

**Interview with**  
**GLEN BLAKLEY**

---

**April 13, 2016**

**MOTION PICTURE PRODUCTION IN  
WASHINGTON COUNTY, UTAH  
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION**

**UTAH TECH UNIVERSITY LIBRARY  
ST. GEORGE, UTAH**

**#2016-008**

Utah Tech University provides access to its collections as an unaltered, authentic historical record to aid in the research and understanding of history, while acknowledging their impact on various peoples and groups. Some collection materials are reflective of past cultures and prejudices, including images or words that are inherently offensive, insensitive and harmful. The University does not support, condone or endorse these harmful ideas, behaviors or attitudes, and they do not reflect the official opinion of the University. Rather, the University embraces a culture that prioritizes diversity and inclusion, as demonstrated in the University's Mission, Core Themes and Values.

Final editing was completed in 2016.  
For permission to use any part of this transcript contact:

Special Collections and Archives  
Utah Tech University Library  
Holland Centennial Commons 330  
Utah Tech University  
St. George, UT 84770  
(435) 634-2087  
[specialcollections@utahtech.edu](mailto:specialcollections@utahtech.edu)

## INDEX

|                                                  | Page          |
|--------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Andelin's Gable House                            | 15            |
| Blakely, Catherine [wife]                        | 11            |
| Blakley, Glen                                    | 5             |
| Brazile, Wally                                   | 8             |
| Brigham Young University, UT [BYU]               | 8             |
| Brookside, KY                                    | 6             |
| <i>Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid</i>        | 5, 12         |
| <i>Car, The</i>                                  | 5, 15         |
| Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, The | 6, 9, 16      |
| Commercials                                      | 8, 10, 16, 21 |
| <i>Conqueror, The</i>                            | 15            |
| <i>Coyote Summer</i>                             | 20            |
| Dayton, Lyman                                    | 9, 14, 17, 20 |
| <i>Drop Off</i>                                  | 9, 20         |
| <i>Electric Horseman, The</i>                    | 5, 12, 15, 21 |
| Film Commissions                                 | 11 - 17       |
| Gott, Delmar D.                                  | 15            |
| <i>High School Musical</i>                       | 19            |
| <i>Jeremiah Johnson</i>                          | 5, 12         |
| Kanab, UT                                        | 5, 17, 21     |
| <i>Killer in the Family</i>                      | 7, 13, 19     |
| Larsen, Ramona                                   | 11, 13 - 18   |
| LDS Mission                                      | 7, 8          |
| Moab, UT                                         | 14, 16, 21    |
| Monson, Shelley                                  | 12 - 18       |
| Nielsen, O. Wendell                              | 10            |
| <i>On Our Own</i>                                | 9, 17         |

|                                   |                    |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|
| Permits                           | 20                 |
| Picture Morgue                    | 16, 17             |
| Platten, Jon “Sticks”             | 19                 |
| <i>Raiders of the Lost Ark</i>    | 14, 16             |
| Redford, Robert                   | 12, 21             |
| <i>Riders of the Purple Sage</i>  | 17                 |
| <i>Sandlot, The</i>               | 20                 |
| <i>Second Chance</i>              | 9, 17              |
| <i>Stir Crazy</i>                 | 12, 14             |
| Teaching                          | 19                 |
| <i>They Came to Cordura</i>       | 12, 15             |
| <i>The King and Four Queens</i>   | 15                 |
| Travel Council                    | 11, 12, 14, 15, 18 |
| United States Air Force           | 6, 10              |
| Wade, Mark                        | 14, 18             |
| Washington County Film Commission | 11                 |
| Western Movies                    | 18, 19             |
| Whalen, Dan                       | 14, 21             |
| <i>Young Guns</i>                 | 19                 |

GLEN BLAKLEY

---

Glen Blakley was interviewed April 13, 2016 in St. George, Washington County, Utah by Dr. Stephen B. Armstrong. He related his experiences with motion picture production in Washington County, Utah.

SA: I will tell you about the project. About nine years ago I started making a documentary about film production in Kanab, Kane County [Utah].

GB: That was a nice production, by the way. I enjoyed it.

SA: Thank you. When I became director of the undergraduate research office I [thought]: we need to start getting funds. We need to have projects for our students to pursue so that they gain this experiential learning that is so popular right now on our campus. I thought: what about a project about motion picture history in our county, Washington County, because we [had] *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*, *The Electric Horseman* and *The Car* [produced] here .

GB: [Also] *Jeremiah Johnson* and many, many others.

SA: Yes. Working with some students, other than Karen and Bailey right here, we put together a grant with [the] Utah Humanities [Council in Salt Lake City, Salt Lake County, Utah]. They [felt it was a] wonderful project and have given us this budget and we are able to give a small honorarium of \$50.00 to each of our interviewees. We heard that you had quite a background with film production in the county and that is why we have approached you. One of the conditions is that we have a standard series of questions that we ask, but if [the interview] goes in any [other] direction, that [will be] great. That is what we want.

GB: We will work as long as my memory works! [Laughter] I thought you were going to be asking about when I came [here]. There was only one red [traffic] light in town and [inaudible] history, but the other is fine. I have no trouble with that.

SA: [Please] give your name and spelling.

GB: Glen Blakley, G-L-E-N B-L-A-K-L-E-Y.

SA: What is your age?

GB: I will be seventy-four [years old] on my next birthday.

SA: You look like you are sixty [years old]!

GB: I feel like I am fifty [years old] so I am sorry to disappoint you.

SA: [Laughter]

GB: I am up to about 350 pushups in the morning. Then I do about 350 this way and I do leg lifts and [exercises]. So I am planning on living a little longer.

SA: Very, very youthful. Would you give a bit of your autobiographical background detailing your experiences, personal and professional, that led up to your experiences working with and interacting with production crews in Washington County? Just your life story.

GB: I grew up in the hills of Kentucky and the Baptist Church used to do a lot of plays. I was in quite a few productions, not just [at] Christmastime, but other themes — like somebody coming to America, being adopted and being an outsider. They were just fun plays. In high school I had the lead role in *Tiger House* which was the senior play. [Only] the seniors [were] involved in it. The teacher came to me and said, “Glen, I want you to play [the lead role].” So I played a [fellow] from India. “You know my Indian is not very good,” [spoken with an Indian accent]. So anyway it was a fun deal.

I always enjoyed movies. My dad [was] a coal miner [and we] lived in a coal mining camp [in Brookside, Kentucky]. We didn’t have very much. Everybody was poor. Nobody had anything per se. We would quite often go to B-movies: Johnny Mack Brown, Bob Steele and occasionally a John Wayne [movie] which was the upper crust. On Saturdays, pay day, a couple of times a month, we would go see two movies. We would go to the Margie Grande and then the Harlan theaters. You would see two, roughly, hour-long movies. We enjoyed those immensely. I still to this day want to be in one Western [movie] before I die. [Laughter] I have never been in a Western. Later on, I met people like Gregory Peck. Not directly, but I would go to buy a magazine and she, [the cashier], said, “Do you know who you were standing next to?” “No.” “That was Gregory Peck there. You and Gregory Peck stood there forever together.” Oh, I really liked Gregory Peck. I crisscrossed across a few movie stars here and there by accident.

Then I went into the [United States] Air Force. I was an aircraft mechanic, read a lot and ended up in Greenland for a year. I met Sonny Liston when he was going over to Denmark to fight. I kept saying, “That [fellow] ought to be in the ring with Cassius Clay.” The librarian turned to me and said, “Don’t you know who he is?” I said, “I have no clue, but he looks pretty tough.” His leather jacket looked like it had been sewn on. It filled [out] and stretched. He said, “That is Sonny Liston.” I said, “Oh.” I still think Sonny Liston took a dive for Cassius. I think he liked this young [fellow].

[After] Greenland [I] came back to Travis Air Force Base [in] California. I ended up there until I retired [after four years in the service]. I joined The Church [of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, was discharged from] the military [and] went on

a Mormon mission to Japan. I saw a lot of movies being filmed there and hung around where they were filming. So I had a real interest. For example, if you have a samurai walking along water, how do you get the water to reflect on the samurai? They take aluminum foil and put it on a piece of cardboard. The [fellow] walks along on the ground flickering that in the sun and you get this wonderful reflection like it is water. Water doesn't reflect as much as aluminum foil. So I watched them film several movies.

SA: What decade was this?

GB: We are in Japan [from] 1965 through 1968. So this is up in Kanazawa [Japan]. They were always making some kind of [a] historical movie. My last city was Kumamoto [Japan]. They made movies down there. I always seemed to be at the right spot at the right time to see some [filming]. When I did a [lecture] for [The] Smithsonian [Natural History Museum] in [Las] Vegas [Nevada] on the history of art and architecture in [Las] Vegas, the group I worked with walked through the set of one of the last [episodes of] *The Sopranos* going from Caesar's Palace over to the Bellagio [Hotel]. When we finished up, I had been talking a little bit about movies, we came back and watched them film for about thirty minutes. It was next to the last episode of *The Sopranos*.

One of the movies made in Virginia dealt with the hills of Kentucky. [It] was *Thunder Road* with Robert Mitchum.

*"Moonshine, moonshine quenched the devil's thirst.  
The law swore is they would get him, but the devil got it first.  
Roaring out of Harlan, out of Kingston Pike"*

[It] was about Harlan County [Kentucky] and moonshining. Later, [Dixie] College hired a person over their public relations [a fellow] who was from Harlan. He married one of the Chapel girls and they were hauling moonshine in the milk cartons. I went on a lot of field trips to a moonshining place that I didn't know about. After he [was] through talking, this may be kind of strange, but Janice Kline said to him, "Don't you realize you have another person here from Kentucky?" He said, "Where are you from?" I said, "From Harlan." He said, "You can't tell anybody what I just told you. It would get me killed."

SA: [Laughter]

GB: When I went back home, I asked the [state trooper] dispatcher, [Doris Hickey], who was a good friend of mine, "Did you know the Chapels were hauling moonshine in their dairy trucks?" "Oh yes, we knew it." They were paying a federal liquor license so the local [fellows] didn't bother them. Robert Mitchum came to the Margie Grand Theater for the grand opening in Harlan. Later on, I worked with him on a movie [filmed] here in St. George [in 1983, *Killer in the*

*Family*. When he found out I was from Harlan we were just old buddies. He couldn't talk enough about *Thunder Road* and filming back there.

SA: Did he write the song for that film and sing it?

GB: I don't know if he sang it.

SA: Was he a producer?

GB: I know he acted in it. I don't remember. I haven't seen it for years. It was a fun movie.

SA: Where did you [go on] your mission?

GB: [To] Japan. I came back and ended up at the University of Kentucky for awhile. Then I transferred to BYU [Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah County, Utah]. A lot of my buddies were in drama so I saw *Joan of Arc* about thirty times. I used their activity cards, my activity card, anybody else's [card that] I could borrow. I had a different date every night. I could afford to date if I [used someone else's activity card and] took [girls] to see *Joan of Arc*. [Laughter] Steve Anderson, one of the actors in that [play], actually broke into Barbra Streisand's dressing room in L. A. [Los Angeles, California]. He used to have dinner with Edith Head who did all of the costumes. Edith would say, "Now Steve, let me tell you how it is. You don't ever say something like 'This china is worth \$6,000.00. It is, but you don't say that.'" So he would mimic going to Edith Head's house. She would have these two Mormon missionaries come over and have dinner quite often.

When they were going to do the movie *The Giant Joshua*, Maureen Whipple wrote it here, [Douglas Fairbanks] was going to [produce and direct] it and Edith Head was going to do the costuming. She and a lady by the name of Betty went down to his house for dinner in Hollywood [California]. While they were there she said, "Now you know I am going to do the costuming on this." He said, "That is not the way it works in Hollywood, Maureen. We do the costuming. Edith Head will do it." "No. If you don't let me do the costuming you are not doing my movie." He said, "Well, I guess we are not doing your movie." She said, "Well, that is good." So otherwise that would have been made into a big blockbuster movie, *The Giant Joshua*.

[While] I was at BYU, a lot of my buddies were either in drama or in acting so I piddled around with them a little bit. I can't think of his name — from Canada. [He] did a couple of commercials. Wally Brazile lived here for quite awhile. Did you ever meet Wally?

SA: No.

GB: He ran Channel 13 [locally]. He did a lot of the videos for us [at] the [St. George Art] Museum. Wally was at BYU in their film department [when I was a student there]. [He] worked with the [motion picture] art department. [They hired] Whitaker [to do] a series of sixty-five drawings [with] felt markers. It was a film strip about the history of Mormonism. You would have people standing on the side of the coach waving back at the church. He did all of those and he did one every five minutes. He was paid \$2,000.00 for two hours of work. He demonstrated two of those in a class. Kent Perkins and Roland Lee, who both live here, were in that same class with me. He said, "It's not worth my time if I can't do it that fast." Later, I talked to him about that and Wally said, "I can't believe that. We thought he did sixteen by twenty paintings for that." He just gave them the slides. They were four by five cards. [Laughter]

SA: [Laughter] Crafty!

GB: It worked. It did [what] they wanted. Wally worked in the motion picture studio up there. I knew a few of the people. I worked with [BYU] Education Days. I was one of the five people they paid. Everybody else was [a] volunteer. How did I get paid? There were five of us that were building coordinators. We were college students and just worked in the building. Sterling Van Waggoner who has done several movies was working in the DeYoung and he [played] Satan in one of the [first LDS Temple] films. "Hey Glen, could you take my role? I have to be over there at one today. Could you come?" "Yes, go ahead, Sterling." I'm not sure he even remembers that, but I covered for him a couple of days while he was down [at the studio] filming a temple film.

SA: Is he still at KBYU? Is he still doing television up there?

GB: I think he is.

SA: Does he have Washington County experience?

GB: He came down here and gave a couple of talks. Doug [Alder] had him come down once, he and Lyman Dayton. I'm not sure if he has filmed very much down here, but you have to talk to Lyman Dayton.

SA: He [lives] in Santa Clara [Washington County, Utah]. I spoke to someone at the home and was told they would get back to me. We have to follow up on that.

GB: He is getting ready to start filming *Drop Off*. I was going to be the art director on that about fifteen or twenty years ago. We didn't get the funding. He did a lot of other movies: *Second Chance* [and] *On Our Own*. He did a whole bunch of movies here. On some of those I shot stills [and on] some I wrote articles. When he would say, "We are going to do special effects today. Make sure you come out." I did that. I took classes and if [they] needed people at the baseball game I would say, "Okay, [fellows], let's go over there. We will kick off a little early and

sit there so that they can have some extras.” He filmed a lot of movies here. He is getting ready to do another one.

At BYU I wasn’t directly involved [with] Spence MacMullin. He was the [fellow] from Canada. [He was in several commercials.] He and I took golf [lessons] from Vernon Law. I never got a baseball signed. How stupid! [In your] youth, you are just dumb. He was one of the greatest baseball pitchers of all time and I didn’t get a baseball signed by him and he was my golf teacher. Spencer and I would go out and play golf there in Orem [Utah County, Utah] and every time it would either thunder, lightning, sleet [or] snow. The [fellow] knew we had to play six games. He said, “I don’t want to ever see you two again in my life. Every time you have been here we have had a catastrophic day.” We would be the only two out [there] playing. [Laughter] We would go home with like eighteen or twenty golf balls and we weren’t golfers. It is just strange!

SA: I am dizzy with how much you have done. You were in the [United States] Air Force. You converted, mission, schooling and then you have been here for thirty-one years.

GB: No. I have been here forty [years]. Doug has been here thirty-one years. [Laughter]

SA: How in the world did you do all this? Do you sleep three hours a night? How do you do this and you are in all these movies.

GB: I am very efficient. I learned efficiency from Bishop O. Wendell Nielsen who set up all [the] temple sessions in [the] temples. He was an efficiency expert. He was my bishop at BYU. O. Wendell Nielsen had a job offer in the 1950s. If we can come out of debt we will give you \$10,000.00. If we make any profit we will give you ten percent of it. He was a millionaire at the end of the first year. He worked for them for quite a few years and made millions and millions of dollars. He worked for BYU for a dollar a year, he and one or two other people like the president, Ernest L. Wilkinson. He and “Ernie” were dollar-a-year men at BYU. O. Wendell handled all of the loans for the school. I went in to get a loan and his secretary said, “Fill out this legal page. Don’t skip anything. You will have to wait two weeks to see him.” You would come in, sit down. He would go down through it and say, “\$26.00 for entertainment? That’s not enough, Glen. I will give you \$28.00 on that. \$18.00 for this? I will give you \$16.00 here. I will give you \$12.00.” Then he would sign it and would go out in the other room. His secretary would type you a check. They had a cashier that only cashed his checks every five minutes all day long. When he left they replaced him with three full-time people, twelve secretaries and you couldn’t get a loan to save you. But I learned a lot of things from O. Wendell Nielsen — how I put these trips together to L. A., how I do the ceramics. It is how you expedite and get things done quicker and more efficiently. I left BYU and taught a year [in] Oregon.

SA: What year is this?

GB: [It was the] 1973-1974 [school year]. I was not interviewed. I was going to work back near the Mississippi [River] because my dad was ill. My dad passed away and I came home from the funeral and told my wife [Catherine], "I guess we are not going to have a job this year." She said, "Oh yes we are. You have a job interview from Oregon City Oregon High School." I said, "I didn't apply anywhere out here." She said, "They are going to interview you. Here is your ticket. They sent [you] a ticket." So I had to leave the next morning. They hired me over 120 people. I wasn't even certified. That presented a little bit of a problem at the end of the year because the district wanted to hire me. I had picked up some credits. Meanwhile, I went to BYU and talked to Doug Stout and said, "Do you want to hire me?" He said, "Yes, Glen, I will put you on full time." So I was a special instructor. They called August 1st and said, "We want you to come back." I said, "I have already signed a contract. I am working at BYU."

I taught there a couple of years with no benefits, but [was] full time. That is what they are doing here [at Dixie State University] with a lot of the new instructors. They are trying to do [a] no tenure track. They [BYU] would have put me on full time [the] next year, but I still felt like why not go to Washington County, a fabulous place, beautiful, one red light, not many people [with] a few Navajos. So I came down here in the fall of 1976. [Dr. Ferron C.] Losee was still the president and [Dr. William Rolfe] Kerr was becoming the new president. Ed Reber and I were the first two people hired under Kerr. We don't know if he was hired [the] day that I was or the day after, anyway we knew that it was within a day or so that we were hired. Then it just became a good place. My connection into the movie area down here came through Ramona Larsen. You might want to talk to Ramona.

SA: [Inaudible] Signifying those are names that —.

GB: Ramona was [over] the film commission in [Washington County, Utah]. She and two of her [children] were taking classes from me when I first came here. They lived over on Sunset [Boulevard] and they invited me to come out to their house. I went out to their house. Dean, her husband, had been in the military and they had a tumble weed that was decorated like a Christmas tree. It was taller than this. It was just fabulous. They regretted throwing it away. We became [very] good friends and she asked me shortly thereafter, "Would you be willing to serve on the film commission with me." She had me serve on the travel council. She didn't know I had any background or any connection to movies. She just knew that I would probably work with her and she liked me.

I served on the film commission. We brought in on the average twenty-eight to twenty-nine commercials per year. Red rock was hotter than hot! You would see a car sitting over in Monument Valley [Arizona] or somewhere up on the cliff. You would see a Nike shoe that is out here on the red rock. There were a lot of things

that were happening. Quite a few movies, [like] *Stir Crazy*. We have a brochure that I printed out. I will dig out one of those [for] you.

SA: I would appreciate that.

GB: We had 10,000 of them printed. We had Wally print it. I said, "Wally, we need to get these brochures and we can only pay \$3,000.00." [He said], "We can't do that for that." I said, "Look Wally, you have already done all these articles in the *St. George Magazine*. Lyman Hafen has written about these people and you have had Gary Cooper here with *They Came to Cordura*. You have had *Jeremiah Johnson*. You have had Robert Redford with *Electric Horseman* and *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid*. You have already done articles on some of that. You have all these articles. All you need to do is just pull some of the images and put it together."

Dennis Weaver happened to be filming a commercial up in the Zion [National Park, Washington County, Utah] area somewhere so they got fresh footage on that. But the sales pitch was put it as an insert in [the] *St. George Magazine*. [He said], "That won't work." I said, "Look, all you have to do is have it as a centerfold in there, print us a separate cover and when you print it just tell the printer we want 10,000 of these flyers printed. It shouldn't cost very much to do that because you already have your book. Besides, Wally, you can use it for artists in the county. You can use it to do a promotion on Mesquite [Nevada], Hurricane [Washington County, Utah]. You can go and sell it to anybody. Do an overrun in every magazine and you make profit. You can put it in any hotel." So the first [brochure] he actually did was in our film commission one, but it was on artists. So all the artists had these glossy, wonderful blue brochures that were printed because they had a page in the magazine. They paid him. So we [had] those printed.

Shelley Monson worked in [Washington] County. In those days they had been over at the [old] court house. That is where their office was [with] the travel bureau. When *Electric Horseman* came out, they had 5,000 calls that Monday wanting to know if the scenery was real or a backdrop. [There was] Robert Redford going up toward Veyo [Washington County, Utah]. Any time he was leaving town [in the movie] he was actually coming to town and any time he was coming to town he was leaving town so the local people [enjoyed that]. They shot some scenes in Winchester Hills [Washington County, Utah]. They couldn't believe the scenery that was used in that movie. You talk about promoting St. George, that was huge. They were just bombarded all day long, just call after call after call. "Is that real?" "Was that real scenery?" Of course they used the McDonald Building [at Dixie College] over here for the inside shoot. Do you remember the poster [that] has him holding her upside down? That is shot over on the hill. But the scene of that night is shot in the second floor of McDonald's.

SA: I had no idea about that.

GB: They made papier-mâché rocks and brought in a couple of buckets of sand and poured it on the floor.

SA: Were other films shot on campus? Do you know?

GB: Oh yes. [In] part of *Killer in the Family*, we used the Graf part of the building and it shows the mural [at Dixie State University]. It is [about] Arizona State [University] but what the heck. It is still Dixie College. The [fellow who] played Q on *Star Trek*, he played god. He always gave Picard a rough time. He was the lecturer in the classroom with James Spader. Those are the two dance rooms [at the college. They were music rooms back then]. They showed part of the campus in those scenes which was really fun. It is still nice footage. You can go online and look up *Killer in the Family* with Robert Mitchum, James Spader, Eric Stoltz, Kevin Lance, and Stuart Margolin who played Angel in *Rockford Files*. I was his double and stand-in. So anytime you see any distant shot or any close up of his hands, it is always me. It is not him. That was a fun movie.

We had the brochure ready and they just finished the new Dixie Center thanks to [Dr.] Karl Brooks who was the mayor [of St. George] and one of our vice presidents. It is our campus park now. They moved Shelley and Ramona. Shelley was full time. Ramona only wanted to work part time. Shelley said, “I will take over the film commission.” And that is what she did. She changed the telephone number. She didn’t want to be bothered by Hollywood [people]. She works at Zions Bank right now. Hollywood people would call me. How they found my name and number I don’t know.

SA: Let’s stop right there.

[END OF RECORDING ONE.]

GB: I think it was just overwhelming for Shelley. We filmed a 1992 El Dorado [Cadillac] commercial in Snow Canyon [Washington County, Utah]. They flew a helicopter through the windshield on it by accident. When they bring in a brand new showroom car it’s no seeing, no photos. They allowed us to take a photo for the archives. They shot in there the year before and they didn’t like the [Las] Vegas helicopter pilot. So they brought in a [fellow] from Michigan. The car is coming up the hill. The helicopter is coming down and you do this and the helicopter goes zoop right in through the windshield. The stunt driver hits the floor, gets a twelve-inch scratch. [It] rips the top like a can opener — just like it is a tuna can. They roll it back in their trailer and say, “Please don’t say anything.” The only thing in the newspaper is: “Accident involving El Dorado car.” That was all that was in the newspaper, a little tiny sentence. When somebody called, like the [fellow who] was the production [person] out of New York, and [Ramona responded]. He said, “I have never, ever worked with anyone like Ramona. I called here and needed this, this, this and that. By the next morning we had photos of everything we asked for.”

SA: But when Ramona moved on and Shelley came in —.

GB: What happened was Shelley was full time. Shelley had the option of choosing if she wanted to do the travel or if she wanted to do the film. Ramona was part time and so she [Shelley] shifted over to Ramona. She took the [position] she wanted which was film. I never asked her, but I think it was just overwhelming to her. She would get calls and she had no reference material like Dan Whalen [who is a location scout]. You ought to talk to Dan, too.

SA: How do you spell his last name?

GB: W-H-A-L-E-N. He is the foremost location scout in Southwest Utah and he does a lot of Utah. He is up scouting a movie right now. He scouted one up there recently. He has worked with [Robert] Duvall. He worked on *Touched by an Angel* for three years, *Everwood* for two years. He has his BA [Bachelor of Arts degree] from Dixie [State College]. He has his MFA [Master of Fine Arts degree] from San Francisco [State University in California]. If you are going to shoot in the [Utah's National] parks, you need to know Dan. He would be a really good [person] to interview.

SA: When there was this shift from Ramona to Shelley, did you see a slow down?

GB: Within months our film commission was kind of shut down and shifted to Moab [Grand County, Utah]. Moab was going to continue to work with us. They tried to revive it a couple of times. Mark Wade was one of the people. Mark is doing some consulting for the [Washington] County on promoting it right now. He did safaris to Africa for hunting people. There was a fellow here, Sonny Bigelow, [who] had a ranch up in Diamond Valley [Washington County, Utah] that brought in actors. He would take them deer [and] elk hunting.

SA: Do you remember any names?

GB: I don't remember. They were all big name actors. We used to meet at his house and Leigh von der Esch from Salt Lake [City] used to come down. I just remember his first name was Sonny. Lyman Dayton was up there a time or two when we met because Lyman had moved here. He brought them in [to hunt]. He served with us on the film commission for awhile.

[Shortly after] Shelley [took] over, then it [filming] went to [the] Moab [Film Commission]. Moab was supposed to send us down some movies. [They did not.] They did [movies like] *City Slickers*, *Con Air*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* [and] *[Indiana Jones and the] Temple of Doom*. They had all those good ones and they had a bunch of other [movies]. So it never quite came back down here, but in those days there were quite a few things that were being done. There was always something that was coming through like *Stir Crazy*. I can get you that name. In

the olden days *The King and Four Queens* was filmed here and *They Came to Cordura*.

SA: [Also] *The Conqueror* and *The Car*.

GB: I saw a lot of *The Car* being filmed and I saw a lot of *The Electric Horseman*. Wilford Brimley who is currently doing a special project with some people connected down here worked with Lyman Hafen on that rodeo piece. Lyman Hafen would also be another [fellow] you might want to talk to.

The story goes, I didn't see it and I didn't know him, but Wilford Brimley was a good friend of the [Dixie College] librarian, Delmar [D.] Gott. Delmar Gott told me this. Wilford had driven for Howard Hughes for years and hauled around his girlfriends. He was a driver. Richard [Curtis] Grisham who lives out in [the] Dixie Downs [area of St. George] also drove for Howard Hughes, but he only drove one year. His wife's family was into big-time movies. Her father built [movie] sets. There used to be the Gable House. Michael [Andelin's] dad built the *Treasure Island* set [for the Disney movie] and that was inside the store [Andelin's Gable House]. They brought the *Treasure Island* [set] so when you went into the Gable House in the olden days when Erma Thomas owned the building you were on the *Treasure Island* set which was fun. [The food was also excellent.]

SA: [Laughter]

GB: When Shelley became the coordinator, I think it was just too much, whereas Ramona had shot pictures. She had pictures of churches, open fields [and] whatever you needed. If you needed a RV [recreation vehicle], if you needed a water truck, she called boom, boom, boom, put [on] FedEx and [sent] it overnight.

SA: Why did Ramona move on?

GB: Because she had no choice. Shelley was full time and the [Washington] County people said, "Okay, Shelley, which [job] do you want to do?" She said, "I will take over the film commission." The travel [job] went to Ramona in a new building [Dixie Convention Center on the Dixie College campus]. "You are going to have conferences and [have to] line up speakers and all of that." That went [very] well, too. Ramona did a good job. [I served on her St. George Convention committee.]

SA: Let me ask you a banal question. Where was the film commission located then?

GB: In the beginning it worked out of the old courthouse [on St. George Boulevard]. The courthouse was where everything was set up. Then Shelley's office moved into the new convention center [Dixie Center] which was the Cox [Auditorium] and the [Smith] Computer Lab. The computer lab, by the way, was the room used for the Prudential commercial, *Lightboard*. "We have more happy endings than

Hollywood.” They filmed that inside. They used it as a sound stage, but they filmed the commercial up [in] Grafton [Washington County, Utah]. They put a road down and went across the [Virgin] River. The commercial was a wagon train and horses so it looked like Grafton was in the background. It was a Super Bowl commercial and was the first one they did. “We had more happy endings than Hollywood.”

SA: I’m curious. [It] seems to have been vogue in the 1970s and 1980s for rugged Utah landscape in commercials and then the interest faded?

GB: What happens is you send them what you have [and] you make it work. People call and say, “I need this. Do you have this kind of a location? Do you have this location? What do you have?” For example, we shot a Datsun [automobile] commercial with a Subaru. We shot it in Zion [National] Park which is not easy to do with leaves that just fell on the ground. It was just so spectacular, so we shot in there. Then we shot in front of that white picket fence [at Virgin, Washington County, Utah] and we did a couple of drive-by shots. Then [we] went up on the Smith Mesa [in Washington County, Utah] and did a shot. So [we] did three locations with that new Subaru. There might have been two or three Subarus they were using, but they were filming the commercials. They would [ask]: do [you] have an [area], a place with a white picket fence on it? You send them that picture. Do you have a road that kind of wanders through trees? We would send them [a picture of] Zion [National Park]. If they say we want a countryside like Tennessee, do you have anything like that? Smith Mesa. *Legacy* was filmed up on Smith Mesa for one of [the] LDS church productions. Part of that was filmed up there. That was where the Dennis Weaver commercial was shot.

SA: Do you think that this resource was perhaps mishandled?

GB: By [Washington] County, [but] not by Shelley and not by Ramona.

SA: But there has been this sort of retreat and industry people, whether it is in Manhattan [New York] or whether it is in Hollywood, have moved on to other parts of the country? Sedona [Arizona, maybe].

GB: Red Rock. You send out [notice that] you are going to film a commercial and you haven’t been filming them. What you do is [to] contact your film commission [with] what do you have. I am sure [in] the *Raiders of the Lost Ark* the city where the dad lives is Moab and they are [filming] up in the Arches [National Park]. Would you have this? We are going to have a scout troop. We are going to be up in the hills. What do you have that indicates a cave? What do you have that indicates this? We need an old house. We need to be close to the railroad track. So a good film commission person has [a picture] morgue. They have like six shots of each [location]. You say I need this and this and this and this.

SA: That is what the Parry [brother’s, Gronnway, Whitney and Chauncey,] had in the flip books, just [shots of] here, here, here, here in Kane County.

GB: When they would contact Ramona, by four o'clock she had it up to the airport. They [would] Fed-Ex [it] the next morning. So they may be scouting three or four locations [with] what are they going to do. These are efficient people. We have everything we need. Let's go to St. George and shoot. So that is [how] Ramona helped to perpetuate and keep that going.

We came up with the idea for the flyer and doing other things. The telephone number was changed and this was when cell phones were new. They were looking for a place to shoot *Riders of the Purple Sage* which ended up being a lousy movie. The [fellow] called me from Page at my office here at the school [Dixie College]. We talked two or three times for fifteen or twenty minutes and this was when it was \$25.00 a minute to talk on the telephone. Boy, these [fellows] have a budget! Where do you know of a place where there is a field where we can have a house? I told them about coming into Virgin [Washington County, Utah] and then going up toward Kolob [Mountain in Washington County, Utah]. There is a place up there that might work. We are driving through [the area]. Where can we go? Where can we find this? Is there something that is close that has this? We need this. We need that. Of course, I didn't have pictures. I didn't have a morgue. They were on the road and they were looking. So they came in [here scouting for a place to] film.

In the olden days, Hollywood knew [about] Kanab. [What] killed Kanab, from my point of view, was they got a little greedy. We want to get a lot more money. Or they would have kept coming there. Under Leigh von der Esch, back when I was on the film commission and after I was off, for about ten or twelve years, we were number four to number six in filming [locations] outside of Hollywood. The most films and money spent was in Utah. New Mexico built six sound stages and they [give back] fifty percent [of the production costs]. Michigan gets fifty percent back. We get fifteen percent back. Then we went to twenty percent production costs tax-wise. That dropped us out in the last few years.

A few [productions] have come back in to Kanab like *John Carter*. But, boy, they had a gold mine there for a long time. St. George was pretty good. It was [an] easy location [with] a small airport. They could fly anybody in they needed. They had good locations, open areas [and] small stores. They could block the highways [very] easily. That is why Lyman [Dayton] moved here and filmed *Solo*, *On Our Own*, [and] *A Second Chance*, maybe five [other] movies here. [The most famous movie is *Where the Red Fern Grows*]. He is getting ready to do the next one. [Dixie State University] is going to work with him which I think is fabulous.

SA: Do you think that [Washington] County will begin to recognize that this is a good source of income for the local economy and maybe resurrect the losses?

GB: I saw it as not Ramona's and Shelley's problem. I saw it as [a problem for] Washington County, the county commissioners and the people. For example, they had a [fellow] come in and he was going to film *Shanley One and Two*. It [is

about Bill Shanley and takes place] out on the [Arizona] Strip. They had the script. They had everything set up. [Clint] Eastwood was going to play the lead. They had two new movies that [had] just come out. There was a Clint Eastwood one, *El Dorado*, and one the [next] week. Those two were out [and] were doing [very] well. Sylvester Stallone's *Rambo III*, or [one] of the *Rocky* movies, came out and made twenty-six million and kicked the other two out. They shut [the Shanley movies] down. They were here [and] were ready to go. [Later], we had another group in here and they said, "If Eastwood wins the Academy Award [for] *Unforgiven*," which was a remake, "we will start filming immediately on two films." One of them was *Geronimo* which stunk. The other one was the James Garner movie they filmed over at Lake Powell [Arizona] based on the old television show.

SA: *Maverick*?

GB: *Maverick*, yes.

SA: With [Mel] Gibson and Jodie Foster.

GB: It was a good movie, a [very] good movie. They set up [and] started filming the next day after the Academy Awards. They have always tried to bring a Western back. I think [Washington] County realized [that] a little later and that is why they brought in a girl for awhile. I don't remember her name. Then they brought in Mark Wade for awhile. I like Mark. He is a great [fellow]. But I am not sure they understood what Ramona understood, [but also times and Hollywood had changed]. Ramona is just kind of odd in many ways to a lot of local people. She was big time Hollywood because she got things done. She knew what she was doing. She looked efficient and was efficient. She helped bring all of that in. I think [Washington] County played a little politics; we will have Shelley do this and have Ramona do that. We have a new convention center. I was just in Kansas City [Missouri] recently. Their convention center is four blocks. We have a convention center down here [where] you can handle 300 or 400 people. It is not a huge convention center. It was even worse when it was on campus [of Dixie College]. You would have to meet with some of the people down on the gymnasium floor. I did lectures, [presentations] and served on [the] travel commission with her. We tried to promote things.

[Washington] County doesn't understand movies for fabulous money. Sometimes they do some damage, but a movie comes in [and] you fill a hotel [or] two hotels. You have catering. On the Prudential commercial, I asked the producer how much did you spend [locally] in four days? [He said,] "\$880,000.00." Just in four days! That was a long time ago. Stephen Cannell's daughter had just come in to town. She came to my office door and said, "I was told you could direct a movie for me." I said, "You were told wrong on that." [Laughter] She said, "I have heard good things about you. My dad said if I can get a Western done he will put it on television for me." We exchanged [business] cards. Her husband was with her, he

was a videographer. [The producers of the Prudential commercial] called me the next day. He said, "We need somebody to shoot some interviews for the Prudential commercial." I said, "I have this person for you. How would Stephen Cannell's son-in-law work?" "Oh great." I gave them their telephone number and they called them. I went over and they did the shooting of it. There have been lots of interesting people in here. [St. George] city worked [very] well with *The Flyboys* when it was filmed.

SA: There was *High School Musical Two*.

GB: *High School Musical Two* was filmed out in Entrada [at Snow Canyon, St. George, Washington County, Utah]. I never did go out on any of the sets. They called me and I gave them a lot of people's names. They filmed three *High School Musical* movies. The third was [filmed] up in Salt Lake [City]. The [youngsters] were really great here. Everybody loved them. By the time they got to Salt Lake [City] they were too big for their pants! Everybody hated them. [Laughter] "Jerks!" I had a friend [who] worked with them. [Jon] "Sticks" Platten, who is an ex-student from here, worked with me on that [and] worked with me on [the] movie *Killer in the Family*. "Sticks" has been in probably sixty-five movies. We were going to go down to Vegas and be in *Over the Top* with Sly Stallone. The car broke down [laughter] so we didn't get to do that arm wrestling scene. We would have been in the crowd. We wouldn't have been the actors, but we were asked to come down on that.

Amy Grant came in at the [Zion] O C Tanner Amphitheater [in Springdale, Washington County, Utah]. They called me to be the best boy. I said, "I am teaching summer school, but I will give you a [fellow's] name [who] will do it for you, Eric Young. That one won quite a few Emmys. It did [very] well. Then they filmed *Young Guns*. They did one and two of it trying to bring the Westerns back. We had seven young actors in it. [I] wasn't around it at all.

I think [Washington] County really made a stupid mistake because it was bringing in money. The good thing, if you have actors come in, they come [back] here. They love the place and [then] buy a place. Most of the actors own seven or eight places. If you are Tom Hanks and you get \$25,000,000.00 two or three times a year, that adds up after awhile. You can buy a two or three-million dollar house. That is like a burger for some of those [fellows]. They fall in love with the places. They would really like to have a house there and they come back.

SA: There has been so much growth. [There is] even a new Holiday Inn, mid-rise hotel by the [Dixie] Convention Center. [They] would have these assets right here to make it so that it is a nicer place for people to stay and to work. At the same time, though, with the skyline going up there is sprawl. Do you think the landscape has been compromised?

GB: Drastically.

SA: And that impairs [the landscape]?

GB: But you can still shoot between here and Gunlock [Washington County, Utah]. Keith O'Brien filmed his last movie here. I think that one was *Coyote Summer* about a little thirteen-year-old girl. He played her grandpa. He committed suicide shortly after that. His quality of life [was poor and] he wasn't doing very well. That was his last movie. But he filmed *Ten Who Dared* here on the Colorado [River]. Some of that was filmed here in the area. It was a fabulous movie [and was produced by Disney].

SA: In your opinion, even though there are more power lines [and] more subdivisions out here, it still has enough beauty? There is still enough pristine land for crews to come out [and film]?

GB: Yes. I think there are still plenty of places where they can shoot and film. It depends on what they are doing. Like everything that is filmed in Salt Lake [City], they try to make it look like it is in Denver [Colorado] or somewhere else. If you keep your eye open, like in *The Sandlot*, you will see an LDS chapel in the background. So they want it to look like a certain place. And even *Drop Off* [looks Midwestern or like Colorado]. The [youngsters] are going to go to Denver, if it is still like the original script, to buy [motorcycles]. They take the city wino to go with them because they can't get anybody else. They clean him up and it is a great, great story.

When Lyman [Dayton] films here, a lot of it looks like it is filmed in L. A. They will play volleyball on the ocean side and a lot of times they are in Malibu [California]. If you are shooting a scene on the beach you have to use three or four different beaches. Some you can't have a fire. Some you can't shoot at night because you have all [the lights] in the background, so you shoot this way. Then you go to another beach and shoot that way. [In] a lot of his [films] you will see the coast going down towards San Diego [California] as the credits come up. It says it is filmed in Hollywood. When they do that, you [think] that is not filmed in Hollywood. [Laughter]

SA: [Inaudible]

GB: It was \$500.00 a day for a permit in Hollywood twenty years ago. Here, for a permit, you have to have a nurse on hand, plus you have to have security and several other things. You have to pay the police to block the road off. So it gets kind of expensive, but they have the budgets for that.

I do think there are a lot of places where they can shoot. I know the [Dixie State University] is going to get a sound stage maybe up on the hill.

SA: Yes, [inaudible].

GB: [Robert] Redford begged them to build a sound stage here back when *Electric Horseman* was filmed. And forever he kept saying: build a sound stage. New Mexico built six and they are in use continuously, continuously. Now there are some [fellows who] are going to build a place up near Apple Valley [Washington County, Utah]. They tried to get that off the ground. I heard they are really getting close to starting it because they have more money now. They have the property. It is a fabulous movie set. Of course, Johnson's Canyon, some of that old western set, is gone over in Kanab because Milo McCowan built houses in there. We were so close to getting *Back to the Future Two and Three* filmed here. They decided to go to Kanab instead and to shoot part of the Monument Valley [Arizona] which I thought was a wise decision. They were going to build a set and everything in Anasazi Valley [Ivins, Washington County, Utah] that would have stayed there until the flood came through. We were really close to getting that. The Robin Williams movie, *Dead Poets Society*, was an Ivy League school. We almost landed that at Cedar [City, Iron County, Utah] because it looked Ivy League. They only thing they didn't have was a small lake. So they went to Indiana or somewhere.

There were a lot of big movies that were really, really on the verge [of coming here], I think, if [Washington] County had worked with them. Right now, if you don't have Dan Whalen you are not getting into the parks or anywhere close to the parks. Dan has really good connections. He shoots a lot of commercials [like] Marlboro, not too long ago. There is another one they are getting ready to shoot. [Robert] Duvall is wanting to come in here for a movie. He worked in Salt Lake [City]. Salt Lake [City] is still cranking out the movies. I don't know about Moab. I don't know how much they are doing over there because I haven't kept up with that end [of it]. A lot of fun things. It is good experience. We have the hottest two degrees right now on college campuses: motion pictures and gaming. Those are the hottest two [degrees]. We are so far ahead of most of the schools that have a program. I have a friend whose best friend graduated from Morehead [State University], Kentucky. One of the two teachers in motion pictures had actually worked on one documentary. They had never seen a movie filmed. We have had [students] that have been on sets and been around.

[END OF RECORDING TWO. END OF INTERVIEW.]