

Interview with
GORDON WALLACE MATHIS

June 13, 1968

**VOICES OF REMEMBRANCE FOUNDATION
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

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GORDON WALLACE MATHIS

Gordon Wallace Mathis was interviewed on June 13, 1968 in St. George, Washington County, Utah by Fielding H. Harris, a representative of the Voices of Remembrance Foundation. He related his personal history of living in various parts of Utah.

FH: Would you give your full name?

GM: [My name is] Gordon Wallace Mathis.

FH: What is your birth date?

GM: [I was born] December 21, 1897.

FH: Where were you born?

GM: [I was born in] St. George, Utah.

FH: What was your father's name?

GM: [His name was] Wallace ["Wally"] Brigham Mathis.

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

GM: [Her name was] Hannah Marinda ["Minnie"] (Miles) Mathis.

FH: [What are] your earliest recollections [from] your childhood?

GM: [There are] many memories that I can recall. Sometimes it is easier to go back and remember little [events] that happened in [your] early childhood than it is to remember [events] that are current. If someone should ask me the first thing I can remember I would tell them that I can remember going across the street with a milk cup. I had to get on my hands and knees to get across the wheel track. This has been disputed a little bit but it must be true or I wouldn't have that in [my] mind. At that time, wheel tracks were sometimes very wide and deep because we didn't have hard-surface roads in those days. In muddy weather, wheel tracks would make quite a gully or a small ditch.

I remember I used to go across the street from our old home [to] the corral with [the] milk cup to get milk from my father [while] he was milking the cows. We had one cow we called "Old Spot" that belonged to Grandmother [Barbara Ann (Bryner)] Mathis. As [they came along], she gave each of us children a heifer calf. It was put on the range and that is [how we] started our herd of cattle.

As I remember very clearly, my work in early childhood consisted of helping my mother wash. I remember that because I dreaded it so much! I had to carry wood from across the corral and build a fire in the fireplace on the outside [of the house] under her wash tub. [I had to] punch the clothes [down] while they were boiling and turn the washing machine. [After] about six [or] eight batches of clothing, I [was] tired and anxious to [go] play.

The main work we did as [youngsters] was in the fields. My father was farming. I remember my brother, Carl [Mathis], and I [had to] quite regularly clear land. It was thick with water willow [trees]. We would cut the water willows out, pile them up and burn them when they dried. That cleared the land for plowing.

In those days we used to burn wood. We didn't have electricity. The main job I had was cutting green cottonwood down in the field and hauling it up [to the house]. During the winter after school [I had to] chop it into lengths. My father kept [the] boys busy chopping green cottonwood in our spare time.

Our play consisted of marbles. I remember very distinctly of [playing] a lot of marbles in partners with Clair Sturzenegger. I guess we were about the best marble shooters in the neighborhood so we won a lot of marbles. We used to cache [or] bury them in cans.

Another thing we participated in was swimming down [in] the Virgin River. We used to walk down there and back. It didn't seem very far then. [We swam] over in the Washington Field canal. Many times we started swimming in the canal up to what is [now] the Andrews Farm or the Pectol Farm and [would] swim [all the way] down to the Blazzard Farm. I would judge that would be about three miles. [We would] swim down stream and play on the way down; then we would get [out] on the bank and run back. Those were the good old days when we used to play!

We always had horses and I used to like to ride horses. I have never gotten over that. I remember distinctly, too, when father was on the range a lot, that mother liked dancing very well. As a very young boy she would have me hitch up "Old Nellie" [to] the shay, and take her up to Booth Hall to dance. I was her escort. We would tie up there and I would go in while she danced. I remember she was very popular. She liked to dance and taught me the quadrille dances. I used to participate as a very young boy.

[I] started grade school at age six. I remember distinctly many good times we had in grade school, sometimes mischievous, like playing hooky or some other mischievous thing. The teachers, as I recall, were Emma Mcfarlane, first grade, Lila Woodbury, second grade, Nellie Stevens, third grade, Edna Cragun, fourth grade, Camilla Woodbury, fifth grade, Lena Nelson, sixth grade, George E. Miles, seventh grade, John T. Woodbury, [Jr.] and W. O. [William] Bentley, eighth

grade. In those days we [received] our diploma [when we] completed the eighth grade.

Prior to school letting out [for the summer], I always had to get excused about three weeks early. The teachers cooperated because my dad took me out on the range to help with the spring cattle drive. He purchased cattle when I was a very, very young boy from Joe Gubler [in] LaVerkin [Washington County, Utah] and Dave R. Foshay from St. George. He ran them down on the Virgin River for awhile until he got [the herd] assembled.

My first real experience in cowboying was helping drive these cattle from St. George out to a place known as Parashant Range or Mociac [on the Arizona Strip]. [This] was his headquarters [and] he had a well pump [there]. In those days we didn't have reservoirs. We had live water that controlled the range and he had a well [from] which he pumped [water] for cattle. I have sometimes thought what a tough cowboy he must have been to put up driving 100 head of cattle with Clair Sturzenegger, about my age, and myself. We were [still] in grade school.

I remember I used to get so tired driving and riding all day long, pushing those cattle on. For recreation, we had flippers. We got so good [with] the flipper [that] we could flip a lizard at quite a distance [almost] every time with a rock.

I will tell of one experience among many we had [on] these drives. We didn't have any place to corral the cattle at night. We either had to get [them] into [a] box canyon and guard the mouth of the canyon or else we had to drive. Sometimes we would drive while it was cool and graze them in the daytime. This one particular time we camped on what is known as Sullivan's Reservoir [on the Arizona Strip]. That is about forty miles south of St. George. We were going to drive clear to Hidden [Springs on the Arizona Strip] that night while it was cool. There was no road over this [area]; it was just a trail. In order to keep awake, my dad urged Clair and me to drink coffee. We were lively for about the first three hours but then the coffee wore off, I guess. Clair got so sleepy that his horse ran under a cedar tree and brushed him off. About two hours before daylight I got very sick to my stomach. [This] was quite a problem for my dad. I couldn't sit on the horse any longer so he put me under a cedar tree and said, "Stay right there under that tree. Don't move. If you feel better, just stay there."

I got to feeling better after I got rid of the coffee and what was in my stomach. I got nervous waiting, so I got on my horse and thought I would go back to where we camped. The chuck wagon was there. [It] was driven by Sam Sullivan. When I got to the wagon, nobody was around. I waited there a long time and nobody showed up. Then I decided I better go back to [the] tree where my dad told me to stay. So I got on my horse and I couldn't find [the] tree! When I couldn't find the tree, I circled around so much that I lost the wagon, too! I was really in a pickle. I remember I was excited and I bawled and [almost] ran my horse down trying to

find the wagon or the tree when I heard my dad holler. He found me and I joined the herd.

The thing that happened to the man [who] was driving the wagon, the horses were hobbled but they hit the road with the hobbles and traveled all night clear back to what is known as Wolf Hole Spring [on the Arizona Strip], about twelve miles, and he was following [them]. That is just one incident on the trail as a young boy.

As we grew older, we would make spring drives and gather [round-up] steers in conjunction with other cattle men. We usually rode with the Gardners, Sturzeneggers, John Knudsen and George Thayne. They all had cattle [out] there. They were running in common then; there were not individual ranges. When we would gather [round-up] the steers, [we] herded them until we felt we had them all and then we would trail them to Modena [Utah] to load [them] on the train. On this trail of about 140 miles, we had a lot of experiences. We had to guard every night, trail all day [and] take our turns guarding.

I remember one stampede that we had. We were camped [at] what is known as Big Rocks [on the Arizona Strip]. [It is] the other side of Sullivan's Reservoir [and] about sixty-five miles south of St. George. We had been trailing these steers from Parashant without water. When cattle get very dry, they get nervous and want to run. I remember Clair Sturzenegger and I always took first guard. We usually guarded from after supper until somewhere around midnight. I don't know exactly what happened; [maybe] a horse stumbled. We were supposed to sing as loud as we could and keep this noise [up] so the cattle [would] not hear any off sound that [would] frighten them. But I think we probably got a little sleepy and a horse stumbled and maybe hit one of [the steers] and they jumped and ran. They ran right towards camp. The boys had their horses tied up so that they could take their guard and had the wagon and —

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

GM: Nobody was hurt but it scattered our camp [all] over the ground and [we didn't have any] horses to gather [round] them up except the two we were riding. After we caught the other horses and got some help, all of them got out. By daylight the next morning, we had most of them rounded up except maybe six or eight head that we lost.

FH: Can you tell me about how many cattle were in the herd?

GM: We had probably between 250 and 300 head. I remember [another] incident that I might mention. I was down in Hidden Canyon trapping wild horses with two fellows from Texas, Bill Shanley and Tyne Hecklethorn. There may have been another [cowboy] there. Somebody brought a letter out to headquarters at the ranch and brought it down to Hidden [Springs] where we were camped. This letter was from the First Presidency of The Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day

Saints]. When I opened [the letter] it was a call for [a LDS] mission to Great Britain. I remember after I worked that day I went around the campfire telling these fellows about this mission call. Of course, they were not members of the church. I told them I was trying to make up my mind whether I was going or not. They said, "What is the pay?" I said, "It doesn't pay anything. You even have to pay your own expenses." They thought that was quite a deal to spend two years of your time and pay your own expenses for [a] church. But then they had a long discussion that night, a little bit on religion. Of course, they didn't have [any] religion. They have a religion in their way, fair treatment to their fellow men. They are noted for that. But as far as religious doctrine, they didn't know anything about that. After this long discussion that night, I went to bed and I was wondering whether I wanted to accept this call. I really hadn't been too active. I knew I had to make up my mind. That night I had a dream. Now I [don't] think I have told this dream before. I never told it to my wife.

I went to bed with this on my mind and wondering whether Joseph Smith really had a vision. That kind of stuck in my mind. I could hardly get it out [of my mind] because it sounded so unreal and unnatural. I dreamed that I saw the Father and the Son appear to the Prophet Joseph Smith in this dream. It was very real. I think that was the deciding factor.

I [had] worked [at the] Nelson Mercantile Company [in St. George]. I met my wife prior to that. When we were boys and girls going to MIA [Mutual Improvement Association], it [was] in the old West Ward. The men would line up and the girls would have to go through a long corridor [laughter] after they left the meeting. Many matches were made right then and there by taking the girls home. I was with Raul Whitehead and I think Paula was with her friend, Manda Pace. Raul said, "There go two nice looking girls. Let's take them!" I said, "Okay." We were just [youngsters] and that is, I believe, the first date I had. It wasn't a date; it was a catch I had with my wife. [Laughter] I think from that time on we were more or less not steady but we were [fairly] close and good friends.

I went to work for the Nelson Mercantile Company. She was clerking there and that threw us very close together. After we started going steady, we had a long courtship. We used to go to the old Biz Ray [Dance Hall] to dances. I [drove] my father's Studebaker car. Cars were very scarce in those days. [There were] only two or three in town. Maybe my popularity was a result of this car [that] I had access to.

I remember one thing in school that stands out [and] I would like to mention. [At] the end of [my] second year [of] high school, there was a Dixie Band. [It was] very well trained [and] extra good. When school was out, they decided to make a concert and dance tour of the southern part of the state. They convinced me to ask my dad if he [would] take his Studebaker car and [transport] them. He finally agreed to it reluctantly because there were seven of us in this car with all the drums and band instruments. It was quite a sight when we [were] all loaded. We

gave a dance and concert starting at Hurricane [Washington County, Utah] and then over to Enterprise [Washington County, Utah], up to Cedar City [Iron County, Utah], then up to Beaver [Beaver County, Utah], down to Minersville [Beaver County, Utah] and over to Milford [Beaver County, Utah]. From Milford [we went] across the desert on a very long dirt road over to Kanosh [Millard County, Utah]. The roads were all dirt in those days. We didn't have any hard surface roads.

After traveling that desert road, the car broke down just before we got to Kanosh. We had to wait there and send to Salt Lake [City, Salt Lake County, Utah] to get a part. When the part came, we got [the car] fixed up and went down to Salina [Sevier County, Utah]. Just before we got to Salina, we blew our first tire out after using our spare. That left us without tires. So we had to go on the rim a little ways into Salina. We got some more tires and went on down to Richfield [Sevier County, Utah and] from there down to Panguitch [Garfield County, Utah]. After they had some concert [inaudible] come up over Bear Valley [Sevier County, Utah]. That was one of the most steep, hard roads to make. It was almost straight up in places and we had a terrible time getting up to Bear Valley. We had to get out and push. [Then we] went down to Paragonah [Iron County, Utah] and gave our last dance and concert at Paragonah and then [came] home.

That was a trip [where] we had a lot of fun. We had tragedy in some places but we had a lot of fun. On that trip I will never forget the names of the parties. There was Sherrad Ballard, LaMar Gray, Heber Holt, Rex Snow, Wilford Webb, Andrew Jolley and myself. We have been [very] chummy. Every time we meet or see one of these fellows, we recall [the] experience we had [on] that musical trip.

In high school we used to have good athletic competition, mostly [in] basketball and track. Each class had a competitive [event] to find out which was the best. I was particularly above average in broad jump and fair at running. I wasn't outstanding, but a little bit above the average.

At the beginning of the fourth year in high school, it was almost the end of World War I. I started school but my [draft] number was so close that I couldn't settle down to study. I was up in the drug store one time with Milton Kyle, my friend, and Herbert Hall. We dared each other to enlist. [At that time] there was an opportunity to join Officer Training Corps. It was held at the University of Utah [Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah] and one at BYU [Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah County, Utah]. We made up our minds to go enlist and quit school. [This] was in early September just after school started. We went together up to Salt Lake [City] first to look over the University of Utah and [see] what they had to offer.

I remember we stayed at the Cullen Hotel in Salt Lake [City] and [with some] boys from Cedar City we decided to go out to the Bonneville Dance Hall. I [went] out there, and before the dance was over, I took terribly sick. I had to leave the

dance and [go] back to the hotel and get in bed. I spent a very sick night. Herb and Milt came in my room. They all knew where my room was. I forget whether we [had] a room together or whether it was my [room]. The next morning there were two or three [fellows] from Cedar [City] and the fellows from St. George all sprawled on the bed in that hotel room. [Laughter] They decided to go down to BYU. They caught the train but I was too sick to get out of bed. I lay there until about noon. I finally got out of bed, dressed and caught the train down to Provo. I was so sick going down [that] I could hardly make it to the Roberts Hotel. I checked in and went to bed. I telephoned for a doctor to come over and examine me to see what the matter [was]. He pronounced [it] the Spanish Influenza. That was a new name to me and [to almost] everybody else. It was the [beginning] of the heavy Influenza Epidemic [of 1918]. He sent [for] a nurse to make a trip over there occasionally to see how I was getting along, but he didn't take me to the hospital.

I stayed about a week in the hotel. I got to feeling a little better and started getting up and walking a little bit. [I was] awful weak. I had to get off at my own expense into the [United States] Army. [The] other boys had already joined up. After about a week in the hotel, I felt a little better and went up to join up but I couldn't pass the [physical] examination. My heart wouldn't permit it. They sent me back and I didn't know whether to come home or go back to the hotel. So I went back to the hotel and stayed there about another week. Every day I felt a little better. After the third [try], I finally got in the army.

By that time, the epidemic had become very bad. In fact, most of the soldiers [who] had volunteered or were in the Army [were living in] the old Maeser Memorial Building [on the BYU campus]. It had been turned into a barracks. I met a fellow by the name of Roy Pyper.

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

GM: We were put on hospital detail and carried food from the domestic science department down in Provo, the old BYU building, up to the Maeser Memorial Building. [We took] medicine from Thornton Drug Store [in Provo] up to the Maeser Memorial Building. [We] helped prepare the food and carried it to the barracks where they had about a hundred men barracked there in the Maeser Memorial Building. This time [the flu] became very bad. We were losing men every day up there and people were dying [very] fast. Uncle Jesse Knight let us [use] his automobile for this service so Pyper and I became very closely attached and have been [very] good friends. We were [friends] for a long time after the war but I haven't seen him very much lately.

FH: Was Jesse Knight a literal uncle or did you just call him this?

GM: [He was] called Uncle Jesse. He was a popular figure around Provo. He had a lot of money and supported the [United States] Army there and the school [BYU].

[Jesse Knight, a Mormon mining magnate, made generous monetary gifts to BYU and to The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.]

We didn't get too much schooling. After the influenza epidemic, we [attended] some training classes. Before we [received] our commission we even got appointed general, [laughter] the army's [inaudible] the war came to an end. [Laughter] I came back home and entered Dixie High School. That spring I graduated [and received] my high school diploma with about twelve hours [of] college credit. That is about the extent of my technical schooling.

From [there], I went back on the range for awhile. Then I received [the] mission call that I spoke about. I came home. I had been keeping company with Paula for a long time and [working at] the Nelson Mercantile Company. I announced that I was called on a mission and [that] I had accepted. We decided to get married before I [left]. We were married about three weeks prior to [leaving on September 2, 1920].

I have some [very] rich missionary experiences. I [will] tell only one or two of them. I went over with Arthur Crawford and Dick Williams, the three of us. We arrived in Liverpool [England] and took the train [to] London. James Gunn McKay and about six missionaries had arrived a few weeks prior. They were the first missionaries after the war to arrive in England. We spent about six months in London under the tutorship of President McKay. We held some street meetings and did tracting work. My first companion was Harold Jensen, son of the church historian [Andrew Jensen]. He was an American newspaper reporter. He was writing for the *Deseret News* and had his newspaper [press] badge and credentials. He could get [almost] anyplace with this badge. He was assigned as my companion or I was assigned as his companion to do tracting work. Harold was [very] shrewd. He never did knock on one door at a time. These English doors are right close together in rows and he would knock on three or four of them. Then he would stand on the curb and preach as they came out. He gave me a good start on tracting.

I remember one incident that stands out with Harold. While we were companions, they took up the English hero from the battlefields of France to bury him in Westminster Abbey. That was the first anniversary after the war. Harold and I decided to go [to the event]. We had the day off. We wended our way up to what is known as Whitehall Street in London [and] it was all blocked off with big iron gates. You couldn't get in — even in the street. People were on tops of the houses and crammed anywhere they could get a sight of this procession that was going down to the Abbey. Harold didn't tell me what he was going to do. We elbowed our way up to [a] big iron gate. An English Bobby was standing right at the gate to let only those in [who] had passes. Harold showed his newspaper credential and said, "I am writing for an American newspaper. This is my friend from the *Chicago Tribune*," and pulled me right in with him. All he showed was his badge. They didn't ask me for mine [and] I didn't even have one! [Laughter] If I had of

[inaudible] I wouldn't have gotten in. That was characteristic of Harold. He was always pulling things like that. We followed this procession with all the European royalty right through the Abbey. We were [very] lucky.

We were the first elders to arrive in England and the big work was to open up different conferences in the British Isles that had been closed during the war. All of them were closed, in fact. I think London was the only active conference that was partly organized for a mission. I was transferred with Jim Smith and President Taylor up to Hull City [England]. Jim Smith was the son of President [Joseph F.] Smith. He and Brother Taylor were there prior to my [arrival]. [The] three [of us] went up there and opened the Hull City conference and started organizing. As fast as new elders came, they would assign a new elder to those that had been there for awhile and we would open up another field. Elder Francis Madsen from Salt Lake [City] was my first companion in the new field. We went over to Grimsby, England and stayed about six months. We were quite successful over there opening that branch. We had some good experiences. Then I was transferred down to a place called Skunthorpe [England] with Elder Donald Rose, Ezra Whittaker and Marion Rogers. [The] four of us opened up that field.

Up to that time, outside of London, President Smith who was president of the British mission didn't permit any street meetings because the condition didn't offer any success. There was quite a lot of animosity against the [Mormon] church [in] false publications. But when Elder Rogers came over from Snowflake, Arizona, he had a letter from his folks. It said, "Don't open this until after the first street meeting." He kept tormenting me to get permission to hold this street meeting. Finally, I wrote to President Smith [in] Liverpool and told him we were at Skunthorpe and were having quite a lot of success. It was a rather small place, probably about the size of Provo. There didn't seem to be too much opposition to our tracting. I asked if we might try a street meeting. He wrote back and said, "Inasmuch as there are four of you there in a rather secluded place you might try it."

We went up on the square, market place they call it, in the center of town and the four of us held a street meeting. It was a terrific success. We had that market place almost jammed. We couldn't even make our voices heard. There were some men [who] tried to break it up, but the crowd was more or less with us. So we had a wonderful meeting. When G. Osmond Hyde up [in] Hull City [England] heard about it, he was for holding a [street] meeting up at Hull City. He wrote for [and] received permission and asked the four of us to come up and help him. Well, we didn't have such a good meeting up there! [Laughter] The police department gave us [the] opportunity to hold it, but not on the main thoroughfare. It was what was called an ante street. The end of the street went off into a dock of the Humber River and the North Sea. We backed up into that street as we were told to do and started to hold our meeting. The crowd started to gather. There were about fifty men from Paragon Square [who] came down just for a little fun. They were going to break the meeting up. They made a rush on the meeting but there were not

enough of them to break it up. By that time, a lot of people [were] interested in [the] message and they failed at [breaking] it [up]. We went ahead with our meeting.

When this first group [of hecklers] came, [we were] talking about polygamy. I was speaking and said, "If you [will] be kind enough to stand here with the crowd and listen to our message, we will tell you the polygamy story complete." That didn't satisfy them. They went up on Paragon Square and got at least another fifty [fellows], maybe more than a hundred, and they rushed the meeting. In the excitement, whistles began to blow, Bobbies came from every direction and they were pushing us toward the Humber River. They were going to throw us [off] the dock. It looked for awhile like we were going to go there because there was only about twenty-five yards more to go. They would have thrown us in, too.

The police department got wind of the commotion and came. They reprimanded us for disturbing the peace. They said, "We will give you protection to your lodge so that these inciters won't bother you." They took us to our lodge. We hadn't been [there] more than about an hour when this fellow came up and said, "I heard you say you would give the polygamy story. I am a newspaper reporter. I would like to have it." We gave it to him, together with some religion and some [reasons] why we were there. He was very fair. He printed [it] on the front page, [a] full column on the front page of the *Hull Times*. The next issue that came out, a party signed his name, "A Skeptic" and refuted everything that this reporter had [written]. A lot of [facts] were not favorable. This newspaper reporter had to come back to answer [the] skeptic because he kind of put him in a bad spot. So we got another article on the front page. That newspaper article was really more successful than if the meeting had been a success because [it] was a door opener for us from then on [for] tracting. That is one experience we had where the meeting you might call a failure turned out to be very successful.

After thirty months, I was released from missionary work. I decided to take a trip around England and visit the different conferences that had been opened up. On my way from the train up to Nottingham [England] I could pass as an Englishman because I could talk broad Yorkshire [fairly well] by that time. I conceived the idea of going into this conference house where I knew —

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

GM: I wrote down all [the] tough questions that I could think of and [that would] make it hard for them to answer. They invited me in and I announced myself as an investigator. [I told them] that I had heard about this [religion] called Mormonism. I asked them [very] rough questions for about three quarters of an hour before they fell [caught] on to who I was. [Then] they started to ask me questions and they [became] a little suspicious. They took me out on the street corner and made me preach a sermon in a street meeting.

I went from there down to London and visited the conference there. I had planned to go over on the continent to visit. I took a Russian mail plane from Croydon Aerodrome over to Rotterdam [Netherlands]. I remember what a rough trip that was. It was just a small, single-engine plane. It is rough [flying] over there. I was the only passenger and it bounced up around so much that I got sick to my stomach. Without thinking, I opened [the] window to get a little fresh air and stuck my head out and I thought I had broken my neck! [Laughter]

We landed in Rotterdam and I looked up the headquarters of the mission. President Lillywhite [was] with the missionaries and I stayed there two days. I wanted to go into Germany but I didn't have a German visa. I didn't have much money left to travel on and I hated to buy a visa. I [went] down to Cologne [Germany]. It was territory occupied by the British forces and American forces down [inaudible]. [It] hadn't been turned back to Germany. So I decided to go down to Cologne. But President Lillywhite got mixed up on his train schedule and, instead of going down into Cologne after leaving [inaudible], Holland; I went across to Germany and was stopped [at] the first station over the border. They examined my passport and sent it back. I waited there in the station until I found somebody [who] could [speak] English. [When] the next train came in, I found a German who had been in an English prison camp and he [spoke] broken English. I didn't have any German money [so] I invited him to have dinner with me and we went to an exchange place. To show you what the rate was then, I got 40,000 German marks for [an] American dollar. The fact of the matter is, in small denominations you didn't have a place to carry it. You had to get a little satchel to carry it around in.

I finally got back on the train to Holland and went back into Cologne. Then I looked up the mission headquarters there and stayed with them about a week. I wanted to go to Berlin [very] bad and was debating whether to pay \$10.00 for a German visa or not. The president of the mission gave me some advice. I don't know whether this is ethical or not to be given. But he gave it to me anyhow. He said, "If I were you, I wouldn't buy a visa. I would just hop the train. The fine for not having your passport is only about half of what it costs for a visa." So I took his advice and hopped the train without a visa but I wasn't detected. Nobody ever stopped me.

When I [arrived in] Berlin I looked up the mission headquarters there. It happened to be Thanksgiving Day the next day, an American holiday. Twelve of the elders didn't have to work. They were planning what they were going to do to celebrate Thanksgiving. They asked me to join them. The next day we hired a German orchestra [and] a theater troupe. We hired a banquet hall in the hotel right kitty corner from Kaiser [Wilhelm II's] palace that [had been] shot up. We spent our Thanksgiving dinner in this banquet hall and all afternoon the comic theater and orchestra entertained us. When we asked for our bill, it cost us \$.39 apiece in American money. So you can understand what the rate of exchange was and [this] was just prior to the German repudiating the mark. The Dawes Plan, [developed

by Charles G. Dawes for the American Reparations Committee, became effective] less than thirty days [later in 1924]. That was the condition of Germany [then]. You couldn't buy anything and take it over the border because it was all inspected.

I went from there down into Brussels [Belgium] and over to Paris [France]. I had been traveling so long without talking English that I got hungry and I [thought] the first fellow I see that [speaks] English I am going to make myself acquainted with him. I [rode] down to Ford [Railway] Station [West Sussex, England] and got off the train. The first man I heard talking to me was Japanese. I made myself acquainted and asked him what he was doing [here]. He happened to be a student from Harvard University [Boston-Cambridge, Massachusetts studying] in London. He came here to spend a week traveling. I said, "You are just the man I am looking for." We hitched up together and spent a week going from Paris out to different places of interest, [inaudible] de Marseilles and over to Southern France and the battlefields. He was one of these smart little Japs. He talked seven languages fluently. I got a lot of information [and] enjoyment because we would lie awake nights and talk.

After I had my visit, I went back to Southampton [England] and caught the boat for home. I stayed in New York [City, New York] a while and ran out of money. I remember I had to buy a sack of apples and a loaf of bread to eat from Chicago [Illinois] to Salt Lake [City]. [The ride] was about two or three days on the train then. They weren't running as fast as they do now. When I got to Salt Lake [City], I could get credit for food and some American clothing.

That is some of my missionary experience. When I [arrived] home, I started to work again for Nelson Mercantile Company. The manager and stockholder, Will Nelson, wanted to sell out. I finally decided to buy his stock and his home on Mt. Hope [in St. George]. I borrowed the money under my dad's signature and [purchased his] home up here. It wasn't modern by any means. We started out there. We had a couple of hundred chickens, three or four milk cows, bathed in a number three tub [with] no inside toilet. That is the way we started.

[The Nelson Mercantile Company] was in very bad shape [and had a lot of] debt. It was a rough row to hoe for a long while. I worked hard. I usually started to work at 6:00 or 7:00 in the morning [and stayed] sometimes as late as 10:00 at night. Then [I would] come home and milk cows, wash eggs for market and make butter. We had four lots. We were farming part of them, too. We really put in some [very] hard labor. But, in time, we got the business back on its feet [to] where we would buy merchandise and take [a] two-percent discount. From then on, it started to prosper a little.

In the meantime, my father had bought some stock [in the company from] one of the other stockholders. In the stockholders meeting, I was made manager of the corporation. I managed it for five or six years before my father and I together had

acquired all the stock of the company. Then The Depression of 1929 hit. It was very severe. It wasn't so hard on trading business, but my father was in the livestock and land business and it was hit very hard, especially livestock. [There were] not [any] sales for expenses and operation had to go on. So, actually, the trading business kind of helped support the livestock business. People had to eat [and] we had a [fairly] good trade by that time.

In 1931, we decided to incorporate. We [put] our stock together and my father put his land and livestock together and we formed what is known as the Mathis Market and Supply Company. From then on we got along [fairly well]. We prospered. [There were] a lot of hard roads but we finally got out of debt and out of The Depression.

Now we [have] branched off into a lot of different fields of endeavor, in addition to the ranch, farming and livestock. I was manager of the trading part and my other brother [Reed] helped with the cattle. I first went into [the] ice manufacturing business. Our basic [products] were meat and grocery.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

GM: I was quite successful [manufacturing ice]. [This] was before we had refrigerators. We had to deliver ice [to the homes]. Then I [added] ladies' ready-to-wear [clothing] to Mathis Market and Supply Company. My wife managed that department for some time. We used to go to market [inaudible] and buy ladies' ready-to-wear [items]. We managed [fairly] well [at that]. Then we went into [a] family shoe store, The Red and White Shoe [Store]. Prior to going into either [of] these businesses, we [were] in the cold-storage locker business. We had 380 individual cold-storage lockers. [Those] were about the first [lockers here]. [Frozen food lockers] were just starting and it worked out very [well]. Then we [got] a Frigidaire appliance agency [and] stocked appliances. I was overseeing a lot of businesses but I had good help and [was] more or less successful. [We had] a lot of ups and downs but [were] successful in [the end].

I had thirty-four years [of] business experience. Then I decided to lease the market, meat business and locker business to my son, Jack [Mathis]. He operated [the businesses] very successfully for five years. By that time, parking had become very scarce for the business world. [The city] didn't have any, only some street parking. As soon as the City [of St. George] inaugurated parallel parking, that just about wound up the business. After a couple of years of operating at a slight loss, we decided the game was too hard without [adequate] parking. I tried to sell the business with the stock but I couldn't find a sale. Parking was the stumbling block. I took my sold [inventory and] stock [in the store]. The building is still vacant, unsold, but still for sale. [Laughter] But [I am] still in the [farm] and livestock business.

As soon as I leased my trading business to Jack, I went into [the] finance business from 1954 up until two or three years ago. I was heavy into financing. The last three years I [have] kind of tapered off. I am hoping to taper off more from here on because, at age seventy, I think maybe I have had enough [of] business life. That is about the extent of my business career.

FH: It is about time that you ought to enjoy some of the things you want to do.

GM: That is right. Maybe it is [almost] too late for that.

FH: It is never too late for that.

[END OF RECORDING TWO.]

GM: I haven't mentioned any church activities. I have kept [fairly] close to the church all during my business life. I served five years in the bishopric when there were only two wards in town. I was connected for several years with the MIA. I [participated] in the stake Sunday school for a number of years and did quite a lot of traveling to different wards in the stake. I have been a home teacher throughout [my adult life]. [I] don't know of a time when I wasn't a home teacher. I served seven years of my life in the temple bureau and am still serving there. I have been a high priest instructor for about fifteen years. The last five years we have been officiating two days a week at the [St. George] Temple.

I have hardly taken time to create many hobbies. I like gardening. I have a good garden. Flowers are my wife's hobby and mine, too. I like them. I do a lot of fishing and hunting when I can get the time. [I do] a little traveling, not as much as I would like to. My wife doesn't like to travel. I do. We haven't traveled too much. I have been associated in a civic way with the [St. George] Rotary Club and we have done a little traveling with the Rotary Club. I have attended four international conventions. I used to go to all the district conventions in Rotary. I served as president of the Rotary and secretary. I [and] Dr. Wilford J. Reichman [are] the only two living charter members [of] the St. George Rotary Club. In a civic way, of course, the Rotary Club is civic; I have always been a member of the [St. George Utah] Chamber of Commerce and an active member in the American Legion. I served as commander of the American Legion for two years [and completed] a project that I [was very interested in]. That was acquiring the first fire engine for the City of St. George. I organized a volunteer fire department [during] the two years I was commander. That was my main ambition to get those two projects [completed]. [The city] still has the volunteer fire department and a lot more engines and a lot of other machines.

FH: Did you [participate] in sports?

GM: During my school days I played [on] all the class basketball teams. That was the main sport [that] I participated in. I was on the track team. We went to Beaver once [and] I remember taking second place in the discus throw. That was about

the only [time] I [placed] in a track meet. They used [to have the] broad jump [event] a lot in those days. I was far above the average in broad jump. I could out jump [almost] everyone. Very few could out jump me in broad jump. I have always been interested in hunting and fishing but never had much time for it.

FH: You were too busy! [Laughter] Have you enjoyed music?

GM: Yes, I like music very well. I purchased a banjo in England and took lessons over there in my spare time [from] a music teacher until I could string the hymns. My companion and I used to go on the street corner with this banjo and sing songs. That is about the only instrument that I learned to play and that not very good. I still have the old banjo that I bought in England.

FH: Was the banjo quite a well-known instrument in England?

GM: It was [fairly] well-known.

FH: What [do] you like to read? How has reading affected your life?

GM: When I went to England, we didn't get any religious training like they [receive] now prior to leaving for a mission. You were just taken raw and put in the field. I am telling you, I was really up against it. I had to get in and study. I didn't lose a minute's time studying [the] scriptures and authors in the church until I [had] a foundation [so] I could do some good over there. I was [fairly] raw at first.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

GM: I have always been interested in politics and law. I have not taken any active part in politics but I have been interested in the law. I passed a course after [I was out of] school under Orval Hafen in commercial law. He taught a [number] of town citizens in a class. After that, I got interested in commercial law [and] I did a lot of reading on that. [Also] I was particularly interested in history. I have taken several history classes at night [from Andrew] Karl Larson. The diplomatic history of the United States and [events] of that nature have particularly interested [me]. So my reading hasn't been novels. I like novels, but I have never taken time to read any.

FH: You [read books] that counted.

GM: I can content myself with reading something about history, something about political science, something about law. [Law] is my particular interest although I like lighter reading, too, even novels. I [would] enjoy them if I had time. I have never taken the time. I have read two or three novels but that's about the amount of my novel reading. They were based mostly on history.

FH: In your early life, what were your church activities? What organizations did you attend?

GM: I went through all the priesthood quorums.

FH: Were you an officer in some of your quorums?

GM: I can't recall whether I was an officer or not.

FH: Did you go to primary and have religion classes?

GM: Yes. In school we had religion classes.

FH: You were a regular [participant] in Sunday school and MIA. Were you active in those programs prior to your marriage?

GM: Yes. I was in the superintendence of the West Ward Sunday school early in life.

FH: Did you participate in baptisms for the dead in the temple?

GM: Yes. Just one occasion I can remember I went down and did baptisms for the dead for one day. That is all I can remember doing.

FH: What are some special things you remember about your father?

GM: My father was a cattle man, a livestock man, in early life. He was classified as one of the best in livestock and cattle breeding. He always took the lead and was ahead of the group that gathered [rounded-up] and ran cattle together. Later in life, after the boys were old enough to take over some of this work, he [did] some civic work. He [served on] the City [of St. George] council, was [on] the high council [and] went into banking. He, with [five or six] or other men, started what is known as the St. George Savings and Loan Association. He was the first president. He was president of the St. George Savings and Loan Association from its inception until three or four years before his death.

[The St. George Building Society was established in 1917...with the intention of building homes. Edward H. Snow, Hugh M. Woodward, Leo Snow, Wilford McArthur, Woodruff Cannon, Guy Hafen, Wallace B. Mathis and Thomas P. Cottam were the organizers. In [1950] the society changed its name to St. George Savings and Loan. — page 359, *A History of Washington County*, Douglas D. Alder and Karl F. Brooks]

FH: When [did] he die? [Wallace Brigham Mathis died in April 1965.]

GM: It has been about three years. He was on the board of the Bank of St. George from the time Edward H. Snow was president. Those were the very early days of the bank. He was on the board for about eight years before he became president. He

was president for about thirty years. He didn't retire from that until he was about eighty years old. He was [also] on the Utah Water [and Power] Board for six or eight years.

FH: What do you remember about him as your dad?

GM: I always thought he was about the wisest man on earth until I grew up and I thought I was wiser than he was. [Laughter] My father was not a particularly keen business man. He didn't help me much in my part of the business. He hadn't made a study of merchandising. He left that altogether up to me and my decisions were all final, although we held a regular stockholders meeting.

FH: Were you close to him?

GM: Yes, we were very close. We had disagreements on policies lots of times. Sometimes it [was] pretty hot, too. [Laughter] We were always compatible in the end. My father was quite a character. I don't classify myself as being close [like] him.

FH: What do you remember about your mother?

GM: Mother was from a family that was extremely religious. My father was not what you would call a right religious man although he was affiliated with the church and held many positions. He didn't spend the time, the dedication, which a lot of other men did with the church. But my mother was very dedicated. She held [almost] all the positions a woman would hold in the church in her life. She was a temple ordinance worker for twenty years. She is the one that kind of kept my father on the religious path as much as she could.

FH: She was a stabilizing influence. Did you feel close to your mother?

GM: Yes, very close.

FH: Tell about each of your children, starting with the [oldest] one.

GM: Dayne [Mathis], my oldest son, was born about five years after I came home from my mission. Dayne went through grade school. World War II [started] and he was drafted very young. He went in the [United States Army] Air Corps [and] was transferred to Denver [Colorado]. Paula and I went over to visit him once at Lowry Air [Force Base] in Denver before he was shipped overseas. He shipped overseas right at the very severest part of the war when submarines and ships were hard to stay afloat. He sailed the Atlantic [Ocean] and up the Mediterranean [Sea], down through Indian Ocean and back over to India. He was in the Air Force in India all during the war.

[Dayne] came home [fairly] well matured and decided to go to school. He went to the [Utah State] Agricultural College [in Logan, Cache County, Utah]. He chose the field of vocational agriculture. He liked the soil and still does. After he finished his schooling he worked for the government for a couple of years training young fellows in vocational agriculture. Then he went to Sevier Valley [Sevier County, Utah] and started his preparatory teaching there. He [became] interested in the country, liked it and has been there ever since. He has made quite a name for himself in Monroe [Sevier County, Utah]. He has been very active [in the] church all during his stay there. He was elected mayor of Monroe.

FH: Who did he marry?

GM: He married Muriel Cannon of St. George. He married her before he went to school. She went to school with him. He graduated [and] is now still teaching at Monroe High School. He transferred out of the government service into regular teaching so he could have his summers to farm. The other [position] was year round. He operates 125 acres of farm land. He had a dairy herd, but he recently disposed of the dairy herd. That was a little bit too tiring. Now he has gone into [a] feeding program. He has two boys, [they are] both over six feet high [and] stalwart boys [and] they help him. Now, I don't know whether you would call school teaching a side issue or whether you would call farming a side issue.

FH: Are the two boys all of his family?

GM: No, he has two girls. One of [of the girls] recently married. She is now in Texas with her husband who is in the [United States] Army. We had our first great-grandchild born about three months ago.

FH: What [about] the next child?

GM: Jack [Mathis] was born about two years later than Dayne. Jack was also drafted in the [United States] Army and spent most of his time in Germany until the war was over and then he was released. Jack, as I stated once before, leased Mathis Market Company for five years. He was a [fairly] good merchant. He [made] quite a lot of money there. He invested in Dixie Diesel, the big building that is out east of town [and] is part owner. He and another fellow are partners. He doesn't work there. He works with the [O. M. Porter] Bakery. He delivers bread on commission. He seems to like it and claims he can make more money doing that [and] he can hire a man to take his place at the Dixie Diesel. He doesn't like that kind of work, so he keeps the books and [does] their [bill] collecting. He [has] a contract [for the] bread delivery. Jack has a [fairly] good business head [and] he seems to be able to grasp [things] quickly. He has been interested in politics [and] government. He likes to talk about politics and government and he does a lot of reading on investments. He has made some investments in mutual funds and other stocks. That seems to be something he likes to do.

FH: [What] about his wife and family?

GM: [Jack] married Cleo Stucki from Santa Clara [Washington County, Utah] as soon as he came home from the [United States] Army. They have two girls and two boys [and] they are all doing well. They are especially good students. His oldest girl [Patricia] was in the top ten [and] recently graduated from high school a 100% A student. Harvey, the second boy, is an A student [and] is particularly interested in school. Russ, his youngest boy, is a little more [of an] outdoor boy. He is now at scout camp in Provo. He is sort of a leader among [the youngsters] his [age]. He likes to play ball. He was the star pitcher [on the] baseball [team] last season. I guess he will start again when he comes back this summer. His youngest girl, [Diane] the one I was playing pool with [when you came], is about eight [years old].

FH: [What] about that [next] one?

GM: [Richard] “Dick” [Mathis], the youngest, hasn’t had any military service. “Dick” and Jack were athletes. Jack was a star football player when he went to school.

FH: Are Jack and his wife also active in church activities?

GM: Yes, he is the president of the MIA now. “Dick” was an athlete, especially in basketball; he didn’t play football. He played basketball every year he was in high school. He went to the state tournament one year. I don’t know if they won the state tournament that year or not. He was a good basketball player. After [high] school, he went to BYU and [studied] business. [After] graduation [he went to California and] worked for the government [auditing contracts at Northwestern]. Then Jack Scholzen went to California to work and [asked] him [“Dick” to] help him in his business at Hurricane. He worked there for [three and one-half] years. Then the St. George Building Society got a hold of him and he has been there since [1960].

FH: What about his wife and family?

GM: [“Dick”] married Ferris Klienman from Hurricane and they have three girls and one boy. Ferris is a church worker [and] interested in MIA. The older two girls are especially popular dancers. They do a lot of public dancing. They are all active in church. “Dick” is clerk [for] the East Stake.

FH: Is there [any] particular thing we have overlooked?

GM: I think I have covered most everything that is important. There might be some experiences I have had that I passed up.

FH: [Have] there [been any] faith-promoting experiences in your early life?

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

GM: I remember one particular sickness that Willard Milne had as a child. [Do] you know who Willard Milne is? He is bishop of one of the wards in the East Stake. He wasn't expected to live as a very small child. Bishop Frank Miles and I were called to administer to him. President Miles was [the] bishop and I was a counselor. We went over to the Milne home and administered to him. It was almost miraculous how quickly he snapped out of it. He was right at death's door. [This] was quite a testimony to me. It just came to [my] mind now [about] another administration. About three or four years ago, "Dick" had his tonsils taken out. He started to hemorrhage. He didn't think much about it at the time, but they couldn't stop [the bleeding]. The doctor couldn't stop it. He [became very] weak and white [and] it scared him. It scared the doctor. He couldn't stop the blood. His wife asked for somebody to administer to him.

[END OF RECORDING THREE.]

GM: Bishop [Roland] Olsen was bishop of the ward at the time. Do you know Bishop Olsen? He is a temple officiator now. He asked me to come and help him. That is the first time I ever felt something just kind of jerk my whole system when I anointed him and Bishop Olsen sealed the anointment. Right after he [was finished], something just kind of jerked me and I felt so weak. I [was] almost faint. I felt that something left me in that administration. Right quickly, the blood stopped coming. From then on, he [was] fine.

FH: I think after this wonderful lifetime of experience and certainly wonderful training that you have gone through, you are so well-qualified to give counsel and advice to your children and those who are coming after you. Maybe you would like to conclude this by bearing your testimony.

GM: I can say that I am extremely proud of my boys and their families. I don't know how they could have come out better. I can't attribute too much to my instruction in their youth because it seemed that I was so busy and involved that I didn't have very much time. I certainly didn't have enough time to play with them. I will have to give my wife the credit for most of their young training. She did a wonderful job, too, because they played together. We all played together but not as much as we should. We didn't take time to go out camping, fishing and hunting as a lot of [families] do. I figured that by the time I got through a day's work I was about exhausted. Although [my] attention was more or less on business to the detriment of their training, I am so happy they turned out as good as they have with as little instruction as I gave them as young boys. They are quite a credit to me if I may take some of the credit because they are all taking an active part in the church and they are all quite successful in their business [and] livelihood. They [were] all married in the temple. I am quite happy with them. The only instruction I could leave with them now is to just continue what they are doing and improve on it if they can.

[END OF RECORDING FOUR. END OF INTERVIEW.]