickster tales as they age—

Looking at the outcome for the central character, which is defined as the character most frequently mentioned, the Marandas assign a plot to one of four levels: No response to conflict or threat (level 1); the protagonist attempts to mediate the conflict, but fails (level 2); the protagonist successfully nullifies the threat (level 3); and the initial situation is permanently transformed with a resulting personal gain or status elevation (level 4). (1977, 31-32)

These outcomes are typical of tales told by children of various ages, the first level being assigned to young children as they are the least complicated and progressing to level four as the child ages. The tales that fall into these categories are typically invented, but they have carry-over to tales of personal experience. As pranks are an integral part of children’s folklore and trickster stories are a part of children’s development, it follows that trickster behavior would naturally fall in the realm of children’s folklore as tale and action influence each other. The Maranda scale is applicable not only to narratives of characters in children’s tales but also to the children themselves as they act out their own trickster tales in real life. The stories my informants told about their trickster-like behavior followed the plot outcome typology above as well as exemplifying typical trickster characteristics. The first of the following two narratives falls into a level four under these categories which makes sense as he was an older child when this happened.
Lex Baer described the conflicts that arose with his father when Lex’s personal interests interfered with the expectations his father had for his son and the farm:

When I was in high school, I made the varsity basketball team as a sophomore, and I didn't come home to milk the cows right after school. And [my dad] told me a time or two, "You've got to come home to milk these cows." Well, they could have waited. He'd actually give me a physical beating...Oh yeah. With a harness off a horse....a leather strap. I have no animosities, but back then life was different, but I still could have milked the cows later. I was a fair athlete, you know....That broke my heart, but maybe that's part of learning, I guess. I don't know. (2013)

There was a certain amount of conflict between Lex and his father about Lex pursuing his own interests: “I had to fight him,” Lex said. “I started playing softball because I could do it at night after dark.” He continued,

I remember one of the fights we had when I told him I had to go play a ballgame at seven o'clock...over in Mendon because they didn't have lights. I was still home then. I told him that afternoon, “I've got to leave and go play a ballgame at seven o'clock,” and he jumped about three feet off the ground, and "No! It's still daylight!"...And we'd start about four-thirty, five every morning. In the summertime. All the time...And we'd fought about that before. And he said that and jumped off the ground and made a few noises, and I said, “Dad, I'm not going to fight about this anymore. My ball playing means as much to me as your singing does to you. You go take off and go singing [with the Glee Club] when you want to, and I'm going to do that with playing ball.” That's when I started playing at night. (2013)

Lex went on to be a talented left-handed pitcher, play in the softball World Series championship game, and eventually be elected into the Utah Hall of Fame. The narrative above is a classic tale of the little guy who has an enormous amount of talent being held back by a parent who does not understand the potential his or her son or daughter has. In the narrative, which preceded his explaining his eventual softball stardom, Lex starts out painting a bleak picture. He wanted to play basketball and even made varsity as a sophomore, a team normally staffed with juniors or seniors. With that detail, he emphasizes how important a feat making the team really was. He also makes it clear by
explaining that the cows could have waited to be milked and that the conflict between
him and his father had nothing to do with shirking chores or doing them incorrectly. The
milking could have been done at another time, but Lex’s father had made rules and
expected them to be followed, no questions asked. It’s clear that Lex felt that his father
was the one who chose what was important in his children’s lives and not the children
themselves. Mentioning the physical beatings further emphasizes Lex’s helplessness.
Although he was a strong boy, he took beatings from his father.

Playing softball at night was a method of circumventing his father’s iron will that
chores be done the way he prescribed. This is the detail that pushes Lex’s story into the
realm of the trickster, as he “is an intelligent, clever character who succeeds by the power
of his wits” in defeating a figure more powerful than himself (Wilson 1983, 60).
Choosing a different sport at an allowable time was Lex’s first move in asserting his
power over his father in this situation. When the conflict finally came to a head yet again,
Lex was able to use logic and an emotional comparison with his father. He had appeased
his father up to this point, but was able to make him budge with wit and reason like
heroes in old ballads. He continued to be able to play when he wanted as long as the work
got done, and because of his prowess in “battling” his father’s will, he received fame and
prestige.

On the other hand, Lex may have resented being reprimanded in the beginning,
but he also learned the importance of making the farm and home a priority so that when
he neared maturity, he was able to demand compromise for the activities he wanted to be
involved in. In her own analysis of trickster tales, “Babcock-Abrahams argues that the
boundaries of acceptable social behavior can be defined in terms of what they are not.
That is, a broken rule testifies to the existence of the rule. Thus the trickster helps establish and define social boundaries” (Wilson 1983, 61). The fact that Lex did put family and farm first even in choosing what sport he could play shows the cultural importance of obeying parents and not shirking responsibilities. He may have found it harsh, but when he broke that rule once (when he made the basketball team), he did not break it again until he was able to identify a sport he could play and still convince his father that work would still be a priority. His father had been raising a son to take his place when he left, but Lex chose a different path. Playing sports may have been the first step in that other direction, a step a youth could take.

Harvey Mohr shared a story in which he becomes a kind of ambiguous trickster hero and further reveals cultural values. One of his least favorite experiences working with the fruit on his father’s farm was picking up rocks off the land. The farmers prided the bench land on being perfect for fruit because the rocky soil was good for drainage, but each rock of a certain size was picked up by hand and piled up on their property. Mohr’s father piled their rocks at the top of his property.

My dad used to--oh gad [laughs]….We had a huge pile of rocks. On our four acres, you can't not believe how many rocks was up there. Probably a pile maybe sixty, seventy, eighty feet long by as high as this room [about 15 feet]. Tons and tons and tons of rocks. And we just piled them all over up through there on one corner of the property where there was a lot of brush. And I've had a dozen guys ask me if they can haul those rocks off when they're digging ceptic tanks or drains systems for some of the new homes up there. They'll go in and haul them off with their equipment. But we picked up every one of those by hand on both orchards up there. And I--I used to hate that. I mean, it was hard work. You bent over and hauled those rocks all day, and I'd get mad and throw them hard, and it'd roll off the other side. And one of them rolled off the other side and hit dad, and he got mad and cussed me out. And I got mad and swore at him back. And he come around there after me, and I took off running. I'll never forget, run all the way home, down off the hill and home. And I was afraid for him to come home because he was going to whip my butt. Yeah, that was not a good experience. [Laughs] (2013)
The trickster-hero quality may be less apparent in this example, but the humorous performance and the details that Mohr chooses to elucidate clearly show a son’s negotiation of power in a conflict with his father. The fact that Harvey ran *all the way* home reveals a great deal about Harvey’s deference for his father’s punishment. Running could be seen as an act of cowardice, but he reveals it to be the only way of asserting power in the situation since striking his father was clearly not an option.

Also an example of a narrative that describes an experience that was not pleasant at the time, but has become funny because of the passage of time, this narrative falls somewhere between a two and three on the Maranda scale since the ending is ambiguous, lacking resolution. Harvey nullifies the threat by running away and awaits certain punishment at home, but in the story, the punishment never comes. The fear of the threat still remained. He may not have wanted to go into detail about what had happened next, but it’s more than likely that those details were irrelevant to the purpose of the telling. Although he came out the worse for his sudden outburst at his father, he was momentarily victorious. He highlights a clearly negative experience as the final line suggests, but he tells it in such a way that the most important part of the story is his outburst where he challenges his father and the fact that he was able to outrun his father’s wrath.

In William A. Wilson’s study of Mormon missionary trickster narratives, he discovered that only certain missionary rules were violated in comic trickster tales. Tricksters never violated rules against sexual immorality or meddling in Satanic power or worship. These tales became tragic tales of warning. He concluded that not only do trickster tales illuminate social rules and taboos because of trickster violation of them, but the rules that the trickster *never* breaks also define social boundaries (1983). In this case,
Harvey’s verbal abuse of his father was his way of getting back at the man requiring such an odious task, but in such a direct manner, there were consequences. In this case, Harvey let the frustration of the task cloud his judgment. We see the momentary breaking out of his role as child and immediately recognizing his mistake when his father came after him. Had he been an adult, his and his father’s reactions may have been much different. Instead of taking direct action again, he had to flee the situation in an attempt to restore social order. He showed his subordination to his father and his deference to him through his fear. Running acts as a method to both avoid punishment and to avoid physical conflict with his father.

Often, when I asked about play or pranks during work, the informants would insist that they were serious about the work they did and would never have dared fool around. But, when pressed, they remembered “naughty things” done as children. For example, Clotille Baer Liechty admitted, "Oh, yeah, we all worked together and laughed and talked and sometimes we played a little, and if we could hear our dad's truck coming, we'd hurry up and get working hard.” The peaches and apricots “were up higher on the hill and so we could always see his truck in the dust. And so [laughs] then, if we'd see the dust, then we'd [get back to work].”

These types of stories reflect the necessity of acting out from time to time. Although they learned to work hard, they were still children testing their boundaries and expressing their need for release. These narratives support the idea that trickster stories act as cultural “depressurizers”, allowing members of a community to live outside of cultural expectations. William A. Wilson, quoting Roger Abrahams, presents two ways trickster hero stories “project cultural values” (1983, 56). They act
as a guide for future action in real life and as an expression of dream life, of wishfulfillment” [Abrahams 1966, 341-342]. Of this second kind of projection, he says: “In many groups there is a trickster hero who expends much of his energy in anti-social or anti-authoritarian activity. Even when this results in benefits to the group, his actions cannot be interpreted as providing a model for future conduct. He is a projection of desires generally thwarted by society. His celebrated deeds function as an approved steam-valve for the group; he is allowed to perform in this basically childish way so that the group may vicariously live his adventures without actually acting on his impulses. To encourage such action would be to place the existence of the group in jeopardy” [Abrahams 1966, 341-342]. Applied to the J. Golden Kimball cycle, Abrahams's dictum means that the stories provide Mormons the pleasure of sin without the need of suffering its consequences or, more seriously, that it gives them the means of coping with authoritarian pressures that might otherwise be their undoing. (Wilson 1983, 56)

Similarly, in their everyday lives, these children who worked tirelessly at school and then at home probably needed some form of release even when working. Looking back as adults, these personal trickster narratives allow the speaker to relive moments where they broke social norms and relieved some of the pressures they felt. They may not be proud of the actions they took or condone that kind of behavior in someone else, but the moments of performance are a guilty pleasure, a moment to break out of the obedient mold once again.

In another example which shows children’s general inclination to test social boundaries, using getting in trouble as a way to gauge social appropriateness, Ike Christensen told a story about how he “got told” by his German grandfather for playing on the hay in the barn. He and his siblings tromped the hay when they piled it in the barn, but playing on it at any time was strictly forbidden. “The cows don't like it when you play on their food. Would you like it if they played on yours?” his grandfather used to scold. This example shows how important respecting animals was to Ike’s grandfather. Ike learned this and so does the listener. This care of animals is also reflected in the story Lex told about his father becoming angry that he did not come immediately home to milk the
cows. LeVon Baer’s concern focused on the cows and their discomfort from not being milked, whereas Lex, like Ike and his siblings, preferred to focus on their own childhood pursuits of fun. These stories of childhood mistakes and mischief sometimes focus less on the trickster-ish actions of the children (as in sneaking into the barn to play on the hay after they had been warned not to), and more on the social boundaries they crossed and the lessons they were taught through the experience.

**Secrecy**

Children use secrecy as an “antithetical device…within the play frame” (Mechling 1986, 102). Mechling discusses secrecy as being “especially important in relatively powerless groups.” In his articles, he gives examples of secret languages and handshakes as tools to differentiate the included and excluded. The following narratives still have trickster-like qualities, but secrecy takes a larger role in deceiving adult figures and shifting power towards the children. Here again, we see recurring themes of children’s folklore emerging in these retellings of memorable events. Perhaps what made them memorable is the fact that they are reflective of vital elements of children’s culture and development.

Clotille Baer Liechty shared some ways that she and her siblings utilized secrecy to avoid conflict though they violated social norms of honesty.

I can tell you some funny things that we probably shouldn't have done. Like when we planted tomatoes, you know, they have the starts. And my dad take that shovel and you just went along just really, really fast and just once in a while you'd break the tomato by mistake, but you just left it in the ground anyway because sometimes they died anyway. But you didn't want to tell your dad that you'd broken that plant as you put it behind his shovel, so you'd just let him plant it. (2013)
In this case, like with Harvey Mohr, the Baer kids avoided getting in trouble, but their actions were secretive and subtle, sheepish and not malicious. As children do, and as we see from examples in the previous chapter when farmers reprimanded workers for squashing the berries as they picked them, these teens perceived the power relationship between them and their parents, especially over issues of executing their work with exactness in order to preserve the farmer’s livelihood. Clotille’s example shows how this relationship transferred into the fields. She saw her dad, not necessarily her employer. Her dad was much more fearsome, so secrecy was imperative. Further, she put her own concerns over those of her father, a further exemplification of a trickster-like characteristic often found in children’s stories of pranks and tricks, individualism or lack of concern for others (Abrams and Sutton-Smith 1977, 32)

In another example from the Baer family, told by Clotille Liechty, the children used secrecy to gain financial power and freedom, or what little they could as children.

We had chickens. Not enough eggs that we sold to anybody, but for our family. And so once in a while, we would go get an egg out of the chicken coop, and we had this little store on the corner. And we could take that egg up there, and they’d give you five cents for it. And so once in a while we used to go get a egg and take it up there and buy five cents of candy. [Laughs]...I don't think they knew! [Laughs] I think we just would do it once in a while. We didn't very often, but we did. (2013)

In this example the children took liberties that did not belong to them. The narrator does not make their trips to the store seem malicious, but it is clear the children saw the eggs as a means to step into the adult world. They were able to subvert their parents’ rules about money allotted to the children through their secret actions. For the adult looking back, the fact that her parents did not know is what makes the memory so
much fun. In that moment they were bonded together as siblings, making outsiders of their unsuspecting parents.

One of the best examples I collected involves secrecy in subverting an employer. The farmer who employed these girls had a policy that if his pickers stayed the entire summer, they’d get a five cent per crate bonus at the end of the season. This farmer had a reputation among his pickers for being tight with his money, so they were often nervous he was going to short change them. The sole prank one of his former employees could remember pulling helped the pickers feel vindicated for the wrongs they had perceived.

You know, he had peach trees also. But of course, the peaches came on later and we were getting ready to go back to school, so we never picked the peaches. But I think it was the year that he was thinking he wasn't going to give us the bonus, the five cent bonus. And we had argued to get it. So, we were really disturbed about that. So one night really, really late, when the peaches were on, we sneaked up to his peach orchard and we stripped some of the peaches off the trees. Put 'em in bags, carried them down off the bench, and we sat by a little a creek and ate 'em. [Laughs] Yeah, we did....I don't think he ever knew. I don't think he ever knew, but we were just so upset that we had to hassle with him to get that five cent bonus, you know. And we did get it, but we felt bad about [how he treated us], so we decided, “We’re gonna just kind of get even....” Nobody knew. (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013)

In this episode, these teens were unified by their secret prank against their unjust employer. The secret functioned in a similar way as secret handshakes or languages, in that it becomes a method for protecting this group of young women who felt powerless because a deal they had struck with their employer was almost ripped away from them. They acted as tricksters, taking power literally and figuratively away from the farmer as they stripped away part of his livelihood. They physically removed something of value from his possession, putting it into theirs, and they took control of the situation, using theft as a way to assert their power in a figurative sense. They snuck onto his property, violating his security, and then consumed what they had taken, making the peaches
impossible to return and symbolically internalizing their new-found authority. The element of secrecy ensured that there could be no retribution from the farmer, and no way the balance of power could be tipped back to the adult employer through legal action or forced compensation.

Not only were there stories about escaping trouble, but there were a few examples of using tricks and deceptions to avoid doing work. Eloise Baer Toolson did not recall many pranks, but she did say, “I’m sure we always tried to say, ‘I’ve done an extra row than you’ and just sit” (2013). Some of the interviewees who were the children of farmers did remember some of the pickers they hired cheating by putting rocks in the bottom of the cups or picking green berries so they looked fuller. This kind of behavior was never portrayed as clever or witty, only detrimental and dishonest.

Work avoidance stories may be similar to Wilson’s analysis of tragic modality LDS missionary stories (1983, 61). In the comic modality stories, the missionaries’ breaking of select rules was, to a degree, socially acceptable as illustrated by the common consequence that those missionaries often led the mission in their work output (convert baptisms). But in the tragic modality stories, the missionaries in question were sent home in disgrace or even lost their lives, which shows that the breaking of all rules are not considered equally severe. The tragic modality stories reveal the rules that are most important and should never, in any circumstances, be broken. The stories I collected about avoiding work are not as extreme, but they do show that not taking care of the farm was not acceptable.

Although they may not have enjoyed working while they were in the midst of it and many of them said the best part was being done, their stories reflect the value of hard
work they profess. In one negative example, Elizabeth Brown shared, “They'd put us in a patch with weeds, and I said to Joycee, ‘Joycee, I have hay fever. I can't work in that patch with the weeds,’ and you know, I really—that was just a story. And then later on, I got—What do you call them?—um, allergies. I thought, ‘Yeah, I shouldn't have fibbed’” (2013). Another example of dishonest behavior, Elizabeth’s linking of getting allergies and lying about having allergies, shows that even though she did not grow up on a farm, she understood the cultural value of working hard and not shirking responsibility even when the task at hand was unpleasant.

**Challenging Sibling Authority**

Adults were not the only authority figures that these trickster children attempted to outwit. The following examples illustrate tensions between siblings in the farming household, but also demonstrate that “joking behavior in any work culture is an extremely important form of social control….These jokes and pranks create and reinforce a sense of community” (McCarl 1986, 78). These families lived and worked together, so jokes and pranks were important in building their own family identity.

These stories were also some of the funniest. Marilyn Jorgensen explains that in “[Erving Goffman’s] work on Frame Analysis” he characterizes fabrication as the following: “The intentional effort of one or more individuals to manage activity so that a party of one or more others will be induced to have a false belief about what is going on” (qtd in 1995, 214). She explains that one of the factors defining pranks and tricks is deception. This “deceptive quality…is probably what makes pranks and tricks so much fun—especially the thrill and excitement involved in an adventure in which the success or failure of its outcome is at least partially determined by one’s own ability to perform”
These narratives are examples of the thrill that children (and the adults telling the story) get out of pranks because of the above factors.

Shayne Mathews is the only one to bring a trickster into his oral history, by which I mean a character known for pranks and practical jokes. The others did not make themselves into trickster, but merely related tales in which they were trickster-like.

Marilyn Jorgensen generalizes that for children, those who pull pranks remember the deed in a positive light; whereas the victim desires to forget the offense (1995, 214). In some of the stories I collected, the narrator was the victim, but because of the passage of time, he or she relates the story in a humorous manner. Some still share the story with feelings of regret or frustration still apparent though they claim to no longer harbor resentment. The following is a narrative collected from Shayne Mathews:

My little brother was full of pranks [chuckles]. He was terrible. [laughs] He, one time--this was kind of funny. One time, we had this--in our barn, we would milk the cows in there, and the most cows we ever milked was, I think we got fifteen once. And we just milked them by hand. And so he and I were milking the cows and standing in the barn at my grandfather’s house. And I would go--and we had a grain bin there that you would just open up and dip in and get the grain and put it in for the cows [motioning each action] before you brought the cows in to milk. And so he hollered at me one time and asked me to grain the cows, and so I go in there to grain the cows, and I lifted up the grain box and went to dip in there with my dip, and he jumps out, and he's gone to the trouble of making this mask out of cardboard. [Laughter] And just "Arrr!" you know. And he scared me. [Laughs] I mean, I jumped, and I flew clear back to the manger. But the thing was, then he started squealing, and he jumped out of the grain box and started jumpin' around and carryin' on, ripped his pants off, and a mouse had been in there. And it went right up his leg, and you could see his little tracks all the way up his leg. And so I got the last laugh on that. He used to pull tricks like that on me all the time. We'd have to go up to another barn where we had calves and I'd go up to feed 'em milk. And he'd go up there and hide, and when I'd come around with a bucket of milk, he'd jump out and yell and stuff. He was just full of that kind of stuff [chuckles]. I never did that to him! [Laughs] (2013)

For Shayne Mathews, the memory of his brother’s pranks was clearly on the lighter side, and his brother seemed to play the pranks to be funny and scare his brother,
not to be malicious in any way, a sign of the camaraderie between them. Despite this impression, Shayne chose to share in detail the episode where the trickster himself is tricked by Mother Nature. He may not have harbored any ill-will, but seeing the brother who had “gotten” him so many times get defeated at his own game stuck out the most in the mind because he was not the only victim that day. This is a common motif in trickster tales, as Lankford says: “In truth, Trickster is as much tricked as trickier in the countless stories about his dealings with others, often leaving the analyst to ponder who is the Trickster” (1996, 716). In this case, the trickster becomes the tricked, reminiscent of the Stith Thompson motif “surpriser surprised,” and his older brother gets to enjoy a kind of divine justice since, as he said, he “never did that to him!”

There is also a kind of role reversal evident in the fact that the older brother was not the one tormenting a younger sibling. Shayne may have been older, but his brother was able to assert his dominance by regularly pulling pranks.

The next narrative example, told by Eloise Baer Toolson, is an excellent example of the tensions among siblings in large families. This was Toolson’s moment where she found the power to turn the tables on her older sister through her own cunning:

We did [prank]. Cause there was always a little bit of friction with 7 kids, you know. Somebody always wanting to be the boss. And uh--yeah, we did. You want to know what they are?....One thing I remember, my oldest sister's name was Delva. And she was kind of in charge of us, or thought she was. So I was two children behind her. And I can remember one day. My mother was Relief Society president....And I remember we were in high school. I don't know where we were, but we were older. And she had all these tomatoes cut up ready to juice so she could can it that night. And I remember her saying that morning to me, "Now I'll have a big, whole lot of tomatoes cut up and when you get home, you run 'em through the juicer. And I'll can 'em when I get home. And I thought, "Gad! I did that the last time." So she--when I got home from school she'd left this note, "Be sure and do the tomatoes." So she made her capital D's with the two things like [motions] and a D, so I very cautiously wrote "Delva." And I knew how to make that capital D, so my older sister did all those tomatoes. So when my mother came
home, I remember her saying, "Well, didn't Eloise feel good? How come you did
the tomatoes?" Oh my heck she was mad! She was bigger than me and four years
older. And yeah, but it was fun. I laughed for a long--I still am smiling about it....I
don't know that she ever got even, which she wanted to do...but just the fact that
she'd been had. I got her that day! (2013)

In this story, told as a comic modality, Eloise avoided the work she was assigned
to do, but she did not neglect the chore altogether; she made sure her sister did it for her.
This is clear because of the lack of punishment. Her mother does not become angry in the
narrative, only the sister who had been fooled. She, unlike Mathew’s brother, did not
scare her sister, but tricked her instead, so I would not classify this as a prank. But, the
deceptive quality clearly plays a role in making the victory so sweet for Eloise, being able
to trick a sister who was supposed to be older and wiser than her.

**Adult Themes in Play**

Similar to other examples of children’s folklore, these stories show, at times, the
familiarity youths had with the struggle between life and death. They may not have
always realized that their survival depended on the work they were doing, but they did
understand the value of hard work and the value of doing it right the first time, which
they learned from their parents. They saw how their mistakes led to immediate
consequences that affected their survival. Children often incorporate serious themes into
their play as they explore the adult realm as they grow older, such as “sex, food, and
excretions” and “other bodily themes like illness, mutilation, exaggerated body parts, and
death” (Mechling 1986, 114). Simon Bronner explains that “besides rebelling against
adult norms, children’s folklore reflects children’s concerns about their rapid growth, the
appropriate responses to adult society, and traditional roles and values in a nation being
modernized” (1988, 31). In his book on American children’s folklore, he further
identifies “themes of maturity, rationality, identity, power and curiosity” (Bronner 1988, 31). Some of these themes are evident in stories about children’s play. The theme of power has already been discussed at length above. Themes of maturity are also evident in the narratives about the difficulty of the work they were required to do each day and the early age at which they started working, but curiosity and rationality are the themes I would like to further discuss here. These children’s work was peppered with adult themes of survival and dedication, themes which spill over into stories of their play, blurring and easing the line between life and death, conflict and cooperation.

Bronner says that “as children age, curiosity grows about the adult world they are about to enter. Although eager to be ‘grown up,’ they express anxiety about the prospects of sex, marriage, work, and mortality….An effective way to prepare for what lies ahead is to contemplate the meaning of adult experiences through legends and customs” (1988, 33). I would add play to legends and customs as ways children prepare for the future as adults. Through play, children are able to act out or model the customs they see adult role models participating in on a regular basis.

Coupled with this experimentation of adult themes are the material culture element of play and the children’s appropriation of their surroundings for their creative purposes. “The theme of rationality comes out in the ways that children explain, and relate to, their environment. They explore nature freely,” Bronner continues (1988, 31). A number of the people interviewed described playing up in the hills and canyons above the fields their parents owned. But they also utilized the common elements of work to create elements for play, pranking and jokes. “Children rely on the materials familiar to them. To hear old-timers tell it, the playthings in a boy’s arsenal were typically made from
wood strewn along the countryside and a girl’s treasure came from the fabrics and plants around the community….That spirit continues today, although the medium is often different” (Bronner 1988, 200). Through the stories of their childhood, many of the people I interviewed included elements of mischief involving work tools. In the stories they told, the lines between adulthood and childhood and life and death were played out and blurred.

Joan Lofthouse, seventy-five when she told this story, described one event when she and her friends from work found themselves in an adult situation and how they used play to manage the situation both physically and emotionally.

One of the girls was tending a bird for somebody else, while their family was gone overseas or something, but it died. And she felt so bad, so we was all helping her out. And the cups were wooden cups back then. So we made it a little [coffin]; buried in there. Put an article in the newspaper. The parents were not happy, but—[laughs]. (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013)

As we continued discussing the event, she explained more fully that they “took one of the raspberry cups and used it to bury the bird, [and] put flowers” on it (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). First of all, the bond between these girls is important in the story. Joan explained how close-knit they became after working together each summer, so when one of them was in need, of course they came together as friends to help and console her, imitating community involvement when a member of the community died. They were available to console her and to help her feel like she had made some kind of amends for letting the bird die. They used the resources they had available, berry cups and flowers, in order to simulate adult behavior in funereal ritual. They even went so far as to put an article in the newspaper! She does not explain why the parents were unhappy or whether these were the girl’s parents or the adults who owned the bird, but it is possible they saw
the article as a mockery of social norms; whereas, the girls felt they were doing the right thing for the deceased pet. This is a very clear example of children using adult themes in play and using play to understand the adult world, death, and grieving.

In a contrasting example, Elizabeth Brown, while describing the kinds of night games and mischief (such as jumping off of the garage roof with an umbrella) they would get into as children, said:

My dad passed away and my mother had to raise my brother and I. And we'd play night games like Run Sheepy Run and Ann Day I Over [unintelligible]. We'd get up on the garage, though and jump off the roof with an umbrella. I don't know how we ever survived all this stuff. At any rate, we--we were playing night games and we decided that we would take the hose and when the cars would go by, we'd spray 'em...So my mother wasn't home, and so I had several friends with me. I don't know if there was boys and girls, but I know there was girls. So when these cars would go by, we'd just stand behind the telephone pole and give them a little water. So I guess this man come by with his wife and the window was down, and we got her wet. And so he slammed on his brakes and came after us and we all run and hid. Some in the house, some--You know it was dark, so he couldn't find us. And then it got really quiet, and he took a knife and cut up my mother's hose. In pieces. [Laughs] So, we all had to chip in and buy my mother a new hose. Garden hose. Oh gosh! And I did, you know--That was a lesson we all learned: never to do that again. (2013)

In both of these examples, children do something unacceptable to the adults involved, but in the first example with the bird, the children assume an adult role. They improvise a coffin out of the materials they have at hand and go through the proper steps of burial, grave decoration, and commemoration of the death. Their best efforts still could not make up for the negligent death of the bird. Joan does not go into detail about what the parents did as punishment, if anything.

So, in the first example, the children acted as adults, but in the second, the adult acted as a child. The unknown man takes matters into his own hands, acting like the children themselves by being destructive in order to retaliate. He oversteps the authority
of the mother of the children and punishes her as well as the mischievous water-sprayers. Interestingly, Elizabeth connects this story to her father’s death, indicating the difficulty their mother had in supervising them, so they were a little wild. She could also be implying that because of the lack of a father-figure, they also lacked a male role model and a second disciplinary force in the home. But in this example, she sees a male figure who acts as a disciplinarian, but in a rash and impulsive way, again, much like a child.

In an example that has to do with not only work tools, but also took place while working, Lex Baer described how when his sisters and the other girls were picking, he would “tease the girls. We had all kind of snakes up there, including rattlesnakes. I'd take snakes down there where they were picking. I shouldn't have done that because then they'd want to quit and go home” (2013).

He recognized the importance of work and productivity in his later years. When he drove the girls away, he would not only threaten them with the possibility of death but also hurt his own family’s living by slowing the work. Play, though, was an important part of being a youth even when so much was at stake. In these examples, even life and death becomes a form of play. We can see deep themes and the way the children act them out. These deep themes also run through each example given in this chapter, showing how inseparable they are from children’s formative play.

**Conclusion**

Trickster figures are an integral part of folk narratives throughout time and space. They feed into our cultural ideals and find their ways into personal narrative. These figures play an important role in child development and children’s folklore, as the similarities between trickster figures and children are quite remarkable. The way
tricksters function in stories and society are parallel to the development of children as they test boundaries and powers of manipulation in order to gain control of their surroundings or authority figures. Like children, these trickster figures are often unsuccessful, but children learn boundaries by testing them, just as tricksters teach members of society their boundaries. And like trickster narratives, the audience takes a moment to live outside of their social sphere, being allowed a release from social pressures, just as when we delight in the amusing exploits of children.

Each of the examples discussed above demonstrate a quality of children’s folklore and the effect it has on cultural value transmission. The trickster narratives clearly exemplify this transmission through boundary testing, and the latter examples show the process children must go through in order to become adults and understand adult themes. The presence of power and maturity in the narratives of these adults looking back onto their youth is unmistakable. “Once grown, we don’t do away with the use of folklore,” explains Simon Bronner, “but different conditions alter its role and shape….Yet this is not to suggest a sharp break with our childhoods. Lore, customs, and games have helped shape who we are, and the values and attitudes they foster take us through our lives. The models of narration and art we learn feed our creative efforts” (1988, 34). The ideas my informants learned then have continued to influence their world-view and their narrative forms, and when collected and analyzed, become a part of this period’s children’s folk history, as we understand the universality of the influential nature of the childhood experience and its subsequent effects on adult perspective.
CHAPTER 5
BERRY FIGHTS AND CHERRY PICKING: A PSYCHOANALYTIC
ANALYSIS OF GENDER ROLES IN FRUIT PRODUCTION

Psychoanalysts and folklorists have a rather turbulent theoretical past in relation
to using the theories of the former to understand the narratives of the latter. For some, the
legitimacy of utilizing psychoanalysis as a method for understanding culture and folklore
is debatable. In fact, many currently say that this theoretical structure is passé or flawed
(Hufford 2003, 99). In 1954, William Bascom acknowledged the importance of Freudian
theory in its relation to folk tales and myths, but approached the method with trepidation
(Ben-Amos 1994, 509-510). Other folklorists such as Richard Dorson and Bengt Holbek,
in the decades following, chose not to endorse the use of psychoanalysis in the
interpretation of folklore, and those attitudes towards it continue today (Ben-Amos 1994,
510-511). Even Alan Dundes, one of folklore’s biggest advocates for Freudian theory,
disagrees with the approaches of most psychoanalysts to the interpretation of folk tales
(Ben-Amos 1994, 512). Indeed, criticism of some of Freud’s claims and their abuse is
justified, but as with any theoretical lens, Freudian theory in its more modern forms can
still explain certain cultural behaviors as long as there are other methods employed to
offer a holistic approach to analysis. Dundes himself felt that the possibilities of using
psychoanalysis in folklore had not been given enough consideration (except, perhaps, by

One of Freud’s claims was that his symbolic interpretations come from folklore
itself (Dundes 1999, 180; 2003, 95-96). If these symbols do indeed derive from “fairy
tales and myths, from buffoonery and jokes, from folklore (that is, from knowledge about
popular manners and customs, saying and songs” (Freud 1916, 158-159), why would they not also be a part of everyday life, especially when home, family, and work are so closely tied? We study individual, social, and cultural contexts of performance to elucidate deeper meanings in folklore. And we study folklore to understand individual, social, and cultural belief systems. The collection of narratives in question are a reflection of childhood and occupation and the folklore associated with those groups, but they are also reflective of social contexts and cultural belief systems. Using “psychoanalytic theory as an interpretive art…this mode of interpretation can be applied…to artifacts and objects” as well as understanding the people who use them (Berger 2009, 27). I therefore argue that applying a psychoanalytic and symbolic approach to the occupational material culture described in the narratives I collected offers an interpretation for the division of labor as a representation of the strict sexual codes to which members of the community were to adhere and further sheds light on the manner in which youth broke those codes by playing with the sexual symbols that surrounded them as tools of labor. This chapter, though a slight aberration from the style of the previous chapters, continues the discussion of cultural transmission of custom and values. Psychoanalysis acts as a way to elaborate on the ethnographic details discussed earlier and offers a possible explanation for the adherence to or break down of certain work practices over the course of multiple generations.

Many authors choose to force the cultural systems and symbols into psychoanalysis rather than using psychoanalysis to explain patterns that emerge on their own. Because the ideas discussed in this chapter organized themselves freely during analysis, I feel justified in using psychoanalysis to explain categories my informants
created themselves. I do not claim that these patterns are universal or even apply to other areas of Cache Valley, as my research was not broad enough to make such claims. I cannot even go so far as to claim that these symbolic meaning can be found elsewhere in my informants’ own lives. I am merely analyzing the structures that my informants dubbed as the “way things were.”

When they did not just rely on “that’s just how it was,” the farm workers interviewed most often substantiated the specific rules for division of labor, explained in previous chapters, in terms of biological differences. The work that was most difficult and required a great deal of strength was allotted to the boys and men, and the work that needed a delicate hand went to the girls and women. For example, girls were better for fruit picking, most said, because of their smaller hands and feet. They did not bruise the tender berries, and they did not trample the plants because of the size of their feet.

Upon further analysis of the implements of harvest and the products themselves, a Freudian interpretation lends an interesting perspective to this division of labor. In keeping with a psychoanalytic approach, participants in this culture do not fully understand the symbolism enshrouded within their customs. In the case of the small farms in the Providence area, men and women tended to be divided based on genital symbolism of both tools and product. As explained earlier, men were responsible for plowing and planting all kinds of crops; moving irrigation pipe, spraying, and watering; and harvesting beets and hay. Women, on the other hand, were most commonly assigned the tasks of picking fruit, raising children, preparing meals and bottling produce. These divisions and the symbols associated with them are reflections of the sexually conservative society (largely LDS) in which they were formed. They do not themselves
represent an unconscious desire to deviate from cultural norms through fantasy, but
demonstrate values of chastity and heterosexuality.

**The Male Role**

Plowing and planting have long been analogous for intercourse in literature and
religious texts, especially the male component of sexuality, penetration and insemination.
Susan Glover, in her book, *Engendering Legitimacy: Law, Property, and Early
Eighteenth-century Fiction*, explains the early use of land and agriculture as sexual
metaphor. “Many Sumerian poems and hymns” she writes, “refer to a goddess named
Inanna, whose body is associated with a fecund grain- and fruit-bearing earth.” Glover
continues, quoting one passage in which the goddess asks, “Who will plow my vulva? /
Who will plow my high field? / Who will plow my wet ground?” Here the literal is mixed
with the metaphor, but the use of agricultural symbolism is unmistakable. “Classical
literature is filled with allusions to the sexual metaphor of the plow opening the ground
and of planting the seed in field or womb,” Glover states (2006, 32). The understanding
of this symbolism is found cross-culturally. For the Greeks, “plowing was a metaphor for
marital sexuality from the later archaic period onward” (Leitao 2012, 136). In her work
on Jewish rabbinical literature, Gail Susan Labovitz gives evidence of this same
metaphor in that context. In one example she provides, from the Yerushalmi Talmud, the
metaphor of plowing as intercourse and planting as insemination are connected. “For R.
Yossi b. Halafta levirately married his brother’s wife; he plowed five furrows and planted
five shoots” (Yevamot 1:1 [2b]). Labovitz explains “that the rabbi had sexual contact
with his sister-in-law only—and successfully—for the purpose of fathering children in
his deceased brother’s stead” (2009, 112). This type of language, equating plowing with
“sex acts” and planting with sons sired, is common in similar writings. “The rabbinic male reader to whom these texts are directed is being cautioned, like the farmer, to plow and sow carefully and with caution, in the right field and without wastefulness, in order to produce the best ‘crop’” (2009, 112).

The Quran too includes verses using this type of imagery. “Your wives are a place of sowing of seed for you, so come to your place of cultivation however you wish and put forth [righteousness] for yourselves. And fear Allah and know that you will meet Him. And give good tidings to the believers” (2:223). Here, the wife is again likened to a field and a man as the farmer. This command differs from the rabbinic example in that the rabbi meant the example as a specific counsel on how and how often to sow seed whereas the prophet Mohammed gives the choice to each individual man. In all of these examples, the plow represents the man and his phallus.

Freud, of course, labels any sharp object as being inherently phallic in nature, basically any object “like the thing symbolized [that] have the property of penetrating, thus injuring the body” (1999, 185). The purpose of the plow is penetration, digging into the ground to prepare for sowing seed, so applying the Freudian symbolism, the plow continues to symbolize male anatomy. Continuing the metaphor of the female as the earth, the Freudian interpretation of the plow is doubly significant, further emphasizing the desire for male dominance socially, sexually, and in the work place.

In the case of spraying pesticides, moving irrigation pipe and general watering, one might think that water would be symbolic of amniotic fluid, birth, or the womb in general, but Freud mentions “objects from which water flows” as representations of the male organ (1999, 185). Colloquially, the male organ is often compared to a hose.
Irrigation pipe itself is elongated, hard, and cylindrical, yet another phallic symbol.

Considering the metaphor of earth as a representation of woman, it quite naturally follows that the “water” (or semen) that penetrates into the “earth” (female body) would be controlled by the male section of the community. The spraying of pesticides by male farmers and their sons is a demonstration of the need for control through dominance over nature, creation of order out of chaos. In the case of watering, it was often the younger men, the most virile members of the community, who would water if they were available, especially if the watering turn was at odd hours.

In the Bible, when the Israelites were languishing from thirst, twice Moses smites a rock to bring forth a fountain of water. In the first account the Lord says to him:

Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smitest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it, that the people may drink. And Moses did so in the sight of the elders of Israel. (Ex. 17:5-6)

The phallic examples abound in this passage, starting with Moses’ use of his rod, a symbol and instrument for the power he was given from God, which he uses throughout his life. Like the farmers in Providence, the watering of the people (or the crops) was done in the company of the male leaders of the community (the male members of the family or community). The water issuing from the rock is itself phallic in nature and, of course, controlled by Moses and his male companions.

In a later example, Moses again is commanded to “take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock” (Num. 20:8) In this case, he is not to strike the rock, but only speak to it
although he is still to take the rod. In the following verses, it explains that Moses did as
the Lord asked, but chose to rebuke the people and then hit the rock twice with his rod.
This method worked, but Moses was chastised by God for not doing as he was told
(Num. 20:9-12). Moses’ theatrical display of his own manhood was a mockery of God’s
mandate, as he put his own prowess above it. In this example, Moses’ dominance of the
water through his masculinity comes from a text common to the farmers in Providence,
the lessons from which they clearly emulate.

Men participated in peach and apple harvests, but these were denoted as a unisex
pursuit. The hay and beet harvest, on the other hand, were always labeled men’s work
although women sometimes participated. These harvests are rife with phallic symbolism,
starting with the crops themselves. Sugar beets do not have a presence as representations
of male genitalia in literature, but a quick analysis of their shape classifies them in that
category. Sugar beets are larger and longer than their smaller, rounder red beet cousins,
growing up to two feet length. Sugar beets grow deeper into the earth than other crops,
embedding themselves in the soil with only the tops broaching the surface. In order to
retrieve the stubborn beets, they were ripped out of the ground with a sharp metal hook
which was plunged into the protruding top. When the beets were removed, the tops were
cut off with a sharp knife. The Freudian examples abound here. The beets themselves are
long and penetrating as the plow. The hook and knife used in harvest are both sharp and
“have the property of penetrating, and consequently of injuring, the body” (1999, 185).
Hay itself followed the same pattern, though without as much force and strength
involved. Hay, like other grains, grows long and straight, an obvious male symbol, and
the harvest is done with a sharp blade, or scythe. Hauling hay, another male job, involves digging a pitchfork into the hay itself to move it from location to location.

These jobs, clearly classified as male through custom and symbol, were sometimes performed by women, which threatened male control. In interviews, though, all of the women who had worked hauling hay or topping beets, as the harvest was called, admitted that the beet fields were no place for a girl because of the physical strength required for the job, but they had to work there out of financial family obligations, whether the daughter of the farmer or just bringing money home as additional income. These women inhabited the male sphere and took on a partial male role through their work, so they justifiably expected to receive equal compensation as their male counterparts.

The practice then (which I have still heard of happening now) was to pass the land down from father to son. In some families, bitter disputes over land inheritance caused divisions among siblings for years and years, some still distant, though friendly, even at the ends of their lives because daughters or non-dominant sons were cut out of receiving any share. Revisiting the example from rabbinical Jewish writings mentioned earlier, Labovitz explains that the five sons that were born were “named according to the name of their biological father, thereby crediting the man who does the labor of planting, while the plowed field in which they are planted remains nameless and voiceless, with no active role in the (re)production of her sons” (2009, 112). The preference to pass land on to sons follows a similar bent as this example. The land, representative of woman, belongs to the man, as the daughters should belong to their husbands who would also presumably receive land or some other inheritance from their fathers. Both the land and the women
are then helpless without the strength of a man, producing nothing on their own, so the man is given credit. The land, as women, is used for cultivation and left for the next year when the man will plow and plant again. It is therefore, the man that determines when the land will be left fallow and when it will produce fruit. In the same way, a woman cut out of any inheritance of land after working it in the same way as a man is like the mother in the rabbinical example, remaining nameless and not given credit for their part in the family economy. In Utah at that time, the social norm of always passing land from male to male was already beginning to break down, so there was an understandable backlash by sons who felt their dominance as sole cultivator of the earth being threatened by their traditionally passive sisters.

**The Female Role**

Taking this same approach towards female farm tasks reveals similar Freudian patterns. “The breasts must be included amongst the organs of sex; these, as well as the larger hemispheres of the female body, are represented by *apples, peaches and fruit* in general,” Freud claims. Berries easily fit into this category, being round and tender, and fruit, for that matter. The berries and fruits the girls picked are largely symbolic, as are the cups in which each plucked item was placed. Cups and buckets are an integral part of the berry harvest as they are the only instruments used in the process besides the fingers. The cups were one of the most often mentioned material culture items associated with fruit, in part because they are an extinct species, the wood having been replaced with the cardboard mix cups found in the stores today, but the wooden cups were also an integral part of the material identity of the berry picker. According to Freud, “The female genitalia are symbolically represented by all such objects as share with them the property
of enclosing a space or are capable as acting as receptacles” (1999, 186). The sister element to the wooden cups are the wooden picker boxes which acted as a carrying stand for the case containing the six cups. Freud would argue that because the picker box is made of wood, that it is also representative of the female.

The berries themselves had to be picked and handled with care, being placed in the cups carefully so as not to bruise them. This care is reminiscent of ideals of femininity. The pickers were to move swiftly yet gently as they did their work. With this context, the plea of Joyce Bitters to not “squash the berries!” becomes a cry to be more careful and therefore more feminine. It is also fitting that she was a young women’s leader at her church, a role model and teacher of young girls in all things spiritual and temporal. Male involvement in this process would be further inappropriate as the required care and delicacy with the process inherently groups them in this same feminine sphere with the female workers.

In another way, the cups act as an inherent symbol of the womb, not just through the shape, but through the patterns of use. Each cup was to be filled, brimming in most cases, with berries, a thing which represented life and livelihood to the farmer, and the fact that the pickers were not to skimp on the amount of berries in each cup shows an abundance, an added vitality to the fruit’s presentation. Each girl was paid by the amount of berries picked. As Toolson (2013) put it, “If they didn't pick their cases of strawberries, they didn't get their money. You know, they didn't get very much money…That's what they were there for”. So, for the girls, full berry cups also represented life to the girls that filled them. There were not many ways for girls to make that much money in those days, according to the women I interviewed, money which
gave them a small portion of independence. Just as a full womb is a symbol of life, a cup full of berries was life for farmer and picker alike.

Returning to the field analogy discussed earlier, Labovitz states, “Woman as field, moreover, is a metaphor that carries implications well beyond those of simple ownership. A field, particularly in a society whose economy is heavily reliant on agriculture, provides (ideally) on-going sustenance. Woman metaphorized as field is particularly a site of (re)production” (2009, 111) In reference to “(re)production,” a large part of the adult female’s role in this community was the bearing and caring for children, but another significant role for the farmer’s wife was canning and making preserves. In our discussions of foodways, this was the food item most mentioned besides pie. In this way, woman embodies the role of the field, providing food, or “on-going sustenance” during the winter months when the ground lay frozen. Freud specifically mentions “jars and bottles” as well as “cupboards, stoves, and above all, rooms,” all things associated with canning and bottling fruit and other preserves, rooms being, in this case, in reference to the kitchen where the preparation would be taking place (1999, 186).

Continuing in a different material sphere, even the protective gear girls wore lends itself to the interpretation. Because the thorns of dewberries could grow up to an inch-and-a-half long, pickers most often wore thick work gloves with the tips of the fingers cut out to protect their hands and arms while working. Following the same line of reasoning as above, if the purpose of the proscribed division of labor was in part to symbolically protect women’s purity through surrounding them with like objects, the gloves acting as a protection for tender skin against sharp thorns can be seen as a symbol of protection against male penetration, the thorn being yet another phallic symbol.
In folktales, the thorn can also be interpreted as phallus. In some versions of both Sleeping Beauty and Rapunzel, thorns act as a show of masculine force that keep other males at bay. In the Grimm version of Rapunzel, upon learning from the sorceress that he will never see Rapunzel again, the prince falls from the tower in which she is kept and although “he escaped with his life,…the thorns into which he fell poked out his eyes” (Grimm and Grimm, Rapunzel). In “Little Briar-Rose,” the Grimm version of “Sleeping Beauty,” the heroine, first of all, pricked her finger on a spindle, a caution against sharp, or phallic, objects. Then, when she fell into her deep sleep along with the other occupants of the castle, “Round about the castle a thorn hedge began to grow, and every year it became higher, until it finally surrounded and covered the entire castle” (Grimm and Grimm, Little Briar-Rose). Men attempted to enter the castle, but were impaled on the thorns surrounding it. It was not until the day appointed that the princess should awaken that the chosen prince was able to move through the thorns, now flowers, unharmed. When he awaited the appropriate time to claim Briar-Rose as his wife, he was successful. The comparison of the details of this story to ideals of virginity before marriage and a father’s care over his daughter until she is rightfully wed is unmistakable. This example could also be seen as the toothed vagina motif or vagina dentata (Dundes 1997, xi). These are the same ideals held dear by the members of the community in Providence which carry over to their day-to-day labor.

From another Biblical example, “The ‘first parents’ were exiled from the garden to a life of labor, working a ground that was now ‘cursed,’ and yielding thorns and thistles” (Glover 2006, 32). The girls working among the thorny dewberries is a reminder of Mother Eve, who toiled among the thorns because of her transgression in the Garden
of Eden. By wearing gloves, the young girls were protecting themselves from following Eves’ path and being punished in the same way. Again, symbols found in folk narrative pepper the work they did, making women’s work a preservation of female purity and tenderness.

Thorns were not the only nuisance for fruit pickers that required extra clothing as protection against loss of comfort and peace of mind when a threat of foreign objects entering where they should not be. This protection is reminiscent of female purity and modesty under male gaze. "One of the worst things I hated was thinning peaches,” said Clotille Baer Liechty. “You have to thin your fruit….You have to pull the fruit off so there's at least 6 inches between each peach. But when they're little, they had 10 times more fuzz on 'em than when you'd, like, buy them out of the stores. And that was just horrible. Your shirt was up to your neck and you had your long sleeve shirts. So that was the least favorite job too was thinning peaches. That was hard." It made their faces itch too, "but especially…you wanted your neck covered so it didn't go down on ya. So that was kinda hard. I didn't like that very well." Long sleeves, instead of gloves, were used in this situation where young women and men needed to protect themselves from infiltration, signifying any unwanted sexual penetration.

The apple and peach harvest often bridged the gender gap. The fruit was firmer and not in such tight rows, so it could be handled by the rougher boys. In some cases, it even became a family affair. One of the reasons I was given for why girls did not help at all with apple and peach picking was that the girls were afraid to go up the ladder. Even this uncommon exclusion of girls from the fruit harvest was based on a generalization of young girls’ tenderness and purity.
Cherries and Flirting

Despite measures to keep youth pure, sex is an intricate part of the life cycle, and even children realized this fact. Manifestations of or references to the notion of intercourse and reproduction even appeared in the ways the children played. For example, although work was often segregated between the genders, there were instances of flirtation between girls and boys as they worked. Melvin Bitters explained that flirting “was probably the major reason” boys were not hired to pick berries aside from the preference towards hiring girls for their smaller feet and delicate hands. Both Art Bitters and Wes Bitters’ wife remember a time when Joyce Bitters decided to let Wes’ kids pick berries:

We were up here and normally Joyce would only pick girls to pick the strawberries, and I think raspberries too. I'm not sure, but at least the strawberries. Well, she decided that because the boys were old enough, about the same age as the girls, that she would give the boys a job and let them, you know, go in and pick too. And she says, "I will never do that again." Because the whole time was a girl picking up the strawberry, picking the strawberry and throwing it at the boys to get their attention, and she says, "There was more flirting and games going on with throwing strawberries back and forth to get these boys' attention." She says, "I will never mix boys and girls picking strawberries again." (W. Bitters 2013)

The act of throwing berries or cherries was an invitation to reciprocate. The pickers in this story come from a younger generation than any of my interviewees, but this story provides a case to show what happens when the berries no longer become a serious source of income for the girls or their families. Instead, the berries become a symbol and object for releasing pent up tensions between the sexes. As Barre Toelken writes, “The craving for fruits in folklore seems widely connected to the idea of sex and self-indulgence” (1996, 248). The youths may not have been craving fruit, but they did demonstrate a moment of self-indulgence with a fruit so representative of sex and desire.
This interpretation of the berries and berry picking lends itself to an explanation of the involvement of young boys in that activity. Because they had not yet reached physical and sexual maturity at that age, the cross over to women’s work would be acceptable. These young boys would still have been children, connected to their mothers because of that fact, so the symbols found in the fields, such as the berries and earth with which they worked closely representing the womb and fertility, would be more representative of maternity and childcare than sexuality. Many of the girls pointed out that there was no opportunity to flirt with the boys in the berry patches because they were absent or much younger than they, the girls, were. According to Eloise Baer Toolson, her father hired “a few boys…but they were usually younger, so nobody we thought was cute. Dang!....When they got to be flirting age: fourteen, fifteen, no, the boys especially probably didn't want to do that girly thing of picking fruit,” said Eloise Baer Toolson. Harvey Mohr himself explained that he did not flirt with any of the girls because “they were always older than [him].”

Another example of boys’ and girls’ sexuality played out during fruit harvest occurred each summer in the Brigham City area, which lies half an hour southwest of Providence. Ivan (Ike) and Deonne Christensen, like other local youths, were often bussed to Brigham City area in the early 1950s to pick commercial pie cherries that area is famous for when farmers were short on hands. Ike only went down for about a week each time, but Deonne remembers spending a month picking sweet cherries and then pie cherries. Ike described the experience of working with girls:

Any time you do that [hire girls and boys together] you're having organized confusion, and [it was] the same thing over picking cherries. They'd hire us to move the ladders for the girls. And of course, you had play around, and joke and
so forth. But the--you'd always wait, "Ladder boy!" That's what they liked to call. "Ladder boy!" And of course they was diggin' it in a little too... We'd shake the ladder when they was up there... Just to scare them a little. Of course, and it was "Ladder boy!" "Ladder boy!" and they enjoyed doing that. They'd throw cherries a little. It was I'm sure the same as today when you're out in the open with boys and so forth. It's girl/boy games. (2013)

In this example, the girls again are the fruit pickers, with the men acting as helpers. The cherry, a common symbol of virginity (Toelken 1996, 248,250) is appropriately in the control of the young girls, who guard them as they pick them. They break out of this symbolic purity both by mounting the ladder and throwing cherries. “The act of mounting ladders, steep places or stairs is indubitably symbolic of sexual intercourse,” says Freud (1999, 187). The fact that the boys shook the ladder weakens the girls’ position and threatens their precious fruit, symbolically and quite literally. By throwing cherries, the girls were willingly giving up what was theirs, figuratively indulging in the act they long for but cannot yet participate in. Through their play, they acted out adult relationships as precursors to sexual intercourse.

Interestingly, Ike uses the term “games” to describe their flirtations. In this example, work turned to carnival as attraction and flirting were involved. When the boys shook the ladder, the girls were in a vulnerable position that was easily exploited by the boys. Girls would have been wearing pants to pick which protected them from the prying eyes of the boys below. Fear of climbing to the tops of the trees was also a common reason that girls were not hired to pick apples and peaches, so in this case the boys took care of the precarious position of the girls in order to remind them of their power and to make those on the ladder remember their reliance on the ladder bearer. In Freud’s own analyses, falling in dreams becomes a symbol of giving in to sexual desires, or in the case of a female, becoming a “fallen woman” (1990, 221). When boys threaten the girls with
instability, they were subconsciously toying with the idea of giving in to their teenage passions, a choice they may not have ever made in reality, but flirtations of this kind allowed them a sense of release from forbidden desires.

**Providence, Land of the Fruits**

Although Providence is no longer known for fruit production, at one time it was. “Providence was really well known. Just like Brigham and Willard. People would come from all over,” Harvey Mohr remembers. In order to take advantage of this popular crop, the city put up a sign expressing pride in their identity as one of the leading fruit producers in Northern Utah. But the pronouncement backfired:

There was a sign, kind of a humorous thing about our fruit. I don't know who made it or who instigated the building of the sign, but they decided to put a sign down on the highway, and it was right down there where Auto Care Body Shop is now....Anyway there was a sign that sit there before anybody was, uh, out there that said "Providence: City of the Fruits." That was back when, you know, if you were a fruit, you were a--gay. So anyway, that was up there for a few years. And we all made fun of it so bad that, uh, they finally ended up taking it down. But, uh, that's kind of the humorous thing about our fruit (Mohr 2013).

In a society where pre-marital abstinence and heterosexuality were highly valued, even demanded, a clear division of labor according to symbolic genitalia was one way that eliminated any gray areas in the definition of gender; although, in the analysis of the symbolic nature of labor divisions, the ability to explore heterosexual relationships is absent, opening the door to the homoerotic because of sexual repression.

The reason people came from surrounding areas into Providence was for fruit. Fruit was a large part of their identity, but this identity becomes questionable if fruit was a symbol of the feminine. Through mocking the sign, these youth essentially mocked themselves. They had to cast off that identity in order to remain within the social
boundaries set up by their labor practices. In a profession and part of the United States where masculinity was highly valued, this sign undercut their own ideals of strength and manliness. They had to be the first to recognize this mistake in identity assignment and laugh at themselves before men from other towns had the opportunity to laugh at them, thereby preserving their power over self-representation.

Based on attitudes within LDS culture and in my interviews, it is safe to say that within the society described here, abstinence before marriage and fidelity after were highly valued. Homosexuality was not condoned or normal. The sexual symbols found in the workplace, which are largely unconscious, are divided by sex and distinctly segregate men and women on the farm and at home. Through these divisions, the prowess and dominance of men is reaffirmed as the primary workers of the land and by being associated only with masculine tasks and symbols. The inherent homoeroticism found in this stark division male-male, female-female had to be combatted through jokes and cultural abhorrence of homosexuality. Adolescents, known for their raging hormones and experimentation of their own sexuality, would be most likely to mock anything that calls into question their own adherence to social sexual norms. In the fruit fields, and especially in the cherry harvest example, they were surrounded by sexual symbols and their curiosity led them to unconsciously act out sexual intercourse at a time when they were unable to cope with their own feelings.

Although these symbols may not be the only explanation for certain behavior, they do offer an interesting interpretation for common practices and beliefs about gender and appropriate labor practices in this specific area of Utah during this time as they developed and passed from one generation to the next.
CHAPTER 6

“THE STRAWBERRIES WERE SO MUCH BETTER THEN”:

NOSTALGIA AS A REFLECTION OF IDENTITY

LOSS IN PERSONAL NARRATIVE

At a recent family dinner at my grandparents’ house in Salt Lake, I was asked about my thesis and the interviews I was doing. My grandfather, born and raised in Fillmore, Utah, a once-booming town in the center of the state, quickly retorted that when they were digging potatoes, nobody told stories or played around. They just worked! In his deep voice, he moved into performance mode, describing the steps to the harvest, the sacks they hung around their necks, emphasizing in his characteristic manner how backbreaking it all was. At that point, my uncle, Gary, jumped in to validate his story, telling a story of his own about Grandpa’s extraordinary ability to work, and work quickly, in the garden. One day, when Gary was a boy, my grandfather asked him to weed the beets while he was at work. Gary procrastinated until the middle of the day, when the sun was the hottest, but he went out and got to work. After five hot, aggravating minutes of pulling on a weed and breaking it off, leaving the root in the ground, Gary gave up and went inside. When his dad got home and Gary explained why the work was not done, my grandpa took him outside to show him the right way to do it. Gary stood flabbergasted as my grandfather moved quickly down the rows pulling the entire plant out in one swift motion. Gary imitated his bent over posture and the swinging of his arms, saying something to the effect of, “It was incredible!” Gary never forgot that example of hard, quick work, a principle that my grandfather applied in his many business ventures over the years. All of his children are hard workers, and both of his sons went into
business just as he did, dedicating themselves to career and family as they saw their
father do.

For my informants, who picked fruit, hauled hay, and hoed sugar beets, their
childhoods were similar to my grandfather’s. They learned the skills necessary to succeed
in the fields because that was the work most readily available to them. Their chores at
home and in the fields became second nature to them, and while some of the “verbal
forms of occupational jargon and narrative” emerge through their narratives, informants
primarily describe “the various skills and techniques which [had to] be informally learned
and performed by any worker” in their occupation (McCarl 1986, 71). Although they
were young, all of my informants were employed on farms. Some of them inherited their
positions by being born into a farming family, and others chose to work in the fields.
Most families in the area had large gardens, as I have previously mentioned, so many
young people in the area understood working with the land at least to a small degree.
Each of these teens had to understand “the canon of work technique [which] refers to this
body of informal knowledge used to get the job done” (McCarl 1986, 72).

“Technique forms the background of any occupational experience,” says McCarl
on the importance of understanding particulars of any job to understand its folkloric
aspects (1989, 75). My grandfather was an expert at the weeding motion as a result of his
many years working as a kid in that capacity, but his experiences went beyond the
techniques necessary to get the job done well. One of the biggest techniques for success
in farming, according to their stories, is not a technique at all, but rather a character trait.
Their chores and jobs required character, perseverance regardless of whether or not the
work was enjoyable. Harvey Mohr explained that they were not trained in their jobs but
learned by example. If they did something wrong, they were reprimanded, and learned not to repeat their mistake. The skills and processes involved in running these farms as discussed in previous chapters are not the result of formal education but were taught by the teenage workers’ parents, bosses, and even peers. Shayne Mathews explained the kind of examples they received from their parents as he recounted the daily chores of his mother who had a nearly full-time job making draperies and assisting in farm work. She was “always busy working. I grew up working. That’s just what we did. We just grew up- - And I think a lot of kids at that time that’s how it was, especially kids that were raised on little farms. That’s how ya had to do. Most of their parents worked and the kids were working on the farm all the time.” Because their parents worked, the children also carried a great deal of responsibility, which they may not have appreciated then, but looking back, they are grateful for the lessons.

In this chapter, I explore those intersections between occupational folklore, family folklore and tradition. As they worked, these teens aided in the transmission of goods, services, and money in the local economy, but during this process, a secondary transmission occurred, in which they became the beneficiaries of cultural values of hard work, community, and simplicity from their families, peers and employers. During our interviews, informants wove themes of nostalgia throughout their narratives and commentaries, not for the work itself in most cases, but for the community and value of hard work lost in the urbanized Providence they know today. This nostalgia is evident as an undercurrent of their lamentations over the changing landscape, the forgotten techniques and tools of their former trade, and especially the decline in quality of available produce. Above all they worry about their grandchildren’s ability to appreciate
what they have and to work hard. As the familiar manner in which goods, services, and money were transmitted changed, so did the opportunities for intergenerational cultural value transmission which had been key in shaping the identity of these workers in their early years.

This thesis describes a world filled with movement, and in the previous chapters, I have discussed a number of examples. In “Cooperation and Competition,” I explained the flow of water through the irrigation system, its use and importance, and the function that it had (and still has) in the community. Also considered were topics on the transfer of plants between farmers and neighbors, not to mention machinery. People moved from place to place in chapter two when the farmers picked up their help. Workers moved down the rows of bushes, transferring berries into crates; then crates were transported to the stores. The fruit changed hands multiple times, finally finding itself in the homes of customers, where it was probably used in a pie or in jam. Money moved in the opposite direction in exchange. In chapter three “trickster kids” shift power to and from themselves through their pranks and stories while the narrator travels to the past, carrying the listener with them. “Berry Fights and Cherry Picking” illustrates how traditional values regarding gender are transferred to workers as they act out stereotypical work roles. From beginning to end, we see the acquisition of land, the division of it within the family, and the eventual transfer to a wholly unconnected owner.

The idea of transmission connects the themes found in all of the narratives. Sexual intercourse, a force driving the analysis of the previous chapter, itself is a transmission, a literal creation of the next generation. Parents initially give a part of their bodies to form their children, and in raising them, continue to transfer ideas, knowledge and values
through the work and play they teach their children. It was through the experiences discussed in earlier chapters that pickers and farm hands learned values of hard work from their elders. Morals and lessons were exchanged for diligence as freely as money was for berries. It is these challenging experiences that those I interviewed wish their children could experience. It is the sum total of all kinds of transmission in these children’s lives that form their heritage. As Archie Green stated:

Standing alone, *heritage* implies transmission, legacy, and gift; it encompasses privilege and exploitation, as well as egalitarian promise. An individual’s inheritance derives from family and friends. The collective heritage of workers resides in a congeries of intangibles—belief in solidarity, respect for skill, shared vocabulary, idealized vision. (Green 1993, 14)

In this case, where the workers were friends and family, they too shared those beliefs. This gift from their parents, their heritage, is the piece of their history that they wish to pass on. Being workers as well as children provided a unique venue for blending identity as a family and as farmers. As an individual’s identity is the sum total of the folk groups he or she belongs to, these children’s family heritage became doubly important as it encompassed and shaped these two aspects of their lives. Work life was home life.

In some cases this process of transmission and gift of heritage was more explicit than others. Wes Bitters was able to remember the values he learned from his grandmother’s narratives in the berry fields.

The story I always tell...Grandma Eddy, she was my salvation during those days [laughs]. We would be up there from six to—I started work on the farm probably when I was probably eight and worked through until I graduated from high school and went on to college. But work would start at six in the morning. Oh, by nine o'clock it was starting to get tough! You know, after three hours, you know. And normally what would happen, we'd have a big breakfast at six: shredded wheat and scrambled eggs, bacon, grapefruit if it was available. A lot of fruit. And then we were expected to work right on through until noon. That was pretty hard work in the morning. So around nine o'clock, I would start getting restless, and Grandma would tell me two stories. She’d tell me one story on Monday, the other
story on Tuesday. The same story she told on Monday, she'd tell on Wednesday. And Friday we don't know what we were gonna get. The same story, though! The two stories. One story: The Little Train that Could. Do you know the Little Train That Could?

AM: Mm-hm! But how would she tell it?

WB: She'd say, “Wes,” you know, “Let me tell you a story about a little train. There was this little train one day. It was a little small train. It lived in this train station. And all he did all day was help move the trains around. Not really hard work, just move the trains around. And, uh, one day this big locomotive came in, and he said. I'm sick. I'm really, really sick. And I-I can't go on my route today. And he said, ‘Little train, you're gonna do it.’ And the little train said, ‘Hey, I'm too little! I can't do it.’ And the train says, ‘Well, I don't care if you can do it or not. You've got to do it.’ So they hook the little train up to this big, big train of toys and he started up and he had to go up this mountain. And he kept on thinking, ‘I think I can. I think I can. I think I can. Oh, maybe I can't. Oh, I think I can. I think I can.’” She'd go on [laughs]. She's go on with that for probably a minute! ‘I think I can. I think I can.’” I'd go, "Come on, Grandma! Let's get to the end of the story!" And she'd keep on going. And then finally, the little train reached the top, and he's "I knew I could. I knew I could. I knew I could," all the way down the other side. Well, she would lengthen this thing out and this little train story would last probably five minutes. Yeah. She would throw in--Each day she'd maybe throw in some little curves or something different to make sure I was listening in, so there you go. That was the one story. The she says, “Ok, well Wes, what do we learn from that?” [in a tone as if rolling his eyes] “Well, not to give up. You just keep working until it's time to quit.” “That's right Wes! Let's get to work.” [Laughs]. Oh grandma! And then so basically on the next day, when we'd start slowing down, she'd say, “I'm going to tell you a story today.” “Oh! Ok.” And she says, “This is a story about a rabbit and a turtle.” She would say, “There was once this rabbit and he thought he was really smart. And there was this turtle. And he said to himself, ‘I'm gonna make this turtle really look stupid today. I'm gonna say, ‘Turtle, I have a race.’” And so, uh, the turtle says, ‘Oh, well, I'm not very fast,’ and the rabbit says--the hare says, ‘Oh, that's alright, you don't have to be fast, but I'd like to race you.’ And so they started, and the hare just flew down the road. And about a mile down he couldn't even see the turtle. He said, ‘Ah! I'm going to take a nap.’ So he took a nap. Pretty soon the little turtle came by and the hare woke up and he said, ‘Oh! The turtle’s here!’ you know. Took off again running another mile. Went to sleep again. Same thing happened a couple of times, and finally he didn't wake up. And the little turtle went past, got to the end, and hollered back to the hare, ‘Hey! I won!’ And Grandma'd say, ‘What's the moral of this story?’ Again, the same moral! “Don't give up until you get to the end and you're going to beat everybody else. It doesn't matter if you go fast. It doesn't matter that you go slow. You keep going. You don't give up, and you're always going to win the race.” Two stories that have stayed with me my whole life in everything I've done. And it's really amazing. It's really--It was probably the philosophy. If I had any success in life, it was because of those two stories my
Grandma'd keep on telling me every day. And my brother, tell him the same thing. (2013)

Wes’s story was unique in that no one else remembered being told specific stories as they worked, but these episodes are an example and metaphor for the manner through which children learned the importance of hard work and perseverance. His memory of his grandmother changing the story, lengthening and adapting it to their circumstances, making it an adventure reflects on the creativity and consideration his grandmother possessed. She simultaneously had sympathy for the children and tried to make work more enjoyable.

Wes made sure it was clear that she always told the moral of the story, and he knew by her timing that she was not merely providing entertainment. Despite variation in content, mishap or adventure that the engine or the rabbit experienced in the tale, the lesson remained unchanged. Wes was to listen, learn and apply. Her story required direct, immediate action on his part. In the first place, her narrative form requires the listener to state the moral, as she does not dictate it. Her grandchildren were responsible for listening and synthesizing, reporting back to her through their addition to the tale. Second, they were expected to return to work immediately. She was a kind grandmother figure but was telling him to focus and get his work done. Her storytelling emphasized that no matter what life may bring, her grandchildren must internalize this moral and learn to apply it. Through her regular repetition of the same basic story type, Wes remembered both the story and the moral, and not only did he remember, he let it guide him and become part of his identity, part of the heritage she passed on to him.

In the analysis of these stories, I have attempted to pull existing themes from the words, avoiding the “grand meta-narratives” Mullen and Webber rail against, relying on
the mini-narratives of my informants. Commentaries on hard work came up repeatedly, revealing a common cultural trend. Frequent phrases were “I learned to work” or “good work ethic” among discussion of the values of punctuality, responsibility, frugality, dependability, conservatism, family values, unity, and above all, applying those principles to all other activities in life, making them a part of their identity. They ate dinner with their family, and they played with their family.

Their friends and families also taught them the value of creative play. “[Their] everyday experience with schoolmates, and the play that resulted, fostered an intense and exciting sense of cultural transmission and creation” (Bronner 1988, 34). I finally noticed at my last interview that when I asked how they passed the time while working, they automatically thought I meant pass their free time. This was a common reaction, as if they did not have a concept of making work fun. Work was work although they goofed off sometimes. Instead, they valued leisure and breaks. The tone changed when they remembered rambling up on the canyon or on the side of the mountain. Melvin Bitters took his boys up the canyon on occasion to fish as a break from their work. Harvey Mohr told the most amazing stories about hunting and fishing with his dad and uncle, experiences which seriously influenced his current interests and profession. They swam; they biked; they played sports; and they played games at night. They knew that when work was over, it was time for fun and play (after a nap, in Elizabeth Brown’s case). The land they worked, their siblings, and workmates doubled as playground and playmates when the time for labor had passed.

These recollections of work and play are at times rife with nostalgic sentiment. Nostalgia’s inglorious origins as, literally, a sometimes deadly disease brought on by
extreme homesickness later gave way to a term which meant a longing for an imagined, idealized past. These notions have given the term a hugely negative connotation with historians and folklorists (Cashman 2006, 138-140). To some scholars, the fact that nostalgia in current use is fully sentimental and emotional, a “reactionary disease,” leads them to automatically discredit nostalgic pasts as credible representations of the actual past (Cashman 2006, 139-140). Cashman argues that although nostalgia is a reaction to large changes, it is extremely useful for understanding the current cultural situation. He asserts, “Nostalgia can be critical in an analytic sense for instantiating informed evaluation of the present through contrast with the past. Nostalgia can also be critical, in the sense of being vitally important, for inspiring action of great moral weight, action that may effect a better future” (2006, 137-138).

Nostalgia in narratives about Providence can be viewed in these same terms. As their community changes around them, this generation sees a number of things which were once valued slipping away. These values and environments become the subjects of their nostalgia, transcending longings for the time past (which their stories sometimes contain), and their nostalgia becomes a commentary on the current sociopolitical situation surrounding them.

Their nostalgia was not always blatant. Although work was clearly ingrained in their social and individual fabric early in life, not everyone enjoyed it. Elizabeth Brown detested the actual work and remembers being overjoyed to go home. The chance for a nap motivated her through each hour (2013). Joan Lofthouse, instead, prized her time working. She chose to go work in the garden at home even if she did not have to (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). Janalee Thomas also remembers her time working in
the fields with fondness, with nothing negative to say about her experiences (2013).

When Clotille Baer Liechty was quite young she longed for when she could join her siblings working, but when she was finally old enough, she changed her tune, wishing for her work-less days again (2013).

For the most part they did not romanticize the work they did. It was hard, and they do not miss having to work so hard. Asking Clotille about particularly happy memories she has of working, she responded, “It was ok, but I'm not sure if it was happy days” (Liechty 2013). During the conversation with Wes Bitters, I began to suspect he felt nostalgia for the past when he mentioned his garden now and the berries he still grows for his own family. His response to my query was quite definitive. “No. It was a hard time. It wasn't an easy life” (2013). But they also recognize, as Ike Christensen did, that “It wasn't drudgery. We had a good time,” he said referring to their family life. “We had a fun time growing up….We had a good life. It probably wasn't as tough as I'm probably making it sound. The jobs were hard to do because of the thing that they was trying to do, but, no, we had a good life [as a family with nine kids] There was troubles or two, but overall, I wouldn't trade it.”

The nostalgia they express is not generally one for the work itself but for the products of work and the context. I found four areas of nostalgia in the stories I collected: the value of hard work, the land, the simplicity of life and leisure, and the material surroundings. “Although rarely addressed by folklorists, the concept of nostalgia is relevant to a constellation of ideas central in our field of study—tradition, identity, authenticity, and heritage, among others,” affirms Ray Cashman (2006, 138). Through
understanding the nature of the nostalgia expressed in personal narrative, we understand
the narrators and what they themselves valued most.

Because it was so entwined with their family lives and jobs outside the home,
work became part of their identities. As Green explains:

> Work, whether pleasant or painful, helps define individual identity. Strangers ask, “What do you do?” We reply to casual or ideological queries by naming skills or places of employment. We relate occupation to race, ethnicity, gender, region, and religion in struggling to comprehend the essential reality of self or community. Our daily tasks give lives coherence; by contrast, the lack of work denies our basic humanity. (1993, 13).

The kids working on farms chose not to go into farming for a number of reasons. One of
the most cited was that they had already experienced the trials of that lifestyle and
decided they were not willing to work in the same way for the amount of pay. Boyd
Lofthouse’s first love is farming, and he would have farmed if he could have afforded it,
but he chose a more lucrative career path instead. The appearance of the outward
consequences of this shift in community mentality was a gradual one, as Joan Lofthouse
explained.

> Well, some of them started [getting out of agriculture] kind of gradually. And it got to where people did not want--It got very difficult to find workers that would work for that amount of money in that kind of heat. And so if they didn't get workers, they didn't make any money on their produce that they were trying to sell. And too, it seemed like the older people were accustomed to doing that work and as their families grew up, their children decided, "I don't want to work this hard." And that's even what's happening now on farms. Compared with the amount of money they get for the amount of work they put in, they have to really have a love for it or not. So consequently, I guess that's why a lot of the Mexican labor is coming because the white people would not do the work that needed to be done when it needed to be done. (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013)

This social change has eradicated the arena where their identities were first formed. The
cultural sphere in which they existed is gone, and they feel the loss of not being able to
carry on their traditions. Work and food was a part of their heritage, but their children’s
children are no longer interested in learning these things or have no context in which they can. The nostalgia that they feel is not caused by a need to go back to their past state, but is created by generation gaps, loss of transmission. Rapidly changing technology makes the classroom for teaching traditional values disappear, and they have not fully adapted. Webber and Mullen agree, “Nostalgia need not mean a desire to return to the past. Rather, its task is more complex: to negotiate which values and practices should be carried into new times” (2011, 231).

The next most commonly shared trait in the interviews was some kind of lamenting about the current generation and that “they don’t know how to work.” When I asked about the caption on the Russell Lee photos that lauded the fact that no migrant labor was needed in the Cache Valley area, if that was true and why they thought it was, most responded that there were plenty of young people that needed work. It was not until later “when the kids got lazy” that they needed to draw on migrant labor. Sometimes the discussion about value and learning hard work was prompted, but little comments on how difficult the work was and the state of their grandchildren or great-grandchildren’s work ethic flowed naturally after stories of their own. After explaining that she was “earning money to get ready to go back to school,” Elizabeth Brown lamented, “I tell you what, the kids nowadays just don’t have a clue what it costs their poor parents, but I’m sure a lot of them has made it so their kids have to earn money too. And it’s better too. You appreciate your things more; you take care of them better” (2013). She recognizes that things are different now, and is pleased that parents attempt to apply the values she learned in the past to current situations. Later in our conversation, Elizabeth Brown, responded to Wes Bitters calling her an all-star, “I don't know if I was an all-star, but I
learned to work. And I think that’s another thing that kids nowadays they have to learn. They have to learn the meaning of a dollar. I don't know. I've felt sorry for my children and grandchildren because money is just like it grows on trees, but it doesn't. It's just a sign of the times, I guess” (2013). This is a general commentary on the state of the economy now. Although we have recently been in an economic downturn, the situation Elizabeth sees is still better than the one she remembers.

Harvey Mohr sets an example for his children, applying the methods for cultural transmission that his father employed.

I bought all my own clothes and everything. I earned money. I mean, all the kids worked pretty much, a lot harder than they do now. I've got all my grandkids working [at my business]. They want money. And they're good workers. And, my grandsons, I have a big place and some property, and they'll get in and work with me but have to be trained. You gotta work with them. You gotta get in there and sweat with them, and they learn how to do it after a few times. (2013)

As he explained earlier, they worked with their parents and learned through example. He also sees the disparity between his generation and the current one, but he does not despair over their potential, knowing that they only lack the informal education he and his peers had. Ann K. Ferrell also pointed out in her piece on tobacco farmers in Kentucky that “this narrative expresses longing for a time in which tobacco was ‘the glue that held families together,’ a phrase I heard repeatedly from many people over the course of my fieldwork. It tells the story of tobacco production as it was once carried out by family members working together to raise the crop throughout the year” (2012, 134). In his commentary, Harvey is able to recreate his old learning ground in order to recreate the previous context for value transmission through collaborative work.
This decline in the willingness to work with each succeeding generation is so common that it’s a pattern people are familiar with by word and through hard experience.

The following is an excerpt from the interview with Joan and Boyd Lofthouse.

JL: Usually, they claim that a third generation business will go under because they don't want to put the work in that the original ones did, work around the clock. They want their vacation. [Laughs]
BL: [Talking over] They say every third generation—The third generation will lose your farm.
AM: Oh, really? Interesting.
JL: If they don't sell it to build houses. [Laughs]
AM: Is that a saying you heard growing up? Or is it something you've—
BL: It's pretty much a fact.
JL: They’ve been saying that for quite a long time while they see what’s happened.
H: It’s kind of like the business people down here [in Logan]. They give their business to the kids; they’ll lose it within five years. It’s pretty much the same principle because they don’t want to work like Mother and Dad did, put in the time. That’s why the third generation--
JL: It’s gone. [Laughs]
BL: We have friends who just went through that....Yeah, he was a hard worker and that, and he turned it over to his—He was a second generation, and then his kid was a third, a third generation lost it for him....Dairy...Pretty big out in Young Ward. They probably had about three or four hundred acres. (2013)

Joan chooses to laugh after each of her comments, a quality of her narrative style. She laughs even when the topic is somber. This situation is clearly a tragedy for Boyd as evidenced through his tone of voice in the interview itself. In her book, Featherless Chickens, Laughing Women and Serious Stories, Jeannie Banks Thomas “shows how attention to laughter in relation to narrative can help unearth obscured and even painful meanings” and that “narratives can be interpreted by using the laughter that accompanies them” (1997, 2). Joan’s laughter seems to be a sign of resignation implying, “That’s how it is. Can you believe that?” With each lost farm, it’s as if a piece of their heritage has flown away.
Ferrell explored similar themes in her article on tobacco farmers’ narratives in Kentucky. “The third [tellable narrative] focuses on tobacco farming as heritage—a label that, as heritage scholars have argued, ushers cultural practices and practitioners into the past, refiguring them in an attempt to replace lost economic value” (Ferrell 2012, 135). In the Lofthouses’ story of lost farms and businesses, they clearly illustrate the lost economic value through the farms and businesses that go under. But, as has been clearly stated, in the case of the farms, there was often an increase in economic value when land was sold for a high profit and then developed. Providence’s economy has expanded immensely because of the loss of land and livelihood. In this case, the narrators are compensating for loss of agricultural family identity. Ferrell continues, “According to Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, heritage ‘depends on display to give dying economies and dead sites a second life as exhibitions of themselves’ (1998, 7)” (2012, 138). Through their stories, their pasts and way of life that they knew as children rejuvenate as narrator connects with audience.

I cannot ignore the fact that “meaning in the oral telling of a local story emerges through the active processing of a narrative: the teller directs the story rhetorically to a particular audience, and the listener makes the story personally relevant by juxtaposing it with his or her own experience” (Webber and Mullen 2011, 214). My narrators demonstrate an understanding of this process. I was the audience for these stories, a twenty-something-year-old master’s student from the east coast. In most cases we shared a common religious background, but our cultural backgrounds were dissimilar. I did not understand their historical contexts, so I could not effectively “juxtapose” their stories “with [my] own experience.” By making observations about the state of “kids these days”
and their grandchildren, they were making observations about me and my generation. Although I value hard work, coming from Utah pioneer stock myself, I have never worked on a farm and have only picked berries recreationally. I do not know how their lives were because I never experienced that time or those circumstances. They had to help me understand that I did not fully understand, and by making comparisons on their own, they allowed me to fully process their narratives. Additionally, their nostalgia allowed me to understand what I lacked and needed to learn.

The second most common theme was the loss of the material surroundings which included tools, but more importantly, the food. The way of life of the commercial and subsistence farmer is inseparable from the implements used in day-to-day labor. In interviews, the objects used in work were always mentioned and often played a primary role in the memories of labor and play. The narratives of the older workers include horse-drawn plows and a great deal more hand work and span into memories of when their fathers bought their first tractors. This span shows the changes in the surrounding area, the combination of rural and modern. Shayne Mathews remembers the progression of technology at his family’s farm. They originally used a hand plow as well as a horse drawn-plow, and they did not buy a tractor until about 1952, he thinks. There was resistance to change by his grandfather who, when bailers came out said, “That’s the worst thing you could ever do.” Even then he had a desire to hold onto traditional methods of farming. Michael Hoberman gives a similar example from the Sawmill Valley: as using scythes went out of fashion, one man indicated that, “Today nobody knows how to swing a scythe snathe,’ indicating that recent generations have lost a vital connection to the demanding standards of the past and consequently no longer are
capable of appreciating their ancestors’ sacrifices” (2000, 34). Shayne’s grandfather likely would have had a similar reaction to the current farming technology and lack of farming altogether. Another connection between this reaction and my own research is an attitude of Lex Baer, who despairs over the lack of knowledge of people today on how to treat fruit and discern ripeness.

We’d pick peaches by color and we always picked the top of the first because the sun would hit the top of the tree and you could look. You didn’t pinch it to see if it’s ripe. You know, sometimes people go to the grocery store, and “Oh, I wonder how this is. Is it solid?” Now, that’s the worst thing you can do to fruit. And if you’re very careful it’s ok, but I’ve seen some, I just do it just for the heck of it, watch people go get ahold of something and squeeze it, and if you do, there’s going to be a mark there. And it was easy [to tell]. When it turned a golden yellow color that meant it was ready. (2013)

Debra Reid argues that “objects have merit as more than illustrations for a narrative” and “stand as equals to textual sources” (2012, 61). As such the objects that people long for as both mementos and to be used again serve as something more than a “reactionary disease” or insignificant items “that our fevered, uncritical nostalgia compels us to preserve” (Cashman 2006, 137-138). Ray Cashman contends that in the case study he presents on a community in Northern Ireland, the collections of these material pieces of the past are used “to register and critically evaluate what is perceived as a staggering amount of change over the past century” (2006, 137). In the case of my study, the oral tradition suggests that they miss the quality of the products they used to work with and the food they used to produce.

As Harvey Mohr explained the make and functionality of the picker boxes, he displayed some of this nostalgia.

And they had the wooden cups, the real thin little cups with the wire rim around the top. I don’t if you’ve seen those. AM: I haven't seen those, uh-uh.
HM: Really neat. I wished I still had some. (2013)

Ike Christensen also gave me a tour of the house in Providence where he grew up, in which his daughter now lives, and the barn on the property. As we toured, he pointed out every detail of its use and former layout, the way his father had arranged it. The crowning moment of the tour was the one hundred year old apple press which his family had used for generations.

Not only do they miss the context and the tools of their former agricultural identities, but also the fresh fruit that went with it. “I just crave good strawberries,” said Harvey Mohr. “You go to the store and they're absolutely tasteless. Green and hard. You've got to cut the centers of them out. They're just horrible.” He has been meaning to put some plants into his garden, but work gets in the way. But even the garden varieties today do not compare to what he’s used to.

They've got a lot of new varieties, and I've tasted some of them. The Weeks out in Paradise still grow berries, and I've tasted a few of those. And they're ok. It seemed like the Casugas and Marshalls were just unbeatable. And I don't know whatever happened to them. Oh, they were just so flavorful and they were just red all the way through the center. And they'd just almost go purple when they were really ripe. Oh, they were just delicious. (2013)

In this case, he does not long for his own berry farm, but wants only the thing that represents his farm life. Almost everyone mentioned the change in the fruit, echoing Janalee Thomas’ “sweet memories of wonderful berries, and fruit; the most beautiful and fresh you could ever get anywhere!” (2013), and generally describing berries today as flavorless and dry. In Ferrell’s discussion of tobacco farmers, she explains that the idea of tradition among them seems to be linked to economic factors, this occupation being their livelihood, but she was surprised to find a lack of emotional connection to the crop (2012, 139-141). In the Providence farmers’ case, there is a nostalgic tie to the quality of their
product, the thing that reminds them of a different time. The varying ideas between the
two types of farmers may be connected to the use of the crops.

The third most apparent theme of nostalgia is connected to missing the days when
life was easier, meaning less complicated, showing a sense of loss while they have gained
so much technologically and economically. Their children are more successful than my
informants’ parents, but the next generation does not comprehend the connection to
community and nature that existed in the 1950s in Providence as in the following
examples from Shayne Mathews and Elizabeth Brown.

I think I grew up in the best time that there was to grow up. I really do. I think, you
know, us kids, we could--our parents didn't have to worry about us if we were
out goofing around at night or something like that. There wasn't all the trouble in
the world, in this area that there is now. It was just a good time to grow up. We
didn't have a lot of hardships. We had to work, but, you know medicine was good.
Transportation was good, so I just feel like it was the best time in the history that
I've read and known about. (2013)

In his opinion, his children and grandchildren have a “tougher world to grow up
in….Back then, it was kind of an innocent time and people could just enjoy life and
growin’ up and getting into a little mischief, but, you know, not--You didn't have to worry
about the serious things that were--So I think it was a great time. I think I grew up in the
best time.” He clearly links the simplicity to being able to enjoy leisure time fully. They
were unafraid of any dangers and had the trust of their parents. These stories stand as
sharp contrast to the trends today of tight adult supervision and regulation that Bronner
described even just a generation after Shayne’s childhood (1988, 35).

Elizabeth Brown adds:

I feel sorry for the kids nowadays. I just don't think they have--Oh, I don't know
what to say--the fun. I don't think they have the fun. There's so much out there for
kids, that I don't know how they survive. And all this mechanical stuff. You
know, I don't own a computer. I don't want one. I barely use my cell phone
because you're not supposed to talk on them while you’re driving on them anyway. (2013)

She also blames the lack of creative, free play on the more complicated world kids live in now. They have an abundance of activities and distractions she did not herself have to navigate, and feel like life is cluttered. Another woman explained that her great-grandchildren no longer know how to work and have fun because of technological changes, emphasizing again that they played outside much of the time (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013). Once more, we see how the arena for cultural transmission has changed. Ferrell found similar instances in her work. “The heritage narrative also expresses nostalgia for the tobacco culture of the more recent past—not a specific era, but a period earlier in the life of the narrator and prior to particular technological and social changes” (2012, 134). Family and work are not as central to their lives, and their cultural tutors are technology and activities instead.

This instance of nostalgia is directly connected to the final instance I identified, loss of land and space. Although many of the stories were about playing with family and friends at home and in town, the setting for some were out in nature in the surrounding caves, rivers, streams, and rocks where children could freely play. Janalee Thomas expressed her nostalgia over her trips up Saddle Rock, “a landmark in Providence,” named for

the two humps of the peak, [which] look like a horse saddle….As young girls (age fifteen, sixteen, seventeen) we even hiked up there with back packs and stay the night. It's pretty rocky, but doable, and we loved the view from there down on to Providence, which back then was a lot of fields. It has grown so much in the thirty plus years since I have been gone, that the “bench” isn't the same playground we knew as kids. (2013) (See fig. 17)
As farmers one by one sold those fields they used to look down upon, we see the need for money, so essential in the process of transmission discussed earlier, creeping in and disrupting people’s relationship to their land, an ironic shift considering the purpose of working the land is to earn income.

Part of their identity as fruit pickers and farm hands was the land just as the forests are essential to loggers’ identity or the school a part of teachers’ identity. Occupational folklore is not tied only to the group and what they do, but the context in which they do it, which includes a sense of place as well as the material objects associated with the profession. Just as Harvey Mohr lamented that he had not saved the berry cups they used to use, the altered landscape represents a loss of identity and experience. Land allowed them to be farmers and gardeners, to produce their crop and be self-reliant.

Figure 17. Hills above the south bench on and around which my informants played.
The change to the landscape of Providence is an ongoing discussion as the population continues to grow even today. Lex Baer lamented that, because of the town’s small size, he used to know everyone in Providence (see fig. 18), but now there are three LDS stakes. In a recent Providence oral history project, organized by the Providence History Committee in conjunction with the Fife Folklore Archives, one of the topics was water and growth. The interviewees talk about some of their memories of working on fruit farms, gardens, and the sadness over loss of acreage. One man moved up to the bench for the view, but with the changes in zoning and the growth, even that view is being spoiled as rows and rows of houses are being built on smaller and smaller lots.

Figure 18. “Providence, Utah views, 1960s” Photo by The Herald Journal (Utah State University Special Collections)
In their article on environmental clashes and about how folklorists can go about interpreting them, Rikoon and Albee discuss disputes that arise over the way land is used, arguing that the disputes are not founded on an ecological vs. a cultural solution but rather, two opposing cultural viewpoints. They go into depth about a particular clash between government and locals in the Ozarks, but they do cite clashes between farmers and developers in their theoretical analysis. The issue at hand in Providence is not between farmers and developers because the farmers (or their children) themselves decided to sell the land, to allow it to move into a new realm of existence as part of the city. The conflict arises from those that see the land changing too much. “We do not want to deny a nature-in-itself, but rather to emphasize a nature-as-experience, a nature filtered through our optical nerves, our "senses," our often romantic expectations, our ideas of the appropriate and of right and wrong” (Rikoon and Albee 1998, 203) Based on the layout of the homes in Providence, and the amount of acreage they sit upon, the original intent of developers seems to have been to capitalize on the view, making the neighborhoods a mix of rural and urban (see fig. 19). Rikoon and Albee continue:

And all of this filtering results in a construction of the environment that is best termed as "mimetic," in the sense that a nature that pleases us does so because it imitates our souls (or gives the comforting illusion of doing so) and a nature that horrifies us similarly reflects our personal, social, and cultural horrors of disruptions in the proper order of things. (1998, 203)

As the yard sizes decrease, the illusion of space quaintness disappears, so the residents find themselves facing the nature of land use as a reflection not of the quaint rural suburb, but as a crowded metropolis, which acts as one of those “disruptions in the proper order of things.”
In the end, as Boyd Lofthouse said, “You can take the kid to the farm, but you can’t take the farming out of the kid” (Lofthouse and Lofthouse 2013). Although they are no longer in the contexts where they learned the skills and values that shaped their characters and world views, those things are still a part of their identities, shaping the way they view changes in technology, play, and even the landscape. Through the nostalgia in their narratives, each person is establishing the “tellability” of their life history. As Ferrell explains,

In their classic 1967 study William Labov and Joshua Waletzky [1967] describe “evaluation” as necessary to successful personal narratives: the narrator’s evaluative moves work to explain why he or she finds the story reportable in a particular context. That is, they establish tellability. And within the context of conversation analysis, Harvey Sacks [1995, 776] argues that listeners monitor whether a narrative has value—whether it is “‘tellable’ in the sense of ‘worth telling.’”

When I asked if she tells these stories to her children and grandchildren, one woman said, “Yes, I tell them how hard we worked” (Interview with a former picker, March 4, 2013).
Because the same type of transmission she learned her values from no longer exists, she must rely on narrative. When each person emphasizes the alterations to society, technology and landscape, they are essentially saying, “Listen to me. This is something you don’t know which I can share. These things are important to me and should be to you.” The details the narrator dwells on are a clue to that which they hold most dear in their memories.

That has been the main purpose of this thesis: to preserve and understand the experiences of a neighborhood long vanished, to find an outlet for a slice of Providence history that is overlooked as a line in a chapter. As I talked with them in their homes and places of business, I could see the bench as it used to be, feel the dirt in the air, and smell the sun on the fruit trees. A part of their memories are preserved there and in the material surroundings they found themselves in at the time, which mostly exist now as imaginary space which they must shape and guide their listener through. They pass that on to the next generation, and through their narratives, we too understand and become part of the context in which these teens formed their identities as they lived, ate, loved, and worked.
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Informant: Wesley Bitters

Interviewer: Amy C. Maxwell

Date: January 28, 2013

Location: This interview was conducted in Providence, Utah in the home in which he grew up. The history of the house is explained in the text below. He and his wife now reside there.

Notes: This was the first of a series of interviews conducted for this thesis. We discuss general information about fruit farming as Wes observed his father and grandfather doing it, planting, taking care of the plants, picking procedures, varieties of berries, selling, and general home life. He concentrated mostly on berry production: strawberries, raspberries, and dewberries, though he does talk briefly about apple production on their farm. Wes also explains the role of fruit farming in Providence and its connection to the Northern Utah region including the factors leading to the Providence bench being such a successful fruit producing area. He lists some of the other farmers on the bench at the time his father was farming. He also explains the divisions of labor between genders in the berry patches and tells stories about the pickers that worked for his parents. Later interviews with other informants involved more information about apple production, irrigation, pranks, and family life which are discussed in the preceding thesis. As a note about transcription, I have not included every word of agreement, interjection or encouragement made by me, the interviewer, as the abundance of them made the information given by Wes choppy and more difficult to read.

Transcription:

0:00:00.0 WB: [Before the interview began, I had explained my research questions and goal for the project at that point, so he started “with an overview”] Providence was well known through the early histories, through the 30s, 40s, 50s, as the fruit location in Northern Utah for berries. Peaches primarily were in Brigham City, but Cache Valley and especially the bench area—this bench area which is up here [which] you can see as you came into town—that was predominantly berry area and the reason why that was berry area was because it's so rocky, and that whole bench there, I guess was sediment that came out of the canyons at some time and so forth, and so that whole area, you can't put a shovel in that ground without hitting a rock. And because of that, the water drained properly and because of the water draining properly, that produced a good berry or a good plant. That's the legend. I'm not a horticulturist, though. But mainly that's what I've been told.

0:01:14.8 WB: Strawberries, dewberries, and raspberries were the prominent crops that were raised; they got their start probably in the late 30s and had their heyday in during the late 40s and the 50s was when the major production was taking place.
ACM: And this is just your parents or were there a number of friends in the area, or—?

WB: There was probably six farmers who basically produced these crops: Newbolds—Did you want to hear some names?

ACM: Ok

WB: Newbolds, Mohrs, Mathews, Bitters, Gessel, Morris. They were probably the major producers. The first I ever remember, I must have been—I talk to a lot of people about how far back in time can you remember. Most of my students when I was teaching school, I asked them, "How far back can you remember?" And everybody had a hard time remembering [interrupted]

BB: Hello.

WB: This is my wife, Bonnie

ACM: Hi. Good to meet you.

WB: Had a hard time—[to his wife] If you want to listen to TV you need to go upstairs since she's recording.

BB: Alright.

WB: [5 second pause] I forgot what I was saying.

ACM: Oh, in school you would ask to see how far—

WB: Oh, you can't remember earlier than 4 years of age. I don't know if that's true. I've met a couple of my students that says, "Oh, I can remember something happening at two." Well, I don't know, but anyway, what I remember—my first memory I remember about berry picking is my grandfather Hyrum and his son, Melvin, my father, they planted five acres of strawberries out in Millville and Millville is six miles to the south and they planted them in an area which is very similar to the Prov bench, it was very rocky and so forth, and seemed to be something they were looking for. And they grew strawberries out there for probably about five years. And that's the first time I ever remember us being in the strawberry business.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Then I don't know what happened. Why we moved, but they bought a farm up on the bench, and it was 5, 10, 15 acres that they bought. And during the late 30s through the 40s they were growing raspberries, strawberries and dewberries. Probably 5 acres of strawberries. Probably an acre of raspberries and probably half an acre of dewberries.

ACM: What are dewberries?
WB: Dewberries is a black berry. Oh, how can I explain it? You probably have it in North Carolina, the blackberries on a bush and so forth. You pick it off and it makes blackberry jam and so forth. It's a little, long, barrel-type berry.

ACM: Ok. So it's like blackberries but they're longer and thinner?

WB: Yeah, longer. Uh-huh. And uh, dewberries are what we raised and dewberries grow on a bush on the ground, very, very bad to pick. If you pick dewberries, pickers had to wear gloves which just had their fingertips exposed because the bush would just rip you apart. But, um, probably the most expensive fruit we raised because it was so difficult to raise, no one wanted to raise them. But people just loved them for preserves.

ACM: Yeah.

0:05:23.8 WB: So, that started in the 40s, and from about '46 through '60, these strawberries—the strawberries have to be rotated.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: The strawberry plant only lasts 3 to 4 years and then the strength goes out of it, so Dad would rotate, or all the farmers would rotate all their strawberry patches. So at one time you would have 4 or 5 strawberry patches in rotation.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: The first year straw—they wouldn't produce the first year. They would produce the second, third, and fourth year. By the time the fourth year came up, you plowed them up and started another one, so you had four fields of four rotations of fruit that you would work from.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: Um. My parents would hire probably 14 to 24 pickers. We would pick them up around town at 5:30 in the morning and they would pick fruit from 6:00 to about 11, 11:30 depending if we got the crop picked. Dad would have so many rows that needed to be picked each day in the rotation.

0:06:39.2 ACM: Who was it who was picking mostly?

WB: What's that?

ACM: Who was is who was picking?

WB: Mostly local girls in the town.

ACM: Ok.
WB: Who basically wanted a job. Dad and Mom would not hire anybody until they were at least 12, and most of the pickers stayed with us until they graduated high school.

0:07:01.6 [Rustling as he pulls out history books with pictures of grandparents and farmland] If you've—these are kind of history books that we wrote.

ACM: Oh, cool!

WB: But anyway, this is my grandpa and my grandmother, and they're in the strawberry patch there, so you can see what it looks like. And all the pickers had a picker.

ACM: Ok.

WB: And this picker was just a box with four legs on it and you slip the strawberry crate into that box, and then you'd go down the row. Keep on moving your picker. You had to have it above the crop so it wouldn't mash the crop, so you just kept on moving. You'd walk down in between two rows. And what you should have done was pick have the row here and half the row here [pointing to either side]. But some pickers would go ahead and pick on the other side. So, we had some fights going on among the girls. That they'd come back and say, [mimicking an angry teenage girl voice] "She stole my berries! She's picked them on my side of the row!" And so we just said, "Hey, you've got to keep up. Try to keep up as you go down and then that doesn't happen."

ACM: Oh, right.

WB: [Pointed to each picture as he describes it] So that's an old picture of grandma and grandpa in the strawberry patch and it shows a picker there. And then here's a picture here, this is probably the first year we're starting to pick this berry crop because it's not as full as this one over here. And then of course, that the case and that's what they berries look like.

0:08:25.1 Dad and Mom were very particular about their fruit picking. You had to pick the fruit with the stem on it. If you didn't, you didn't work any longer for us. You had to not bruise the berry. You couldn't throw them in the case; you had to actually set them in the case. They were really—really sticklers. And the kids who picked for us, uh, and everybody in town said "Well, if you're gonna picker for Bitters, you know, it's tougher than you've picked for the Mohrs, or the—

ACM: Oh, really?

WB: Newbolds and so forth because Dad was so particular about his crop. And Dad didn't feel you ought to cheat anybody, so I don't know if you ever went into the grocery store and saw the cases of berries.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: You can see the rims of the cups.
ACM: Uh-huh.

WB: Sticking up.

ACM: Yeah, ok.

WB: Dad says, "Your case is not full" or "You're not going to get paid for that case unless I can't see the rims of the cups." And so he made sure the berries were all—people got value for what they got. But you couldn't stack the berries higher than these points here [referring to picture] because we stuck the cases on top of each other and you don't want to mash the berries.

ACM: Right. And so would he be particular about how the berries were picked because he wanted a quality product, or what was the—?

WB: Well, the berries deteriorate rapidly. Within two hours you'll see all bruises. And if you take—if you don't pick the berry with the stem, the berry will dry out.

ACM: Oh, ok. I didn't know that.

WB: It will shrivel up. And so you keep the stem in, you keep the moisture in the berry, and you don't squeeze or maul the berry too much because it will cause bruises. And you know as well as anyone if you go to a grocery store and you see a fruit with bruises on it—

ACM: Right.

WB: —you pass it up and go to something else.

ACM: Ok. That makes sense.

WB: Uh [10 second pause]

0:10:31.8 How we sold our berries were basically about 9:00 after about 1/3 of the crop was picked, Dad would gather up those cases that were picked and we would go to Logan. And at that time, during the 40s and the 50s there was no Macey's or Smith's and so forth.

ACM: Uh-huh.

WB: These were all little neighborhood stores. Every 6 blocks, you had a little neighborhood store. And if you drive through Logan, you can see some of them still today. They've been turned into houses and so forth. You can tell from the outside that they used to be a little neighborhood grocery.

ACM: How can you tell? Is it—?

WB: Well, I'll tell were a couple is if you want to look at them.
ACM: Ok.

WB: Do you know River Heights?

ACM: Uh-huh. Just a little bit. I've been through there.

WB: Ok. If you come through River Heights, as you get down the hill just before the river.

ACM: Uh-huh.

WB: Just before you get down the hill, there's a brick house on the right hand side.

ACM: Ok.

WB: It's two-story.

ACM: Ok.

WB: No windows at the bottom and I can't remember seeing any windows at the top.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: That's an old grocery store. And in what happened—I don't know what happened, but they went ahead and ripped up all the bottom and put the house up on the top. Well, when we went there, selling berries, only the bottom was showing.

ACM: Ok. [Continues with prompts of agreement throughout section]

WB: It wasn't the top. If you go down over the hill and turn left, you'll got either a block or two blocks on your right, you'll see a little white house. That was a grocery store also.

ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: Over by [Utah State] campus, as you go up the 4th South, it's probably about 4th South and about 450 North, there's another building halfway into the block you can tell looks like a store or was a store. That was also one of those country stores. Now those—there's a couple down on the West End, but I'd have a hard time describing them. If you really want to see them to take a picture or something, you'll have to call me and I'll have to go look them up and give you the address. But there's probably 5 or 6 of those still in existence. Oh! In providence here, the city offices on the right hand of the street, that used to by Theurer's store, and that was one of our stores.

So anyway, at 9:00 we'd put all the berries in the back of the pick-up and we'd go to town and we would stop at a rotation of probably 10 to 12 stores. Now, of course, the day before, Dad was say, "What do you think? Do you need berries tomorrow?" And they'd all say, "No. We don't even know if we can sell what we've got." So, it was a difficult task. So, Dad really was a peddler. He would take over and hopefully be able to get rid of
all the berries that he had and then he would come back and 50% of the business was orders. People from as far as Weston, Idaho, Paradise, Utah, Brigham City, Ogden, knew our fruit, so every year they would call and saw, "Look, we'd like to have 10 cases" or something like that. People out of Weston would come down and they would buy for their town. So, a person would come down and buy 24 cases and take it back to the town. And so half of our crop every year was on orders and the others had to be peddled and so Dad would go ahead and take the first crop over in the morning and peddle them. And then come back and see how many were left and if there was more than what we had orders for that day, he would go back to town and make a rotation of other stores he hadn't hit earlier that morning.

ACM: Ok.

0:14:38.2 WB: Probably in the beginning of the 50s more and more people started raising fruit. Some of these people I mentioned earlier didn't get started with Dad. I think Dad was probably one of the first. Well, he was probably one of the top 3 that started early. But, people saw, I suppose the successes Dad was having. And you can't get us wrong. I don't think my mom and dad made over 6 or 7,000 dollars a year."

ACM: Well, how was that—? I don't know the—

WB: Well, I don't know, but I always thought—People called us poor. I didn't think we were poor. We had everything we needed. But compared to people living in Logan, people living in Ogden, yeah, we were poor! You know, we spent every dime we made. We didn't have any money to go on vacations or anything. We lived day to day.

ACM: Right.

WB: But anyway, that was how it was in all of Providence. But anyway, so the other residential that had land on the bench, they said, "Hey, if Mel can do it, we can do it," and so starting in the 50s we started getting an oversupply of berries.

ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: And I think berries, I could be wrong in this, I can't remember that well, but I think a case of berries probably in the 40's started out for $2.50 and by the time we got into the early 60's, they were probably $10 a case. Maybe $10 is too many. Maybe $8 a case. Dewberries were 12, they were expensive. Anyway, that's um—Because of the overabundance in supply, the stores could haggle. And so all of a sudden, people were selling berries for $2 a case. Well, you couldn't pay a picker. You couldn't pay for fertilizer and, uh, developing your crop for two dollars a case, and so all the farmers formed what was called the Cache Valley Berry Association. And they agreed that any berries they had surplus. That meant that any berries that was not going to be sold to a person who had ordered them, they would not take them to the store. They would take them to a location over in town, uh, and this location was in back of the Capitol Theater, on the back side of the Capitol Theater, that parking lot, and that's where the Cache Valley Berry Association was. So all the farmers, after the day's picking, those that they
didn't have orders for, they would take them over to the Association. Then if any stores wanted berries, they would come down to the Berry Association or have the Berry Association deliver the berries to the store. That way, we controlled price. And we'd say, "Ok. I'm sorry. There's no more haggling, the price of the berries is $2.75 a case. If you want 'em, fine. If you don't, that's fine with us, but we're not going to go ahead and sell our fruit cheaper than what it's worth."

ACM: Did you keep it lower than the market price? Was it about—Was it the same as other places in the US?

WB: We kept it at what we thought market price should be.

ACM: Oh, ok.

0:18:20.3 Now, all of this was before the California berries started coming in.

ACM: Ok.

WB: When the California berries started coming in here in the 60s, our market went to pot because people—except our loyal customers. Dad dropped his production in the 60s probably down to a fourth. Because all he was doing was satisfying customer orders, and he realized he couldn't compete with the stores anymore because the stores were getting the California berries in. And people who just wanted a strawberry was not going to be willing to pay what Dad wanted for his fruit compared with what California was selling on the market. And then our customers, the people who were loyal to us, Dad had a strawberry which basically was called—This strawberry right here [flipping book open] was called a Linda Delicious.

ACM: Ok. Oh, wait. Was it called Lemon Delicious?

WB: No, it was called Lindon Delicious. No, Linda! L-I—How do you spell Linda?

ACM: L-I-N-D-A?

WB: Yeah, it was called Linda Delicious.

ACM: OK.

WB: And, no one had a berry like that. And that berry had tremendous sugar content, really sweet, and really good size. About that size there [motions with fingers]. No one had them and the California berries—The California berries tasted like straw. And I'm not being facetious. That was really how it was. California berries today are probably twice as good, four times as good as they were in the 60s.

ACM: Oh, really! Ok.

WB: Dad cut his crop down and all he did was pick for our customers and he didn't worry about the stores anymore. But at that time in the 60s, he realized the fruit game was going
to pot because California, everybody was just killing us with their prices. In the late 40s, he's decided to switch over to apples.

ACM: Ok.

WB: So in the late 40s he planted that apple orchard. 10 acres of apples. And it takes 10 years to mature apples and so he had to just hold on through the 50s and early 60s until the apple crop started coming in. And then that was the apples.

ACM: Well, then that was really good that he switched over so early. Because, did he realize that the berries were declining in the 40s?

WB: I don't think he realized it at that time. I think he was just very fortunate. He just felt he needed—

0:20:56.4 WB: The berry crop runs from the first of June through middle of the July and so if you're raising berries, what are you going to do the rest of the year? And Dad had to go out find another job. He had to work at Thycoll or he had to work in town, or work somewhere else to supplement his living. Because the berry crop on that six week-basis wouldn't support the family. And so, he said, "What am I going to do to supplement my income?" and he said, "Oh! Maybe apples would do it," so he planted the apples. It was a survival thing and also to extend his work period during the year did he do it for.

0:21:41.9 Raspberries.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: Raspberries were a good crop. Raspberries were hard to pick. Do you ever pick raspberries?

ACM: Once, yes.

WB: Ok. Tedious.

ACM: Yes!

WB: And, even more so than strawberries, Dad could only find four or five people he could trust to pick raspberries because when you took that raspberry off the vine, it has a core, so you pull that raspberry off the core and if you go ahead and squeeze too hard, you squash the berry, and it breaks apart. So you had to go ahead and be very careful, put it in the bucket and when you emptied the bucket into the case—You picked raspberries with a bucket hanging around your neck. So the raspberry pickers were just us little kids, my mother, my grandmother and maybe two or three selective girls which we felt could do the job.

ACM: I actually talked to Janalee; she used to be Gale, now she's, oh, what's her last name?
WB: Andrea Gale?

ACM: Oh, I don't know. Her name's Janalee, and she has another sister, but she said she got to pick raspberries one year, a few years, so she was one of the select—she was pretty proud of that [laughs]

WB: [Laughs] and, uh, I only remember—I think the pickers on strawberries only got 25 cents a case. That was [laughs] that were not pretty much money, but back in those days, strawberry pickers would go ahead and make a good living. Especially young girls that'd buy their school clothes and so forth, and that's what they were doing.

My cousin, Geraldine Fuhriman, she set a record of one day of picking 28 cases of strawberries.

ACM: Wow.

WB: And that was unknown of because most pickers would put 8, 9, or 10. And Geraldine picked 28.

ACM: Oh my goodness.

WB: And mother was just flabbergasted. But mother could only pick 24. She was really upset that her niece had beat her picking strawberries one day.

0:24:01.3 But anyway, raspberries was probably our worst area because they were so hard to pick and people really weren't willing to pay for raspberries. You had to go ahead and give—I don't remember the prices, it's been too long. Raspberries were triple the cost of strawberries. The dewberries, people were willing to pay for dewberries because no one raised them, so you could get $8, $10 for dewberries, but again I think Mother and Dad picked probably 80% of the dewberries because we just couldn't find anyone to pick them because they were just so difficult and yet they felt, "Well, if there's a market for them—" So we only picked 10 cases a day, that's maybe 100 bucks. That's worthwhile for us.

0:25:28.7 I remember when—I must have been really young, somewhere between 5 and 6. Let's see, the war ended in '45, so must have been '44, '45, I remember going up on the hill with my grandpa, and we sat there and watched some pickers one day and they were picking raspberries. And I said, "Grandpa, they're pretty old pickers." And he said, "They're German soldiers, and I don't know how this ever happened and I haven't really checked it out, but somehow we must have brought Germans over to America during the War as prisoners of war. Or maybe they were Germans living in America who we didn't trust like we didn't trust the Japanese.

ACM: Oh, maybe.

WB: And we put them in camps.

ACM: Right.
WB: Well anyway, we had about 12 or 15 German POWs picking raspberries. I thought that was really interesting.

ACM: This was on your parents' farm?

WB: No, this was on my Dad's grandpa's farm up on the hill.

0:26:29.3 Ok. One thing about strawberries is, if an early frost comes, you can lose your crop. And I remember many nights during the 40s and the 50s, Dad gathered up logs and gathering up materials that burned really, really hot like tar paper and so forth, and making pile around our strawberry patches. And then if we knew a frost was going to come, he went up there at probably about 3:00 in the morning; he started lighting these fires to try to keep the fields warm so the strawberries wouldn't be frozen. And if the strawberry patches froze, that was it; they didn't have any income for the year.

ACM: Oh, wow.

WB: And so it was a tough thing. Um. Later on, I don't know when this was. It was about [10 second pause] About probably in the mid-50s, farmers were so concerned that my uncle went ahead and built a contraption, looked like this [drawing the contraption], and had legs on it and stood about 5 feet off the ground and then it had a big metal cylinder made out of tin that looked like an egg up here. And it had a hole in the top. And he'd go ahead and take some substance—I don't know whether it was oil, rags, or something—and would light it, and this heat would build up here, go up here out of the top and then fan out over like that. And they built about 4 of those to go ahead and put around the dewberries and strawberries to try to defeat the frost. I don't think they worked very well because, even though they stood up there for 5 or 6 or 7 years, I think they only used them 1 or 2 years. And they found out that the bonfires were probably just as good as that contraption they built.

Ok. Now, unless you can come up with some other questions, I've basically drained my mind about the berry business.

0:29:05.6 ACM: Ok. Well, I can ask you some questions, then.

WB: Sure.

ACM: I guess, just a follow up to that one. So nowadays they put the white canvas-looking things over berries. Did you ever put anything over the berries or was it always just—?

WB: No, I don't remember Dad ever putting anything on top of the berries. And I know he—I know I heard people talking about that and Dad talking about that and there was some reason why he didn't want to do that and I think it was because of the amount of water that would go ahead and form under the plastic, that it had some kind of reaction with the plant. That's hearsay, but I'm thinking that's what it was.
ACM: Ok. I guess, then, so how did the business end? Because it's not in existence anymore, right?

WB: No.

ACM: Did they get out of it and go somewhere else, or when they passed away they—?

WB: No, California just—California was able to produce fruit in such quantity and quality that there was no longer—They just ran us out of business.

ACM: Ok. What did they do afterwards? Did they—

WB: My parents?

ACM: Yeah.

WB: Switch over to the apples.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Yeah.

ACM: And that's still—Was that—

WB: Well, the apple orchards are gone too now because of the housing. Yeah. Basically all farmers in the 70s, 80s, maybe 80s—In the 80s, most of these farmers, the Mohrs, the Bitters, the—all that I mentioned were all getting into their 70s

ACM: Ok.

WB: And couldn't farm any longer and so they sold their land to live, to survive, to pay for until they died. And every fruit growing area that was in this heyday back in the 50s and 60s are now all homes.

ACM: Wow.

WB: And if you go down to Center Street and you keep on going up into the new housing area, all those houses up on the hill, those were all orchards and berries.

ACM: Oh, wow.

WB: If you go up this hill here and go up on the bench. Everything on both sides of the road until you get to the mountains was all apples, strawberries, peaches, pears. The whole thing!

ACM: Was that just beautiful? What did it look like? Or was it—

WB: Just a giant— [flipping pages of the book] just fields like this. That's what it all looked like and normally it was in a rotation kind of thing, so you'd have ten acres of
orchard and you'd maybe have five acres of strawberries or ground crops, another orchard, other ground crops, so it's just a patch quilt of the whole benches both the south bench and the north bench. South bench, north bench [indicating on photograph]

0:32:43.9 ACM: I get a little turned around here with north and south. Well, and so where did—it seems like in these days, U-pick berry farms are pretty popular. Isn't Weeks berry farm down in Paradise—are n't they a U-pick farm?

WB: Yeah, Weeks—I don't know when Weeks got started. I think Weeks just said, "Hey, you know, I think there's a—" Total speculation.

ACM: Yeah.

WB: I just think that Weeks said later on in the 90s or 2000s whenever they started—and maybe they've been growing fruit all along with just a minor thing, but they just said, "Hey, people want to go back to basics. I think people will buy fruit again."

ACM: Yeah.

WB: And they've turned out pretty well. I buy raspberries from them. I think their raspberries are great. I just thought that it was a minimum market and there's enough people in Cache Valley who are willing to go ahead and pay a higher amount of money for fruit which is—Everybody's going back to the organic.

ACM: Yeah, they are.

WB: You know, they want the fresh thing. They want what they had in the old days, and I think Weeks just hit on something and they've been very, very successful with it. That's what it was like 100 fold back in the 50s.

ACM: Really?

WB: That was just—that was it.

0:34:25.9 ACM: Ok. Well, and I had a question too with—Is there any connection to people going up and getting berries, like, up in the Canyon or foraging for berries? Is there any connection to growing berries as a farmer and that kind?

WB: No, I think what they are picking—they're picking chokecherries.

ACM: Ok.

WB: And chokecherries has been a pioneer thing from the time the pioneers entered the valley and it's just continued on. Oh! Grandma used to go, "Let's go do that!" And it's just continued on down throughout time. And, oh, the only thing I could say is maybe in the 30s people said, "Isn't there something since people want to go into the mountains to get berries, why can't we raise something here so they don't have to go to the mountains." I don't know. Maybe there had been a rotation of some sort. I don't know.
ACM: Yeah. Could have been. That's what my mom said.

WB: That's something for you to go ahead and investigate in your thesis.

ACM: [Laughs] Yeah.

WB: Your mom used to live here?

ACM: Well, she lived in Salt Lake and so she was talking about how—She was like, "I bet everyone who wanted berries would just go and get a start and bring it down." But you wouldn't have gotten raspberry or strawberry starts from the Canyon. It would have been from somewhere else, right?

WB: No, well, you could have got one from the Canyon, but I have never seen, and I used to camp a lot, and I've never seen a strawberry plant in the Canyon that would produce more than 4 or 5 berries.

ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: And maybe some people did. Maybe they brought them down and transplanted them, but I wouldn't know that. But it seems very true, you know. I still have a strawberry patch in my back yard here. I still raise strawberries. I still raise raspberries.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: I still raise—I don't raise dewberries, but I raise blackberries. And I just raise enough to furnish my own needs and make preserves, but

0:36:25.6 ACM: Is there a little bit of nostalgia for you when you're picking them or is it just kind of another—?

WB: No. It was a hard time.

ACM: Yeah?

WB: It wasn't an easy life.

ACM: Really?

WB: I didn't have to pick, but when you first put in a strawberry patch, Dad was very fussy about strawberry patch. You would go up and you'd go ahead and put in your rows and it'd probably be 50 rows in a patch.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: It would probably be 30—about 90 feet, 30 yards long, maybe 50 yards, about half the size of a football field. So anyway, what you would do, you would go ahead and it would be two people planting the strawberries. One person would put in the shovel. The
other person would take that strawberry plant, and it had its roots here [motioning]; it had some leaves up here. You’d put your fingers on that crown.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Right where the difference between the roots and the green started, and you'd put that down and you had to put that crown right at the edge of where the shovel was going to drop the dirt back. That plant couldn't be more than half an inch deep or half an inch high. If it was half an inch deep, I don't know what happened there, but half and inch high it would suffocate because the air got to the roots and you'd kill it.

ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: So it was very tedious planting to go ahead and plant the strawberry patch. And it wasn't done by machine. It was done by two people with a shovel and the other person placing the plants. Then after they were placed, probably about 4 weeks later, the plant had established itself and if the plant hadn't established itself, then we'd have to go back and replant a plant in that place.

ACM: Oh, wow.

WB: These plants were put about 18 inches apart. Then, you had to hoe. Since the plant was put like this underneath the shovel, Dad taught us all you go ahead and put your hoe down on this side. You hoe down this side, very lightly on the top and heavy during the bottom. [Making the motions throughout].

ACM: Ok!

WB: It was tedious! And Dad would hire people to hoe and then he'd fire them because they'd go ahead and hoe across the top and if you hoe across the top, then you would make the roots become—

ACM: Right.

WB: —accessible to the air. It would kill your plant! So Dad was a stickler on how he did his job. Me and my brother, we had to adhere to all these specific rules on this.

ACM: Uh-huh.

0:39:32.8 WB: And then after you'd hoe them—You'd have to hoe them after about 4 weeks. Then after you hoed them, you had to go through and pick off all the blossoms.

ACM: Really?

WB: Because Dad did not want his strawberries to produce fruit the first year because if the plant produced fruit the first year, instead of all the nourishment going into the roots, establishing it for the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th year, you would make a poor crop the 2nd year. And so we had to go through all pluck off all the blossoms.
ACM: Wow.

WB: And you can't tell that from here [shows photo], but this is really rocky soil.

ACM: Ok.

WB: There's a rock every four inches, and so you'd get down on your hands and knees [gets down on his hands and knees to demonstrate]

ACM: [Laughing]

WB: [Table with recorder on it rattling, so unintelligible for 3 seconds] You're clipping off all these blossoms for 8 hours a day until you get the crop done. Until you get that acreage done.

ACM: Oh, ok. Oh, wow.

WB: And then you'd hoe them again. And you would have to hoe them probably four times a year, once before the crop came on, one or two times comes on. You can't hoe them while the crop is on, then you'd have to go and hoe them twice after the crop. And so, very, very, tedious. You're up there. It's hot. I don't—

ACM: [Laughs]

WB: I don't, I don't envy those days. Nah.

ACM: No. [Laughs]

WB: If it was a good life, I enjoyed it. About 10:00 Dad would say, "Hey, let's go fishing." So we'd go up the canyon and fish for a couple hours then come back and go to work again. Dad was very good to us, I mean, he wasn't slaving. He wanted us to work hard. We would work from 6 to 10 and then we'd take off and go fishing for a couple hours, so—

ACM: Yeah.

0:41:15.4 WB: It's just not—after becoming a college professor, I would sooner be a college professor than be a fruit farmer. [Laughs] I got spoiled.

ACM: I never asked you! What did you teach? What were you—?

WB: Business—Hotel, Restaurant and Business management

ACM: Ok. And did you have businesses on the side as well or did you—?

WB: I was in the Hotel/Restaurant business for 15 years before I started teaching. That's how I got involved with that.
ACM: Ok. And was that Utah State or—?
WB: Utah Valley.
ACM: Utah Valley?
WB: Yep.
ACM: Ok! And so when did you move back up here?
WB: My mom got dementia in 2002.
ACM: Oh.
WB: And my brother and I were moving her back and forth to take care of her, and she kept on running away. And the doctor said, “You've got two choices: either you got to keep her in one place or you've got to move her to a rest home.” And my brother and I said, "We'll never put her in a rest home," so I retired early. I retired when I was 62 instead of staying, could have stayed 'til 70, but I retired at 62 and moved back to take care of her and she was in good health. There was nothing wrong with her body, but she—We were only up here for 6 months and she passed away.
ACM: Oh, wow.
WB: And then it was too late to go back to Utah County. I likes Providence, I really do. Utah County was just getting too big and busy. I wanted to get back to a more simple life.
ACM: Mm-hm.
WB: Back to Aggie-ville.
ACM: Yeah! [Laughs]
WB: So I came back and we decided to stay.
ACM: Ok. Yeah, I lived in Provo. I went to BYU for my undergrad. So, it's different down there.
WB: Yeah. When did you graduate down there?
WB: 2008?
ACM: Uh-huh.
WB: Ok.
ACM: So, it's been awhile.
WB: Yeah, we'd already moved up here by then. So you came up here for your masters, huh?

ACM: Uh-huh.

WB: That's good!

ACM: Yeah, it's been good.

WB: Not a Tar heel, huh?

ACM: No. My brother was.

WB: [Laughs]

ACM: [Laughing] No, I'm a fan though. It's good, though.

WB: Your dad from down in that area or did he move back there for work?

ACM: He went there for work.

WB: Oh.

ACM: So he works for the computer—For SAS. I don't—It's a computer company.

WB: Ok.

ACM: So, yeah.

WB: Is he originally from Utah?

ACM: He's from—I don't know where he'd hail from. He kind of grew up—His dad was a professor too, but he did German. But they were in Wisconsin and Idaho, so I guess he'd say he's from Idaho maybe. And Mom's from here.

0:44:11.8 ACM: But, so— Can I ask you, what would you talk about when you were picking and things? Would you just kind of—I don't know. Would you make jokes? Would you tell stories? Would you work in silence?

WB: The story I always tell—there's probably—I was really interested in athletics. Most of my thoughts were thinking about athletics, what I was going to do and so on and so forth, but my grandmother, you saw a picture of her in here [pages of book flipping] It'll help you remember if I see her again....Grandma Eddy, she was my salvation during those days [laughs]. We would be up there from six to—I started work on the farm probably when I was probably eight and worked through until I graduated from high school and went to college. But work was start at six in the morning, and by nine o'clock it was starting to get tough! You know, after three hours, you know. And normally what would happen, we'd have a big breakfast at six, [unreadable] and shredded wheat and
scrambled eggs, bacon, grapefruit if it was available. A lot of fruit. And then we were expected to work right on through until noon. That was pretty hard work in the morning. So around nine o'clock, I would start getting restless, so Grandma would tell me two stories. She's tell me one story on Monday, the other story on Tuesday. The same story she told on Monday, she would tell on Wednesday. The same story she'd tell on Tuesday, she'd tell on Thursday. And Friday we don't know what we were gonna get. The same story, though! The two stories. One story: The Little Train that Could. Do you know the Little Train That Could?

AM: Mm-hm! But how would she tell it?

WB: She'd say, "Wes," you know, "Let me tell you a story about a little train. There was this little train one day. It was a little small train. It lived in this train station. And all he did all day was help move the trains around. Not really hard work, just moving the trains around. And, uh, one day this big locomotive came in and he said. I'm sick. I'm really, really sick. And I-I can't go on my route today. And he said, "Little train, you're gonna do it." And the little train said, "Hey, I'm too little! I can't do it." And the train says, "Well, I don't care if you can do it or not. You've got to do it." So they hook the little train up to this big, big train of toys and he started up and he had to go up this mountain. And he kept on thinking, "I think I can. I think I can. I think I can. Oh, maybe I can't. Oh, I think I can. I think I can." She'd go on [laughs]. She's go on with that for probably a minute! "I think I can. I think I can." I'd go, "Come on, Grandma! Let's get to the end of the story!" And she'd keep on going. And then finally, the little train reached the top, and he's "I knew I could. I knew I could. I knew I could," all the way down the other side. Well, she would lengthen this thing out and this little train story would last probably five minutes. Yeah. She would throw in—Each day she'd maybe throw in some little curves or something different to make sure I was listening in, so there you go. That was the one story. The she says, "Ok, well Wes, what do we learn from that?" [in a tone as if rolling his eyes] "Well, not to give up. You just keep working until it's time to quit." "That's right Wes! Let's get to work." [Laughs]. Oh grandma! And then so basically on the next day, when we'd start slowing down, she'd say, "I'm going to tell you a story today." Oh! Ok." And she says, "This is a story about a rabbit and a turtle." She would say, "There was once this rabbit and he thought he was really smart. And there was this turtle. And he said to himself, "I'm gonna make this turtle really look stupid today. I'm gonna say, "Turtle, I have a race." And so, uh, the turtle says, "Oh, well, I'm not very fast," and the rabbit says—the hare says, "Oh, that's alright, you don't have to be fast, but I'd like to race you." And so they started, and the hare just flew down the road. And about a mile down he couldn't even see the turtle. He said, "Ah! I'm going to take a nap." So he took a nap. Pretty soon the little turtle came by and the hare woke up and he said, "Oh! The turtles here!" you know. Took off again running another mile. Went to sleep again. Same thing happened a couple of times, and finally he didn't wake up. And the little turtle went past, got to the end, and hollered back to the hare, "Hey! I won!" And grandma'd say, "What's the moral of this story?" Again, the same moral!

ACM: [Laughing]
WB: "Don't give up until you get to the end and you're going to beat everybody else. It doesn't matter if you go fast. It doesn't matter that you go slow. You keep going. You don't give up, and you're always going to win the race. Two stories that have stayed with me my whole life in everything I've done. And it's really amazing. It's really—It was probably the philosophy. If I had any success in life, it's probably because of those two stories my grandma'd keep on telling me every day. And my brother, tell him the same thing.

0:50:45.8 And to make things less monotonous, Dad would always bring back soda pop, and candy bars for the pickers at 10:00 to give them kind of a little boost. Like I mentioned, Dad would always take us fishing at noon when it started getting hot in order to soothe out the pain of the work.

ACM: Would he take the pickers too or—?

WB: And good meals.

ACM: Oh, yeah?

WB: We ate good.

ACM: Mm.

WB: And like I mentioned, we had big breakfasts in that morning. At noon, because mom worked—I don't know how Mom did it. She would get up at 5:00 in the morning, cook us all a decent [breakfast], go to the farm where she supervised pickers and picked also from 6 to 12, came home from 12 to 4, she sold the berries here on the front porch to people who had ordered them. And so, at noon it was always sandwiches, a bowl of soup, something like that. But at night, she always had time to go ahead and roast potatoes, vegetables. Most of the vegetables just came out of the garden.

ACM: Wow.

WB: There was beets and green beans and tomatoes and turnips, beets, and then always would have an apple pie or some kind of pie. She loved to make pies.

ACM: And she made them every day?

WB: Huh?

ACM: She would make a pie every day?

WB: Pie about every three days. And on Sunday was a special day: big pot roast and more elaborate. I don't know how she did it. She was phenomenal to work all those many hours and still have time to go ahead and prepare the meals.

ACM: Mm-hm.
WB: But that was life in those days. A little bit of that pioneer stock, I guess.

ACM: Yeah. Was that—?

WB: Any other questions.

0:52:57.3 ACM: Are you from pioneer stock? When did your family settle out here?

WB: My Grandfather—My Great-Grandfather Bitter, he came out of Prussia

ACM: Ok.

WB: Lived in St. Petersburg and he came to the United States in the 1800s and was converted to the Mormon Church in New York and then came to Utah in the late '80s. My mother's side, the Tibbett's, they came in the '60s by wagon train and settled in this area. So both the Bitters and the Tibbett's—Bitters were latter and the Tibbett's were the first. Interesting: my Dad was raised in this house right above us.

ACM: Oh! Just the one right next door?

WB: Right next door.

ACM: Ok.

WB: My mother was raised in that white house in the middle of the block on this side.

ACM: Ok.

WB: They only lived half a block from each other. Mother started picking berries for them.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: [15 second pause] 1940? Yeah, they must have—I might be wrong on my dates if that's—they must have had strawberries, both on the Providence bench and in Millville during the 30s because Mom picked fruit for Dad, for Grandpa. She said he picked for them. That's how she got to know my dad.

ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: That must have been in '38, '39, so they must have had strawberries in both places. But anyway, she met my dad picking fruit. I don't know why—Well, you don't mess around with people at church, I guess. You don't do anything like that; you don't pay attention to them.

ACM: [Laughing] Ok.
WB: Anyway, she said she didn't really get to know my dad until she picked fruit for my grandpa. So that was in about '37, '38. They got married in '40. So anyway, that's kind of interesting. So here's 2 people, only lived half a block, and this is my great-great-grandfather's home.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: And after they got married, my great-grandparents had passed away so it was vacant and so my dad was able to buy this house in 1940 for $650.

ACM: Wow.

WB: And we've owned this property, this whole 10 acres since 1887.

ACM: Wow!

WB: And that's another reason I wanted to come back. Because I thought it was kind of neat. We owned this land—we were the first ever people to own this land, and it would be sad to give it up.

ACM: Yeah.

WB: [Laughs] And so that's the reason I came back, and of course, this house was built in 1904. And it was built by my grandfather for my grandmother's—I've got to get this straight. Built by my grandfather for—Oh, my grandmother's father, and so it's kind of interesting because the house was built by my relatives for my relatives.

ACM: Uh-huh.

WB: One family for the other family. There's a lot of historic value here.

0:57:10.9 ACM: That's really—That's amazing. Do you and your wife have children, then?

WB: We have 7 children.

ACM: Ok. So, they'll hopefully keep it in the family, I hope. I don't know.

WB: Yeah, they would. During my early life when I worked at a hotel/restaurant in New Hampshire. We were in Arkansas. We were in California. We were in London and so our kids have been born—And then Utah county. So our kids have been born all over.

ACM: All over.

WB: And they live all over.

ACM: Yeah.
WB: We had one in New York, one in Florida, one in Escalante, one in Shelley, Idaho, one in Flagstaff, Arizona, and one in Utah County. One stayed in Utah County.

ACM: That seems like my family. All over. Let's see. I don't want to—Are you ok for time?

WB: Sure, I'm fine.

ACM: Ok. I don't want to keep you too long.

WB: I've got—I don't know if you're LDS, but we've got home teachers coming at 5:30, so probably before then.


WB: Ok.

ACM: Ok. Let's see.

WB: Oh, I should have realized. You went to BYU.

ACM: Oh, yeah.

WB: Of course, there are people that go to BYU that are not LDS.


WB: Take your time. And feel free to go ahead and call me. Or come see me again, you know. In writing a thesis, you'll get to a point and you'll say, "Wow. Did I ever ask about that?" I need to know about that.

ACM: Yeah, I might have to do that. But I guess the questions now would be the Cache Valley Berry Association, is that still in existence in any form?

0:58:54.32 WB: No.

ACM: Ok. When did that go out?

WB: I couldn't tell you for sure. But it only lasted—it probably didn't last more than 5 years.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Because it was started—As I said earlier, it was started because the more numerous number of farmers that came into the fruit business basically put a glut on the market. And so we couldn't maintain our price. So we had the Association, but by the time we had that Association and tried to maintain price, it was only a matter of a few years before California killed us anyway.
ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: And people were not willing to go ahead and buy the fruit for what we felt we had to have the price for. And just like Weeks, I talk to people here about Weeks and they say, "You know, you get your fruit from Weeks? Oh, no! It's so expensive! I can buy it at the grocery store cheaper than that."

ACM: Oh! Yep.

WB: The problem is the quality you buy in the grocery store does not equal Weeks because it's locally grown and there's numerous factors of why it's better. But when you go ahead and compare price, very few people will pay quality instead of quantity. And that's what happened to the fruit market. People just not willing to pay the price we felt we had to have for the fruit.

ACM: Right. And so there was no berry that grew here that didn't grow in California? No corner on the market, no?

WB: Mm-mm. I could be wrong. No. I haven't—I'm prejudiced of course.

ACM: Right [laughs] I don't think I've ever tasted a berry as good as ours from California. Even the berries I'm growing here in my yard are not as the quality. And what happened—Well, ok. There's something else I should tell you. The first strawberry that was raised on the bench was a strawberry that was called Marshall.

ACM: Ok.

WB: And Marshall was like putting a cube of sugar in your mouth with a little bit of strawberry flavor. High, high content of sugar. But, the blossoms would freeze if the temperature went to 32 degrees.

ACM: Wow.

WB: It didn't even have to get to freezing, that plant, that fruit, would freeze. And so every year, the crops would just get wiped out. And another thing about the Marshall, the Marshall is very, very tender. And when you picked it, after about 1 hour, you'd see bruises all over it, but there was probably no berry better to make jam with or to have strawberry shortcake or something like that than that Marshall berry.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: But because the Marshall was so temperamental because of frost and because of the way you handled it, Dad tried to find a new berry. And he was always research, always sending for plants from all over. And he found a plant in the northwest which they said was tolerant to frost and had a good sugar content and could be handled well, and that was called those Linda Delicious. So he sent forth plants, tried them out, said, "Hey, this is good." And that became the predominant plant then for the bench.
ACM: Really?

WB: After Dad found it, everyone else bought the Linda Delicious because it didn't freeze as bad; it had good content; and about 70%, 80% of the sugar content of a Marshall.

1:03:09.4 Now, down through time, since people, the commercial growers were raising fruit for shipping, you had to take the sugar out, and you have to go ahead and expand the toughness of the berry so it will ship so it looks nice once it gets in the grocery store.

ACM: Right.

WB: So, through time, we've lost flavor and we've got more firmness. Because sometimes you go and bite into a strawberry in a strawberry shortcake or something, it's like crunch! I'm mean, it's really firm. The Linda Delicious and so forth, they weren't like that. They were firm, but, boy, the sugar content was really there.

ACM: That's good.

WB: But, I've been trying to find a berry. Probably the best berry I've found is called an Ozark. It's for sale now. You can buy it from nurseries and so forth. That's probably the closest I can find to a Marshall, but it's—I can't find this Linda Delicious. I don't know what happened to it, maybe a virus. Oh, there's another thing too. Virus started wiping out the strawberry plants and that caused the decline also of strawberries in Providence. And that was probably in the late—well, middle-sixties, I guess that the virus started destroying the plants. Then you've got to find a different plant.

ACM: Right.

WB: And that's the problem. Also, with the raspberries, the raspberries were notorious for getting virus and killing them.

ACM: Mm-hm. Mm-k. That's—

WB: I bounced off the subject. Where were we at?

1:05:02.6 ACM: Oh, we were talking—What did I ask? I don't remember what I asked, but that goes on to my other question was, "Were there other techniques that they had to make better berries? Or certain fertilizing techniques that your Dad or Grandpa swore by? Or—Do you remember?

WB: Well, strawberries require to have a lot of rocky, I mean, a lot of water; they had to have rocky soil for good drainage; strawberries do not like to go ahead and sit in water-logged land. They wanna get the drink and get the water out of there, so that's why the Prov bench was so very good for strawberries is it had good drainage. [10 second pause] Another problem with picking strawberries, you had to rotate your watering. The plants needed a good shot of water about once a week while they were in production. And so you had to water so that—it was a couple of days before you let the pickers in because
you couldn't let the pickers in that field after you had watered for at least two days because it was too muddy.

ACM: Oh, right.

WB: And also, you would kick mud up onto the berries, and you get a muddy berry, you know, unless you wash it, how are you going to go ahead and sell it? He was very, very particular. Also on rainy days. Dad would not let his pickers pick on rainy days because the strawberries would mildew because you would pick the strawberry and put it in the cup and if it was wet, within three or four hours, it would start to mildew. And so that was another problem you had to work with, and you'd hope during the 6 weeks of production, that you wouldn't have rainy weather because that would really cause havoc with your crop.

ACM: Yeah. Um, with the pickers, where were the boys? Were there any boys that would pick or was it mostly—?

1:07:01.7 WB: Very few.

ACM: Really?

WB: Very few.

ACM: Why was that? Did they have other problems—?

WB: Flirting for one thing.

ACM: Oh, really? Ok.

WB: That was probably the major reason. Big feet. You've got to go ahead and stoop down into the row which is no more than four inches [across]. And so the women's feet were more petite. And they could go down middle of the row. So and also, men's hands were bigger. And it was just a flip flop. With strawberries and the berry crops, it was 90% women--It was 100% picking. In the apple picking it was 100% boys.

ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: Because they could climb the ladder. Their hands were bigger to pick the fruit. They could carry the big baskets around which they picked in. It was a miscellaneous thing.

ACM: Ok.

WB: No. Dad would not allow any boys to even consider to pick fruit.

ACM: Wow. And so, but did you get to pick?

WB: Oh, yeah.
ACM: Ok. He made his sons pick.

WB: Yeah, we had to pick. Dad knew that would do what he said [Laughs]. Yeah, we'd heard enough chewing out of pickers that we know how to do it without getting into trouble.

ACM: Well, and one thing that I heard was that your mom used to say, she'd say, "Lift up"--"Make sure you checking under their pantaloons or their bloomers." I don't know. Do you remember her saying that? With the raspberries. She said, "Make sure you look under their skirts" or something like that, so that you could--.

WB: Oh, yeah. The raspberries--That was also the case on the strawberries.

ACM: Was it?

WB: A lot of girls, both on the strawberries and raspberries would only pick what you had in sight. You always had to pick up the leaves in both the raspberries and the strawberries to see what was underneath because a lot of the berries were right there on the ground.

ACM: Yeah.

WB: And that, uh, was very, very important because the berry that was on the ground would only last at least one day after it was ripe; After one day, it would start rotting on the bottom where it touched the ground. And so that was a very critical thing, that each picker--That's why they only picked a half a row because Dad wanted them to pick up all the leaves, look underneath, make sure you picked up those berries on the ground. Because those berries wouldn't last. And if you missed them one day and picked them up--It rotated on a two day, no three day basis. Every three days you picked the patch, so if you missed a berry and it was on the ground the first day, three days later it was rotten on the bottom, so you lost it. Losing berries were critical because that was all money and, no, that was very critical, that they always lift up. Take your time. Don't rush now and just pick what you can see. You've got to go ahead and make sure thoroughly and make sure you picked every ripe berry on that plant before you move to the next one on both sides.

1:10:32.3 WB: Oh, no. I forgot to tell you something else about planting.

ACM: Oh, ok. Sure.

WB: So anyway, as I mentioned, you plant this one row.

ACM: Yeah.

WB: And you took off the blossoms and you went ahead and hoed and so forth, but then in the fall of the year, the strawberry plant gives off runners.

ACM: Ok.
WB: I don't know if you've ever seen that before.

ACM: Mm-mm.

WB: But each plant has children, and each plant will have maybe 8 or 9 children, and the children are long or short. Some children are only this far from the plant [motions 5 in long]. Other children are this far from the plant [indicates 3 feet] because the runner comes out. It's a little stem that comes out and it develops a new plant. The little stem comes out and develops a new plant. Some are short; some are long.

ACM: Ok.

WB: So, you took the long plant. Here's the plant here. You took this long plant and you went ahead and put one here and you put one here [see notes]. And then you cut off all the other children. Then you went to your next plant and you went ahead and planted on here and one over here, so now what you're doing: you're making a second row for the first row. So the next year, instead of just having one row of plants, you've got two row of plants in each row, so primarily, what you're telling your pickers to do is you pick this row and the other person picks that other half a row. So you've both got plants on both sides your picking. The other person has two sets of plants, but you develop that second row of plants in the fall by using the runners off the strawberries.

ACM: Oh! That's cool. I didn't--And so they--Is it like potatoes, so you put them down in the ground and they form their own little roots?

WB: Oh, oh yeah. What you would do, you just take the runner and it had maybe a couple of little roots establishing.

ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: And all you do is you put it over where you wanted you just put a rock on the runner. And it's automatically--It's going to put the roots down anyway. All you've got to do is place that runner where you want it to plant and then cut off the other so they don't interfere.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Basically, what you do also, is in the first year of plants, after you do the first year of pla--After the second year, then there's a lot of more runners that have come out. Then you go down that walking space and any runners in the walking space, you dig out those plants and that's what you use for your new patch.

ACM: Ok.

WB: So after the first year, after you buy your plants for the first year, you don't have to buy again. You're using plants produced from your old plants.

ACM: Alright. Well, how did your dad know all this? And your grandpa?
WB: Oh, I don't know.

ACM: Did they learn it from--?

WB: I don't know how they learned it. They didn't go to school. My dad went to Utah State to become an accountant so he didn't learn it there, and my grandpa--My grandpa probably did. He was a--He was what you would call an entrepreneur. He dabbled in everything. He had turkeys at one time. He had rabbits at one time. He had mink at one time. He had beaver at one time. Chickens. Which just means that he went from one thing to another trying to find the gold mine. He never found it. [Laughs]

ACM: Oh! [Laughs]

WB: But he kept on trying. Sometime in the 30s he must have decided that there was something to gain from going into the fruit business. So, that's-- And how they learned it, I don't know.

ACM: Ok. They just--

WB: But they did.

ACM: They just started doing it.

WB: Yup.

1:14:32.2ACM: Ok! And how--Let's see. What was the other question I had? You mentioned the War. Did that affect the berry growing and the business coming in at all or did it just kind of keep going?

WB: I don't think that--I think if anything the war helped the crop because everything was rationed.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: You weren't getting anything you didn't raise yourself. And I think business was probably very, very good during the 40s because things were so short.

ACM: Right.

WB: And people appreciated getting what they got. I'm sure they weren't very expensive. I don't know what a case of berries during the War would have been, but I doubt it would have been a dollar. And I mean, it's just amazing. I remember going down to Theurer's store down here when I was a boy and getting pop for 5 dollars. Excuse me, for 5 cents. Getting big candy bars for a nickel. And other candy for a penny or 2 pennies. It's incredible!

ACM: [Laughing]
WB: Why can't we have that today!? Huh?

ACM: Oh, I wish!

WB: Oh, man alive! Tootsie. Or--[trying to find name] What just went out of business?

ACM: Hostess.

WB: Twinkies! Twinkies!

ACM: Yeah, Twinkies.

WB: Twinkies were 3 cents.

ACM: Oh my goodness!

WB: It was incredible! That's a good life! [Laughing]


WB: No, no, no! I'm not tired!

ACM: Oh, no! Theurer's, the store. Was it the name of the people?

WB: That's the name of the people that owned it.


ACM: Oh, ok. Oh, wow! That's not even how I expected it to be. So--

WB: And if you go past that right now, the framework's all the same, but it's been changed here. It's now the city offices.

ACM: Ok.

WB: But the building is still there.


1:17:27.3 WB: Ok. It's just a slight picture. You see this was all the orchards. These pictures were taken the time I went on my mission, so these pictures were taken in the early 60s.

ACM: Ok.

WB: And so, you can see that still in the 60s all of the orchards up here on the bench land and where you see spaces between the orchards
ACM: Uh-huh.

WB: That was the fruit crops.

ACM: Ok. That looks different, huh?

WB: Yeah. You wouldn't even recognize it today.

ACM: Yeah. And the Newbolds and the Mohrs and the Mathews and all the other farmers, are their families still in the area? Or have they all moved on?

WB: The only one I can think of is Harvey Mohr.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Harvey Mohr primarily is the same age as I am. And Harvey's dad had his farm just north of ours. And they probably had 10-15-20 acres.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: But Harvey might be about to give you some more information also.

ACM: That would be great.

WB: Their family was more into the peaches, I think, than the strawberries, but they did have some strawberries and maybe some raspberries too. Harvey used to live just right up the street, but I went ahead and looked in the telephone book, and looks to me like Harvey's now moved to Nibley.

ACM: Ok.

WB: So I would give that number a call and say, "Harvey Mohr, did your dad own fruit on the Providence bench?" If he says yes, then you got the right Harvey Mohr

ACM: Ok.

WB: And say, "I need to talk to you."

ACM: Ok.

WB: Wes Bitters said you're an authority on the fruit crops.

ACM: Ok.

WB: [Laughs]

ACM: [Laughs] And he'll say, "Oh, I don't know about that." Great, and so, if that's not him, he may be down the street from you still, but--?
WB: Well, where he used to live is if you go down the street right here which is 4th South. You go down one block. There's a big brick home on the right in the middle of the block.

ACM: Ok.

WB: That's where Harvey used to live.

ACM: Ok.

WB: And he lived there two years ago, but the telephone book doesn't say a Harvey Mohr lives there. It doesn't give anybody living there, but someone lives there.

ACM: Huh. Ok.

WB: Maybe his kids bought it. I don't know.

ACM: Maybe.

WB: I'm sure if you went buy and knocked on that door, if it's not Mohr's living there, then they know where Harvey is.

ACM: Ok. So, I'll call first and if that doesn't work, I can try to track him down.

1:20:24.6 ACM: I guess my last question is--Maybe last. I always say that and then it never is.

WB: Ok.

ACM: Well, So Bear Lake was really famous for its raspberries. So, was there competition between here and Bear Lake?

WB: Bear Lake always had the reputation of having better berries.

ACM: Ok.

WB: And fruit crops basically are based upon weather. Raspberries like cool weather. They do not like hot weather. Here in Cache Valley, by the time our raspberries started coming on, it's July. And at noon in July, raspberries don't like, and that's why the Bear River raspberries have such a good reputation. It's a colder valley. And raspberries thrive in that colder weather.

ACM: Ok.

WB: The other reason why our crops did well not only because of the well-drainage, there was something about the Prov bench. Even though we got frost some years, and even though we got wiped out, there was something about Prov bench. It was not as severe for frost as other parts of the valley or other parts of the northern state.
ACM: Ok. Interesting.

WB: And, so that was interesting. Now, our apples--Dad stopped raising his apples, I think I said, probably in the early 80s. But, our apples were just fantastic. They were crisp. High sugar content, and again, they said that the reason those apples were so well is because of the drainage and because of the climate we have. Our apples were always much better than anyone else's around. Now, Zollingers still raise apples out in River Heights.

ACM: Ok.

WB: If you get the double delicious and the double yellow delicious apples from them, you'll find it's very--has a sweet taste, has a snap when you bite into it. Much different from when you go to the grocery store and buy one from Washington. There was just something about our apples. We had people in Salt Lake and Ogden always call and say, do you still have your apples because we can't find anything like what your dad had.

ACM: Aw. Ok.

WB: It's just something about this weather, this location that produced it.

ACM: Mm-hm.

WB: Same thing with peaches in Brigham City. There's just something about crops thrive in certain areas. Bear Lake had their raspberries. We had our strawberries and dewberries. We had our apples here. Brigham City has their peaches. There's just something about location, weather climate and so forth that produces superior fruit.

ACM: Ok. I didn't realize how dramatically the climate changed from--I mean, it's just a little bit, but from here to there to--.

WB: Well, what'd you think the difference between Orem and here?

ACM: Well, it's definitely--

WB: I mean Provo.

ACM: It's colder up here.

1:24:01.4 See, when I lived in Orem--When I moved to Orem in 1979, Orem was totally apple orchards. And I said, "Hey, Dad." I says, "We're in apple country. He says, "You bring up an apple and taste against mine," and it was--The sugar content, the snap was not even recognizable.

ACM: Really?

WB: Yeah. Because temperature.
WB: Apples grow best in cold weather. Just like that raspberry. They love cold weather. You know, not like what we've got now, but as they develop they like a cold, cold weather so it takes longer to develop the sugar. In Utah County it's a good apple, but what happens, it gets hot and when it gets hot, it develops that sugar rapidly and so you develop your sugar content down there in about 3 weeks, 4 weeks. Here it takes 6 to 8 weeks because of the difference in temperature between the 2 valleys. That's what produces the flavor, the sugar content.

ACM: Ok. And you knows all this from just talking to you Dad and--

WB: Growing up with it.

ACM: Growing up with it? Ok.

WB: Growing up with.

ACM: That's really cool.

ACM: Ok. Here's the last question. Maybe.

WB: No it isn't, but it's ok!

ACM: [Laughs] Maybe! So, my whole interest in this was sparked--And I think it's really interesting to talk to you because I wonder--Well, I'll talk you what it is first, but I worked at the Library of Congress this summer just for an internship.

WB: DC?

ACM: Uh-huh. In DC. Mm-hm. And there was a picture of girls picking blackberries. Well, they said they were blackberries, it could have been dewberries. I don't know. But--

WB: Were they on the ground or were they on a bush?

ACM: They were [pause]--I think they were on a--Well, they were low to the ground. And it was a small bush.

WB: It would have been dewberries.

ACM: Dewberries? And there were a few pictures of them and it was in the 1940s I think, maybe. And so, it was really interesting because I, first of all, didn't realize that--I didn't know that there were so many berries during that time, and, second of all, because the caption said, "Youth pick--" I think they said, "Blackberries in Cache Valley. No migrant labor needed here. And it was just really interesting that he made sure to say there wasn't any migrant labor that they used here. That it was all local labor. So I don't know. Was that a big deal in--during that time?
WB: I don't think that was a big deal.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Big deal because there was--of, uh--What is the word I want? [3 second pause] Prejudice or anything.

ACM: Yeah.

WB: It was just that we had all the labor we needed. Here. We had a teenage workforce who needed to work, who wanted to work. And so if a migrant worker came in and the farmer had the choice of hiring a migrant worker or hiring a youth in his own town for the job, he was going to hire the youth.

ACM: Ok.

WB: And then he was going to pay them the same anyway. And so he would have been more inclined--I don't remember any migrant workers in Northern Utah in my youth.

ACM: Ok.

WB: I don't remember any at all. And then the thing is, we were so poor, and we were all farmers except for Logan had 13,000 people as I was growing up. And they were shop workers and university workers, and everybody else in the valley were farmers. We never got anyone in Logan to work for us.

ACM: Really?

WB: They wouldn't work! I mean, they were city girls. They didn't have to work. Their dads were bankers and store owners. Their dads were college professors. They didn't have to work, but the majority of the kids were basically farm kids. That's who we would have hired anyway.

[ Takes the dog to the door ]

ACM: [ Laughing about dog ]

WB: I think that not needing migration workers was because we just had--I mean back then every family--except mine. My mother had nine miscarriages.

ACM: Wow.

WB: Not that she didn't want to have children. Every family had large families.

ACM: Yeah.

WB: And man, you had a large family, you had to support them, so the kids, if they weren't working on the farm, they were expected to be working somewhere else.
1:29:09.0 ACM: That makes sense. Oh, I didn't ask, how many brothers and sisters do you have? Or had?

WB: Oh, I only had one.

ACM: You have one. Ok.

WB: Just a brother. Yeah, and [5 second pause]-- Yeah, you know, you could call Art. He lives in Centreville, but he'd be happy to talk to you on the telephone if there are some other questions you want to ask to add his viewpoint of.

ACM: Sure. Yeah, and I go down to Salt Lake to see my grandparents.

WB: Yeah, and he'd be happy to go ahead and--

ACM: Ok.

WB: [From the other room as he looks for Art's number and address] He's four years younger than me. He's probably more knowledgeable on the apple--

ACM: Ah, right.

WB: Apple production than on the fruit, but still, he might remember some things that I had forgotten, or-- It-- [long pause, paper shuffling]

I can't think of any other kids that are still in the area that were sons of fruit farmers.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Except Harvey.

ACM: Yeah. [Papers shuffling] Do you--

WB: But Harvey might know some because I moved away in--[Papers shuffling] I moved away in '65 after I graduated from college, and never really came back until 2000. 2002.

ACM: Do you know--?

WB: So I've lost track of a lot people.

ACM: Do you know if there's someone who picked for your parents for a long time who still lives in the area?

WB: Yeah. One of our good pickers was [10 second pause] Brown, and she just lives just two blocks south of me here.

ACM: Oh, ok! Is that Elizabeth Brown?

WB: Huh?
ACM: Elizabeth Brown?
WB: Yeah.
ACM: Ok.
WB: You got her name?
ACM: Yeah. I got her number from--
WB: You talked to her already?
ACM: No, I haven't talked to her yet. We are going to--
WB: Ok. No, yeah, Elizabeth Brown was one of our stalwarts.
ACM: Ok.
WB: Let me see if there's any others I can remember that would be in the area. Liz Brown. [5 second pause] Liz is probably the one that would remember most. We had a lot of our cousins working for us. Geraldine. She's died. Diane. She's died. Anne Marie. She's in Arizona. Liz Brown is that same age group.
ACM: Yeah.
WB: That was the heyday. So Liz Brown can go ahead and give you the names of those girls who were the all-stars, you might say because they picked during the glory years of our existence. But, no, Liz would be a good one--
ACM: Ok. Great. Then I'll make sure to--
WB: --to go talk to.
ACM: --go talk to her. Great. I think that was all the questions that I had while we were talking and then I'll probably think of other ones as I'm going through my notes.
WB: Yeah, if you need to come over again, don't hesitate. Or if you want to call me on the telephone just for a quick couple answers or questions, don't hesitate, no.
1:33:40.2 I'm going to go ahead and give you some information that would be helpful.
ACM: Ok. I appreciate it.
WB: How long are you going to try to knock it out in?
ACM: Well, I'm supposed to get it done by May.
WB: By May?
ACM: Yeah, so it should be--So I was hoping to get my--talk to people in the next few weeks, like the next month and then write it over the next month and then revise it, but--So we'll see.

WB: Yeah. To give you another perspective, if I'm the first one you've talked to, of course, I think Harvey would be important to talk to because we were in the same time period, so that would be good.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Liz would give you a perspective from the pickers. And then sure Liz could give you a couple other names but I just don't recall right now. It would be good to hear both sides of the story, [Laughing] both from the ownership and also from the slave labor at the bottom.

ACM: [Laughing]

WB: Yeah, but, um--

ACM: I hope this isn't an indecent question. Your mom, did she have--was she sick or have Parkinson's or-- Because one of the girls described--Or one lady I talked to said her just being shaky when she was picking and things. I don't know if that was just her memory or--?

WB: That was just a normal problem. Mom had very, very good health except for her miscarriages. And she died with Alzheimer’s.

ACM: Ok.

WB: But, she didn't get severed until she was 90. She died at 94. So, no. I never--I never knew of Mom having tremors.

ACM: Ok.

WB: I think it was just she didn't like the cold.

ACM: Oh, ok.

WB: I can remember her shaking her hands if it was a dew morning with the moisture and so forth, but maybe some people saw that, but it wasn't anything that I knew was a problem.

ACM: Ok. Well, that was a young girl's perspective on it, so I just wanted to see what your--I didn't want to misrepresent who she was at all, so--That's cool.

WB: Yep.

ACM: Alright. Well, if you think of anything else, let me know. I don't know.
WB: Well, if I remember any other people--I'm trying to think of some other pickers, but [3 second pause] I don't know.

ACM: Mm-hm. Well, and then another thing would be if you remember other stories or songs or jokes or things that you guys had during while you were picking and things, that would be interesting to hear.

WB: Go ahead and put your telephone number down so I can--


WB: I keep on erasing my telephone, so I lose it.

ACM: Ok. Can you read that ok?

WB: Yep. That's fine!

ACM: Ok. Great! Alright. Thank you so much! Is there anything I can do? I was--I brought my snow shovel just in case you hadn't been shoveled out yet, but it looks like you're ok, but--

WB: Oh, I'm fine.

ACM: Ok.

WB: I'm fine.

ACM: Well, if you think of anything.

WB: Thank you for your consideration.

ACM: I'm just really, really appreciate your time and the refreshments. That was great.

WB: Ok. Well, tell me when you get it published and where it is so I can look at it.

ACM: I will.

WB: [Laughs]

ACM: Hopefully it will be good and you'll like it.

WB: [Laughs]

ACM: [Laughing] I may bring you things and say, "Is this right? Is this right?"

WB: You graduated--You graduated in Folklore?

ACM: I graduated in Anthropology from BYU.
WB: Oh, Anthropology!

ACM: And I'm in Folklore now.

WB: Oh!

ACM: So--

WB: My son down at Flagstaff University or down at the University of Arizona, Flagstaff is studying Anthropology as a master's.

ACM: Oh, really! Is he doing archaeology or is he doing sociocultural?

WB: Archaeology.

ACM: Ok. Ok.

WB: He likes to go out and dig.

ACM: Uh-huh.

WB: Yeah.

ACM: I never did dig. [Laughs]

WB: [Laughs] Now you can come over in May and I'll let you dig in my strawberry patch here. [Laughs]

ACM: [Laughing] That might be fun, actually. We could do that.

WB: Let me--Just one minute here.

ACM: Ok. Sure. [WB leaves the room. ACM packing things up]

1:38:28.6 ACM: [Gasps]

WB: The main purpose of growing strawberries is to make jam.

ACM: Oh my goodness!

WB: That was the main purpose of raising them because that what 90% of them was used for.

ACM: Yeah. Ok.

WB: So I'll give you some of my raspberry rhubarb jam.

ACM: Thank you! This looks wonderful!
WB: [Laughs] Yeah, that's if you--Now I probably should give you straight raspberry--or straight strawberry but they're not the same strawberries, so--

ACM: Ok. It's not the same.

WB: This is the better jam with rhubarb. You ever had rhubarb?

ACM: I love rhubarb!

WB: Ah! You're going to love that jam!

ACM: This is going to be great. I'm so excited. Thank you so much.

WB: You're welcome.

ACM: This is great. Alright. Yeah. Thank you. I guess I'll get out of your hair.

WB: Yeah. Well, the very best to you.

ACM: Thank you. Same to you.

WB: And keep in touch and--

ACM: Ok. I will.

WB: I'll give you a call if I remember any other people or any fun things that you need to know.

ACM: Ok. Oh, I guess while I'm thinking about it, so the people that would buy it in--buy your strawberries and berries in Ogden and Salt Lake, were they growers or were they--

WB: Oh, no, no.

ACM: So not growers.

WB: All private individuals

ACM: Ok, so it wasn't grocery stores or anything. For jams and things?

WB: We seldom sold any berries--Well, outside of Cache Valley, no berries to stores.

ACM: Ok. Alright.

WB: Only in Cache Valley.

ACM: Ok.

WB: Yeah.
ACM: Cool.

WB: Yeah, all orders outside of Cache Valley were private owners, for people.

ACM: Ok. And they were making jams and preserves and everything?

WB: Making jams or having strawberry shortcake parties.

ACM: Oh, fun!

WB: Well, did you get snowed in over there?

ACM: Oh, just a little bit. Here, I'm going to turn this off. It's done.

1:40:20.0

BB: [Wife from other room] Did you tell her our story, Wes?

ACM: Wait. I didn't hear that one!

WB: [Laughs]

BB: You didn't hear our story!? 

WB: No, I didn't tell the story.

BB: [Laughs]

ACM: [Laughs]

BB: When he was in college, he was a member of the fraternity--returned missionary fraternity. And his--Well, he always had a strawberry festival, invite his friends over and ice cream and all this stuff. So, anyway, I had moved up here from Southern Utah, was going with a friend of his. And he invited this kid that I was going with because he played a guitar because they'd have a strawberry festival. Then they'd go outside and play music and dance and sing and whatever.

ACM: Oh, fun!

BB: You know, that part of the party. Anyway, and so I came with this guy and sitting here in the living room and he comes in with his date. He was double dating with another couple. Anyway, and that's when I first met him. And then 2 months later, I went back East for a while. And then I came home and he invited me to a dance. And so we met at the strawberry festival and then it went on from there. So it was right here in this house at the strawberry festival.

ACM: That's fantastic!

BB: That's where I met my husband.
WB: Now, Mom would have a strawberry festival each June for both my friends and Art's friends. All of our friends were invited for an evening of just eating milk and strawberries, strawberry shortcake, strawberries with ice cream. Any way you could think to eat strawberries, she would have it set up here on the lawn--

ACM: Oh, that's fantastic.

WB: So we would be able to enjoy.

BB: And in this room she had everybody along the outside of the room and then she had like 5 chairs back to back down the middle of the room, so she got a surprisingly large amount of people in here. But anyway, that's how we met, at one of these strawberry festivals.

ACM: That's so fun!

BB: I just never dreamed this would be my home!

ACM: Yeah! I bet.

BB: Just coming over here on a date-- [Laughs] So anyway.

ACM: Oh, that's awesome!

WB: She likes little stories like that.

ACM: I do!

WB: Do you remember any other little stories?

BB: Well, they're very humanized stories. I remember when the kids, our children, were older. We had the two boys and then the girl. Anyway, we were up here, and normally Joyce would only pick girls to pick the strawberries, and I think raspberries too. I'm not sure, but at least the strawberries. Well, she decided that because the boys were old enough, about the same age as the girls, that she would give the boys a job and let them, you know, go in and pick too. And she says, "I will never do that again." Because the whole time was a girl picking up the strawberry, and picking the strawberry and throwing it at the boys to get their attention, and she says, "There was more flirting and games going on with throwing strawberries back and forth to get these boys' attention." She says, "I will never mix boys and girls picking strawberries again." [Laughing]

WB: Do you remember any of the girls that picked for Mom?

BB: Oh, my goodness! Everybody's always saying, well, their always saying either they picked strawberries or they were one of her Gleaner girls.

WB: Yeah, and what--?
BB: She taught in Mutual for so long. I don't. I don't.

WB: Liz Brown was the one that--

BB: It went on for many years. I think some of the Eck girls might have. Laurie Eck. I don't know. It was mostly ward girls.

WB: I don't think Laurie did.

BB: No? Are they too young? They might be too young. But whenever people would come and see Joyce, or see her anywhere, "I picked strawberries with her!" And so it was a lot of generations.

WB: You've got to be in your 70s to be in the heyday with the pickers.

BB: Well, she still had people picking--no, I guess not. Well, when you and I were married.

WB: The heyday was when I was in high school.

BB: So, they just handled it themselves after we got married in the later years.

WB: The crops tapered off [Not completely true since others picked after]

ACM: Ah, that's cool.

BB: So, there's just 2 little stories that I remember. That's the only ones that I remember.

ACM: Would they do--Were there community berry festivals too or was it your--Where'd your mom get that idea from.

WB: I don't remember Providence having Berry Days. You know a lot of places have berry days. But I don't remember Providence having one.

ACM: Ok.

BB: No, not specifically geared to strawberries.

ACM: Mm-hm. Ok. I guess, yeah, because there's the Trout and Berry Days in Paradise.

BB: Uh-huh.

ACM: Has that been going on a long time? Do you remember?

WB: Probably when Weeks started.

ACM: Oh, ok. So--
WB: And Weeks might have been in existence when we were doing strawberries back in our day, but if so, they only catered to the south end of the valley.

ACM: Ok.

WB: And they probably didn't have a big enough market to go even to Logan. If they had Hyrum and Wellsville, Paradise and if they were growing fruit back in the 40s and the 50s, they probably were only growing fruit for a small market. It wasn't like Providence where we produced for the whole valley.

ACM: Ok. That makes sense.

WB: But you might want to contact them and see what they say.

ACM: Yeah, they might--I think on their website, it might have even been the 80s.

WB: The problem is if you talk about the valley, you have to cover every inch.

ACM: I do! I really do. Ay! Oh my goodness!

WB: [Laughs]

ACM: Well, if you think of any fun stories, let me know.

BB: Ok. Ok. Yeah, those are the only 2 that I can think of.

ACM: Yeah. Well, thank you!

WB: You're welcome!

BB: Thanks! Nice to meet you! Good luck to you.

ACM: Have fun with your home teachers. [Laughs]

WB: [Laughs] Alrighty!

ACM: Alright, bye.

WB: Have a nice evening.

ACM: Thanks, you too.

1:46:07.0 [Shutting off recorder]