

Interview with
JOSEPH HILLS JOHNSON, JR.

May 31, 1968

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JOSEPH HILLS JOHNSON, JR.

Joseph Hills Johnson was interviewed on May 31, 1968 by Fielding H. Harris, a representative of the Voice of Remembrance Foundation. Joseph Hills Johnson related his personal history of living in Johnson, Kane County and St. George, Washington County, Utah. Also participating was Myrtle Johnson, his wife.

FH: Would you give your full name, please?

JJ: Joseph Hills Johnson, [Jr.].

FH: And your birth date?

JJ: July 28, 1891.

FH: The place of your birth?

JJ: Johnson, Kane County, Utah.

FH: [What was] your father's name?

JJ: Joseph Hills Johnson, Sr.

FH: Your mother's maiden name?

JJ: Mary Glover.

FH: Would you please try to remember something from your earliest life. Tell us about your early childhood. What do you remember [as your] first recollection? Would you like to tell us anything about [your childhood]?

JJ: It is hard to determine just what the first things were. I do remember one time [when] I was only two or three years old [and] it is just a faint remembrance that I have. [Emotional] We were living on a ranch and a badger came up near the house. I remember [that] it caused a little commotion. Everybody ran to the window to see the badger. I was less than three years old but I do have a faint remembrance of that.

FH: Okay.

JJ: That is the first thing that—

FH: You lived on a ranch?

JJ: We were [living on a ranch] at that time, yes, when I was three years old. We were living on a cattle ranch.

FH: What else can you remember about your early life?

JJ: When I was about seven, we moved to a new town just being farmed, the town of Tropic [Garfield County, Utah]. I was seven years old [and] that was in about 1898. We were back yesterday to look over the old place and I saw the little home we lived in while [my] father was building a home for us in the new settlement. I remember the home where we stayed. Also I remember the first person I saw [there]. It was a little boy, about my age, that came out to play with me. His name was Eldon Romney. He lived up across the street from where we stopped.

FH: Up until the age of seven, you didn't have anyone your own age to play with at all?

JJ: Yes, there must have been someone but I don't recall any particular [name]. I do remember one little incident [that happened] before we moved here. I was playing around in the barn and I jumped over the manger and [landed] on a nail that was sticking up. The nail came through my foot. I was five or six years old at that time. I remember them having to pull the nail out. It was attached to a board.

FH: Okay.

JJ: I do remember that [happened] when we were in the [inaudible]. I had never been back to Johnson for nearly forty years. When I went back I could point out the little places under the ledges [and] I could point out our home and where other people lived. It was quite clear in my memory. Up on the side of the hill there was a little sand ledge. The doodle bugs made holes [in them]. I don't know if you know what doodle bugs are?

FH: No.

JJ: They make these little round holes in the ground. I remember going up there and finding ants. [If you] put ants in the holes the doodle bugs would come up and grab the ant and [pull] him underneath. I could see that in my mind after forty years.

FH: Yes.

JJ: I recognized that place. [There were] just a few little things that impressed me about the early times. But I don't remember much about my playmates. I remember the names of the people who lived there, many of them, who were our neighbors.

FH: Do you want to mention them?

JJ: There was the Mackelprangs who lived next door. I would have to stop and think where they lived and who they were.

FH: Yes.

JJ: There were quite a number of our relatives, the Johnson family that lived near. I do remember my grandmother Glover. She lived with us there for a short period before we moved away from Johnson.

FH: Okay.

JJ: A little old English lady, sharp, heavy little woman. I do remember her. She died soon after that. I remember I had an aunt there with a small family, aunt Ellen Laws. Robert Laws [was] her husband. I did have a companion there, Edward "Eddie" Laws, who was about my age. Just a year or so older, but we were together [a lot] during that early period.

FH: Yes.

JJ: There are many things that I would have to take time to recall.

FH: You went to church when you were young?

JJ: Oh, yes, I remember going to primary. I remember some of the [programs] I [participated] in. I remember giving a little recitation in primary but it was before I was seven. I said, "Drive the nail aright, boys, hit it on the head. Try with all your might, boys, while the iron's red." I had almost forgotten it! "If you have a thing to do, boys, do it with your will." Oh, I can't remember. But it was a little recitation that I learned when I was about six. I remember giving that in primary.

FH: That recitation kind of portrays a little bit of your character, I believe. It seems to. What about schooling? Did you have some schooling there?

JJ: My first schooling was in Tropic. I started school after I was seven. I do remember my first schoolteacher. [She] was Maggie Davis. I got along quite well in school there with her. I remember some of my schoolteachers. The next year, after Maggie Davis taught, Sarah Ahlstrom was my teacher. They were all lovely teachers, very fine. I loved them very much. Years later, Sarah Ahlstrom came back and taught me when I was in the fourth or fifth grades. I had her two different years.

FH: How far in school were you able to go?

JJ: I only [went] to the eighth grade. I finished the work [for] the eighth grade but about two weeks before the examination that was given at the end of the school [year], I was called out of school and never did take the examination.

FH: You had to go to work?

JJ: Yes, I had to go to work. However, a few years later, after we had been in Tropic, I went to Murdock Academy for about six weeks. [The Murdock Academy was operated by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints].

FH: Where was that located?

JJ: In Beaver [Beaver County], Utah.

FH: Alright.

JJ: I was there from the latter part of October until about December 15.

FH: What was the particular reason that you [went] there? Just to get some further education or some special [education]?

JJ: Yes, my parents were determined that I was going to get an education. [Emotional] That was when I was sixteen. I herded sheep that summer and earned enough money that I thought it would put me through school.

FH: Yes.

JJ: [My] father took me to Beaver. They were building the Murdock Academy at that time. [I] and two companions went with him and we all rode to Beaver on a load of lumber.

FH: Can you tell me about how many miles you had to travel?

JJ: Approximately eighty miles.

FH: That is a long trip for those days.

JJ: [Inaudible] with the wagon and a load of lumber and the [inaudible].

FH: You enjoyed your schooling at Murdock?

JJ: The schooling was wonderful but it didn't last very long. I was late starting school. I didn't [arrive] until about a month after school begun because I was working. I couldn't get away. But I did start and I remember a few things about the school that I would like to recall.

FH: Good.

JJ: I was put into a class of twenty girls. There were two boys and twenty girls. It was the algebra class. The teacher said that these boys could understand and grasp the algebra much faster than the girls. So he put them in a class by themselves, just two or three girls with them. But there were about twenty girls in the class. Wallace Henderson and I were put in the class with the girls, the second class or lower class. Wallace stayed with it about a week and he couldn't take it and dropped out. I stayed with it a few more days. I had never had algebra before and somehow, after two or three days, it came to me and I could understand it. It seemed so easy to me. So the teacher promoted me back up to the boy's class.

FH: That made it easier!

JJ: I remember that because I was the only boy in a class of twenty girls.

FH: [Laughter] Most boys would like that! [Laughter]

MJ: Not at that age.

FH: Not at that age?

JJ: No, not at that age. I was seventeen then.

FH: Okay! That would account for it. Did you have any other trips besides this one to school? That you can remember?

JJ: There are a lot of things that I can remember [of my] early days. I took a trip with my father [when] he was hauling freight. [We] took a trip down to Elsinore [Sevier County, Utah] when I was a very small child. I must have been eight or ten years old, I was small anyway. We went to Elsinore which [had] the railroad terminal, at that time, for freight. That was the first time I had ever seen a train. How excited I [was] about seeing the train! I also remember another thing about that trip. As we were coming home, we had a team and a wagon, up a long grade, not a heavy grade, but we were coming up a long pull. [My] father stopped the team to let them rest. I was walking beside the wagon. We were all walking, my father too. I noticed in the brake box there were little creases worn down on the brake block where little pebbles had worn into the brake block. I felt the furrows in the brake block and I guess the wagon started to run backwards. [My] father was on the opposite side of the wagon and he put the brake on suddenly and caught my hand in there. I cried out and he released the brake and came around to where I was, but it had mashed my hand. I have a flat finger now from the effects of that [incident]. He went to a farm house where there had been a fire some time before and [found] some fresh ashes and bound my hand up in ashes. It remained that way for four or five days, until we [were] home. I always remembered that because I carry the scar yet!

FH: For goodness sake, you are lucky that you didn't lose a finger.

JJ: Yes. I just lost some nails but they grew back and I still have my hand.

FH: About how many days did it take to make that trip?

JJ: I don't recall exactly but about ten, I think.

FH: Ten full days! That was quite a trip. How did you manage for food on a trip like that? Did you stop along the way and camp and make your own—

JJ: Yes, we carried our beds and food along with us and just stopped where [we were at night]. Where we could find hay for the horses. That was the main thing. We tried to make the trip where we could find hay for horses. If we went some place where there wasn't hay, we would get it at the last available place and carried it with us to the place we wanted to stop.

FH: I see. Your father did the cooking?

JJ: Oh, yes. He was efficient at that.

FH: He was a pretty good cook?

JJ: He was a very good cook. He had a lot of experience at it. My father had been head of [his] family for many years. His father [Joel Hills Johnson] died when he was young. He was the oldest son and he took over the family and was quite responsible for them. This was before his marriage.

FH: How many children were there in his family? That you know about.

JJ: In [my] father's family?

FH: Yes, when he took over.

JJ: He had one sister [Ester Orton] older than [him] and [there were] about [six] [younger] children.

FH: He became the head of the household for awhile?

JJ: He was for quite a number of years. [His] mother [Margaret (Threlkeld) Johnson] always leaned toward him as being the head of the family.

FH: Is there [anything] else that you can remember while you were still in your teens?

JJ: One of the greatest shocks that I ever had was when I was going to school [in] Beaver. I was living in town and the school was about two-and-one-half miles

out of town. I was working for my board. I had seven cows to milk, thirteen horses to feed, pigs and [other animals to care for]. We had to be at school at 8:45 [in the morning]. On a cold morning in December I went out and milked [the] cows and got ready to go to school. I tried to move the buggy but it had been a cold night. I hadn't greased the wheels of the buggy and the wheels wouldn't turn. I had to pry them off and get some grease on so the wheels on the buggy would turn. I had to take two girls to school. When I [arrived] there, I tied the horse up and [went into] school just as the class was commencing. I ran up to the stove [because] I felt so cold. The teacher came along and I said, "Mr. Snyder, I won't be able to do very much English this morning." He said, "What is the matter?" I said, "My hands are so numb I can't hold a pencil." He looked at me and jerked me away from the stove and took me outside of the building. [He] called someone else and they rubbed my hands in the snow for nearly a half-hour, it seemed to me. They were frozen, just frozen stiff. That was about December 17 or 18, my hands were frozen. I suffered with that more than any particular suffering I have gone through, I guess.

One hand was just [inaudible] there wasn't any color in it. It was completely frozen. I had a glove on that hand. The hand that was uncovered I had been using [it] more and it wasn't quite so frozen. I went to the doctor with those frozen hands and he fixed them up as best he could. [He] put them in oil and wrapped them in cotton and I was required to hold my hands above my head to ease the pain. I had to hold them up over my head for two or three days. I stayed with the family, my sister [inaudible] Henderson and her family, up at the fort. I sent the horse back to [the person] he belonged to and I stayed there at the fort for two or three days. I went to the doctor several times and he would treat my hands again.

There was about three feet of snow on the ground at that time. We were about eighty miles from home and were rather homesick. George Graff, who was from Cannonville [Garfield County, Utah], and I decided we would like to go home. We arranged for horses and he saddled my horse for me. I [mounted] and hooked the reins over my arms [with] my hands up, I had to hold my hands up for any relief at all, and we went single file over those miles to Panguitch [Garfield County, Utah]. [It was] nearly forty miles, I guess. [It] was just a narrow trail in that snow. We [arrived in] Panguitch that night and stayed in the hotel. The next morning we [mounted] our horses and went on to Tropic. [We were] within about a mile of Tropic and met a delegation that was coming out to meet me. [Emotional] They had heard that I was coming. They had been calling Panguitch [and] knew that we had been there. [They] told me that [my] father had died.

FH: That was a real shock! Do you feel like your inclination to go home was an inspiration at this moment?

JJ: [Emotional] It was a shock. I didn't know that anything was wrong. I had never heard of anything. When he was on a mission in the southern states he contracted malaria. Just as regular as the spring months would come around, he would have

chills and fever. It handicapped him quite a lot and he was weak. That winter he [had] pneumonia [and] he couldn't take it. I was helpless [as] I couldn't use my hands. [Inaudible]

FH: [Inaudible] How many children were there in your family at this time?

JJ: [There] were seven of us. I had one sister [Mary Leona Johnson] older than I and she was married at this time. She was four years older than me.

FH: I see.

JJ: Father had a few cows, thirty [or] forty head of cattle and horses. He had a stallion that I had to stay right at home and take care of for several years. [Inaudible] From that time on I had the responsibility of the family. It took a long time [but] my hands finally [were] better. The left hand, the one that was frozen so hard, I could just rattle the skin on the fingers after the swelling went down. The skin had not contracted again like it was in the first place [before] it had been swollen. My fingers were smaller like I had a glove on my hands.

FH: The skin was loose.

JJ: The skin was loose on all of my fingers. The nails all came back and were alright. For years I had to be careful about my hands.

FH: That was a close call. You came close to losing your hands.

JJ: [They healed] and I could handle things pretty well with the family and the farm.

FH: Farming, automatically, came to be your way of life.

JJ: Yes, I started out quite early several years before [my father died], when I was thirteen years old. [My] father was out in Nevada freighting. He had a four horse freight team for about a year. I ran the farm [that] we had about two miles from town and, with the help of a helpful neighbor, managed to get the crops in and harvested. I worked one day on our place and then one day for him for the use of his team. Then when it came time to cut the hay, he [held] things together and I cut the hay, raked it and hauled it with his borrowed team. I worked one day for the use of the team and then had the use of it a day for myself. That is the way I started out farming.

FH: Was your farming fairly successful? Did you have pretty good crops?

JJ: Yes we had good crops for a few years. Before [my] father died, we went to the East Fork Mountain [Garfield County, Utah] on a ranch with a dairy herd. We had a herd of cows and we ran the dairy there for several years on what we called the East Fork, what we called the Flat Bottom, the old Beaver Co-op Ranch.

There I milked as high as thirty cows [daily]. [My] mother made butter and cheese. [We] sold that. [We] put butter in barrels and crocks. There wasn't any sale for milk or cream [so] we just had to convert it into butter and cheese. We did that for three or four years, moving to the ranch in the summer and back in the fall.

FH: [Did you] take your herd of cows with you?

JJ: [We would] take the cattle with us and in the winter we took them to a lower altitude, lower country, where we wintered them. Then we [took] them back to the side of the mountain in the summer. After [my] father died, we continued that. We tried a little farming on the East Fork Mountain. He and Joseph U. Jolley were the first two who tried farming on the Flat [Bottom] on the mountain. We tried that but it wasn't very successful; the season was too short up there. After his death, we didn't farm any more but we did stay with the ranch for several years.

[TAPE RECORDED TURNED OFF]

JJ: I had taken part [in] quite a lot [of] theatrical [performances]. Most of my life I had been interested in [the theater]. One winter I was herding sheep and they knew I was coming home at a certain time. It was just before Christmas, I believe. They gave me a part [in] one of the plays and sent the lines down to me. [They] copied it off and sent me the copy because it was to be given just a few days after I [arrived] home. When I [arrived] home I went right into the play. I have forgotten [the name of] the play.

FH: Maybe you will think of it as you go along.

JJ: It will come to me, probably! Mabel Watson was cast as my wife in this play. I had never met her. I was introduced to her in the play [and] that was the only way I knew her. Some time [later] we [became] well acquainted. She was teaching school in Tropic at that time. She lived in Glendale [Kane County, Utah and was] teaching school [there]. We [became] rather attached to each other. That led to a marriage in about two or three years.

FH: In about two or three years?

JJ: Yes, she taught school there two years. [It] was her first year there when I met her. I believe it was the second year that we [started] corresponding. I made one or two trips over to her home town during the summer. That was in 1912.

FH: What did you do for courtship? Did you take her to some dances or what did you do?

JJ: Oh, yes.

FH: Church activities? What did constitute your courtship? Let's hear about it a little bit.

JJ: Nothing very outstanding. Yes, we [went to] dances and parties. There was quite a lot of that. We were in quite a number of theatrical performances together. Dances were—

FH: Who sponsored these theatrical [performances]? Was [it the] church?

JJ: [It] was a church thing. The Relief Society [did] most of it. We had to make our own entertainment at that time; there wasn't [any] commercial [entertainment and] we had to [make] our own. About every two weeks we would have another theatrical [performance]. We used to travel around with them to the neighboring towns and put on our performances.

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

FH: I bet you had a lot of fun doing that!

JJ: It was pleasant, we liked it. Yes, it was a different thing from the work we were called to do. They cast us together, quite a lot, so we just decided after some of the performances that we may just as well continue on together.

FH: You decided to just play together the rest of your life!

JJ: We decided to make it permanent.

FH: Where were you married?

JJ: In the St. George Temple. We made a trip by team [and it] took us four days from Tropic. I took two days [to go] over to Glendale and stayed there one day. Then it took us two days; one night we camped out between here and Glendale, so it was four days [to make] the trip down here [to St. George]. [We] stayed here one day and [were] married.

FH: A regular excursion trip!

JJ: It was for us! We came alone, no one [was] with us. There was one couple down here, that we were acquainted with, who was working at the temple. [They were] the only people we knew.

FH: Can you remember who performed the marriage ceremony, by any chance?

JJ: Yes, it was David H. Cannon. [He was] the president of the temple at that time. [This] was in 1912.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: Brother Johnson, tell about your return trip home after your marriage in the St. George temple and [about] getting started together in life, setting up your home and where you lived.

JJ: We returned to Glendale and stayed there two or three days. We had the typical wedding dance all arranged for [by the] wedding party. We went on to Tropic and had the same [events] there. She was well known in Tropic and we had a great time there. My grandmother owned a home just across the street from where I had always lived. She [wanted] to move so she sold me her home. We made a home there for the rest of the time in Tropic in [grandmother's] old home.

FH: How many years did you live there?

JJ: In the meantime we lived two years over near Glendale. [We] lived on a ranch over there for two years after we had two children. With the exception of those two years, we spent from 1912 until 1941 in our home in Tropic.

FH: Let us hear about your home life and your children. Whatever you think [of that] comes first, just tell us about it.

JJ: We had a good home life. There was always peace and contentment in the home and we never had any troubles at all at any time. We lived happily all the time.

FH: You never did have a cross word?

JJ: I [can't] hardly say that!

FH: [Laughter]

JJ: [Laughter] There might have been some misunderstandings but we never did [let it] get serious enough to cause any trouble.

FH: Most of us have a little!

MJ: [Inaudible]

JJ: We got along very well. My wife had quite a lot of trouble [raising the family alone]. I was not able to adjust to the things that I should [have] adjusted to and do the work that I had planned on doing. My folks were determined I should have an education. I wanted it so badly that I decided I was going to be a school teacher, at least. I went to school there in [the] little town of Beaver. When I came home my father had passed away and the trustees of the town, they just had the three trustees, they chose the teacher. They came to me and wanted me to teach school. They thought I was qualified to do that. They coaxed me to do it but I just didn't feel confident enough and I told them no. I've always been sorry, all the rest of my life, that I didn't accept the call when they gave it to me. But I didn't have courage enough to attempt to teach [students] that were about my age [who] knew as much as I did, or maybe more, in a lot of [subjects]. Since I didn't

have any particular occupation, I just tried anything I could find to do. I was away from home [a lot]. I farmed during the summer and then, about the time we had to pay taxes, I would have to leave home and find a job somewhere [to] earn enough to pay the taxes and the bills. We had to settle up and make enough so that we could farm again the next year. I was never able to make enough money to do anything.

FH: You had to work away from home to support the farm.

JJ: I had to work away from home, most of the time, to just keep farming.

MJ: [Inaudible]

JJ: My wife had the responsibility, almost entirely, of raising the family.

FH: Tell me about some of those jobs you did that took you away from home. Do you remember something about any of them?

JJ: Oh yes! I can recall quite a lot of the things that I did. I remember one of the first [jobs]. I went down to Gunnison [Sanpete County, Utah] to the sugar factory [and] worked there [during] the sugar campaign for three or four months. Then I went to Bingham Canyon [Salt Lake County, Utah] and I worked there for two winters as a boiler maker. Another winter I was in the building trade [doing] plastering and general building. I did that part of the time.

FH: Sounds like you were a pretty handy man. If you set your mind on it, you did it.

JJ: I did most everything a few months at a time and then I [would] go back home and take care of the farm. After we were married I bought a place in Bryce Canyon [Garfield County, Utah]. We lived and [had a] dairy there for five or six years. Most of my family were born and raised there on the ranch. We lived there during the summer [and] when fall came [and] school started, we moved back into town.

FH: Tell me about those children. [Who] was the first one that came along?

JJ: Mark was born first. He was born in Glendale while we still lived there. Those two years we were over there he was born in Glendale. Then we moved back to Tropic. Three years later, Mazel Kay was born. Three years later, Grant came to us. He was born in 1918.

FH: Is Mazel a boy?

JJ: Mazel is a boy, Mazel Kay is his name.

FH: Then Grant?

JJ: Then Grant. I don't remember just exactly the birth dates but about three years later Metta came along. She was our first girl. We were so happy to have a girl

after three boys. Then, a couple or three years later, Sheldon was born. We decided that this was about the end of our posterity, but it wasn't. Gladys was born several years later. We were sure happy when Gladys came along. So that completed our family.

FH: Before you tell [me] what happened to the children, I want to ask you about something else. You did some singing through these years, didn't you? Along with play acting you did some singing with your wife too. Is that right?

JJ: Yes, she was quite a musician. She played and sang well and I sang with her in duets. I was always able to take most any of the parts in singing. Whatever we sang I could take the base, the tenor or one of the other parts. We were called to sing duets, quite a lot, wherever we went. Down here at the temple they used to ask us to sing when we came down. We did quite a lot of that. But that was the only type of singing I ever did, part singing.

FH: Have you sung at funerals?

JJ: Yes, we did some singing at funerals. But I've never done any singing except [to] accompany someone else. When someone else would carry the melody or something of that sort, I was always just for the harmony parts.

FH: Tell me about your reading. You've done quite a bit of reading in your life. What seemed to appeal to you? What kind of reading did you like?

JJ: I was always interested in something of a serious nature. I've been accused of being too serious all my life. But it is just part of me, I guess.

FH: I can't understand [that] really, because you are always so pleasant in your attitude.

JJ: I want to tell you that I think I almost have a record in the church. I held my first church position when I was nine years old.

FH: What was that?

JJ: In Tropic we had just the one building for all [programs], an all purpose building. We held our schooling, our dances and our plays and everything else. We would just convert it. It had folding doors and we just converted it into anything we needed. In our Sunday school we had books that had to be cared for and we couldn't leave them out because maybe that night there would be a dance and they would be destroyed. I was appointed to gather the books up and put them away. They gave me the keys and appointed me as the Sunday School Librarian at the age of nine.

FH: What do you know about that? [Laughter]

JJ: I gathered up the books and I felt quite proud.

FH: You probably were about the first Sunday school librarian in the church, weren't you?

JJ: I think I was one of the youngest ones.

FH: I believe so! You never did quit being active in church activities?

JJ: No, I've always been active in church activities.

FH: Tell [me] a little bit about some of your [church] activities.

JJ: I was president of the deacon's quorum all through my period as a deacon. I was president of the teacher's quorum all the time I was a teacher. But I was never ordained a priest.

FH: That is peculiar.

JJ: I never was. It seemed that missionary work has never been my particular calling. [I] never have been ordained a priest or a seventy since then. But I've always been active. In those days, the bishop recommended us [for] any change or advancement that was made. It seemed like the bishop we had, Thomas H. Cope was our bishop, and he didn't recommend very many people. So I was never made a priest. When I was twenty I was made an elder. [Inaudible] I was made President of the Elder's Quorum soon after and, for a number of years, I was President of the Elder's Quorum. I've been up through the church that way, always active. When I was eighteen, I was called as Assistant to the Superintendent of the Sunday school. I continued that for several years. [I] went from second assistant to first [assistant]. I was superintendent for about nine years in the Sunday school. I was also Assistant Superintendent of the Mutual [Improvement Association] for a period of years. After that, I was made Chairman of the Recreation Committee in Mutual. It was my responsibility to take charge of all the church gatherings [like] the dances.

FH: In other words, you were the activity counselor.

JJ: It wasn't called activity counselor at that time but I was the activity counselor.

FH: In our day that is what they called it.

JJ: Our committee responsibility was to take charge of all the amusements of the ward. My job almost always was to manage the dances. We had a dance every Friday night that was [a] regular [activity]. I did have quite a lot of experience that way.

FH: You did quite a lot of dancing?

JJ: When I was the manager of the dances I didn't do much dancing. Before that, I was just as anxious to have the dances called as anyone else.

FH: Go on through the rest of your life and tell [me] about your church activities.

JJ: There isn't much to tell, I've always been quite active.

FH: You did some local missionary work?

JJ: Yes, I did two or three little stints of local missionary work. I was called on about three two-week missions throughout the stake. That was about all [of] the missionary [work] that I [did]. We were called out for two or three weeks at a time to go to the neighboring towns.

FH: What about priesthood quorum activities later?

JJ: I've been chairman of the high priest's group twice in my lifetime. I've taken part in it all the time.

FH: You have done a lot of teaching. Let [me] hear about that.

JJ: I've been a Sunday school teacher all my life. There isn't much to tell about it. For the majority of the years of my life I've been a Sunday school teacher, usually in the gospel doctrine class. Theological class it used to be [called] in earlier days. I had the younger group a few times.

FH: I can see in my contact with you that you have a tremendous knowledge of the gospel. You have probably gained this by teaching the gospel.

JJ: I think that is a great part of it. We used to have what we [called] a teacher training class. I was responsible to teach that [class] for quite a number of years. I think I gained more [during] that period of time [than] I have at any other time, the studying of it, to keep ahead of the class in teacher training. It wasn't just [for] teacher training; anyone was welcome to come whether they were teachers or not. It was just a training class for church doctrine. We carried that on in Tropic for quite a number of years. I was responsible for much of that.

FH: In recent years you've done quite a bit of temple work, haven't you?

JJ: I've been interested in the temple work. After we were married, there were twelve or fifteen years that I didn't come back. I remember asking my brother-in-law [Leo Barton] who had been down [to the temple] a time or two, how anyone could get the spirit of temple work. I would like to have it so I could feel like it was worthwhile coming. He said, "There is only one thing in the world, only one way that I know of and that is to go." So I started coming and it wasn't very long, as soon as I started coming a little bit, [that] I had a love for the work! In Tropic I was [the] head of the genealogical society for quite a number of years. We arranged for an excursion to come down once every month [during] the winter and summer. We came mostly in the winter because that was when we [had] more free [time]. We had a bus or a few cars, or just one car, whatever we [could]

gather up so that we could come. Since that time I've been very interested in temple work.

FH: I think we need to go back now and have you tell what has happened to your children. Tell me about where they are, what they are doing, their marriages and their children.

JJ: Mark was married when he was twenty years of age. He married Hannah Shumway. She was only sixteen at the time. They came to St. George [and] they were married in the temple. They have two children [Arcola and Kay]. Mark is living in Sun City, Arizona, a retirement town down there. He has a cafe [in] Glendale, Arizona and another [one] in Young Town. Young Town and Sun City have just one street between them. One side of the street is Sun City and the other [side] is Young Town. Glendale [is next to] Phoenix. He and his two children are running the two cafes now.

During World War II, all four of our boys were in [military] service at the same time. I operated a saw mill for quite a number of years back on East Fork Mountain up near Bryce Canyon. The boys and I, the four of them, we just about manned the saw mill. That was about all the help we needed. Occasionally other people helped. Mark was [a] great help to me there for quite a number of years. Then when [World War II] came on they took all the boys into the service.

FH: That really hurt the saw mill business!

JJ: That hurt the saw mill business. You couldn't hire men to do it. Just before this, I turned the mill over to Mark and I stayed down here. I had a lumber yard in St. George. We had a planer here and took care of rough lumber down here, finishing it up. I took care of this end while he [Mark] ran the saw mill. Each week he brought the rough lumber down and I would work it up during the week, finish it for sale here. That lasted for a year and a half and then the war came along. [It] took all my help and [I] couldn't hire help so I sold the mill and started doing something else. I worked as a carpenter around [St. George] for a year or two. Then President Snow asked me if I would like to work at the temple as a gardener and utility man. I took that job and, for sixteen years, I stayed there on the temple grounds. [I was] in and out of the temple [and] took care of the work in the temple (carpentry, plumbing and all those things) just to keep it going. I worked there for about sixteen years and then I retired. I was sixty-seven when I retired. Since then I [have] been doing just about as I please!

FH: Okay, we [were] down to Mazel, I believe.

JJ: Mazel didn't marry for a long time because he went into the [United States] Army. He took quite a lot of electrical training. He was naturally inclined along the lines of electricity. In fact, when he was only a child, he said, "If only everything hadn't been invented, I would like to be an inventor." He did do a little inventing [of] different things during his life. He was inclined along that line. When he

went into the Army they put him into electronics. During his stay in the Army he went to every state in the union except three, I believe he said, while he was in training. They just shifted him from one point to another teaching him basic electronics. He never did leave the states. He just kept going from one camp to another. He continued on in that work, and is still at it. He did come home long enough that he met Maurine Gardner and married her. He worked here for a year or so in radio repair.

MJ: Tell about his mission.

JJ: Yes, Mazel went on a mission and so did Grant. Mazel was called to Czechoslovakia before the war. They [were] as far as New York City [New York] on his way to Czechoslovakia when we entered the war. They stopped them there and he did his mission work in New York and Pennsylvania in the New England mission. He gained quite a reputation there for his wonderful voice. He did radio work most of the time while he was there. He was interested in radio work anyway and it fit well. He engaged in radio work and thought maybe he would make a career of it. He had worked at it so long. I don't know just what the reason was, but he quit that work. But he had always followed that line. He came home and lived here for two years and worked in radio repair. Then he [found] a job with some of the radio companies in Salt Lake [City, Salt Lake County, Utah]. He [moved] there, bought a home and lived there two or three years. Then [he found] a bigger company and moved to Portland, Oregon. He lived in Portland, Oregon for a number of years. He was a sales manager for a big electronics company. He traveled the United States [in] electronics work. He went back to Silver Spring, Maryland and lived there for several years. In the meantime, Maurine died in Portland. He lost his wife when they were living in Portland.

FH: Did they have some children?

JJ: They had two children, a boy and a girl [Mike and Sheila]. He went back east and took care of his children [but] he never did marry again. Up until the present time he hasn't. A year ago he [became] sick and his children decided they wanted to come back to Portland. They liked it so much better than they did the east. He was tired of the east also. [They] stayed there for six months and then he brought them down [to St. George]. They stayed here last summer with me. Then Metta took the girl down to her place and she [has been] going to high school in Fillmore [Millard County, Utah]. Mike [received] a call for a mission from our ward here and he is now in Brussels, Belgium. Mazel is now in Alabama [where] he is installing a \$3,000,000 television station. So that is his story.

Grant was in the Army, up around Seattle [Washington], Fort Lewis, I believe, and he met Lorraine Mason. She was from Aurora, Sevier County [Utah]. They corresponded for quite a while. He went into the Army and, after he [was discharged], they were married. He has four children, two boys and two girls.

His daughter was married last week here [in] the temple. The oldest boy's been on a mission. Their names are Lynn, Linda, Carla and Karl. They are a very nice family and carrying on the best way they can. Grant is now a jeweler. While he was in the Army he was interested in mechanical work and he fixed watches for quite a lot of the people during his stay. When he came home he went to Los Angeles [California] and took training for a period of two years and became an efficient jeweler. He now has his jewelry shop in St. George and has a good business.

[END OF RECORDING TWO.]

JJ: Then Metta came along. She had always been a wonderful daughter, very studious, very serious. She worked her way through school. After she moved to St. George, she finished college here and then went to BYU [Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah County, Utah] and graduated. She taught school at Hurricane [Washington County, Utah] for a couple of years. Then she went up to Kanosh [Millard County, Utah] to teach school. Here she met Van George [and] they [were] married in the St. George Temple. [Inaudible]

MJ: [Inaudible]

JJ: Yes. They have four children, Eller and Marilee, Larry and Duane. Larry was on his bicycle about two years ago. [It was a] Sunday morning [and he was] waiting for a friend to get ready for church. It was after Sunday school and they were ready for church. I think he was about eleven or twelve years old. He was waiting for his friend to come and when he [thought] he was about ready he said, "I'll run home and change my clothes and meet you here." He turned around right quick and ran into a truck on his bicycle. The truck struck him and knocked him off the bicycle. The fellow stopped as quickly as he could and went back but the boy was dead. It killed him. He had no idea that he had done it any more than just pushed him out of the way. He didn't think that it had hurt him at all but it had taken his life. It has been hard for Metta to understand just why things like that happen, but she's been—

FH: Sometimes there is a call for people that we don't know about.

JJ: She had been the life of her home ward. [Metta] has been busy at everything. She has taught school all through the years and has been a gospel doctrine teacher and very active. Before this time she was called to a mission to the southern states and she filled it. I [forgot] to [mention] Grant filled his mission in the central states. He was in Kansas and Oklahoma and served a very honorable mission.

FH: By any chance, do you know what years he was [on his mission]?

JJ: It was right [before] his experience in the Army.

FH: Yes.

JJ: [Metta] has been exceptionally active all the rest of her life. Up until now she has been active in everything that needs to be done.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

JJ: Now I'm down to Sheldon. Sheldon [was] good to help me in the saw mill, as did all the rest of them, but he was so young when he started in to work there. He just seemed to be so apt at doing things. He could do anything there was to be done after he [was] old enough. When we moved to St. George he was too young to go to work so he stayed here at home with his mother.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

JJ: He fought moving and didn't want to come to St. George and despised everything that was here for a few months after we [arrived]. We couldn't get him to even leave the house. He didn't like it or anything or anybody that was here. But after staying here a certain length of time, he started to school. He found the conditions weren't like he thought. He learned to really enjoy the town and loved it. I can't tell you very much about his courtship or anything of that sort. Only [that] he and Leatrice Sproul found each other. They just had an ordinary courtship, I guess, and they were married. Soon after, they went to Los Angeles and he took training as an eye specialist, [an] optometrist. They [lived there] until he graduated. His mother and I went down to the graduation. [Emotional] What a proud moment for us! The president of the college [spoke] to us and congratulated us for having such a son. As far as he was the [inaudible] concerned he said, "He is the top man in our school." We are very proud of him.

After that they came home. Leatrice worked all the time they were [in California] and made fairly good wages. She worked as a stenographer. Leatrice helped him while they were there as he couldn't work or get money from other sources, so he [could] finish his training. After he finished his training they came back [to St. George]. They had grown to love St. George so much that they wanted to stay here. There were a lot of other places where he thought he could make a lot more money, but he was in love with St. George so much at this time that he couldn't think of anything else. He established himself in town as an optometrist in spite of the fact that there were two others here in town at the time. As the years went by, one of them retired and one of them moved away and turned the business over to him. Sheldon has a very fine practice now and [is] well respected and thought of by practically everybody that has ever had anything to do with him. He has been very active in civic and other projects throughout the years. They have five children, five boys, never had a girl. Their names are Kerry, Layne, Kris, Gale and Brett.

MJ: That was the one that was here [inaudible].

FH: Oh, yes.

JJ: A fine family and they are so proud of them, do so well by them, give them what ever things they need and try to keep them busy. They are doing a wonderful job of raising his family.

Gladys taught school. [Inaudible] she has been very steady [and] one of the [loveliest] characters that you can imagine. She has been so happy all her life, pleasant. [Emotional] [She] never caused us one second [of] trouble anyplace. She is the sunshine of our lives! She came into [our lives] quite late but she sure made us happy. After graduating from Dixie College, she graduated from BYU and started teaching school. She taught here [and] she taught in Tooele [Tooele County, Utah for] two years. The rest of the time I think she taught here until she met John Palmer and married him. [Later] they moved to Provo [Utah] and she taught school there. He graduated from college as an accountant. He decided he wanted to go a little further so he took three years of law training from the University of Utah [Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah]. While there, Gladys taught school in Salt Lake [City] to keep them going. [After] his graduation from the University [of Utah] they went to Vernal [Uintah County], Utah and he practiced his profession there as an attorney for a couple of years. He wasn't quite satisfied with the conditions there and we persuaded him to come to St. George [to] see if he couldn't grow up with the country here. He decided that he was going to make a success of his business and remain [an] honest man. He is trying to get the reputation as an honest lawyer. I think he succeeded exceptionally well. Everybody who has any dealing with him has pronounced him as being as honest as a person could be and he has that reputation. He doesn't have all the business he needs but it's growing. He seems quite satisfied. They have two children, David and Paula. Lovely children and they are getting along very well in their work. They have both been active [in the church]. John is a seventy in the priesthood. Gladys has been mixed up with each of the organizations [and] very active in church affairs.

FH: From listening to you tell about your children, one would naturally suppose that you have a great love for them. I think this is readily understandable.

JJ: Oh, such a family as I have! You couldn't do anything else but love them. [Emotional] I think they are very outstanding in their endeavors, whatever they are. They have been great children. They listened to their parents, generally. Some may have strayed a little, like we all do, but they have been honorable, honest and upright, in all the things they have done. I am proud of them for that. Each of them is very careful in their dealings. We have tried to instill in their minds that, no matter what else they were, if they could be honorable and honest [in] their dealings with their fellow man that was one of the greatest virtues. I'm happy to say that I believe that is true with these children. [Emotional]

FH: Is there any particular thing that you remember about your father that you feel is an outstanding thing about him? [Something] that you would like to talk about for a minute.

JJ: I was only sixteen when [my] father died. I'm quite a lot like he was, I guess. He was a very serious individual. I don't think he ever had very much fun. He was tied down, as I have been, with a family from the time he was a very young man and took his responsibilities very seriously. He had little time to have what we term "fun."

[My] mother was a convert from England. She came here when she was a young girl, fourteen I believe, when she first arrived. They had help to pay for her passage to come America. She worked out when she first came to America to pay for her passage over here. When she was two or three years older, she and [my] father fell in love and they were married. [My] father was a very serious minded man [and] very strong [in] his religious convictions. He also filled a mission [to] the southern states. Here, [he] contracted malaria and it finally weakened him so he couldn't withstand an attack of pneumonia and he died.

FH: These things tell us a lot about you, your character and your life. One outstanding thing that I can think of, as you told the story of your children, is the scripture that says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." You [leave] a terrific heritage [to] your children. Can you tell me now, what you feel you want to, about the time your wife was called away from you?

JJ: [Mabel] had skin cancer on her face for many years. She had a sore on her nose [and] it kind of ate the flesh away. It took a lot of courage for her to continue on in her work. She was always very active in church work. She was the theology teacher and was President of the Relief Society for many years. Besides being president, she was chairman of the Genealogical Society two or three times, and she was very active all during her lifetime in church affairs. She had this handicap for a great many years, the sore on her face, and we went from doctor to doctor all over the country trying to find something to stop this growth. It would stop for a little period and then break out again. We never were able to conquer it. She faced it anyway and carried on with her church activities all the time. If she had a hobby, [it] would be in the line of church duties. She was very serious in doing her duty well in spite of her physical condition. She had other afflictions, in the last five or six years of her life, she was so afflicted. Finally, she couldn't move around. I had to care for her for several years and live with her suffering and her embarrassment over her condition. She just kept getting weaker and weaker. We tried everything we knew how to do, the doctors, the priesthood and whatever one might have to overcome the condition. It just seemed like it was impossible to do anything about it. When she [became] so weak that she couldn't move around, I had to carry and move her around the best I could for a number of years. I made many trips to Salt Lake [City] to the hospital. They took care of her condition but nothing seemed to avail. It became so bad that, at her

passing, even I was happy that she could pass and get out of her misery.
[Emotional]

FH: Sometimes it's a great blessing to be able to go.

JJ: It was to her and to the rest of us because it hurt us so to see her suffer.
[Emotional]

FH: This left quite a void in your life for a while, didn't it?

JJ: Oh yes! It really changed our lives when this happened but we understood and knew that her condition couldn't be changed. I never did grieve about losing her. I couldn't do that. I wouldn't have her back for the world, in that condition, with the suffering she was going through. I just accepted the change that came into our lives and [went] on as best I knew.

FH: After a while you happened to run into another woman.

JJ: There isn't very much for me to tell about that story. I knew that I should have somebody. In fact, my [first] wife told me that I should. She expected me to. I wanted to find somebody. It [took] about four years. I didn't seem to have any luck at finding somebody that I was looking for, so I asked the Lord, "Now, I think I've tried to do things the best I can and I need some guidance. I want you to guide somebody to me. Someone that will be suitable for a companion."
[Emotional] Time went on and I sized people up [and] I didn't find anyone. I said, "Let me know when that time comes, who it is." Well, this carried on. I went a year or two with no answer to my prayer. Finally one day I met this woman here; I met Myrtle! She had been here quite a while but I didn't really pay any particular attention to her. One day I went up to the prayer circle and she came up and stood by me. [Emotional] She took a hold of my hand and that was my answer. I was told, just as plainly as words could ever say, that she was the one He had sent. It was only a matter [of] a few weeks until the understanding was mutual. Now, I have this lovely woman for a companion. [Emotional]

FH: I think that is a beautiful story of courtship. I don't know how it could be better.

JJ: It was a short duration because it was such an unmistakable answer when it came to me. I know that she was sent here for that purpose.

FH: [Inaudible] Would you like to tell when you were married? Do you remember that?

JJ: Yes, I married my first wife [Mabel (Watson) Johnson] on June 19, 1912. That carried on until [1964]. Then, last February 6, 1968, Myrtle became my companion. We were married in the St. George Temple. No one can imagine the change that came into my life, knowing as I did that she was the one I had been waiting for.

FH: That's wonderful! Can you tell me what you would like to do now? What are your plans for the future? Do you have some?

JJ: I have no plans outside of the work that we are doing now. I love the temple work more than anything else in the world. I intend, so long as I live, to continue on in that work whether it is in an officiating capacity or otherwise. That is the only thing I have in mind that is of any value to me. I have a place there and I think the Lord has a place for me there and I accept it.

FH: After this wonderful lifetime of experiences, would you like to speak for a few minutes and leave counsel and advice to your descendants, those who [will] come after you? Surely, after all this experience, you should be able to counsel well. Then perhaps you would like to leave your testimony in conclusion.

JJ: I would like them to trust the Lord just as I have done throughout my lifetime. He never lets us down. We let ourselves down quite often by not keeping His counsel. But when we do what He asks us to do, He has never been known to fail. This I know because of the experiences I have had. I have had a lot of marvelous experiences during my lifetime. Some of them are too sacred to even record. I know that the Lord is watching over us and is kind to us. But we have to do our part. That is the thing that I would impress upon anybody. So long as we do our part, He will do His, and everything will turn out right. When we neglect our doing, He blesses us alright, but we can't expect the blessing that we really realize if we were wayward or doing some of the things that He advised us not to do. If I have any advice to give, I would ask my children, and those who might listen, that they would keep this in mind. Remember that all we have and all we ever will be [will] depend on what we can do with the Lord's assistance. If we can remain upright, virtuous, and honorable in all of our dealings, always remember that. Never at any time [should you] try to take advantage of [your] fellow man in any way whatever. Be as honest with Him as you [are] with our own. We love our own. I love my family and everyone else loves their own family, probably more than we love other people. We haven't reached a point yet, where we can love others as we love our own; [perhaps] we never will. Treat them as [if] they [are] your own. Treat them with the same consideration that you would other people.

Remember that there is a reward for all who keep the law. If I have any advice at all, it is to remain true to the teachings that we have received. I ask my children [to] follow the teachings that their mother gave them. She gave them more teachings than I because I was gone away from home so much. But try to remember her and the teaching that she gave you and all will be well for the rest of [your] lives.

I can bear testimony to the fact that the Lord has been good to me and He has answered prayers so directly at times that I have been almost afraid to ask. But yet, I have asked Him more than I should. But I know that He was so willing to

answer. That is all I have to say to them. Remember to keep [yourself] as close to Him as is possible. It is possible to be a lot closer than we usually feel that it is.

Don't be afraid to be different from other people. That is one of the things that I have considered a strength all of my life. Dare to be different from other people, not just follow after someone else. It would be well to have an ideal or have someone in our minds that we would like to pattern after, but there are things in all of our lives [that] nobody else would want to do. [It] wouldn't be right for them to do. We each have a mission of our own and that mission differs from one to another. Your mission and mine are not the same. So let us [remain] true to whatever calling that we feel that we have. I would like to direct all our posterity to live a righteous life. After we are called home, we will all be together. Then we can continue on this wonderful family relationship that we have had here.

That is about all that I have to say. I leave my blessing and hope that the Lord will continue to be as mindful of my children as He has been with me throughout my lifetime. [Emotional] I hope that this blessing will continue on with us all, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

[END OF RECORDING THREE. END OF INTERVIEW.]