

Interview with
CLARA REESE (ALEXANDER) NISSON

November 22, 1968

**VOICES OF REMEMBRANCE FOUNDATION
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

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CLARA REESE (ALEXANDER) NISSON

Clara Reese (Alexander) Nisson was interviewed on November 22, 1968 in Washington City, Washington County, Utah by Fielding H. Harris, a representative of Voices of Remembrance Foundation. She related her personal history of living in various parts of Utah. Her husband, Edward "Ed" Francis Nisson, also participated.

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

CN: My full name is Clara Reese (Alexander) [Nisson]. Reese was my mother's maiden name.

FH: [What is] your birth date?

CN: [I was born] August 22, 1885.

FH: [Where were] you born?

CN: [I was born] here in Washington [City, Washington County, Utah].

FH: What was your father's name?

CN: My father's name was Moroni Woodruff Alexander.

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

CN: [Her name was] Martha (Reese) [Alexander]. She came here [using] the name of Thomas. Her father and his father had trouble before they came here and he took the Thomas [name]. [My] grandfather's name was [Henry] Thomas Reese. He took the Thomas [name] and left the Reese [name] off. Mother was married [using] the name of Thomas.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: Tell about some of the [events] that happened to you when you were a [young] girl.

CN: When I was about four years old, we lived up [at Moccasin Spring, Arizona]. My father owned the Moccasin Spring out there. His father [Randolph Alexander, II] went out there and bought it from the Indians. He left father and another one of his brothers [Murphy] there to run the cattle and the horses. They came here from Salt Lake [City, Salt Lake County, Utah]. They lived up in Big Cottonwood Canyon when they first came to Utah. When they came down here, he had to find someplace where they could put their horses and cattle. He [bought] this spring

from the Indians. There was an old moccasin floating around in the water in that spring. That is why they call it Moccasin Spring. My mother told me that [story]. She went right out there. He [my father] met her out on the Emigration Trail coming [into the Salt Lake Valley]. He was in [the] Lot Smith [Handcart] Company that went to help the [emigrants]. The Indians had already burned their mail stations, killed a lot of emigrants and cut the lines that took the telegraph to California and around [the area]. As soon as he was off of [the] Lot Smith [Handcart] Company, [he went] with some other men back to help the emigrants [come] into [the Salt Lake Valley]. That is where he met my mother.

FH: Was she coming in one of the [other] companies?

CN: She was coming in with one of those companies with this fellow [named] Daniel [Duncan] McArthur from St. George [Washington County, Utah]. [That] is the man she was coming with [at that time]. She had a very dear friend [who] came with her. Her name was Polly Lewis. Polly's brother decided that he wanted to marry her [my mother] while he was on that trip. [However], when he got to Salt Lake [City], he found another little girl that he thought he liked better so he did not marry her [mother]. Mother begged father to marry her [Polly] in polygamy. Father would not do it. He said, "No." He would not take any woman into polygamy. One wife is all he could support and that is all he wanted. She married a wonderful man up in Beaver [Beaver County, Utah]. [His last name was] Lilywhite. I do not know if you have ever heard of the family or not, but they lived in Beaver.

FH: Yes. The name is familiar [to me]. Tell some of the experiences of your early life. What happened to you when you were [a] little [child]?

CN: When I was [young], there was not much to do. There was all the mischief that little [youngsters] get into. I was the last of my mother's children. She had ten [children] and I was the last one. The [child] next to the oldest [child] was a brother [Samuel Lot Alexander]. He was not very much fun for to play with [when I was a child]. He did not care —.

FH: [He did not care for] the things that a girl would want [to do]?

CN: No. I played with the [other] children. We [played] Hide and Seek and all those [games]. [My father] left Moccasin Spring and came in here after everything was burned up and he [had] lost all of his cattle and [possessions].

FH: Did the Indians do that [to him]?

CN: Yes. They burned him out. [They] took his cattle and everything. Then he went up to Pine Valley [Washington County, Utah]. What was that place?

EN: [Was it] Bitter Creek?

CN: [It was] up on Bitter Creek, [which was] up on Pine Mountain. He made a good farm up there. He burned coal for the Silver Reef mines [in Washington County, Utah]. They were digging out the silver there. There is one thing that I can remember. I was four years old and was chopping wood. I cut that finger. [I] just split it. It looks better than you would think it would look, but that is what happened to it. I took [came down with] membranous croup [inflammation of the larynx] up there. I nearly died. They had to bring me down to town on the running gears of a wagon. I was nearly choking to death. I can remember so well about that [incident]. They tried to give me something that would cause me to vomit and get the phlegm out. It seemed like they could not [do it]. They had some elders there [who] came and administered to me. Mother was praying all the time. She was a prayerful person. She took me outside to the toilet. While I was there, that all loosened up and came out of me. I got well from that membranous croup. There were not very many people in those days [who] recovered from it because it chokes you. You cannot breathe. You cannot eat. You cannot do anything. I remember I was four years old, so I remember how miserable I was [when I had it].

That was quite an [event]. I was four years old and I can remember it. We came down to my father's sister's place. He did not have a home here then. We stayed there for awhile. We did all kinds of [things]. When I got old enough, I played all these games that they used to play. [I played] Hide and Seek and Steal-a-[inaudible].

FH: Can you tell about your [education]?

CN: I started to school when I was old enough.

FH: Where did you start school?

CN: [I started school] right here in Washington [City]. We had some very good teachers. There was Parley Snow and the Seegmiller girl. I cannot remember her name. They were [very] good teachers. As I grew older, we had other teachers. [I had] Andrew Sproul [as a teacher]. [There was a teacher who was] a lady that lived over in Toquerville [Washington County, Utah]. [Her name was] Abby Thornton. She was a wonderful teacher. She taught for several years here. We had John T. Woodbury [as a teacher]. When I [was] in the seventh grade, he was our teacher for several years. He was a wonderful teacher. They did not have the eighth grade here then.

FH: When you finished, did you get any further [education] beyond that?

CN: I went to college in Cedar City [Iron County, Utah] for a year.

FH: Did you enjoy that school?

CN: [I enjoyed that school] very much. I had so many wonderful girlfriends. [It] seemed like we had known each other forever. Governor Mabey was our teacher. I cannot remember his name.

FH: [Was it Charles] Rendall Mabey?

CN: [His name was] Rendall Mabey. He was my first teacher. He was a good teacher. There was Howard Hargrave and Miss Spencer [who were teachers]. I really do not know her name. Her given name is all I know. She taught reading and culture. She was a wonderful person. I thought I was going to go back the next year, but I married instead.

FH: [Did] you entered into sports activity at school?

CN: Yes. I was a basketball player on the girl's team.

FH: Tell about your activities [in The] Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] when you were growing up.

CN: I kept in the church pretty much. We had to walk everywhere we went. We had no way of getting anywhere but that way. Mother had to go to Relief Society on Thursdays. Now they have changed that to [another day]. I went to Sunday school [and to] church almost every Sunday.

FH: [Did you go to] MIA, Mutual Improvement Association?

CN: Yes. I went to Mutual as soon as I was old enough. I was put in as president [of the MIA].

FH: Was this a little later [in your life]?

CN: Yes. [That was] after I was married.

FH: [Did] you take a few trips with your father?

CN: Yes. I used to go with him up north peddling grapes and melons.

FH: Was this produce that he [grew]?

CN: Yes. Sometimes he would have to get some of it [from other people]. There was an old lady [named] Sister West. He sometimes took her produce, too. He had a lot [of produce]. He [grew] quite a little bit himself. [He] just [grew] a variety that came on. He would go up when the grapes and melons were ripe. I went with him.

FH: Where did he go peddling?

CN: He would go as far as Cedar City.

FH: Was this quite a long trip then?

CN: Yes. [It took] two days [to get there]. We stopped at Bellevue [Washington County, Utah]. That [place] is [called] Pintura now. We stopped at a camp house there [and] stayed overnight.

FH: [Did] Pintura used to be known as Bellevue?

CN: [It used to be called] Bellevue. That is where we would stop.

FH: Tell [what] you can remember about your father.

CN: My father was one of the most Indian-loving men that you ever saw. He loved Indians. He loved dogs. Anybody was welcome at our home no matter who they were. He had been in Salt Lake [City]. He had been a Minute Man [in the militia] in Salt Lake [City]. He had to go out a lot on Indian raids. [The Indians] would come in and steal people's cattle and all [these other things]. He had been in a lot of that before mother met him. [That was] before he went back on the trip with the Lot Smith [Handcart] Company. When he came back, he had met mother and they [were] engaged back on the Plains. He tried to make a place for them here. Grandfather had a place out in Moccasin Spring. That is where they first went [to live]. After that was all burned up and gone, he had to start peddling and do anything he could. He did a lot of peddling. He went out to Pioche [Nevada].

One time he had been gone for so long and the Indians were so bad at that time. Mother was worried about him. She lived way up on the hill. I do not know if you know where Joe Hannig lives or not, but he lives up on the upper part of town. [It is] about the last house in the upper part of town. There was an old lady [who] could tell your fortune. Mother had looked for him and he had not come. She knew what kind of an outfit he had, [but] she got so worried about him [and] feared that something had happened to him. [She thought] the Indians had killed him. She went down to this old lady [who] told fortunes and asked her if she could [help her]. They made a cup of tea and she told [your fortune] by the tea leaves. This old lady asked mother what kind of horses he had. She told her he had a black [horse] and a bay [horse]. She said, "Did he have anyone with him?" She said, "No, he was alone when he left." She said, "Well, before you can get back up home, he will be right behind you. There is a black man [with him]. I don't know if it is a Negro or an Indian, but he has a dark-complexioned man with him."

By the time she walked from way down here clear up there on that hill, it was just a very few minutes before my father came [home]. Sure enough, he had a Spaniard with him. He was alright. He had traded horses and got this other colored horse. That bothered her. She did not know why he changed horses, but he had a different horse than what he had [when he left]. They used to go a lot on

fortune telling. They used to go down to an old lady here in town. [Her name was] Sister Jolley. She would tell your fortune for you. If you had a dream, she would tell you what it meant. This was not a dream that mother had [about my father]. She was just worried for fear something had happened. My father carried on his peddling work as long as he could.

They were trying to buy a home here in town. They had lost everything. The property that my grandfather had should have been divided up between all of them. It was taken over by some of them [who] thought they had a better right to it. He was trying to buy this home. He herded sheep for a good many years for Sy West. He was a great [big] sheep man. He [my father] was cheated out of his wages. He did not get the money for his herding and he lost the place. We did not really have a home of our own for quite a long while. We had to rent [a house]. Finally, they bought a little home in town. [It was] straight up the street. [It was] just a small home.

My father was only sixty-three [years old] when he died. He died [from] what some of them think would be called leukemia now. He was not sick very long. Dr. A. J. Affleck called it something else. Dr. [Wilford J.] Reichman said he had leukemia [when] he died. My mother lived a long while after.

[Moroni Woodruff Alexander died on July 8, 1901 in Cedar City, Iron County, Utah.]

FH: Tell about your mother.

CN: She was a very faithful and religious woman. She was a person [who] took part in all the organizations. She went out and helped the midwife here. [She helped] Sister Barron deliver children as long as she was able to go. She would have been ninety-one [years old] if she had lived a couple of months longer. She lived a long, long life. She had children who married and moved away. She used to go and visit them. She enjoyed [visiting]. She joined the Daughters of the —.

[Martha (Reese Thomas) Alexander died April 2, 1935 in Washington City, Washington County, Utah.]

FH: [Was it the Daughters] of the [Utah] Pioneers?

CN: No. They would not allow the Mormons to join it [at] first. I have a little book in here that tells you the story. My father, through the right of him being in the Lot Smith [Handcart] Company, had a right to belong to this [organization called the Sons of the Utah Pioneers].

FH: Can you tell the names of [your mother's] children?

CN: My oldest sister [was] Martha [Elizabeth Alexander]. She married Ulijah Averett here in Washington [City]. Then there was "Maggie", [who was named] Margaret

[Thompson Alexander]. She married [Jim] Averett. [He was] a brother of [Ulijah]. Then there was, Nellie Laura [Alexander]. She married a man by the name of [Frank] Lyon. Then there was a daughter [Berilla who] married Charles Wilkinson in Cedar [City]. His folks lived in Cedar [City]. That is Kay Wilkinson, a relative I was telling you about.

FH: What was her name?

CN: Her name was Berilla [Alexander]. I do not know where they [found] that name. It must have been an Indian name. She hated that name.

FH: [It] sounds like it might have been taken from the stone, beryllium.

CN: It might have been, but she sure hated Berilla. Mother lost four boys [Murray Randolph Alexander, Moroni Woodruff Alexander and [two others] and then she lost two girls. One [girl] died of typhoid [fever] up the river. There were no doctors. There were two of them down in bed together with typhoid [fever]. One of them lived and one of them died. She lost them all. [Inaudible]

FH: [Did] she lose five [children]?

CN: [Yes]. She had a little baby [and] she buried her. I guess that [happened] in Cedar [City]. [Her name was] Johanna [Alexander]. She named her after her sister who came over here with her.

FH: Are any of those children still alive, except you?

CN: No. I am the last of all of them [still alive]. My brother [Samuel Lot Alexander] lived to be eighty-three [years old]. He was not as old as I am now. He was in World War I. He [received] a pension and lived in Salt Lake [City]. He was taken care of up there by the doctors. I did not even get to go to his funeral. It was a bad, snowy time.

[Samuel Lot Alexander died December 5, 1962 in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah.]

FH: Was he the last one [to die]?

CN: Yes.

FH: Did your mother's children have a lot of children? She had a big family.

CN: They all have pretty good-sized families. My oldest sister had two pair of twins [and] then she had four or five or six [children] besides that. I had [one] sister [who] lived in Cedar [City], [who] married the Wilkinson [man, and] she had a pair of twins. Her twins and my twins are born just two weeks apart.

FH: The family was increasing rapidly that way. [Laughter]

CN: Mother was with me and she had to leave me as soon as I was able to get up and sit in a chair. [She] was [with me] about ten days. You had to stay in bed, in those times, [with twins]. She had to go up to her [house] to take care of her and her babies.

FH: Is there anything special that you want to tell about the children of your parents?

CN: I cannot say that there is very much [I want to say]. They all did [well]. None of them were wealthy. This Wilkinson [man] was [very] well off in Cedar [City]. He owned a store and ran the [United States] Post Office. He had a picture show. That was when picture shows were just beginning to come into money. His brother-in-law talked him into going up to — was it the Strawberry River?

EN: [Inaudible] No, [it was up] at Utah Lake [Utah County, Utah].

FH: There is a Strawberry Highline Canal that runs down there.

CN: That is it. He was supposed to go up there. He had a lot of boys. Nearly all of their family was boys. His brother-in-law made him think that if he would go up there with these boys, he could do so much better than he was doing there [in Cedar City]. The poor [fellow] had never farmed in his life. He did not know anything about farming. He left and went up there with his boys. The boys did the best they could, but they were not farm boys.

FH: Did they not know much about [farming]?

CN: No. Finally, he quit and went to [Cedar City] and got in the newspaper business. I guess that was what he was cut out for anyway. He ran the *Iron County Record* for years there. [He] owned it and ran it. He ran *The Dixie Advocate* here in St. George. I was a correspondent for him for that [newspaper]. [I] wrote the news around [the area]. Can you believe it? I went over there and helped set type for him. They lost a little girl in St. George and they [became] disheartened and moved back to —

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

CN: — Cedar [City] then. They stayed there until they made this move up north. They would have been so much better off if they had just stayed where they were because he was doing [very] good there. This [fellow] made him think that if he got a hold of a whole lot of that land and [with the] water that was going to be there, [that] these boys would be busy. His boys were [very] good boys. [They were very] smart and intelligent fellows. One of them worked in the newspaper office all the time.

FH: [Did] the pasture look a little greener over the fence?

CN: Yes.

FH: [That] happens with so many people. Were there some faith-promoting experiences in your life?

CN: I can remember my mother telling about when she was lying in bed with typhoid [fever]. That was before she came over here. The elders had administered [to her]. [One of the elders] was Richard Parmer. [He was] one of the elders [who] helped convert father and mother [to the church].

Grandpa, her father, did not take too much to it. He was not baptized, so grandma would not be [baptized] because he did not want to be [baptized]. So she had [to] kind of put it off. She let the girls go [and] be baptized because they went out and helped deliver pamphlets on the street corners. Grandpa did not want to do anything about it. Grandmother took [very] sick [one time]. I do not know what the matter was, but she was [very] ill. She wanted to be baptized before she died. She knew she was going to die. She wanted to join the church before she died.

They lived [below] a big canal. The canal was way above their house. The elders came and dug a trench down to let enough water into a hole that they dug so they could baptize her. They could not possibly pack her way up where [the water] came out of the canal. She was too ill to be moved. As soon as she was baptized, she was healed. That did not save grandfather. He still did not join the church.

FH: [Was he] a little bit hardheaded? [Laughter]

CN: Yes. They did come when mother and her sister decided to come [to America]. Brother Parmer and his companion were coming home. Brother Parmer had become engaged to my aunt Uanna before they left. Mother wanted to come so bad. She had typhoid fever and the ship they had chartered was supposed to leave right straight, within a week or ten days. Mother could not possibly leave being in that condition.

She said they had the elders administer to her, [so she would get better]. She saw the doves go by her bed [and] just like that, she said she was alright and able to go. It was the administration that caused her to [hear] that sound. She said it sounded just like a shish [and] a lot birds just flew right by her. It was the answer to the prayer that had been given to her; that the disease would stop. She got well and came with her sister. She came out along with her [when her sister came here].

The ship that they were going to come on sprung a leak. They could not come until they could charter another ship. She [was] well enough to come by the time

the ship was ready to sail. She said she was on the water for seven weeks [because of] a storm. They did not know if they were going to make it or not, [but] they got over here. It was an old [inaudible] vessel. She said that on the way back, the old ship [caught] on fire and burned up.

You could not find anyone with more faith than my mother had. My father [had faith], too. He was off and gone so much. He was not around where we knew all of the things that he thought and said. I know that he wholly believed everything that the church stood for.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: [Did] they go through a lot of hardships?

CN: Yes. Both of them [did]. [They went through hardships] after they came here [and they had hardships] especially getting here. There were so many things that they had to go through. There was a good man, Brother — I cannot remember the man she came with [here]. He is a St. George man.

FH: Was the man Robert Parker.

CN: Yes. He had been sent after the emigrants. Mother said he would get on a horse and start out. He must have had another person [who] helped him drive. He had a load to get to people.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: [Tell what] you did when you were growing up just to have fun.

CN: We had candy pulling. That was one thing that we had a lot of fun [doing]. We made a lot of molasses. We made molasses candy and had candy pulls. We got out and went walking around the town. [We were] going here and going there just to be outside. [We did that] to have a little fun like the [children] do now. The [children now] have something to go to more than we did. There was not very much [going on]. They did have dances here. I learned to dance when I was quite [young]. I had a cousin. He died years ago. When I was just a youngster, I was not really old enough to go to a dance, he came and asked me to dance with him. [Inaudible] I had never danced [before]. He was such a nice looking, good fellow. [His name was Andrew] “Andy” Sproul.

FH: Tell about the music that you had for dancing.

CN: They had the violin, mainly, and they had an organ. I do not know if they had very many instruments or not, but I know they had the violin. [They had] very few instruments.

FH: What kind of dances did you dance?

CN: We had shod-a-ship and lots of quadrilles. We danced a lot of quadrilles, waltzes and shod-a-ships. Later on, there were other dances that would come up [and] we tried to learn [them].

FH: Did music play a part in your life?

CN: I always loved music. My folks were ready to buy an instrument, a piano. When they lost all they had, they could not accumulate very much. My father always promised me that he was going to buy me a piano, but I never did get it.

FH: He had good intentions, but he was not able to get it.

CN: Yes. He was not able to get it.

FH: [Did] you do a lot of singing?

CN: Yes. I sang in about everything that there was [to sing in]. I was asked to sing with somebody or to sing alone. Andrew Sproul, my cousin, used to play for me to sing. I used to sing in the Twenty-Fourth of July and Fourth of July programs. I used to sing a lot. My sister, who lived in Cedar [City], used to come down with her guitar. [She] had me sing in Primary. [She would] play the guitar while I sang. She gave me a few lessons [on the guitar], but I did not get very far with it. It was too [hard].

FH: What about reading in your life?

CN: I loved to read. You should see all the things that I have packed up to read. I have quite a lot of the church works and this little book. I would not take anything for it. It has my father's history in it. I was going to show you my mother and father's picture here. It is here somewhere.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

FH: Would you tell about your courtship and marriage?

CN: I went with my husband [Edward Francis Nisson] before I went to Cedar [City] to school. He could not go [to school]. His brother [Willard Orlando Nisson] was going up there, but he could not go. His father [Neils Nisson] only had the two [grown] boys and he was getting quite old. He had a big farm out in the [Washington] Fields, so he could not do without "Ed." They thought Willard, his brother, ought to go on [to school]. [They wanted him to] go to Provo, get a diploma and be able to teach school. So he went on [to school]. He would come up on horseback sometimes. He decided one part of the season that he was going to go to school. He had not any more than [arrived] up there [when] his father

took sick and he had to come back home. That ended his school days. He used to come up and see me. There was not very much to do, but we were together some. He stayed and visited a little while and then he had to go back to take care of things. There was not much to do [for] a courtship. [We] just ran around town in gangs [groups]. A big gang [group] of us would get together and go places. [We would] go down somewhere [and] get some fruit [or] have a candy pulling. There were some dances.

FH: [Was there] any commercial entertainment?

CN: No, there was not [any] commercial entertainment.

FH: How long did you go together before you finally decided to get married?

CN: We decided to marry before I ever went to school, but I thought I wanted to go to school some. I had a good chance to go and my sister [Berilla] was there. It would not cost me anything to stay [there]. They wanted me to go [to school]. He came up as often as he could, anyway. He was needed at home too much to be away. When I left, I did not know whether I was going to come back or not. I [received] letters from the girls [who] I was pals with [up there]. How they begged me to come back [to school]. [They said], "Don't get married. Come back to school. We have to have you here so we can have some fun." I was kind of a little devil. You do not believe it, but I have a little meanness in me. [Laughter] I kind of have a little fun [in me]. [It was] what the [young people] thought was fun. The Cedar [City] girls and I got along [well].

I had one girl [who] came down here. She married a Gardner. Her name was Ima Lea [Gardner]. She was my dearest friend up there. How she begged me to come back to school. She wanted me to come back to school so bad. She came down here. She and her husband worked in the [St. George] Temple. She died down here [from] cancer. They [would] come by and we went over [to their place]. We thought we were going to see quite a bit of each other, but I could not get away from my work and chores like I should have done. [I should have] gone over and visited her. I did not get to see very much of her.

FH: Was your school life up there a lot of fun?

CN: Yes. We had a lot of fun.

FH: Where did your marriage happen?

CN: It happened in the St. George Temple.
[Edward Francis and Clara Reese (Alexander) Nisson were married December 26, 1906 in the St. George Temple, Washington County, Utah.]

FH: Where did you set up your housekeeping?

CN: We had kind of a hard time finding a place to set up our housekeeping. This house here, not as it is now, was built to be just like Brigham Young's home over in St. George. "Ed's" grandfather started to build it when he came here. [He] lived in a little rock house out here. We tore it down after we moved here. It was so tall and had a big banister there. When we [had] a baby, that [banister] was such a nuisance. He decided to tear it down and make a bungalow out of it. He did and we lived in it until the youngsters [were] so big that we did not have enough room for them.

When work [was] scarce, he worked out at the Grand Canyon [National Park, Arizona] after his father died. [Before] they sold the farm, [they] rented it. He decided he was not going to farm any longer. He was going out where he could make a little bit of money. He went out to the Grand Canyon and worked there. [He worked] up here in Zion [National Park, Washington County, Utah]. [There is a] big bridge over the creek up in Zion [National Park]. He helped build that [bridge]. [He helped build] the cabins up there, and the lodge. He was gone [from home a lot]. He was on a road job or building job for a long time.

FH: In those days, [did] men go where they could get work?

CN: Yes. They had to go where they could get work. It was lucky that he did get on these jobs because he [did not have] any experience at all. He did a little bit around home, but we had somebody help us with the building of the house. There was a fellow over in St. George [who] helped make a bungalow out of the house.

After he came back from the rocks, [The Great] Depression came on. There was no work anywhere for him. He went around everywhere. He went down to Boulder Dam [Nevada] and tried to get on and he could not. He could [get on], but he had high blood pressure. They would not let him work there because his blood pressure was so high, so he had to come back from that [job]. Then he decided he was going to fix this house over and make it a little different. [He was going to] make a little more room for us. So he did that.

FH: Tell about your six children.

CN: Yes, we had six [children].

FH: Tell about each one of those children.

CN: Our oldest daughter was married to a boy in town.

FH: What was her name?

CN: [Her name was] Gwendolyn [Nisson]. [The name] Gwendolyn came from the girl that mother came across the ocean with on that ship. She thought it was such a

pretty name and thought so much of the girl. [So] when the baby was born, she said, "We are going to name her Gwendolyn." So that is how she got her name.

Our second [child] was named Edward Clark [Nisson]. He was born right around the time World War I [started]. "Ed" had a [draft] card that he might have to go into the [United States] Army, but he did not [have to go]. They did not call [him] up. He just [had] a card that he showed he was eligible.

FH: Did this [son] get married?

CN: He did not get married so very soon. He was about eighteen [years old] or nineteen [years old] when he married. They did not have any children, so they adopted.

FH: Who did he marry?

CN: He married Mildred Hannig.

FH: [Did] they adopt [a child]?

CN: They adopted a little girl. It was a little girl [who] was born over here in the hospital. Dr. [Wilford J.] Reichman had the case and they gave them the baby. The people wanted to know that the little girl was in good hands, so they got [her].

FH: Is that the only child they had?

CN: That is the [only] child they have. Then we had Darrell [Alexander Nisson]. He lives over here on the corner. He lost this boy here. [He is the one] that is smiling there [in the picture]. He was the oldest boy that he had [and] died [from] leukemia. His daughter is married to a boy [who] came here. He is in the [United States] Air Force in St. George. What is his name, "Ed"? [Darrell Alexander Nisson married Helen Bentley.]

EN: What?

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

CN: Janet is married to Donald King. That is all [of their children who] have married. Their other children are still [young].

FH: Who was [your] next one?

CN: Our son, Ralph [Nisson], was a twin [to Roma]. We had bad trouble [with him]. I feel sad about him. He [was] married to a St. George girl. He was in the [United States] Navy during the World War [II]. [Then there was our son], Quentin

[Nisson]. I am forgetting all about him. He [came before Ralph]. Maybe I can tell about —.

FH: That is alright. You can tell about him.

CN: Quentin was [in the United States for two years and] over in Europe [during] the war for [two] years. He graduated from BYU [Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah County, Utah]. He had to go right into the [United States] Army as soon as he was out of school. He roamed all over this country before he went [to Europe]. He [was able] to see the whole United States before he went [to Europe]. Finally he got over there and went through all the hell that was [there]. He was where all the ships sank. The ship he was on sank and he lost everything he had [with him]. What was left of them on their ship landed around France. He sent home handkerchiefs that were made out of the parachutes.

FH: [Was] he over there on D-Day?

CN: Yes. He was in England quite a long while before he [was] right into the war. He made quite a lot of friends. He played the piano [very well] good and they had him play in these pubs. [He would] make music for them. He had a lot of good friends there before the war really started for him [and] before he really got into the fighting. After he got into the fighting, it was pretty rough. He lost a lot of good friends that he thought so much of. He came home safe and sound without anything wrong with him. I prayed. That is why I know there is something to the — maybe people do not take it like I do, but I —

FH: You know your prayers were answered.

CN: — prayed that they would be [answered]. I tried to live so that the Lord would know that I was worthy of having my prayers answered. He was not married when he left. [He] did not even have a girlfriend. The wife, [Gwen Turner, who] he is married to [now] was just so in love with him, but she did not force herself onto him. She is not the kind that makes any big rush. She went on to school [in] Provo with some of her other friends. While he was gone, he sent for “Gwen’s” picture. That is his wife. She had given him a picture of her before he left. As soon as he got back, they [were] married.

FH: Do they have children?

CN: Yes. They have three boys and two girls.

FH: Where are they living now?

CN: He runs the store [Nisson Mercantile] up here [in Washington City, Washington County, Utah]. [The] girl [who] lives upstairs here is [his] oldest boy’s wife. They [were] married recently. The others are still going to school. He has been a

bishop. He has been in the High Council. He has [held] every [position] there is since he has been in [the church]. He was active before he went into the war. He was always active in church. No matter whether anybody else went to Sunday school or not, he was always up for going to Sunday school. [It just] came natural to him. He is a good singer and is a good pianist. I do not think that anyone has a very bad word to say [about] him. There might be some in town [who] do not like him. I do not know, but he mostly has friends.

He [started] this store as soon as he [came] back [home]. The fellow that had it only wanted it because it was going to keep him out of the war. He was that kind of a [fellow]. He only had a wife and an adopted child. When Quentin found out he was trying his best to sell it, he said, "I am going to get it." His father had given him some land down in the [Washington] Fields. [It was ten] acres of land. He sold that [land] and [obtained] some money from the bank. The bank took his note, so he got the store. He has been in that business ever since.

FH: Let us go back and finish telling about that first twin.

CN: I do not hardly know which was the first twin. [I do not know if it was] the boy or the girl that came first.

FH: We were talking about the boy.

[END OF RECORDING TWO.]

CN: He [Ralph] was a boy [who] did not really care too much about school. He did pretty [well] in school, but he liked to —. Children liked to draw and do things like that in school. He wasted some of his time doing that. I think now that if he had been where he could have been taught drawing, he would have been a real artist because some of the [drawings] I saw in his [sketch] books.

FH: Commercial art is a big field.

CN: Yes. He went down to California before he went into the war. He went down there [with] one or two of the boys from here. [They found] work down there in some of the places that needed help. He got into the ship building business. We have a picture of him where he was way up in the air. [We got it] out of the newspaper. It shows where they had to climb so far up to the top of the ship and he is up there doing his job. He stayed down there and worked in the shipyards in Richmond, California until he was drafted.

[TAPE RECORDER TURNED OFF]

CN: First, three of the boys went up to Salt Lake [City] and took training in sheet metal work. Then they all went down [to California]. They all [found] work. It thrilled him so [much]. He just wanted so badly to be on a ship after he had been

helping to build [one] and knew all the parts. When he was called [drafted], he was put on an old, old ship. It was a repair ship. He had to follow all the other ships around so he could make a part if anything went wrong. He was so discouraged and disgusted because he did not get on a big ship. He did not come out of there feeling too good. He felt like he had been cheated because he had been kept down in those old places [and] never saw anything. Finally, when the war was over, they let them go to Japan. He went there and saw a little bit of Japan. He was discouraged about the way it panned out for him.

He got over it and [was] working with his folks here with rock. We did not know it then, but he is a [very] good rock man. He is as good a rock mason as they will ever find anywhere. His father was working in what they call picture rock. There is a place over here on the hill that had it in [it]. They were making beautiful fireplaces out of it. If you want to see some of his work, there is a fireplace over there in, Brooks do not own it now, it is the café that Brooks used to own. [It is] a lodging place [now]. The old folks lived in [the] house and they had him come and make them a picture rock. The hearth looks just like a tree. It is a root of a tree all across that hearth. He is really an artist in that [work].

He liked doing rock work. He said you had to go out of here for it. There was nothing to hold him here after he married. They had a quarry up in the mountains that brought out this kind of rock. It got [to] where there was no sale for that, so he gave that up and went down to Las Vegas [Nevada]. [He] got him a home through the — you know the [United States] Army gave them a chance to buy a home.

FH: [Was it a] GI [government issue loan]?

CN: He [obtained] a GI loan and he married a girl [Ellen Truman] from over in St. George.

FH: Do they have any children?

CN: They have three children. Their first little baby died. It lived long enough to be blessed, but it died. They have a girl. She was married just recently. He has a boy [who] is a great athlete down there. I guess he has a football scholarship. [They have] all the ball games down there.

His wife wanted to go to school. So she [did] and learned [how] to be an assistant to the superintendent. She got a little bit too high up for him and she left last year. That broke him up pretty bad. He felt pretty bad about it. He is still living down in Las Vegas [and is] still doing rock work. He comes up to see his pa often. There is nothing here for him. We have no farm. He could not farm anyway. There is nothing in it for him.

FH: He is better off to stay with the work he knows.

CN: Yes. He stays down there and works with the men that he has been working with. He is staying with my daughter [Gwendolyn]. She left her husband. Our oldest daughter had a sad time with her husband. He drank a lot. She finally left him after she had a big family by him. Every one of those boys are just wonderful. They do not drink [and] they all have a good job. One of them runs a beauty shop and the others are barbers. One of them [is a] barber and [also] has a service station. So they are all doing [very well] down there.

FH: Tell about [the] other twin [to Ralph], [who was] the girl.

CN: The girl's name is Roma [Nisson]. She married a young fellow [Howard Morris] [who] was in the war the same as Quentin and Ralph. He had to go over [there]. He was going to BYU [and] taking care of the bookstore. It was [closed] when school was out [for the summer]. When school was out, he was drafted and had to go over [there]. He went all through the war, too. He had every kind of experience that [there] could be over there.

They lived in St. George and he got in with Milne Truck Line. They did [very well] by him. They could not find a better [accountant] than he is [or] more energetic and honest. I guess they knew it, so they have kept him right on. That is what he is doing right now in Salt Lake [City].

[They] have three boys and one girl. The oldest boy has been on a [LDS] mission to Finland. He is the one [who] made this tree for us before he left. They have one little baby now. It is the cutest little [baby]. They [came] down last Sunday to see us and stayed over a couple of days and brought the little baby down to see us. Now his wife is going back to Finland when it gets a little bit warmer. [She is going] in the spring to see her folks and [then she will] come back.

FH: Have you talked about six children? Did you have another [child] after the twins?

CN: No.

FH: That is [all the children] then.

CN: That makes six [children]. That is all.

FH: [Did] you and your husband stay right here in Washington [City]?

CN: I stayed here.

FH: [You have] fixed up this home and made a beautiful home out of it.

CN: He has worked —

FH: He had to go all over to get work.

CN: Yes. After his father died, they sold the farm. He was barely existing here then, so he has been on a lot of jobs. Now he is getting so he cannot go out and do anything. He [was] over here just last week and helped — who was that man you went over and built [the] fireplace for?

EN: [His name was] Hy Coons.

CN: Hy Coons. He was a man [who] worked out at the Grand Canyon [National Park] when he did.

FH: [Does] your husband do rock work?

CN: Yes. He does rock work. He came over and wanted him [my husband] to come over and build a fireplace. He is building himself a home. When they [went] out to the Grand Canyon [National Park], he was working on the lodge. This Coons was the boss of the job there. “Ed” knew him [very] well, but we did not even know he was over here. We never heard that he had moved over [and] that he had lost his wife. He lost his wife and married a St. George woman.

FH: You had a wonderful life. [It was full of] great experiences and [you have a] lovely family. All of these things have taught you a lot about life.

CN: I should have learned quite a little bit about it. Now, the worst thing [for me is] my memory. I cannot remember a lot of things.

FH: You are doing [very] well. Would you like to try to give counsel and advice to your descendants? Then bear your testimony if you feel like it. Give them the benefit of your years of experience and counsel.

CN: I can say this about my life, as a testimony that I know, I do not think that I would have ever been here if it had not been for prayers that have been given for me when I have been ill. I have had a lot of sicknesses [and] a lot of bad operations. The first thing I think about when I get so bad [is that] I want somebody to come and administer to me. Sometimes I had to wait a little while before they came, but I have always had that happen. I believe that is the biggest power there is to keep a person, if you can live it. I cannot live it now like I used to [live it]. I cannot get to church and do what I used to [do]. [This is] what I was saying about my illnesses. I have been about as ill as anybody has been in their lives and lived.

FH: Has the Lord been pretty good to you?

CN: He has been mighty good to me. [He has been] better than I deserved. I know that if we try to live and do like we should that there is nothing in the world that we will be happier about than we have served the Lord and did what He wanted us to

do. I have always thought that [way]. My children, as long as they were with us, there are none of them [who] are overly religious.

Quentin is the only one [who] has ever [gone] very high in [church work] ordinances, but that is because he is where they think he can — people know him. They know just exactly what kind of a [fellow] he is. If they can get him to take hold of anything, it will go through. The other boys are just a little bit different than that. They have other things that they like. They do not want to be burdened or tied into something that maybe they cannot do. They have all contributed and done things like that, but to do like Quentin did, [he would] neglect his own to take on all of it. Sometimes you do not get credit for credit [that] is due either. He went through quite a lot.

FH: A lot of [positions] like this are thankless.

CN: Yes, they are. We have a wonderful chapel up here. If it had not been for him, I do not think we would have ever had it. He stopped doing a lot of things that he was doing. He bought all of their candy and [he got] everything that they needed. He would go to Salt Lake [City] and [they would] have these shows. He bought this picture machine. One of them was stolen right off the bat. They stole his microphone with it.

FH: [Was it the] public address system?

CN: They never did find out who did it. [They] never did find it or get anything out of it. What was [there] to do, but go right ahead and get another one. So that is what they did. They held shows and put on dinners [and] dinners [and] dinners. I bet we put on more dinners over here and I baked more pies. Each one was supposed to bake so many pies. I did not make them. Some of the people here in town [made them]. This woman across the way is a relative of mine. She is one of their pie makers. They would bring them here by the load. We would bake them and they would take some of them. We baked a lot for St. George. [It was] not just here. The people who came here to dinner, they cooked and fixed good dinners. Everything just seemed to go along so good. [There was] only the worry of it. It was not only on —.

FH: [Was] it a lot of work?

CN: Yes. It has been a good thing. I am glad I was able to [help]. I could not do it now. I guess I could bake a pie. The things that we had to do then [were different]. We used to go up there and sit out in the [park] for picture shows. They were big picture shows though. He got good ones. He got them through the school [and] people enjoyed them. I pity [that] they quit. People notice it so much. Now they are starting them up again. They have put a new bishopric in and they say they are starting them up again. I hope they go along with them like they did. They did make some money there.

FH: What would you like to tell your children and your descendants from many future generations? Is there anything you want to tell them?

CN: The only thing that I could tell them is to serve the Lord and to do the things that they know that they are expected to do. [They should] not think it is too much. Maybe it is not needed, but we do not know. We do not know whether it is needed or not. It is not for us to say. If we are asked to do something, and we do not do it, we do not even give ourselves a chance. I always feel like if I can do it, I will do it. That is what I have always done. If I have been asked to do anything in the church, I have done it as long as I could [and] was able [to do it]. Now that we [are] so that we cannot do what we want to do or what we would like to do, I still feel the same. I wish I was back where I could do what I used to do. That is my big regret. I am not able to do [what I used to do].

FH: Now it is up to your descendants to do these things.

CN: Yes, it is. It is up to them to try to do their part and do what they can. Some of them are not too religious. I know those boys [who] are down in — not [the children in] Las Vegas. There are no better boys than they are. They have not been going to church like they should [be going]. Some of them have [been going], but some of them have not [been going]. It means a lot. It means a lot to me anyway.

If I was not as old as I am and as crippled up as I am, I would walk to church. I would get there, but I cannot do that now. I cannot walk that far. We have grandchildren who say, “Grandma, we will come get you if you want us to.” I know I am putting them to trouble. I know they have something that they want to do. We will not hinder them from going and doing what they want to do. There is [a picture of] my father. Their faces are together somewhere in here.

FH: You wanted to put in something here about what your sister said about the reason she worked so hard to help get the ladies of the Grand Army Republic organized in Utah. Would you like to read a quote from her telling why she did this?

CN: That is right.

FH: Her name is Nellie Laura (Alexander) Lyon. This was a sister of Clara Reese (Alexander) Nisson. This is a quote from what she said at one of their meetings:

CN: Mrs. Lyon said, “I work so hard for the ladies of the Grand Army [of the Republic] in Utah. The Lot Smith Company in particular because of the love which I hold for my noble father. I have done all this for him and I dedicate it to his memory. He was the first volunteer to enlist from Utah into the service of the United States. There are six. These are the only Civil War veterans Utah can claim. The citizens of Utah should unite in honoring their memory and to show

appreciation to those of that company who yet remain and to all veterans of the Civil War wherever they may be.”

FH: One time when Moroni Woodruff Alexander was with Lot Smith and the company of men, they were attempting to cross the Snake River [Idaho] to recover some horses that had been stolen by the Indians. In so doing, they had made a raft and two of the men were crossing the river on this raft [and] pulling it across by rope tied to trees. The rope broke and one of the men, [who was] a man by the name of McNichol, was swept into the current and was drowned. They never did recover him. Another young soldier was thrown off the raft and hung onto it. Then something very dramatic happened. Sister Nisson wishes to read the account that was given about it.

CN: “The small raft was lost carrying one comrade in an attempt to cross the Snake River. A rope was tied to a tree on the opposite bank with which to assist the comrade to pull himself across. When partly across, the rope broke and the raft turned over throwing the soldier boy under water. The raft began drifting downstream. Captain Lot Smith called for volunteers to go to the rescue. Moroni W. Alexander volunteered. He sprang into the stream without clothing with a rope tied around his waist. He made his way rapidly toward the raft as it drifted his way. As the raft reared near the bank of the stream, the brave volunteer succeeded in pulling it to shore, thus saving the life of the drowning man.

“When he emerged from the rushing river, his body was torn and bruised from head to foot lacerated from the force of the rocks and the raft rocking against him as they was carried along the turbulent water. He contracted a severe cold from this experience and a cough developed which remained with him throughout his life.”

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CN: Moroni Alexander was my father. I was the youngest child and cannot remember or know very much about this, but it is all true because he went through it. I know that he was ill. A lot of his illnesses were on account of this terrible cold that he got while he was in the water so long.

[END OF RECORDING THREE. END OF INTERVIEW.]