

Interview with
THOMAS BUTLER ROBINSON

December 28, 1968

**VOICES OF REMEMBRANCE FOUNDATION
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

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THOMAS BUTLER ROBINSON

Thomas Butler Robinson was interviewed on December 28, 1968 at the Cooper Rest Haven in St. George, Washington County, Utah by Fielding H. Harris, a representative of Voices of Remembrance Foundation. He related his personal history of living in various parts of Utah, Nevada and California.

FH: Would you please give your [full] name?

TR: [My name is] Thomas Butler Robinson

FH: [What is] your birth date?

TR: [I was born] July [27], 1881.

FH: [Where were] you born?

TR: [I was born in] Paragonah [Iron County] Utah.

FH: What was your father's name?

TR: [His name was] James Coupe Robinson.

FH: How do you spell his [middle] name?

TR: [It is spelled] C-O-O-P. [C-O-U-P-E]

FH: [What was] your mother's [full] name?

TR: [Her name was] Alveretta [Farozine] (Butler) Robinson.

FH: Do you remember anything from your early life?

TR: My mother was exactly like my father in handling the family. I never saw nor heard of a family handled just like ours. We were never told to do anything. For an example, when I went in the field to plow with my older brother [James Coupe Robinson, Jr.] and father, I was given a team and told the plow was mine. I was given a piece [of land] to plow. We had a salty plow. It was the first salty plow in Paragonah. When I was ten years old, my father said, ""Tom", if you [want] to go off fishing and hunting, you better give the old horses a five gallon can of oats each three times a day." That was a lot of grain. Those old horses — they knew what it meant. They ate every kernel of it.

I worked in the fields with my [younger] brother Jesse [Skeen Robinson], he was my shadow all of my life. We plowed fifteen acres of ground without my father knowing how much or how little we plowed. That was our quota before we went fishing. That was all we did, plow those fifteen acres of ground. During the time we plowed, my father had a brother [who] was a farmer. He was a young man, but was twenty years older than I was. My father's land and his land came together end-ways. He lived a block past where we lived in Paragonah.

The first day of plowing, my uncle went to my father and said, "James, I wouldn't have that boy plow an acre of my ground for any price." "Why?" he said. "He has not gone over two acres and a half and that is more than 99% of them ever plowed." The old horses were full of grain and wanted to go and we knew how to plow [so] we let them go. That was a salty plow that ran on wheels. The first day we went around the piece [of land] we were to plow and it wasn't turning very much on short corners. He asked how we were getting along. I said, "Pretty well, but we can't put that plow in and take it out of the ground because it is too damn heavy. Two of us can not do it." He said, "Run around the corner and wheel it in." That was my first experience. We plowed those fifteen acres in about three days. Those old horses were fat, great big fat suckers. They knew we were [boys] and they didn't need driving; they just went along and plowed. My father went over to his brother's ground before he came to his [and] he could see how both pieces were plowed. The field that we plowed was — are you a farmer?

FH: No.

TR: We didn't cut or cover an inch of the field; it was all plowed. My father stated the dividing lines and his brother came along. [He] said, "I have stepped off fifteen big long steps where you cut and covered. I wouldn't have you plow for no price." That was the end of the complaints about the plowing

We knew how to hook up and harness a team and we knew how to plow. My father never did work like that because he had us boys. I had two brothers, [John Lowe Robinson and James Coupe Robinson, Jr., who] were older than me. He never gave them instructions. He would say, "You fellows are bigger than me and know how it is done. I am not going to tell you how." That was the same with my mother. I had two sisters [Jane (Robinson) Jones and Caroline Farozine (Robinson) Jones] [who] were older than me. They never asked my mother a question about cooking or the housework. They didn't have to because they did it without being told. That was how we were raised in the family and on the farm.

FH: Tell about your [education].

TR: The first college [Branch Normal College] I went to was in Cedar City [Iron County, Utah].

FH: Did you go to grade school in Paragonah?

TR: Yes, I went to grade school in Paragonah. I had two sisters [Bertha Butler Robinson and Alva Retta Robinson] [who] wanted to go to college, but they wanted me to go with them. I went with them and there were four of us. He [my father] said, "I want you children to know that when you go to that school [that] you can go to any and all [emotional] of the schools around the state. [Emotional] All I ask is for you to come home for summer vacation." That was all that was ever said about going to school. [Emotional]

I had three sisters [Bertha Butler, Alva Retta and Jennie Robinson] [who] graduated from the college. I was too smart and didn't go. I would rather go out in the field and plow than to go to school. I was in school when the penmanship teacher changed the writing from slanting to vertical. You don't remember that because it was before your day. The first lesson we had of the vertical writing, the teacher came around to see how we were getting along. There was about eighteen of us [in the class]. He stopped at my desk and said, "'Tom", you don't need to come to penmanship anymore. Your writing is better than anything that we would ever have on that board in vertical writing." That was [when] I first started with college.

I didn't stay long because I fell in love with a nice little gal when I was about fourteen years of age. We went together steady for five years and then we were married.

FH: What was her name?

TR: [Her name was] Alzina "Zina" [Tryphenia] Lamoreaux, L-A-M-O-R-E-A-U-X.

FH: What was her first name?

TR: [It was] "Zina", Z-I-N-A. She was [from] a big family. They had twelve or fourteen [children] in their family. She was a Paragonah girl.

FH: In your early life, did you take a trip with your brothers [John Lowe and James Coupe, Jr.]?

TR: Yes, [the] two brothers [who] were older than me.

FH: Would you like to tell about that trip?

TR: As far as back as I can remember, we had a sheep wagon in the yard [during] the summertime. We didn't take the camp wagon out on the mountain, it was more of a burro trail to follow, no roads. We always had a camp wagon in the yard. The first trip we made [to] the mountains my oldest brother was head of the sheep wagon and the herd. Father said, "If you [boys] want to use that wagon, I want you to take the wagon jack, jack it up and put linseed oil in that bolt that has been [inaudible] to oil the wagon." That is what we did. We were hardly big enough to

drive a team. We oiled every one of the wheels with linseed oil and then we took a brush and brushed the spokes. [Inaudible] We enjoyed [doing] that. Anything that we could do of any consequence, we liked to do without being told. We were never told. Before I was a teenager, my mother always did the gardening. She wouldn't let anybody else mess around with her garden. I said, "Mother, I want to help you with the garden." We gardened together for ten years. She never did say anything to me, but would tell me bedtime stories; stories for [youngsters]. She and I did the gardening for fourteen [people] in the family. That was part of my early life.

FH: You were going to tell about that trip you took with your brothers. Where did you go?

TR: We went up to the mountains where we had a cow ranch. [It was] about eighteen miles from the town. We didn't have the privilege of going fishing every day. We were in the country where they had had a sawmill and they left the stumps when they cleared [the land]. [Inaudible] When I was big enough to [inaudible] a load of hay, I would be down the hill helping haul hay.

FH: Tell about this trip. You went up in the mountains with your brothers.

TR: The fishing trip?

FH: Yes.

TR: My brother [James Coupe, Jr.] had a girlfriend [Ella Evelyn Clark] and we had a couple of sisters in the bunch. We didn't take the females there as partners, pals or sweethearts; we were just one happy family. They would usually take care of the dishes [after] we did the cooking. Sometimes we would get ten or fifteen fish and sometimes we wouldn't get any.

FH: How long would you go for?

TR: We would be gone for about two weeks.

FH: [Did] you camp right up in the mountains on the stream?

TR: Yes, we would camp anywhere. I would haul spare horses. They wouldn't have to be put in the pasture. My first wife ["Zina"] was one of the gals that we managed to pick up in the mountain after we [arrived there]. Her parents [David Albert and Hulda Mariah (Messinger) Lamoreaux] were dairy people. There were twelve of them.

FH: How often did you go up there [to] camp?

TR: [Usually] once a summer.

FH: It sounds like a lot of fun.

TR: We had a lot of fun [and] a lot of nice memories.

FH: Were you active in The Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] when you were growing up?

TR: Yes. I was a deacon for as long as we are supposed to be a deacon and then I was put in as a priest and as an elder. I spent two years or better as a [LDS] missionary in California. I was down there after my wife died [December 24, 1934]. I went back down there to work for a company I worked [at earlier].

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: What [do] you remember about your father?

TR: When I was not old enough to be left alone with the sheep, my father was the herder and I was the [boy]. I went with him until the old estate was divided between us boys. I [went] with some of my brothers who took care of their share of the sheep. After I was twenty-one [years old] and married, my brothers [John Lowe and James Coupe, Jr.] got tired of the sheep business and moved out of Paragonah. My oldest sister [Caroline Farozine] took charge of the business and the herd. She was having a little trouble finding a sheep herder. They [sheep herders] did what they pleased until they found out it was a mistake. She had a little trouble with one of the herders. She told him to do something and he told her he would do what he damned please. She came home and said, ““Tom”, I want to read you a letter from our brother John [Robinson] in Idaho.” He wrote her to have me rent the sheep because he was through messing with them. He only had 300 or 400 of his own and the rest belong to the estate. He said I would take care of them in the very near future and I just as well learn. I took charge of the sheep. I was camp [inaudible]. I had some of the fellows [who] were good herders, but they all thought they knew more than I did [about] the sheep. They soon found out I was running it. [I] never had any trouble with them — only when they told me what to do. I said, “Listen boy, I am taking care of the camp. I am running it. If you can’t herd them the way they should be, I am getting somebody else.” That ended that [inaudible]. When I quit college, I was with the sheep [for] twenty-five years.

FH: [Did] your father teach you this business?

TR: Yes, I followed him when he was herding. After I [was old] enough, I was the [boy] with the herders.

FH: What else do you remember about your father?

TR: There are a lot of things. He was a very exemplary man. He never had any occasion to talk or tell you to do anything. If I was at the herd with him and we would come to a place where I couldn't jump, he would carry me. He would never tell me to wait. He would say, "I will come back and get you." It was about the same while working in the field.

FH: Would he show you what to do and you would do it?

TR: Yes, he would [suggest it] and we would do it.

FH: What do you remember about your mother?

TR: My mother was a very good housekeeper. That was before I knew much about housekeeping. It grew onto my sisters and they knew. [Emotional] They didn't have to be told how to make a bed. They knew a bed shouldn't be left unmade. My mother was a very good cook. My oldest sister [Caroline Farozine] took advantage of the experiences of my mother. She was just like my mother as I was with my dad. She watched how she did it and mother never told her how. Mother got tired [very] easily. She would say, "Let me and the [children] take care of 300 or 400 pounds of peaches. We will put them up. Just forget they are here." Of course, she helped when she was younger, [too]. She didn't have to be told how to put [peaches] up. I never heard my father and my mother speak a cross word to one another nor to us [children]. They told us when we were [young that] we couldn't do anything until we learned how.

FH: Were there twelve children [in your family]?

TR: Yes.

FH: That was a pretty good-size family. Did they all turn out pretty good?

TR: I would like to tell a little story about that. My mother and father always did their talking to one another away from us [children]. One morning, they decided father was getting too old to plant and supervise two farms, a herd of sheep and a herd of cattle. After we had breakfast, father said, "I want you boys to sit and listen. You know we have the sheep herd, two farms and about 125 head of cattle to take care of and I am quitting. I am hurting." One time he was hurt and couldn't do anything for three or four months. He said, "I am going to give the older sons the choice of what they want to do." They spoke up and said they would take the sheep and they did. That left the responsibility of the farms [to] me and my [younger] brother. We took the irrigated farm and the Paragonah field. We [grew] as much grain on the amount of acres that my father put in when we were [boys]. We knew how it was done, but we were too small to sow the seed. The seed had to be broadcast.

FH: Did you do it with your hands?

TR: Yes. We did it with our hands but, we weren't big enough to carry a half-bushel of grain. We figured out how we were going to do it and told our dad. He said, "How are you boys going to get the grain scattered on that ground?" We said, "Don't worry dad, we know how. We planted five acres yesterday; we put the grain in the back of the wagon in sacks." The youngest fellow drove the wagon and I sowed the grain. We [grew] about 1,500 bushels of grain each year. He asked us how much we were putting in, not how much to put in. He asked, "How much are you putting in?" We told him. [When] the old fellow [who] measured the grain at threshing time was through, he called my father over and said, "James, the boys beat your crop pretty [inaudible]." [Laughter] Anything that came on the lot that mother could take care of or have us do, she would see to that. Father never had to put anything inside of the lot. It was always put out where we could get a hold of it.

FH: What did you do while you were growing up just to have fun?

TR: It is getting pretty close to what we did do. [Laughter] The best fun we ever had and the longest — my [younger] brother was a great one to do things. He had rheumatic [fever] when he was a baby [up] until he was able to walk. He had to be turned on a sheet in bed. The old doctor told my mother and father, "I could cure "Jess" [Jesse Skeen Robinson] of his sickness, but his heart is bad. The first experience I ever had for doctoring [was] a [fellow] for rheumatic [fever]." He was so weak and so [inaudible] before he was able to walk. He had to be turned with a sheet. He was about four years younger than me. When he was ready to go to school he said, "Now "Tom", I know as much about school as you do." When he was home and all the [children] were in school he would study. He did know as much about school as I did. When he [was] ready to go to high school, that took money. He told my mother and father one morning, "I don't want you folks [to] furnish any money for me to go to school on." Father had already told the family that they could go to school as long as they wanted and he would pay the bill. The only thing he asked was that we come home for summer vacation. What was the question you asked?

FH: What did you do to have fun?

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

TR: We spent two weeks in the mountains for a little vacation. That satisfied us pretty well. Soon it grew into a job.

FH: Did you ever go to the dances?

TR: I never missed a dance from the time I could hardly walk until now. [Laughter] My first wife ["Zina"] was a very, very good dancer. [I had] to learn before I had nerve to ask her. I asked my older sister [Caroline Farozine] to show me how. She had some old maid friends in town [and] we would go and ask them to

[inaudible]. That was the way we always danced. I remember when we sold the farm that was eight miles from town and we would walk eight miles to the dance. We really had a good time.

FH: [Do] you enjoy music?

TR: Yes, very much. I would stand by the violinist and watch him play for hours and hours. Before I grew up, the violinist died. All of us liked the music. We had to go to the funeral. He had a son that was just like us fellows. He watched his dad play the violin and played under his dad's direction. When his dad died, he took over and we still had a good violinist for dancing.

FH: Have you enjoyed reading?

TR: Very much, but I am a poor reader.

FH: What kind of things do you like to read?

TR: I am reading a book now about when Jacob Hamblin lived. Did you ever read that?

FH: Yes.

TR: It is a nice book. We never read very many novels. We read a lot of books on the winter range after I was grown up. When I was grown, we would take turns reading the [Holy] Bible, *The Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrine and Covenants*. We read through those books two or three times during the winter. We usually had the sheep in [bedded down] somewhere between sundown and dark. Then it was a long evening before morning. We just laid there and read. I herded for my brother [John Lowe] who was six or eight years older than [me]. He didn't like messing around with reading. He would say, "Hell, I will read to myself and you fellows learn to do the same." I said, "Read to yourself." He soon got rid of all of the books. He didn't have any to read. We enjoyed reading. I have enjoyed [reading about] Jacob Hamblin.

FH: Can you tell about your courtship and marriage?

TR: Are you married? [Laughter] My first wife ["Zina?"] lived just one block from the top of the field. Everybody had a few acres in that company field, but my father was fortunate enough to have about eighty acres. He had seen the time when the land was limited in the field so he bought [land] when it was cheap. It was \$200.00 an acre. My wife lived one block from the gate that we opened to go into the field. She was always out when I went by, but she was very shy. I would see her peeking around the corner. It is kind of a hard question for a fellow to ask a girl to go to the dance with him, but she had a sister [Eva Josephine Lamoreaux]

[who] was just two years younger than her. She was a beautiful girl. She went with us wherever we went.

In the mountains, they had about 125 head of cows that they milked in the summer by hand. After I [was] fourteen or fifteen years old, I took a leave to go up and see my girl at that ranch every summer until we were both twenty-one. One night we decided to ask her parents if she could be my wife. It was hard to get them away from everybody so it would be a little more private. One night they left the dance a little early and I was dancing with my wife, girlfriend. She said her mother and dad had gone. I said I would be back after I talked with them. I met the parents' part way home; they were about four big blocks from home. I asked them if they had any objections to me and their daughter being married. I said she is twenty-one [years old] and I am twenty-one [years old] and we are pretty near full grown. [Laughter] That made the old man laugh. That gave him something to laugh over.

FH: Where did you go to live afterwards? Where did you get married?

TR: We [were] married [January 27, 1903] in the St. George Temple.

FH: Where did you go to live?

TR: We went back to Paragonah. My mother had a big house and said, "You may as well live in there. The door is to be shut twenty-four hours a day when you aren't there and they are." We lived in a part of her house until we decided it was best for her, and us too, to get somewhere else. We went to one of the neighbors to see if we could rent a couple of rooms. This woman lived close to the dance hall. By that time, I [had] left the farm, out eight miles from town and came [inaudible]. We lived there until our first baby [Vilda] was born in Paragonah. In those days there were no doctors. We had a very, very good mid-wife. The best one that my mother [had] used for all of her [children]. Her name was [inaudible] Lyman and we always went to her for advice.

When the baby was old enough that the wife dared to be alone with her, we moved out to the farm eight miles from town. I bought a little one-seat buggy. My brothers had some fancy saddle horses they were [using] out at the ranch. I would use them when I drove into the dance. We had a lovely time all to ourselves. At that particular time, the rabbits were [very] bad. We were out there where the sagebrush was as tall as a man's head and as thick as the hair on a dog's back. Our crowd would come out early on a Saturday afternoon. The county was paying \$.025 bounty on a rabbit ear. We would get out there with our clubs and get the rabbits cornered at the wire fence. When we came home we had enough money to pay for our musicians [at] our dance hall and have a little besides. We usually danced about every week. My first wife was a very, very good hand on the dance floor. At home we danced the [inaudible] oil slick. [Laughter]

FH: What was your first child's name?

TR: [Her name was] Vilda, V-I-L-D-A [Robinson]. We had nothing but a mid-wife. Do you want me to keep telling you?

FH: Tell about this child. What happened to her?

TR: She wouldn't nurse and my wife was a good milker. She gave lots [of milk to] nurse. We tried to raise her on the bottle, but she refused the bottle. The old mid-wife suggested we get her a pup. So we got a nice clean little pup and he did the nursing until our baby [was] big enough and she nursed. One of her breasts caked and got sores all over it, so she could only nurse on one breast. In fact, that was the only one [breast] she used for the whole family.

FH: What happened to Vilda?

TR: She went to school as long as she wanted to go to school. She and this [Cyril Orson] Bastian boy got together at school in Cedar [City at the Branch Normal] College. She was pretty young, eighteen years old. I could see by her actions and his actions that if they ever asked to be married, the answer would be yes. Should I go ahead and tell about her marriage?

FH: Go ahead and tell about her.

TR: I will have to tell you part of what happened before. There was [a] very nice young man [who] belonged to a family that had just moved in. He [Cyril Orson] fell dead in love with my daughter and she was old enough to be married. He could see he had to move out or do something else. He had been studying to be an attorney. Without any second thoughts to anybody, he told his girlfriend Vilda, that he was going to Salt Lake [City, Salt Lake County, Utah]. She didn't ask why or how long he was going to be gone or anything. In the course of two or three days, here comes a letter for Vilda asking that she please come to Salt Lake [City]. He said no way of beating around the bush; we may as well be married and live together than to have to follow one another up where we are going. She went and was married up in Salt Lake [City] just a few days after he went [there].

[Cyril Orson and Vilda (Robinson) Bastian were married June 4, 1921 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah.]

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: Was he the same fellow she had been going with?

TR: Yes.

FH: [Did] she [go] to Salt Lake [City to] live?

TR: They [were] married up there. I don't think she [was] married in the [Salt Lake] Temple. We kind of impressed on our [children] that they were Mormons and they ought to live a life that would permit them into the temple to [be] married. A few years later she and her husband went to work in the temple. They would have to have a recommendation to get in.

FH: Then they married in the temple.

TR: Yes, they were married in the temple.

FH: What about the next child?

TR: The next one was a boy and his name was [Thomas] Wendell [Robinson]. He realized that there was no money in the country [area], absolutely no money. He wanted to go to school so damn bad, he was ready to steal. I had been to Salt Lake [City] and I bought a Ford pickup. It was just at strawberry time. He wanted to know if he couldn't [haul] berries with that pickup. I said, "Yes, but I want you to sign papers for another [truck]. I can wait for a few days to get another car." After we came back from Salt Lake [City], a fellow bought the pickup. They [Vilda and Cyril Orson] made arrangements to go Salt Lake [City] right quick to get married. I don't know if they had business with one another or not, but they went to Salt Lake [City] and were married. In due time, they went to the temple.

FH: Now, what did Wendell do to get to school?

TR: Let's see, damned if I know.

FH: Did he go to school?

TR: Yes, he went to school and was working for an attorney in Salt Lake [City] at the same time.

FH: Did he become a doctor?

TR: No. He wanted to be a surveyor. He learned [inaudible] of the law. He [was] married [inaudible].

FH: Who did Wendell marry?

TR: He said, "No women for me." He had a few dollars and aimed to be a dentist when he got through school. He went to school in Los Angeles [California]. He didn't have any girlfriends. Hell no, he wouldn't have a thing to do with them. He went to Los Angeles to the dental school. I guess there was never a man in the world that paid more attention to the young fellows than he did. He went there with a new one-seat car and looked around for a place to board. It was a week or ten days before he [was] located. There was a widow woman there [who] had lost

her husband. In the very near future, her son wanted to be a man with men. He told his mother, "Mother, it is just too damn bad a woman ain't a woman or else I should be a woman because I just can't live without being with one." Wendell said they slept together and they had room in the big house. The [fellow's] mother said, "When Wendell needs room to study and sleep in, you just get your own room." Hell, he never had his own room; he just bunked with Wendell.

Every night after school and on Saturdays, he went hunting rabbits and this [fellow] was right at his heels all the time. He had a .20 gauge shotgun of mine and a .30-30 rifle. They would hunt as long as there was daylight and then they would go home. They didn't pretend to take their kill home. I will be damned if I can remember just how they got married.

FH: He married this widow?

TR: No. No, oh no. At any rate —

FH: [Did] he finish his dental [education] in Los Angeles?

TR: — he finished dental school right there. That widow woman wouldn't let him pay one damn single penny towards his keep there nor any of his expenses. "Anything you need or want, I will buy it. That is why I wanted you here," she said. [And] she did. He didn't have very fancy clothes, but they were good for school clothes. He liked to doll up every once in awhile. He quit and went to work. He took his car and hauled berries from [the] Dixie [area] to Los Angeles. [He] made two or three trips and [then] one of the neighbors bought the car. He could see what my son was doing with the car and the berries. He was clearing \$150.00 to \$200.00 every trip. You never saw him around home without a hose in his hand washing that car off. [Inaudible] boys just liked to be there with him.

I told my family I was going to get married.

FH: Was this after you lost your wife?

TR: Yes. My oldest sister [Caroline Farozine] said, "You better get your ditties [diapers] off first." I was twenty-one [years old] and she was twenty-six or seven [years old].

FH: She wanted to herd the sheep with you.

TR: I said, "I know you have all [of] the load you can carry." She said, "I wouldn't have come here for any amount of money and take the money you have to have for your family." He [Thomas Wendell] herded sheep for awhile. Finally, he got enough money so he thought he could get married. He called me and said, "Dad, I think I will get married now." I said, "Hell, I am going to get married day after tomorrow." [Laughter] I hadn't told anybody. My girlfriend and my parents were

the only ones that knew. I [took] the white-topped buggy and went to Dixie [St. George]. It took us two days to get to Dixie.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: [Did] Wendell go to school there?

TR: Yes. He was quite a hand to save money. He had money enough to buy part of the tools he needed. I never did ask him how much money it took, but this young fellow in St. Louis, Missouri that was just finishing his dental school said he had \$1,000.00 worth of tools in his chest. He said, "Money is no object."

FH: Wendell must have had to have quite a bit then.

TR: The widow woman furnished him with board and room.

FH: He just paid for his schooling.

TR: [And] some of the clothes he bought. She would get out of patience if he wanted to spend a little money. If he had to spend some money, he had to get away from her before she would know what he was going to do. He [was] married.

FH: Who did Wendell marry?

TR: He married a St. George girl. Let's see, what the hell is her name? He had the equipment to set up an office.

[Thomas Wendell and Mariam (Ahlstrom) Robinson were married June 2, 1939 in San Bernardino, San Bernardino County, California.]

FH: Did he set up his office in Hemet, California?

TR: Yes, in Hemet, California. He told the fellows when they started, "I want what I want and I want it now." He said, "I want you to build me a house all under the same roof that will have room for three dentists and a nurse. The old carpenters built him a house. I don't know a thing about what it cost. He never tells anybody anything.

FH: Is he all established in Hemet?

TR: Yes. Did you want Wendell's history?

FH: We have had it now. Who is the next child?

TR: He is LaVell [Messinger Robinson]. That isn't half of Wendell's life.

FH: [Then] tell more about Wendell.

TR: I was married to my first wife and it was just a few weeks before he [was] married.

FH: You mean your second wife [Genevieve].

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

TR: It was one or two years after I married that he was married. He and his wife were dead in love with each other, I think, since they were born. They went to the St. George Temple and were married.

[LaVell Messinger and Orpha (Alger) Robinson were married October 6, 1927 in the St. George Temple, Washington County, Utah.]

FH: That was LaVell?

TR: Yes, LaVell.

FH: Where did LaVell go to live?

TR: I had more farm [land] than I could handle. I told LaVell that if he wanted to farm to go ahead and I would do something else. I had been in the sheep business. At that particular [time] there were damn near more coyotes in that country than there were sheep. I had several dozen steel traps and I was a camp mover. I was doing pretty well at trapping, but I couldn't trap, haul wood very well and take care of the family so I let my second son, LaVell have the traps. I had sold my wheat for flour that my family needed for scraps to trap. I couldn't afford to give LaVell the traps because that was my wife's family's grubstake during the winter.

He [LaVell] married and the first thing he did was to go to work in California. There were two or three of them [who] went down there to work and it sounded like a good layout [deal]. He took his wife with him. That was [the last] I saw of him for months and months.

FH: Is he still in California?

TR: No.

FH: Has he gone to Idaho?

TR: No. He has a farm in Nevada now.

FH: Did he sell the land you gave him and do something else with it?

TR: He had a little money to support on and make the trip to California with the other fellows. We moved from here to Alamo, Nevada and leased a farm there. My first

wife was dead then. All of my older children were in Nevada and it looked like I was going to have to move to where they were or else. They had married and started a home —

[END OF RECORDING TWO.]

TR: — of their own whether I had anything to say about it or not. I moved there and rented a farm. My oldest son-in-law, Vilda's [husband], and I rented 500 acres of pasture, grass and corn there. We went to work leveling that ground.

FH: Was this where Vilda met her husband-to-be? I don't mean Vilda, I mean Hulda [Robinson]. Is this where Hulda met the man she would marry?

TR: That was where she met her husband [Joseph Ainslee Sharp]. We moved out of Nevada and went to Provo [Utah County, Utah]. Damned if this young whipper-snapper didn't go up there. [Laughter] I didn't like him at all.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: [Was] the [last name of that] fellow Hulda married, Sharp?

TR: Yes.

FH: [Did] he follow you up to Provo?

TR: He followed me up to Provo before I had leased a farm there. He hung around and I [was] so damned disgusted that I was about to tell him to come out to the gate and I would perform the marriage ceremony [for] them. [Laughter] He wanted to know if he could take her back to Alamo. He made two or three trips from Alamo to Provo. They finally [were] married.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: [Did] they make their home in Alamo?

TR: Yes. Hulda's father-in-law had a lot of ground there. They emigrated [to] that country [area] and took up all of the ground that was worth anything. It was just a broad open flat valley. The widest place was a mile and a half wide. There was lots of water. There were two or three places down in the valley [where] they could [use the] water [for] their land.

They [were] married and as quick as they could they did as they pleased. It was hard to tell a young couple what to do when they [are] married. They were [inaudible] for awhile. My wife had died and I decided I would go to California and work. My son LaVell was down in California and had a good job and he [came] home. The fellow he was working for had taken several farms from

fellows [who] wouldn't pay for the farms or ranches they bought. He finally told my son LaVell, he said, "I don't want your dad down here." LaVell said, "I absolutely guarantee he won't be in your way. He won't be the drag-ass-end of your damn men on the farm either." He had half a dozen farms. When the fellow [who] owned the farm died, he left some Mexicans as foremen on the ground and they didn't do anything.

My family was in Alamo and I was down in California. The fellow [who] owned the farms usually took a month or six weeks vacation every fall. I went to the farm with the understanding that I wouldn't complain about the wages. It was a damn cheap-john layout, but it had a house for me to live in and I could have my children there, but my wife was dead. This woman [Genevieve] I am married to now traveled back and forth from Salt Lake [City] to Los Angeles. We had gotten acquainted up here in Nevada. She said, "I would like to come and visit you a little while if you don't care." I said, "I am just a working man and my time is out in the field." She said, "I will visit with the girls." I had two little girls [Zola and LuJean Robinson] and two boys [Preston and Vee L. Robinson] without a mother. I told her to come. She didn't have to ask if she could come; she could just come and when she was ready to leave, she could just get on [the] stage that went by and go on.

I was working in Provo [when] my [first] wife died. She didn't die in Provo, but she died while all of our [possessions were] there. She died in Provo and they moved her body to Enterprise [Washington County, Utah] to bury her. When she died, that left a woman who didn't know how to take care of children. Every damn place those children would meet anybody, they were told you don't have to do that, that isn't your mother. "Your mother is dead and you can do as you damn please." My children are damn near worse [that they] were. Hell, they are driving their [children] away from me or this woman. I finally married her. She has been my wife [for] about thirty-five years.

FH: What is her name?

TR: [Her name is] Genevieve Pratt.

[Thomas Butler and Genevieve (Proctor) Pratt Robinson were married April 19, 1937 in the Salt Lake Temple, Salt Lake County, Utah.]

FH: [Did] she come to live with you on the farm?

TR: We went to our bishopric in Provo and asked him under what conditions I [could] marry this woman, take on as a wife and have her as my second wife; not [a] plural [wife]. They said to go to the temple, any temple you want, talk to the man that is there. Tell him you want to get married, that your first wife died and [that] this woman's husband was plurally married to you don't know how many women. They gave her —.

FH: A temple recommendation?

TR: Yes, a temple recommendation.

FH: What temple [were] you married in?

TR: We went to Salt Lake [City]. I don't know how I got up there to where she lived, but anyway we went to [the] Salt Lake [Temple] and talked with the president. [We] told him that the man he was working for said we could go up there and get a temple recommendation. I had been in California for seven years and when we [were] married I had never, never worked for wages; I had always worked for myself. There were twenty-five years [that] I was with the sheep. Sometimes I would hire ten men, but when I [started] working for wages it was sure awkward.

FH: Was it something new?

TR: Yes, I had plenty to do. My oldest brother [James Coupe, Jr.] was in the sheep business. He said, "'Of all the men I have to hire I can't see where I can let one go and you take their place. I would like to have you come and work for me because you are the best, but who would I let go?'" I said, "Don't worry about me." I don't know hardly how I got this woman.

When she was going back and forth on the stage from Salt Lake [City] to Los Angeles she stopped at our place and helped the little girls. I had two little girls [Zola and LuJean] [who] were school age. She helped the girls get the house cleaned up and the bedding fixed like it ought to be and was gone before I came home. That was when I began to hunt her up. [Laughter] The little girls never did have anybody in the world that was any better to them than this wife. All the damn Nevada [folks] would say, "Don't mind that woman. She is not your mother and you can do what you please."

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

TR: Where was I? Oh, we went to Nevada to live. I stayed with my job and the man told me, "We want you back." My son had been running the farm for a few years. After the boss had been gone on a three-week vacation, he came home and found me there. My brother said, "I will tell you when to come. You come here and work. We are moving forty acres of walnut trees. We are digging them up, chopping them up and shipping them off of the ground." He said he didn't want me to work for wages, \$1.60 a day. That was what we were getting. The boss came [back] the latter part of the month. My son had an account of the work we had done. There were thirteen or fourteen Mexicans and two white people—I and another fellow were the white men. He brought his secretary and the books and met my son out on the farm. He said, "I will give you your time when you are able to work in the morning." He took the time and went home. The secretary saw

what work we had done. The Mexicans had chopped [trees] for so much a cord. My son told the boss, "Dad will stay until the first of the month at regular wages, but if you want him to work here you better go and explain the matter to him." He [told] me before I came to work at all, "I don't want you to complain about the wages." I never said a word. He said, "You don't mean to tell me that you chopped five or six cords of wood out of walnut [trees] into four-foot lengths and piled it up when the Mexicans hadn't even chopped a cord out of one tree?" I believe I had five cords of wood. The old boss asked, "Who helped your dad?" "Helped?" he said. "He doesn't need any help. It was just like chopping green cottonwood [trees]."

There wasn't a Mexican there [who] knew how to sharpen an ax. They didn't know how to use it when it was sharp. [Laughter] I said I would stay and work on the farm for \$3.00 a day and they were paying \$1.60 a day. I stayed and worked on the farm until all the trees were trimmed and the wood was corded up on the farm.

This same [man], my son's boss, had another forty acres that had been cut. They had run a plow along side of the trees on both sides and cut the roots on four sides and pushed them over. We corded them and piled them up. We stayed there seven years. Then I was getting kind of tired of being away from home. The children were getting big enough so they needed someone there besides their stepmother. She did a lot of things that their mother would not have allowed them to do. She let them wash the dishes, set the table and clean the dishes up off of the table after a meal. They would spend hours out in the walnut trees hunting walnuts. That was where my first wife died before we moved to California the second time.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

TR: I had a little bunch of cattle. That is kind of a long story. [Laughter] My dad and mother had a big family. They wanted to give us a little start when we [were] married. They started in with the first child and said, "Listen, Sister Robinson, you go out in the corral and pick your calf out of the little heifer cows that we were raising in the pen. That [one] is yours and if you don't get married until you are fifty years old it will be yours and everything it increases as long as you are unmarried." I [went] out here with these farmers and one of the fellows [started] talking with me. I said, "Why in the hell don't you [fellows] get some cattle on the farm here? There is good range outside here and corn fodder. You are farming so much for the corn and not the fodder." I traded the cattle to a fellow for the farm. It had thirty acres of land. I sold a few of the cows to my brother-in-law to double them in five years. In five years he was to double the stock to me. I sold twenty acres and that made me eighty acres of farm. It was right in the middle of Enterprise Fields.

FH: [Was] Enterprise where you came?

TR: Yes, I moved to Enterprise.

FH: Is the cattle and their increase what your father and mother had given you?

TR: My wife had a calf given to her when she was not as old as I was.

FH: You both had the same kind of a situation.

TR: My cattle ran in my father's herd and the cattle she had ran in her dad's herd. Her dad was not able to take care of them and my dad was out of patience when he found out I had traded mine off. He said, "Why did you want to trade those cattle off? Just last fall you and "Jim," (my oldest brother) had marked and branded all of your cattle out of my herd. I had a pretty good herd after you [took] all your stock out." That is what we did.

FH: You had about an eighty-acre farm in the Enterprise area [with] cattle on it.

TR: We had a few cows on it. [At] that particular time, all of the money that was in the country [area] was out of a cream check that we [received] when our cream was shipped.

FH: How many years did you live in Enterprise?

TR: I don't know. It was thirty or thirty-five years — a long while.

FH: [Did] you raise all your family and get [them] married off?

TR: Yes.

FH: [Are] you and your second wife both here in [Cooper] Rest Haven?

TR: Yes.

FH: What happened to the farm in Enterprise?

TR: I don't know how many years of drought, but I finally had to let the damn [farm] go.

FH: You just let it go?

TR: After so many years of not paying taxes on it, the county [Washington County, Utah] let somebody else have [it]. We have been here for four years and I have found that some of the fellows who have been [inaudible] for four years. I had plenty of water. When there was any water, I had water. I was getting [to] the age when I didn't care very damn much about watering at night. I couldn't get along without watering at night. I let somebody else do it and then everything went to

hell. The fence was net wire; about three sections of it, and I ran the sheep one year. It was a bad year. Some fellows from Panguitch [Garfield County, Utah] came over and wanted to buy some hay. I said, "Listen, you wooly-bugger, I will just give you so many bales of hay for so many sheep." I [had] 300 head of some darn nice young sheep. When spring came they were [very] nice. I sold those and bought another twenty acres of ground. We built a reservoir. I bought a slip scrapper and a Fresno because of the experience I had around the country [area] with the sheep. I knew there would be times when we would have to use the Fresno and the slip scrapper.

I was on the [Enterprise] Reservoir and Canal Company board. They wanted me to sign up for [Washington] County Commissioner. I said, "To hell with you! I'm not [inaudible] the county commissioner's job." I am also chairman of the [Enterprise] Commercial Club.

FH: You had all kinds of civic opportunities.

TR: Yes. I was in the Commercial Club for eleven or twelve years.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

TR: I want to finish telling you about this work in Enterprise.

FH: Did you fix that farm up [to] pretty good shape?

TR: Yes. When I was on the [Enterprise] Reservoir and Canal Company Board, I had the secretary make a note in the meeting [that] the stockholders were to be duty-bound and compelled to help clean the canal anytime during the summer when there was a flash flood. In those days, in July, it was nothing to fill up a half-mile of the canal in mud and dirt. We had quite a storm and there was a lot of water around. Do you think you could get a man around there to work? Not on your life! I swear, if they didn't get water on their alfalfa we wouldn't get any. It was hot and dry. I went down to the canal and they told me what I would have to clean. I had a little span of horses that weighed about 1,200 pounds. There was never enough work on the farm for as many horses as I had, but I always had a bunch of horses. Somebody always wanted a horse. I put the span of horses on the the slip scrapper. Did you ever see one?

FH: Yes,

TR: I bought a good slip scrapper in Paragonah country [area] before I came out here. I was just about to clean up the stench of gravel and mud. The sweat was running down my legs clear to my heels. The mud sweat was running down the horses' backs to the ground. I was in a hurry and it was getting kind of late in the afternoon. I drove the horses into the canal with the slip scrapper into the mud. I kicked at them to go and when they got the signal to go they just dropped down

on to it and broke the bale off of that damn slip scrapper. I had some big, heavy oak handles and one handle struck me on the knee right there. My foot was up here. I saw what the situation was so I just laid down on the ground and put my legs back in shape. It was about three months before I got out of bed. I [have] sure as hell paid for it here.

When we first came here a couple of years ago, some of the fellows said, "What are you going to do with that leg?" I said, "I am not going to have it cut off!" One doctor said, "What are you going to do with that leg of yours?" I said, "I am not going to have it cut off!" It sure has caused me a lot of trouble.

FH: Was that the end of your farming?

TR: I didn't do much [farming] after that.

FH: I think we ought to have you give counsel and advice to your descendants, your children and grandchildren. What kind of —.

[END OF RECORDING THREE.]

FH: — counsel and advice would you like to give them?

TR: Well, I don't know. Don't follow me or some other fellow around on the job they figure on working on. I won't have much to tell them. When my father was raising his family, he only had six sons. I don't think he ever told one of us to do anything.

FH: In other words, [have] you learned best by example?

TR: We either followed him or one of the older boys. When I was in grade school, my father went on a mission for the church. It didn't matter if you were a Mormon or not. He went without purse or script. There were cattle on two farms to take care of and the oldest brother was the boss. He said very little, but when father left for his mission, he never said a word to anybody on how they were going to run this. It was understood between my mother and father that if he went on a mission we would lease the sheep to one of my father's brothers. That did away with the sheep herd. Cattle were easy to take care of. We didn't have to milk [them] because we had plenty of money. I have never been in the habit of doing that.

FH: I know you have never given counsel very much, only by example, but now you have the opportunity to do it [another way].

TR: Maybe I can do that. It will take a little while to think about it.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: You are like Jacob Hamblin, you have a testimony to give, but it is hard to give it to somebody else, but try. See if you can.

TR: I think maybe that some of my kinfolks [who] have boys have said too much to them.

FH: Maybe that is right, but I think you should tell them something about [how] you feel about the gospel.

TR: I have no grandsons, but what their fathers are there to direct them. I couldn't step in and give them instructions. [Laughter]

FH: [Do] you have a testimony?

TR: Oh yes. I know there is something to live for beyond this life. I am satisfied that there will be a time in my life that I will wish I had paid a little more [attention] to my religion than I have. We had a grand opportunity with the sheep herd in the summertime and wintertime.

FH: [Do] you mean [an opportunity] to study?

TR: Yes, to read.

FH: Did you read all of the standard works of the church?

TR: Yes.

FH: [Do] you believe the church is true?

TR: Sure I do.

FH: Do you think that your children and grandchildren should find out about it?

TR: I think that most of them have been pretty well coerced.

FH: There are some of them [who] aren't even born yet.

TR: I know that. I feel the most concerned about Helen's family. She married [Raymond Clyde] Stewart.

[Raymond Clyde and Helen (Robinson) Stewart married June 6, 1931 in Panaca, Nevada.]

He was [an] alcoholic for forty years. He was a good worker. His health broke a year or so ago. The doctors told him he mustn't work and he

has begun to study a little now. I really think he thought there was a God in heaven and there [inaudible] some day.

[END OF RECORDING FOUR. END OF INTERVIEW.]