

Interview with
MATILDA “MATTIE” (WOODBURY) RUESCH

May 18, 1968

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MATILDA “MATTIE” (WOODBURY) RUESCH

Matilda “Mattie” (Woodbury) Ruesch was interviewed on May 18, 1968 in St. George, Washington County, Utah by Fielding H. Harris, a representative of the Voices of Remembrance Foundation. She related her personal history of living in various part of Utah.

FH: Would you please give your full name?

MR: My full name is Matilda (Woodbury) Ruesch, but I have been called “Mattie.” People who knew me as a girl know me as “Mattie” Woodbury. Emil [J.] Graff over in Hurricane [Washington County, Utah] said to me one day when I was there shopping, “When you were a girl, people in St. George thought you were the smartest girl in St. George.” [Laughter] That is encouraging to some of us oldsters to think about something like that. I am not saying it is true, but it encourages you when you get along in years [as] I am.

FH: What is your birth date?

MR: [I was born] August 8, 1890.

FH: Where were you born?

MR: I was born in St. George [at] what is now the southwest corner of the [St. George] Tabernacle block.

FH: [What was] your father’s name?

MR: [His name was] John Taylor Woodbury, Sr.

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

MR: My grandmother was married twice. My grandmother was sealed to [her] second husband. My mother’s name was Mary Elizabeth Evans. That was her father’s name. Thompson was her stepfather’s name, the sealed name. Mary Elizabeth (Evans Thompson) Woodbury is the way [it is] read it in the temple.

FH: Can you recall some of the earliest events of your life?

MR: You will laugh at some of them! [Laughter] I attended kindergarten in Salt Lake City [Salt Lake County, Utah]. I have some of the [items] that I made in kindergarten.

FH: How did it happen that you attended kindergarten in Salt Lake [City] when you were born in St. George? Did you [move] up there soon after [your birth]?

MR: Yes, my father went up there to teach.

FH: Did he teach school?

MR: Yes, I [moved] there when I was a baby. I have a picture [of me] in my father's arms. My mother is rather short like me. She was peeking over his shoulder. [Laughter] A lot of the [children] had been giving me candy and my hands were sticky and I didn't like the feeling of it.

FH: Were you holding your hands out with your fingers stretched apart?

MR: Yes, because they were sticky.

FH: Tell about [attending] kindergarten in Salt Lake [City].

MR: We used to weave maps and [inaudible] cards. I [still] have some of those. [The teachers] put different colors on and holes in the cards. I have those. They are someplace in my albums.

FH: Tell about some of your experiences going to school? [What do] you remember?

MR: One thing I can remember quite visibly [happened] here in St. George. I did take some kindergarten work here. I was promoted twice. The first year I went to school, they [entered] me a year younger [on the record] than most of my classmates. This will make you laugh! We had boyfriends [who] used to claim us as their girls. They used to chase us around, catch us, hold us [for] our boyfriend to kiss us. We used to put our arms up above our face like this so they couldn't. The group of boys would pull them down and allow him to kiss us. [Laughter] I remember standing out on that porch there at [my son] Rondo [Ruesch's] home over on the south railing and looking at a ring I had that was given to me by one of my earliest boyfriends. [Laughter]

FH: How old were you then?

MR: [I was] about five or six years old, I guess.

FH: Do you recall anything about your home life when you were [young]?

MR: My father used to put me on his shoulder in that home. He would let me stand on his shoulder, reach up to the ceiling and touch it. That was one thing I used to do. In the evening we used to sit around the table and study or read. I remember sitting when I was about twelve years old; I made up a poem called *Kindness to*

Animals. They were offering a prize [at] the [Washington] County Fair for the best poem on kindness to animals. I happened to be the only one that entered so they gave [the prize] to me. Stake President George F. Whitehead said to me, “You didn’t write that poem.” That hurt my feelings so much I could hardly stand it. I didn’t want anybody to think I told a lie. I told my father about it. He told President Whitehead (he was in the stake presidency at the time) that he was sure I wrote it because we were sitting around together [with] the family [when] I wrote it. Shall I [recite] it?

Kindness to Animals

*Kindness to animals, my dear friends,
Is a thing to be practiced by all.
This is a thing in which oft times
Both men and children fail.*

*If you will treat your horses kindly,
They will always serve you better.
Always be gentle to your cows and
They will give more milk and butter.*

*To little boys, don’t kill the birds,
For our dear Lord knows what you do,
And every life your flipper takes
Will only tend to harden you.*

*A poor man once a lion met
In one of the forests of the world.
The lion came right up to him
And to the poor man his paw did hold.*

*He looked in the paw and found a thorn
Which he immediately pulled out.
The lion did not eat the man
But brought him food from the wild woods about.*

*For what we do for animals
We receive a great reward.
They do for us all that they can
When we are in need.*

FH: That is good. How old were you?

MR: [I was] twelve years old.

FH: You said you were a year younger than your classmates. Did this affect your schooling?

MR: In what way do you mean?

FH: Did it seem to make it harder in your social life?

MR: No, it didn't seem to.

FH: How much [education] did you get?

MR: I graduated from BYU [Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah County, Utah] in 1916. [Then] I taught school for a number of years. When I was past fifty years of age, the public welfare department [in St. George] asked me to go to Salt Lake [City to] take the social work course. They had so many people [who] were child welfare workers [that] would work a year or two. [Then] they would go away to marry or take [another] job. They wanted somebody [who] would stay with [the program]. They sent word up there that they thought I could do it.

Arthur [L.] Beeley, a supervisor in the child welfare [department] said, "You are too old." I was past fifty then. He said, "You wouldn't be resilient like the young people. You couldn't take on new ideas." I didn't say anything back to him but I felt that I could [as] I had lived out on the Arizona Strip. That is hard work. But I set aside an hour a day [for] constructive reading and I was able to remember a great deal. When I came back and reported to the public welfare office that he said I was too old to take on new ideas, Vernon Worthen, my cousin, [who] was the president at the time said, "We know you can do it. You go back up there and tell Arthur Beeley we want you to do it." He said, "Take your brother with you." My brother, Angus [W. Woodbury], was head of the biology department at the University of Utah [Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah]. He said, "Have [your brother] tell him that we want you to do it."

I took [my brother] with me. He told them that the [St. George] public welfare department wanted me to take the course. Right after that, Arthur Beeley had a nervous breakdown and [left.]. They put me under the care of Miss Hazel Peterson. All [of the] teachers up there were so kind to me. They helped me in every way they could. I remember standing up in Hazel's class one day and reading her a tribute. I said though she had never married I felt she had done more good in the world than many of us mothers [or] parents, because she had sent her message to many thousands of people.

FH: [Did you receive] a certificate or diploma [for] that course and also one from BYU? What was your [major] at the BYU? What did you prepare in?

MR: I was naturally interested in English and speech but I knew that I would do that anyway. In order to make myself so I would be a good homemaker, I majored in home economics. I have taught in the home economics department. I have taught cooking, sewing and physical education. [At] Hurricane [High School] I was head of the English and speech department. I put on many plays and I acted in [some of the] plays myself. Did you ever hear of [the] play *Mormon Girl* that was put on for tourists here in 1954, 1955 and 1956?

FH: No.

MR: I played [the role of the] mother of the children in that play.

FH: [Why] don't they put that on anymore?

MR: The fellow that conducted it married and he hasn't been doing anything about it.

FH: What grades and [where] have you taught [school]?

MR: I have taught from the first grade to the eighth grade. I also taught first and second years [of] high school. [At] Hurricane High School I taught [all] four years. Then I went out to Fredonia [Arizona] for three years to teach. My husband [William "Will" Ruesch, Jr.] wanted to take up some land in Fredonia and he couldn't do it without [establishing] residency requirements there. We were able to take up [a] homestead out there, a stock raising entry for 640 acres and a homestead entry for 120 acres.

FH: [Did] you prove up on the homestead?

MR: Yes. My first teaching [experience was] at Springdale [Washington County, Utah] in 1906-1907, 1907-1908 and 1908-1909.

FH: How old were you when you [began] teaching?

MR: I was only seventeen [years old] when I took the examination. I had a girlfriend who was a year older than I [was] who had taught school at LaVerkin [Washington County, Utah] the year before. She came by and said, "Mattie, let's go and take the teachers' examination." I said, "I am sure I couldn't pass it. I have never studied a minute for it." She said, "I think you can." So I took the examination and I passed it much to my amazement. When the Springdale [school board] trustees found I had passed it, they asked me to teach there. I taught there for three years. That was [inaudible].

That was before I was married. That is where I first met my husband, a young man. The next year he went to a school at Beaver [Beaver County, Utah] I think it was.

FH: Was he from Springdale?

MR: [He was] originally.

FH: [Did] you meet him while you were teaching school there?

MR: Yes.

FH: We want to know about it.

MR: [The] teachers used to play with the students after school. We would play baseball there on the grounds. We would [play] different [positions]. We would either be the class that was [up] or the ones that were out [in] the field. At one time, when William ["Will"] Ruesch Jr. was catching at my back, he kept saying the word, "Dammit! Dammit!" [Laughter] When we stopped and started to go back to the schoolhouse, I turned to him and said kind of shyly, "I am going to see if I can say what you said every other word." He said, "What?" I said, "I am going to see if I can say what you said every other word." He kept still and didn't say anything more. He was quiet. When he came around as a visiting teacher, he said he would cut his talk short. What he meant was talk short. He apologized for the kind of language he used to me and said he had already apologized to the girl [who] was with me.

FH: Who was she?

MR: LaRende Langston was a girl from Springdale. She married a man by the name of Wilson in St. George. [LaRende Langston married Henry Wilson.]

FH: After he apologized, then what happened?

MR: The next year he went away to school [in] Beaver and I [continued] teaching school in Springdale. I was attending BYU when he went on his [LDS] mission.

FH: Where did he go on a mission?

MR: [He went to] South Carolina. That is where he was when this picture was taken.. When I was attending BYU, I had a number of men friends but I was always very careful that I didn't kiss them unless I was engaged to them.

FH: Was that a rule you lived by?

MR: Yes. A Sunday school teacher we had said, "Girls, don't get the sweet rubbed off."

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

MR: What was I trying to tell?

FH: You were telling what happened after William Ruesch went on a mission.

MR: He went away to school [in] Beaver and, after he came back, I was attending Dixie [College] here [doing] my high-school work. He came and talked to me but I didn't know for sure just what I wanted to do. I didn't believe in encouraging a friend until I was sure. I didn't feel it was right to deceive [a person]. I think it was better to have different boyfriends. If you had different boyfriends [you had to] be careful that you didn't do things that you shouldn't do. Hold to your principles.

FH: Someone had trained you very well.

MR: Yes. Fanny Miles was the name of that Sunday school teacher. I had good training at home also. That expression [still] remains in my mind, "Don't get the sweet rubbed off." I wrote my love story later and this will be in my book. I have given my grandchildren copies of it. They wanted them.

FH: How long did it take you to find out he was the right one?

MR: Maybe I [was] jealous, I don't know what you would call it. He came back from his mission while I was at BYU attending school. I heard that he was student body president of the Dixie College at the time. He was keeping company with a girl. I had been on the police force when I was at the Dixie College and I had arrested her. She always seemed to have a grudge against me. [Laughter] I heard he was going with her and it may have made me a little bit jealous the way I expressed it. He had given me instructions [that] if I ever wanted him to come back to please let him know. I thought it over and thought it over and decided I didn't want to make any mistakes. So I wrote him a letter while he was president of the student body at Dixie [College]. [I] told him I [was giving] him plenty of opportunity not to respond if he didn't want to, to use his own judgment.

When the holidays came, I was still in Provo. I made the comment that he came on the run. [Laughter] There in the privacy of my sister Ann [(Woodbury)] and Barry Hafen's home, I was living with them at the time, he put a diamond ring on my finger. It wasn't very expensive but it was all he could afford at the time. As soon as I graduated, we were married on September 1, 1916 in the St. George Temple. I was small and didn't look very old but I was twenty-six [years old] when I married. He was nine months younger than I was. Somebody took me to be his younger sister once. [Laughter]

Our life together was one of hardship [for] me. I had never been used to the kind of life he wanted. He and Charles Petty, a merchant here, and Ray Galbraith, an attorney from Salt Lake [City], got together and decided to take up a homestead

on the Arizona Strip. The other fellows couldn't go out and live on it so they got "Will" to go out there and live. It proved to be a very hard life for me because I had never been used to such difficulties that I went through out there.

FH: What does it mean to prove up on a homestead?

MR: You had to live on the place for three years to get [a] title to it. Charles and Ray found they couldn't do it. They didn't have any residence requirements. After we had been out there, we decided it was too much to give up. So we took it up. The grazing entry was 640 acres and the homestead entry was 120 acres.

In the first years of our married life, when cars were very few and far between, we went to the sawmills up on Kolob [Mountain]. From there to the dry farm up at Upper Smith [Mesa] and from there to the Arizona Strip. [We] lived in a dugout. [This kind of living was] very hard on my strength, health and endurance, but I wanted to give my husband a chance to make good on the thing he desired so much. I used to do the best I could. I remember at one time we had to ride way out in the desert. It was a couple of miles on a horse. My first child, Rondo [Ruesch], was just a baby. He is the boy [who] lives up on the corner. I remember him saying, "What?" one day when he was a very young child. We were leaving the sawmill. At the dry farm we still had a hard life because we had to live in very difficult places. [It was] difficult [for] me. I was not very old, myself, but it was hard on me.

FH: Was it a kind of life you were unaccustomed to?

MR: Yes, it was a kind of life to which I was unaccustomed. I went to the dugout and lived in that place. Do you know what a dugout is?

FH: Could you describe it?

MR: It was a place dug out in the side of the hill. At each end there was dirt and up behind us it was dirt. We later built a top story to it. I used to have to descend on a ladder.

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

MR: We had a stove in the bottom part. It was so cold that you couldn't sit in the [area] below without feeling you would freeze. We used to churn milk from the cow. I would let it go sour. If I put it on the front of the stove, the bottle would break. If I put it on the back of the stove, it wouldn't be warm enough. I made a wire suspension and hung it from the rafter above so I could get the warmth of the heat [vapors] that went up [from the stove] so the milk would sour. I would take the bottle and shake it until the butter broke. Do you know what I mean by that?

FH: Yes, until it had flakes of butter in it.

MR: My second boy, David Ruesch, when he would see me doing that, would say with a lilt in his voice, "Making butter!" He is my boy over in Hurricane who has a laundermat there. I have written [about] a lot of experiences in between.

FH: Didn't you end up north of town with some [members] of your family gathering pine nuts?

MR: Yes, we used to do that.

FH: [Did] you have an experience with a rattlesnake?

MR: Yes, I did.

FH: Can you tell about that?

MR: Yes. Our family, my father and his brothers and sisters, used to get together and we used to go on trips up in the mountains in our covered wagons. We girls would gather pine gum [by] chipping it off the trees and let it fall down on the ground. Then we would pick it up. Before we went on those trips, my cousin Lenny Worthen and I and several other cousins knelt down together and asked the Lord to take care of us and safe from [anything] harmful. That day I chipped the pine gum from the tree and let it fall on the ground. I stooped to pick it up and there was a rattlesnake. Oh! I was frightened to death! I tried to get out of the way. I got by without getting bitten by the snake. We felt very thankful.

Another time, while we were out on one of those trips, we climbed to the top of the mountain and walked down. One day I caught my foot in a bush and tripped. I couldn't get [loose]. The boys were throwing rocks from the top of the hill. I heard one coming but I couldn't move [because] my foot was tangled [in the bush].

FH: Were they rolling big rocks down?

MR: Yes. I prayed in my heart for my Heavenly Father to protect me. The next moment I heard the rock bounce over the bush [and land] right below me. Oh, I was so thankful! It was wonderful to me.

FH: [Do] you have some other experiences that you want to talk about?

MR: I had a teacher named Mollie Judd. She was the wife of Thomas Judd. He had two wives. The second wife had only one child. His name was Bert [Judd]. One time I was asked by his children to make a tribute and tell of my experience with Aunt Mollie Judd. She was one of my beloved teachers. She only had the one child. We

used to sing songs during the reunions we had together. My father wrote a long poem and Aunt Leonora [(Woodbury)] Worthen, Vernon Worthen's sister, wrote another one. I have always treasured those two poems.

FH: Does that mean that Vernon Worthen is your cousin?

MR: Yes, my first cousin. His mother is my father's sister. Grandma, Ann (Cannon) Woodbury, used to work in the temple. She used to ride in the temple wagon from her home to the temple. When I was going to be baptized, I remember very distinctly how she leaned from one person to the other in the wagon. She said, "She was eight yesterday! She was eight yesterday!" She was so thrilled that I was going to be baptized the day after my birthday.

FH: Were you baptized in the St. George Temple?

MR: Yes.

FH: At that time, were all of the children baptized there?

MR: That was the usual place at that particular time. If they were in another region, they were not [baptized there].

FH: Sure. That is an honor to remember that. [Can you] tell about your social work?

MR: When I took my course in social work, I lived at my brother, Angus [W.] Woodbury's, home on University Avenue [in Salt Lake City.] That was quite a number of blocks down to school. We had to visit in certain homes at the time. One day I was due at a certain home at a certain hour. I knew I was going to be late if I didn't get a ride. I had nerve enough to wave to some fellow that was driving down University Avenue to the street [of] the home. My daughters were astounded when they found that I had done such a trick as that.

FH: [Laughter]

MR: [Inaudible] [Laughter] I had to keep my appointment. I didn't want to miscue on that. So I did it! I [received] my certificate for social work on April 15, 1941. There wasn't a [job] opening until the next year. I started doing social work in 1942. I worked for thirteen and one-third years.

FH: Where all did you work?

MR: At first I worked up and down the state. Later, I did most of my work in Iron and Washington Counties. One year I [worked] about eleven months in Iron County. The rest of the time was [spent] in Washington County. I used to drive my car all around the county and visit certain homes. My [approach] most of the time [was

to] look for the good I could find in my clients. Instead of going in and accusing a new client of neglecting a child, I would look around and [observe] all the good [points] I could about that parent. I would tell [them] of the good qualities that I saw. I would say, “You can’t afford to blind people of all the good qualities for that one little mistake.” It seemed to have good results. I suppose that had something to do with my receiving —

FH: That was good psychology you were using.

MR: I tried very much to do that; to find the good in people and tell them about it. That is what is expressed in my *Prayer For Parents*. I gave Fern [(Jones)] Cannon a copy of my *Prayer For Parents*. I have copies here someplace that I will loan you. [Inaudible]

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: Maybe you would like to give some of your poems.

MR: I had to help organize the Alice Louise Reynolds Club. Later, when they were going to honor some of the founders from [inaudible] Chapter Sixteen, they asked those who had help found the club to write an expression or thoughts that had inspired us of our creed. I wrote:

“To serve, to grow, to seek beauty, goodness and truth everywhere, to help to have happiness and peace, encourage humanity to recognize sincere effort ever so small, to be honest and humble enough to admit a mistake, to accept with gratitude sincere criticism whatever the source, to avoid the self-righteous holier-than-thou attitude and the ignorance and arrogance of condemnation without investigation, to practice the reality of democracy without condescension, to be ever mindful of the warning judge not that ye be not judged, to think for myself, to be thankful whatever my lot, to be mindful of the great eternal laws and trust in God.”

FH: That is really nice.

MR: Thank you.

FH: Turn back to page 83 [and read] *The Director’s Orders*.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: You said you were teaching a class in Sunday school and you used this poem that you had written.

MR: Yes. I got the bishop’s approval before I gave the class members copies.

Help Me To Learn

*Help me to learn with my child the power of love greater than the atomic bomb.
Help me in his growing up to hold his respect and confidence by insisting
[inaudible] firmness and calmness on obedience to a few fundamentals of right
living.*

*Help me to stand by with wise counseling in his struggle as a free agent to ensure
his freedom and eternal joy.*

Help us to celebrate his successes and forget his mistakes.

Help this family not only to work together but to pray, play and stay together.

Thank thee, Father.

Walter Brooks and I were teaching that class. What page is *The Director's Orders*?

FH: That is on page 83.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

MR:

The Director's Orders

*Oh, Dixieland, is the place that pa tells
all about when he is talking to ma.
When ma listens and don't get mad,
'cuz she wants to hear about that pretty bad.*

*Pa just heard about that one day
When the cold north wind was blowing our way.
Then ma got sick with arthritic pains
And pa walked in the snow and got chilblains.*

*And the doctor said, "Take the highway lanes
Down to Utah's Dixie to nice warm sunny Dixie, oh!
Pa thought and thought about this plan
And yelled to ma, "I believe we can!"*

*Then he 'llowed there would be no checks
To which Glen Lee said to him, "What the heck
Do you think we are made of in these here parts?
Why we have all the arts."*

*We will just transfer your case down there.
There will be plenty of sunshine and good fresh air.
You can sit on the porch in your old wheelchair
In nice warm sunny Dixie, oh!*

*My daddy and mommy didn't have any clothes
'Cept some thin old rags [inaudible] in the snow.
The money was cut and commodities gone
And I didn't have any shoes to put on.*

*The walls were thin and the trailer was old
Outside or in was just awfully cold.
So the director said, "Take your trailer and go
Down to St. George, there ain't no snow.*

*You can live outside and go barefooted too
In nice warm sunny Dixie, oh!"*

*My mom and pop didn't like each other
And run out at night and left me and brother.
'Till the director said, "Go to Dixieland.
Stir around on the nice warm sand.*

*Sit in the shade of the blossoming trees.
Look at the temple and around the [inaudible]
While you fall in love all over again
You will watch your kids like an old mother hen.*

*And I can transfer your case for you then
To nice warm sunny Dixie, oh!"*

*We were all down here in the nice warm sun
But we might come back to you one by one.
The sun is getting hotter day by day.
The sand burns my feet when I go out to play.*

*[Inaudible] starts to scorch
Ma would be so sick she couldn't sit on the porch.
But mostly we are lonesome for Clarence and Glen
Goodbye Katie, Anna, Mattie, and JoAnn
They are not a bit like Mr. Callahan*

*And the rest of them folks us there.
Goodbye, hot scorching Dixie, oh!*

FH: That is nice. Are there some special things about your parents that you would like to [mention]? What do you remember most about them?

MR: My father was a very good teacher and a very understanding father. He was kind to us. Mother hadn't had a great deal of schooling, but she had lived in homes and learned a great deal about homemaking, sewing and cooking. She was able to do many things that people who had a [lot] of schooling were not able [to do]. She lived to be ninety-two years of age. Her hair was black most of [those years].

FH: That is unusual.

MR: Yes, it is. She had the ability to relax. Her sister, Louise (Evans) Wilson, used to give dressmaking lessons to the very best-dressed women in Salt Lake City. Mother had learned to sew and was quite skilled.

FH: What about your own family and home life? You were married in the St. George Temple. Did you live in St. George after you married?

MR: The first year we were married, I taught [school] at Dixie.

FH: At Dixie High School or Dixie College?

MR: It was Dixie Junior High School. I taught sewing, cooking and physical education. I [taught] some speech and English [also]. I used to direct plays and put [them] on. I put on *The Laughing Cure* in three different communities. When I was teaching in Fredonia, I put it on there. [Inaudible] Judd took the part of the wife who was a hypochondriac. In Hurricane, Rachel Petty took that part and in St. George [inaudible] took that part. The woman thought she was sick all the time and went around with a mournful look on her face. The doctor told her that there wasn't anything wrong with her. He prescribed a laugh for her every half-hour. She had forgotten how to laugh! She had to go to the mirror and practice. She was told to turn up the corner of her mouth when she laughed and down when she was frowning.

FH: Is Rondo [Woodbury] your oldest child?

MR: Yes.

FH: [Who] are the rest of your children?

MR: David [Ruesch] is the owner of the laundermat [in] Hurricane. He was down here the other day and took the heavy furniture out of the way. I didn't want it and it was [on] my patio. He picked it up and got rid of it. Both [of the boys] had some schooling in high school. Zona [Ruesch], the third child, works at Graff's Store [and] had quite an experience. She has an antique home in the canyon. I have

given her quite a bit of old furniture to take up there. I have some more that I want her to take. I gave her my mother's old sewing machine, [from the] Domestic [Sewing Machine Co.]. It ran by foot treadle. Joy's [Ruesch] husband is the athletic director and also teaches [at] Fredonia High. Joy has taught there [too]. One year I wanted a typewriter. She wanted a new typewriter to do genealogy work, so she gave me her old one. I went out there and stayed a month and helped her [in return]. Previous to that, I took a typewriter from the school out with the antelope and practiced until I could type. I learned how, but now I am out of practice. I want to get back [to it]. I depend on my girls so much. I don't expect the proficiency they [have]. I used to do the newsletters on the typewriter and send them around to the different places.

FH: What is the name of Rondo's wife?

MR: [Her name is] Marjorie (Leonard) [Ruesch].

FH: And David's wife?

MR: He married Nola (Wilson) [Ruesch]. Her parents are Ben and Susie Wilson and live in Hurricane. Zona [married] Calvin Wright. [His] mother is Annie Wright [and she lives] in Hurricane. Joy married John Bennie Jordan. [Inaudible] Our youngest [child] was Rozelle (Ruesch) Seastrand. They live in Las Vegas Nevada]. Her husband is Stake President in North Las Vegas.

FH: What is his first name?

MR: His name is James Kent [Seastrand]. This is a picture of them when they were married.

FH: How many grandchildren do you have?

MR: I have thirty grandchildren and ten great-grandchildren.

FH: That is already quite posterity!

MR: It isn't as many as some people have.

FH: I know, but that is quite a few. How old are you?

MR: I will be seventy-eight in August [1968].

FH: You are still [very] active and doing your own work.

MR: I am trying to! I have been doing too much heavy lifting lately. I am not doing cleaning yet. [I] don't have to tell you that! You can see that I am not. My first

object was to organize things. I have heard it quoted, “Order is heaven’s first law” and “Cleanliness is next to Godliness.” I have been trying to organize so that I would have a place for everything and everything in its place.

FH: That was a motto that my father used to have. [Laughter]

MR: Do you remember V-I-A that means by way of?

FH: Yes.

MR: I have used that as a foundation and have put several other [words] with it. Going backward in the alphabet: visualization, organization, observation, imagination, exaggeration, —

[END OF RECORDING TWO.]

MR: — concentration and association as well as memory helps. [Laughter]

FH: Is your family fairly accessible?

MR: Yes, they are reasonably so.

FH: Is Las Vegas about as far away as anyone [lives]?

MR: Yes. The roads are being improved and it doesn’t take [as] long to go and come like it used to.

FH: Do you have them all come home once [in] a while?

MR: We have a family reunion occasionally. I remember one we had out at Antelope [Island State Park, Utah] a year or two ago. I [am not] as active as I used to be in my younger days. My son and my son-in-law made a place for me to sit on their hands.

FH: Did they make a chair carrier for you?

MR: They made a chair carrier for me. It was quite a help [for] me to be able to do that.

FH: Do they look after you [fairly] good?

MR: They are [very] good to me. They telephone me. Rozelle telephoned on Mother’s Day from Las Vegas and Zona [called] from Hurricane. I told Zona and “Cal” not long ago that I didn’t expect them to take me into their home for their Christmas celebration because they had too many of their own children. I didn’t want them to do it.

I am giving these to Zona. They still have a few more things to take from the patio. There is an old box that my mother used to use as a storage place. It has had some plastic material on the outside of it. [Zona] does that kind of work herself in Hurricane. I told Zona she could take it up there and have it in her antique home if she wanted to. When I was at the sawmill I had a place that I used at the top of my closet. It was kind of a store room and I made a couch that was crossed at the bottom like that and had a curtain down over the side of it. I made a little pad for the top of it and inside was a place I could store things. [Inaudible]

FH: I am going to ask you another question or two and then I want you to pursue another thought in your life.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: You have a poem that you memorized and have [recited] on occasion called *Kentucky Bell*. Could you [recite] that for me?

MR:

KENTUCKY BELL

*The summer of '63, sir, Conrad was gone away.
Gone to the county town, sir, to sell our first load of hay.
We lived in a log house yonder, poor as ever you've seen.
Roscoe there was a baby and I was only nineteen.*

*Conrad, he took the auction and left Kentucky Bell.
How much he thought of Kentucky you couldn't begin to tell.
If you came to the blue grass country my father gave her to me
When I rode north with Conrad away from the Tennessee.*

*Conrad lives in Ohio, a German he is, you know.
The house stood in broad corn fields stretching on row after row.
The old folks made me welcome. They were kind as kind could be.
But I kept longing, longing for the hills of the Tennessee.*

*Oh, for a sight of water, the shadowed slope of a hill,
Clouds that rest on the summit, a wind that never is still.
But the level land went stretching away to meet the sky
With never a rise from north to south to rest the weary eye.*

*No river to shine out under the moon,
Nothing to make a shadow in the yellow afternoon.
Only the breathless sunshine as I looked out all forlorn.*

Only the rustle, rustle as I walked among the corn.

*When I fell sick with pining we didn't wait anymore,
But moved away from the corn lands out to this river shore.
The Tuskerora as it is called, sir, out there is a hill you see.
And now I have grown to like it next best to the Tennessee.*

*I was at work one morning when Conrad was gone away.
Baby laughed and prattled playing with spools on the floor.
Kentuck was out in the pasture. Conrad, my man, was gone and
Nearer, nearer Morgan's men were galloping, galloping on.*

*I picked up baby and ran to the cow pasture bar.
"Kentuck," I called. "Kentucky." She knew me ever so far.
I took her off to the gully that turns out there to the right
And tied her up to some bushes, her head was just out of sight.*

*As I ran back to the log house at once there came a sound.
The ringing of hoofs, trembling hoofs, coming over the ground.
Coming in to the turnpike out to the [inaudible] glen,
Morgan, Morgan the raider and Morgan's terrible men.*

*As near they drew nearer, my heart beat fast in alarm
But still I stood in the doorway with baby on my arm.
They came, they passed. With whip and spur in haste they sped along
Morgan, Morgan the raider and his band six hundred strong.*

*Wearied [inaudible] and jaded riding through night and day
Pushing on east to the river many long miles away.
To the border strip where Virginia fords up into the west, and
Ford the upper Ohio before I could stop to rest.*

*On like the wind they hurried and Morgan rode in advance.
On like the wind he hurried as he gave me a sideways glance.
I was just reeling freely after my choking pain
When the last one of the troopers suddenly drew his rein.*

*Frightened to death I was, sir, I scarcest dare look at his face
As he asked for a drink of water and glanced around the place.
I gave him a cup and he smiled, sir. It was only a boy, you see.
Faint and worn with dim blue eyes and he sailed on the Tennessee.*

*Only sixteen he was, sir, a fond mother's only son.
Off and away with Morgan before his life had begun.
The damp drops stood on his temples and drawn was the boy's mouth,*

And I thought me of the mother waiting down in the south.

*Oh pluck was he, the backbone and clear grit through and through.
Boasted and bragged like a trooper but the big words wouldn't do.*

*The boy was dying, sir, dying as plain as plain could be
Worn out by the ride with Morgan up from the Tennessee.*

*When I told the laddy that I too was from the south,
Water came in his dim eyes and quivers around his mouth.
"Did you know the blue grass country?" he wistfully began to say,
Then swayed like a willow sapling and fainted dead away.*

*I got him to the log house and worked and brought him to.
I fed him and coaxed him as I thought his mother would do.
When the lad got better, the noise in his head was gone,
Morgan's men were miles away galloping, galloping on.*

*"Oh, I must be up," he muttered. "I must be up and away.
Morgan, Morgan is waiting for me. Oh, what will Morgan say?"
Then I kept him back from the door,
The ringing sound of horses' hoofs that I had heard before.*

*On came the soldiers, the Michigan cavalry,
And fast they rode and Black they looked galloping rapidly.
They had followed hard on Morgan's track, followed day and night.
But of Morgan and Morgan's raiders they never caught a sight.*

*[Inaudible] startle to all those summer days
For strange wild men were galloping over her broad highways.
Now here, now there, now seen, now gone,
Now north, now east, now west.*

*The river valleys and corn land farms sweeping away her best.
But they were taken at last.
They almost reached the river by riding hard and fast.
But the boys in blue were upon them where they had gained the ford
And Morgan, Morgan the raider, laid down his terrible sword.*

*Well, I kept the boy until evening, kept him against his will,
But he was too weak to follow and sat there pale and still.
When it got cool and dusky you will wonder to hear me tell
That I strode down that gully and brung up Kentucky Bell.
I kissed the star on her forehead, the pretty gentle lass
But I knew that she'd be happy back in the old blue grass.
A suit of clothes of Conrad's with all the money I had*

I gave to the worn out lad.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

*When Conrad came in the evening, the moon was shining high.
Baby and I were both crying. I couldn't tell him why.
But a battered suit of clothing gray was hanging on the wall
And a thin old horse with drooping head stood in Kentucky's stall.*

*Well, he was kind and never once said a harsh word to me.
He knew I couldn't help it. 'Twas all for Tennessee.
And just think when the war was over, just think what came to pass.
A letter, sir, and the two were safe back in the old blue grass.*

*The lad had got across the border riding Kentucky Bell
And she was thriving and fat and hardy and well.
He cared for her and kept her nor touched her with whip or spur.
Ah, we have had many horses but never a horse like her.*

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

MR: One that my grandchildren ask for the most of all is *Little Ah Sid*.

Little Ah Sid

*Little Ah Sid was a Chinese kid and a cute little cuss I declare.
With eyes full of sin and a nose that began right up the roots of his hair.
Jolly and fat was this frolicsome brat as he played through the long summer day.
And he braided his queue as his father used to in China land far, far away.*

*Once [inaudible] that Ah Sid played upon a bumblebee flew in the spring.
"American butterfly," he said with winking eye. "Me catch him and pull off the wings."
Then in his cap he hid in a wrap this innocent bumblebee
And put the remains in the seat of his jeans where a pocket there had the Chinese.
Then down on the green sat the little sardine and his smile was strangely demure
And said with a grin that was brimful of sin, "Me mashing American butterfly
sure."*

*Now Little Ah Sid was only a kid nor could you expect him to guess
What kind of bug he was holding so snug in the folds of his loose fitting dress.
"[Inaudible]" cried Little Ah Sid as he hurriedly rose from his spot.
"[Inaudible] American man butterfly very much hot."
Did you understand it? [Laughter]*

FH: You bet! That is real good! [Laughter]

MR: [Inaudible]

FH: I want you to sing the first verse and chorus of [the] song that you wrote the words for — words by “Mattie” Woodbury and music by Ned Harvey. *Just Innocent Pretense* is the name of it.

MR:

Just Innocent Pretense

*It's evening time and a pretty miss happens along your way.
You have other work but an errand you insist must be done that day
Or else your outside work you perform instead of the usual time.
Just as the miss is going home from her day's work up in town
Just innocent pretense, no offense is meant for anyone today.
Lovers small and lovers tall do this way.
You'll be always found while the world goes round
No matter what people say.
Of innocent pretense, no offense but the world will have its way.*

That is just one verse and the chorus.

FH: Do you want to do the other verse?

MR: Not necessarily. I had my seventh grade boys sing that out at Short Creek [Arizona] once [inaudible] and gave it.

FH: How long ago was it that you taught out there?

MR: That was after I had retired from everything else. They heard that I was retired and they had had a teacher from Salt Lake [City who] couldn't pass the examination. They knew I had a life diploma so they asked me [to do] it. I said, “I [have] just retired and I have so many things I want to do at home.” I just couldn't do it. But they kept coming back and finally I said, “If you will give me two weeks to prepare, I will come out.” There was just seven months [in the school year] left. I went out there and taught. I had a very hard time because they didn't have any electricity at the time. I used to reach way down into the bottom of a well to pull up water, take it in the schoolhouse, put it in a bucket and let the [children] have it there. We had an old cook range. I had a hot water bottle. They got me a camp bed that I used to sleep in and I would put that hot water bottle at my feet to keep me warm when I was in the camp bed.

When I first went there I reorganized their library but I didn't have any light to [use]. I used to go over there at nighttime and take a lantern with me. When I came back, I had a pair of flashlights that would show me the [road]. It was quite

hard [to] do but I used to make it. I reorganized their library. I had the books all organized into a way [so that] they could find what they wanted. When the end came, they gave me a tribute. It was made by the mothers of the people whose children I had taught school and they —

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

MR: After my year's teaching was over, they wanted me to come back but I told them I had so many things to do at home that I just couldn't take the time to do it. But the parents all got together and made — I have it someplace in my record — a tribute and an acrostic [with] my name, "Mattie" Ruesch, on it. It was a white pasteboard with pansies pictured on the front in colors. Inside was the acrostic and this is what it said:

*M is for the mother she is to all her students,
A for her ability to handle them with prudence,
T is for the tireless way she struggled bit by bit,
T is for the training we hope they gained from it,
I is for her interest in people large and small,
E is for her energy in trying to show them all.*

*R is for the richness she finds in daily living,
U for understanding and kindness of her giving,
E for effervescence with a soul that's always young,
S is for the songs she writes and all that she has sung,
C is for the charity and greatness of her heart,
H is for the hope we have that when we are far apart*

*She can still forgive us for our uncherished ways.
We will remember Mattie Ruesch in dear thoughts all our days.*

The girls would try to give me presents like vases. I said, "Girls, you take it home. You need the money for something else. Don't do that." But when they gave me this, I said, "This is one of the best things I ever had. I wouldn't offer this back." It is a lovely thing. That is [when] I quit teaching and quit doing welfare work as well.

FH: After all this lovely lifetime of service and working, maybe there are some things you would like to say to your posterity [who] come after you in the way of counsel and advice. Then bear your testimony to them.

MR: I have tried to set a good example for my children. I haven't had a great deal of time. After my husband died, I had to spend so much of my time earning a living that I didn't have a great deal of time to do things for them.

FH: When did he die?

MR: [He died] March 30, 1938.

FH: How did he die at that early age?

MR: He had been out on the ranch and [was] branding a cow. [Something] caused him to have an accident. He was referred to the doctor and had to take medicine. My sisters had come up from California [to] see me. We had a picture taken of the family group reunion, me and Willard Ellis and his wife, Louie, my youngest sister, and Mary Adams, my next youngest sister. I looked so sallow in my complexion and so ill they said we are going to take you home with us down to California. My husband gave his consent. While I was gone, he was left to do his own cooking. I took the two youngest children with me. They were just babies at the time, Joy and Rozelle. They were young and hardly two years between them. It was quite a job. It made such a job for my sisters [and] it worried me because they caused so much extra work [as] babies.

“Will” had his first heart attack. I was gone and nobody told me a thing about it. When I came home and heard about the situation, I took him to Dr. McGregor and had him checked. [He] said [he] would give him two weeks to live. I took him to [Dr.] Parley Harris who was a chiropractor [and] kind of a nature doctor. After he had given him some treatments I got “Will” to leave off [stop taking] all [the] medicines. There was one he wouldn’t give up and that was digitalis. He lived after I got him to give up most of his medicines and [with the] help from the chiropractor. He lived [for] four [more] years after that.

FH: It did help.

MR: Yes, it did help a great deal. When he passed beyond, he was in town and I was out at the ranch. I had to go back to the ranch to work with my boys, Rondo and David. [David] was seventeen [years old]. Rondo, David and Zona were ages seventeen to twenty [years old]. The two boys had to go back out there to work. I used to go out with them [to] keep things going for them. “Will” was in here getting his treatments. Jill Inglestead went out with me the first week after he died. You don’t know her, do you?

FH: No, I am not acquainted with her.

MR: She went out with me and stayed a week after he passed on. She was so sweet to me and so kind. It surely was a comfort to have her out there. But I had to come back because the work had to be done. It couldn’t be left for long days at a time. You still had to work out there on the ranch and keep it going.

FH: Was this hard work for you as well as the children?

MR: Yes it was. The boys [were] used to it. I remember I used to ride horseback a great deal. My youngest daughter [Rozelle] was four years old when she [started] to ride horseback. She used to go outside and would come running up and down the lane on a horse. Tourists would go by. They would hold their breath for fear she was going to fall off. She wanted to make them aghast so when she got up there she had [the horse] stand up on its hind legs. They would, “Ohhh,” again. [Laughter]

A year after “Will” died I used to go out there and keep a garden. I made a nice garden there. The boys had other work they had to do. I bottled [canned] 300 quarts of green beans one year. I used to serve them to tourists [who] would pass by. My mother and father used to come out [to] help me. They used to bring me bottled fruit. They lived up on that corner.

FH: I noticed in your record you had a chapter entitled *My Quest for Health*. Would you talk about that?

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

MR: When I was a young teenage girl Dr. [Frederick] Cliff of St. George cut and burned [some] growths from my nose and throat. I walked the yard all that night in painful agony. When I went to the sawmill before we had cars to any extent, it took us two days to ride up in a wagon [and] two days to come back. Much of the time we had to [go] without good, fresh food, good, fresh, live, vital food, [like] an orange. I remember when I was there at the sawmill I felt so hungry. I became pregnant with my second boy, David. It was less than two years from the time Rondo had been born. I couldn’t eat a mouthful I was so sick at my stomach. I was so hungry. I felt starved for something like oranges or apples, something of that nature. I remember one day I was up there trying to iron or something of that nature and I became so faint that I went out of my head. I lost consciousness for a short time. When I came to, my husband was there with Howard Ruesch . They had consecrated oil and were giving me a blessing with it. I came back to consciousness and felt a great deal better.

[END OF RECORDING THREE. END OF INTERVIEW.]

[Howard Ruesch was a first cousin to William “Will” Ruesch, Jr.. He had a brother, Hiram, who told me he worked at a sawmill on Kolob when William “Will” and Matilda “Mattie” Woodbury Ruesch were there. — Added during editing by J. L. Crawford – May 2006.]