

Dennis Iverson
Interviewed by Loren Webb
For The Washington County Historical Society

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Participants: Loren Webb
Dennis Iverson

Webb:Hi. Good morning. My name is Loren Webb. I'm the Washington County Historical Society Oral History Coordinator. And today we are interviewing Dennis Iverson from Washington City. Dennis is a long-time resident of Washington and brings with him a vast amount of knowledge and community service. So today, today is Wednesday, August 16th, 2023, and we'll start this interview. What is your full name, Dennis?

Iverson: Dennis Hans Iverson.

Webb:Okay. And are you retired, and if so, what do you do with your time, you know, spending?

Iverson: That's a matter of opinion. I spend most of my time helping with our livestock operation and with the farm. We have a couple of boys that are kind of responsible for it, but I spend some time helping them.

Webb:Okay. Good. So you're still working, and you're still farming, farming and ranching. Is that correct?

Iverson: Yes.

Webb:Okay. So how did you get into farming and ranching?

Iverson: Well, when I was 18 years old, my father asked me if I would be interested in buying his farm, and I said, "Well, I might be." He told me, he said, "It's not a very good place to make a living, but it's a great place to raise a family." So, anyhow, I bought the farm when I was 18.

Webb:Okay. What breeds of cattle or horses do you raise?

Iverson: Why, that has evolved over the years.

Webb:Okay.

Iverson: We began, of course, I kind of bought out the Pine Valley operations up there, and it was Hereford cattle. And then they wanted a little bit of Brahman in them, so we started running some Brangus bulls, and then they've kind of evolved to Angus. Everybody wants Angus now. So—

Webb: So are these—

Iverson: If you've got a black cow, everybody thinks it's Angus, which isn't necessarily true.

Webb: Okay. So are these grass-fed cows right now, or are they stockyard?

Iverson: We just raise cow, calf, and some yearlings, mostly on the range..

Webb: Okay. Did you raise any other farm animals, besides the cows?

Iverson: No, I, well, no.

Webb: No horses or—

Iverson: I, I've, well, we've had a mare that we kept to raise colts to raise so we'd have horses for the operation.

Webb: Okay. Any chickens, pigs, sheep, anything like that?

Iverson: Very little.

Webb: Okay. Where is your farm located, and how many acres do you have on your farm?

Iverson: Well, the farm, the farm is located, our alfalfa farm is located on the river between Washington and Hurricane.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: Right below the Washington Fields and Diversion Dam. That's the farm that I purchased at that time from my father.

Webb: How many acres?

Iverson: It's about 70 acres.

Webb: Okay. And do you have a farm up in Pine Valley, as well?

Iverson: Well, we've kind of acquired a farm in Beaver. [Consisting of about 100 acres.]

Webb: Oh, okay.

Iverson: And a farm in Panguitch [Consisting of 140 acres], and then we have the Homestead on the Beaver Dam Wash. And then, of course, we had, through the years, we've had the grazing rights on the public lands, too.

Webb: Okay. How many acres do you have on your homestead there on the Beaver Dam Wash?

Iverson: There's a section there, 640.

Webb: Six hundred and forty acres. Okay.

Iverson: M-hmm.

Webb: What crops do you raise?

Iverson: Everything we raise now is pretty much hay. We used to, I used to raise some grains, barley and milo, for livestock feed.

Webb: Okay. Did you rotate any of your crops?

Iverson: Oh, yeah. You know, to begin with, we raised sugar beet seed here in Dixie, which was probably the best rotation crop that we had at the time, and the best cash crop.

Webb: Best cash crop.

Iverson: Yeah.

Webb: And you sold your, your sugar beet seed to whom?

Iverson: To the U and I Sugar Company [Utah-Idaho Sugar Company].

Webb: And where was that located?

Iverson: Well, the plant where they processed the seed was here in St. George.

Webb: And where would that, where was that at the time, can you describe it?

Iverson: The facility was up at the old opera house up there [northeast corner of intersection of Main and Diagonal Streets in St. George].

Webb: Okay. At approximately 200 North Main.

Iverson: Yeah.

Webb: Right across the street [north] from where the U.S. Post Office is now located.

Iverson: Yeah.

Webb: Who did you marry, and how many children do you have?

Iverson: Well, I married Jerilyn Burgess from Pine Valley. And we have six children.

Webb: Any grandchildren?

Iverson: We have 24, I think, grandchildren.

Webb: Any great-grandchildren?

Iverson: We have 12 great-grandchildren.

Webb: Wow.

Iverson: If I'm keeping up.

Webb: Okay. How did you meet your spouse?

Iverson: Oh, we went to school together. We went to Woodward [Junior High School] and to Dixie High School. And so we got acquainted there.

Webb: Okay. Is she a stay-at-home mother, or did she work while you were both raising your family?

Iverson: I had a hard time keeping her home. She loved to get out and work. She worked for a pharmacy here in St. George practically all of her young life until we got married.

Webb: What was the name of the pharmacy?

Iverson: Bateman Pharmacy.

Webb: Bateman Pharmacy, okay, okay. Well, describe any important aspects of family life and raising your children.

Iverson: Well, you know, to begin with, after I bought the farm, my bishop called me in and said he thought that I ought to go on a mission. And I explained to him that I'd purchased the farm and had some obligations. And he said, I think he felt like he couldn't convince me I needed to go on a mission, so he said, "Why don't you go home and think about it and come back next week, and we'll discuss it again." So I did, and I told him the same thing. This was Bishop Quintin Nisson. He was a wise bishop. So he says, "Why don't you go home and think about it again and come and visit me next week." Well, I made the mistake of going home and thinking about it and decided that maybe I should. So I ended up going on a mission. Now what was the question again?

Webb: Just describe any important aspects of family life and raising your children.

Iverson: Well, as I indicated, my dad said that the farm was a good place to raise a family. And I had more fun with my boys. We would trail our cattle from the Beaver Dam Wash to Central, Utah.

Webb: How many miles is that?

Iverson: I'm not sure, but it took us five days.

Webb: Five days, wow.

Iverson: And we would leave out on the Beaver Dam Wash with the first herd, we had 700 head.

Webb: Wow.

Iverson: And we would leave out there with that herd, and when we'd get to Pine Valley we'd go back and gather again and would leave with about 300 head.

Webb: So did you camp overnight, or did you just go home each night.

Iverson: We camped overnight.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: M-hmm.

Webb: What was that like?

Iverson: Oh, golly, it was great. We enjoyed it.

Webb: That's awesome.

Iverson: It was, I think those boys enjoyed it. Now one thing I will say, our kids never went riding horses for fun. Riding horses was a job, and I think they enjoyed it, but they didn't enjoy it enough that they wanted to do it when we weren't moving cattle. But they did enjoy playing ball and whatnot, and so I ended up coaching their Little League teams and working with those boys. The first two children we had were girls, and I thought, hmm, I'm probably not going to get any help. But pretty soon we had four boys, and so it worked out pretty good.

Webb: That's good. I've got to come back to what happened with the mission? So you said you, did you, you accept the mission call, and you had, did you have any children at that time?

Iverson: No, no, no. This was before we was married.

Webb: This was before you got married.

Iverson: Yeah.

Webb: So where did you serve your mission?

Iverson: Denmark.

Webb: Okay. And so what kind of experience was that like for you?

Iverson: I had a wonderful mission, had some great experiences. You know, most missionaries that went to Denmark, some of those Scandinavian countries, if they've seen one person come into church they were very lucky. Me and my companions worked with maybe 12 or 15 people that ended up coming in to the church. And some of them had some great experiences—

Webb: Wow.

Iverson. In getting a testimony.

Webb: So what happened to the farm while you were gone? You said you had just barely bought a farm.

Iverson: Well, before I went back to Bishop Nisson to tell him I guess I'll go, I'd had the discussion with my dad, and I had a brother who was farming, as well, and he said that him and my brother could probably take care of the farm while I was gone if I decided to go.

Webb: Okay. So what positions, if any, have you held with any local irrigation companies?

Iverson: Oh, golly.

Webb: And what did that entail?

Iverson: I've been on the St. George Washington Canal Company for years. I was on the Washington County Water Conservancy District Board for 15 years or so. And, of course, it, you have to make decisions on development and improvements and whatnot. And we've done a lot of improvements over the years.

Webb: So with the irrigation company, did you, did you oversee any installation of irrigation ditches in the Washington Fields, for instance?

Iverson: The Board did.

Webb: The Board did.

Iverson: Yes.

Webb: Okay. So can you give me an example of some of the irrigation canals that were installed by the Board, by your irrigation company board?

Iverson: Well.

Webb: During that time.

Iverson: The main canal from the diversion east of Washington came down, the main canal came from there to Little Valley, and we started to line it with concrete, and we lined the whole canal from top to bottom before, in the process of getting it done, which made a real improvement for the canal system. But the community loved to go float down that canal. And it became such a liability for us, up at the diversion dam we had one or two that drowned there, and we were worried about the liability of it, and so we finally, with the Water District, decided we had to pipe that canal to get rid of that liability.

Webb: Okay. And you took out the tunnels, right? At Shinob Kibe Mountain?

Iverson: M-hmm.

Webb: Okay. And that was probably one of those things that was a liab—

Iverson: You know, and what's interesting, those tunnels were through those gypsum hills, and you try and put a pond in that gypsum, it will not hold water. But for some reason, over the years, those tunnels never had any problem. I assume it was because when we get floods, it was so muddy, that maybe it would seal up some of those tunnels. I'm not sure. A friend of mine said the only way you can get water down through there is with faith. So maybe that's how it worked.

Webb: Okay. How did you become a board member with the Washington County Water Conservancy District, and you said you served 15 years on the Board?

Iverson Well, about that, I'm not—

Webb: And from approximately what year to about what year?

Iverson: Oh, gosh.

Webb: If you remember.

Iverson: Now you're, I have no idea what years it was.

Webb:It's okay. We can look that up later. But what, how did you get on the Board?

Iverson: I was appointed by the Commission.

Webb:The Washington County Commission?

Iverson: Yes.

Webb:Who was on the Commission at the time?

Iverson: Jerry Lewis, I think Jerry was on there.

Webb:Kurt Young or John Whitney?

Iverson: John might have been, John Whitney. That's, I can't remember.

Webb:Okay. So tell me what that, what did that, what experiences stand out while serving on that Board?

Iverson: Well, one thing that kind of bothered me was our board was an appointed board. And we had the ability to levy tax, and that was a concern to me. I felt like the taxpayers should have the opportunity to elect those that have the authority to levy taxes. But anyhow, we worked through that.

Webb:Is the governor the only person who is over the conservancy districts in the State of Utah? Does that sound about right?

Iverson: Hmm. You're asking me questions I might not know the answer to, Loren. You know, I don't know if the Governor has that authority over the water district. The Commissioners do.

Webb:Okay. The Commissioners do.

Iverson: And, of course, the rights to use the water come through the State Water Engineer. And so we have to deal with him—

Webb:Okay.

Iverson: On issues concerning—

Webb:So what experiences, other experiences, stand out, anything that, or accomplishments that you saw during your time on the Board?

Iverson: Of course the first project that the Water District Board was Quail Lake. Then we had the failure, you know.

Webb:M-hmm.

Iverson: I was not on the Board at the time when the Quail Creek dike broke. But some time later I was appointed to the Board. My farm was the first farm that was destroyed when the Quail Creek dike broke.

Webb:And how, what kind of effect did that have on your farming operation?

Iverson: Well, it was wiped out.

Webb:And how many acres were destroyed?

Iverson: Well it was the 70 acres there.

Webb:The entire 70 acres were destroyed?

Iverson: Yeah. That whole farm was completely covered with that flood.

Webb:Wow.

Iverson: So we went back, and over time we've rebuilt it. All the concrete structures and that from the diversion, our farm laid right below the diversion dam. And all those structures and rock from, that the pioneers made the dam with, were scattered down over that farm. So anyhow, we went to work on it and finally got it cleared off. And it took about ten years to really get productive again. But it's a pretty nice little farm still now.

Webb:Ten years! Wow! Okay. So did you serve on either the Washington County Commission or the Utah State Senate or the House of Representatives?

Iverson: I was in the legislature, in the House.

Webb:In the House of Representatives.

Iverson: M-hmm.

Webb:Okay. How many years did you serve there?

Iverson: Five years.

Webb:Okay. And what made you decide to run for state legislature, state representative?

Iverson: I don't know if you know Met Johnson or not.

Webb:I do.

Iverson: We, Met was a livestock person, and we here in Washington County felt like we needed somebody to help to represent us in the State Legislature. And so we talked Met into running for the legislature. And he was elected. Well, after three years, he'd call, he was always calling me at 6 o'clock in the morning. He called me one morning and said, "I'm going to resign my seat in the legislature." I said, "Met, we got to have you there." And he said, "I'm going to get out. But I'm going to submit your name to the Governor." And so I said, "Well, no, that's not anything I have in mind." And he said, he wouldn't take no for an answer. If you ever tried telling Met Johnson no, you just as well forget. So about 8 o'clock, then, I says, "Well, I'll go ahead and file for the seat." So that's how come I got involved.

But the main reason I got involved was because of the difficulties we were having on the BLM and public lands that were going to eliminate the ability for livestock people to use those lands. And I think one reason Met wanted me to be there is we, I was the president of the County Farm Bureau, and we had filed a lawsuit against the BLM because they had, they were required to do an environmental impact statement on livestock grazing on the public land, and their recommendation--well, on one allotment that I had was 250 head--their recommendation was to reduce it to 12 head. And their, I guess, qualifications for doing that was that they didn't give you any credit if you hauled water or anything like that, and if any of the area was more than 5 miles from water, then they just wiped it out. Well, this particular grazing allotment was over on the other side of Utah Hill, and there was a lot of area more than that, more than 5 miles from water. But we hauled water to them.

So anyhow, that's kind of what they were doing. And it was wiping out a lot of the ability to operate on the public land. And what's interesting was in doing this, the BLM began in three areas in the west—Challis, Idaho; Rio Puerto, New Mexico, and right here in Washington County. And if those decisions would have been allowed to continue, they would eventually have gone to the entire West. And so that's why we decided we had to file a lawsuit. And I went to the Farm Bureau, and the American Farm Bureau came, then, and took the lead in our lawsuit and helped us. BLM withdrew all their decisions, and we were able to work with them and establish a program that really works for both.

Webb: Okay. Was that about the time when BLM established grazing boards, or were the grazing boards already in existence?

Iverson: They were already there.

Webb: Already there.

Iverson: M-hmm.

Webb: Okay. Anything else that stands out while you were serving on the State Legislature as a State Representative?

Iverson: Yeah. Well, Rob Bishop had drawn up a piece of legislation that provided for a Constitutional Defense Council to advise the legislature and the governor on constitutional issues. The Council would, the governor, which was Governor Leavitt, hadn't constituted a council. The Association of County Governments came to me while I was in the legislature, and they said, "We need this council in place." So working with the Association I ran legislation that defined how the Council would be organized, and it had, of course, the Attorney General was on it; the county governments could appoint people to the Council, and the governor had appointments to the Council.

Well, the first year I ran it the way the Association wanted it, the governor vetoed it. So the next year they came to me and said, "We've got to do it again." Let's see if we can make it so he'll sign it. So we did. And Governor Leavitt called me down, and he said, "There's a few things here I don't think I like." So we reviewed it. I went back to the Association. They said, I think we've got more than we really wanted, so that will be good. So we ran it again, and we got the Council constituted. The Governor signed it. And the Council was appointed and in place.

And it needed, in order to have a council that could advise the legislature and the governor, when issues came up, you had to be able to file a lawsuit, so it had to have funding. Well, Representative Hatch happened to be on the Appropriation, and he was able to get funding from the Mineral Lease Fund. So we put in place an ongoing fund of two million dollars that the State could use if there was an issue they felt was unconstitutional when some of these regulations come down from the Federal government. And there have been several situations since then when that fund has been used and the council has advised the legislature on it.

Webb: Okay. So, and you were referring to Orrin Hatch, correct, when you said Hatch?

Iverson: No, it was Tom Hatch.

Webb: Tom Hatch. Okay.

Iverson: Tom was in the legislature, in the state legislature. [Tom was in the House at the time the legislation was passed.]

Webb: Great. I'm glad you made that clarification.

Iverson: Yeah. We, Tom was in state legislature, and like I say, he got those funds, he used the mineral funds which were the funds that come from the Federal government, which were paid to the state in lieu of taxes.

Webb: In lieu of taxes?

Iverson: Yeah. Payment in lieu of taxes.

Webb:Right.

Iverson: And so we used those Federal funds to defend us against the Federal government when we needed to.

Webb:Okay. Rob Bishop, was he Speaker of the House at that time?

Iverson: Rob was speaker just before I got there.

Webb:Okay, okay. So what positions, if any, have you served with your church? You mentioned that you served a mission to Denmark. Any other church callings that stand out?

Iverson: Yeah, you know, I was in the bishopric in Washington when we were one ward. Now we're several stakes over there. And our ward included out in the Washington Fields and Middleton. It didn't include Leeds, but everything else in that area, you know, was in the Washington Ward. And that was soon after Jeri and I were married, I was called into the bishopric. And then later on I had a calling as bishop, as well, when we, after the, after the area had grown like it has now. So I had that opportunity. But you know, one of the funnest things I had in serving in the church was I was called to the High Council soon after I got out of the bishopric the first time. And I served with Truman Bowler, Murray Webb, and Milne, what was his name?

Webb:Willard Milne.

Iverson: Willard Milne, yes. We had, we had a good time serving with those guys.

Webb:Okay. So where, where and when were you born?

Iverson: I was born in Washington. People ask me, "Have you lived in Washington your whole life?" I say, "Well, obviously, not yet."

Webb:What year were you born?

Iverson: 1939.

Webb:1939. And who else was in your family?

Iverson: My oldest sister was Celeste, and, you know, I don't see, I was the youngest in the family. My mother, I think, was 42 when I was born. And so my sister Celeste had moved to California, and I really never knew her. She had a daughter or two that were older than me.

Webb:Wow.

Iverson: So Celeste was the oldest. She moved to California. Next was my sister Wanda who married Wayne Sandberg. You know who those people are.

Webb:M-hmm.

Iverson: And then my brother Malin. He and I farmed together for a long time after Jeri and I were married. He had his farm, and I had mine, but we worked together a lot. And then my brother Grant. Grant was a truck driver. Grant loved to get in those trucks and drive those trucks. After I got in the livestock business, I mentioned we trailed those cattle back and forth, but the traffic got so bad we decided we had to buy a truck. And Grant helped me to buy that truck, and me and my friend Fenton Bowler ran our cattle together, and so we bought this truck together and started trucking our cattle instead of trailing them.

Webb:Okay. I want to come back to that, but what were your parents' names?

Iverson: Wallace Iverson was my father. He was the bishop over in Washington for ten years.

Webb:Okay.

Iverson: And my mother was Dina Adams.

Webb:Okay.

Iverson: And so I'm related to all the Adamses in Washington.

Webb:So, oh, okay. And what type of work did they do, your parents?

Iverson: Uh.

Webb:Was your father a farmer?

Iverson: My father homesteaded on the Beaver Dam Wash. He and my mother did, soon after they were married. And three of the kids were born while they were out there on the Beaver Dam only. They were located at a place about ten miles up from Beaver Dam, a place called the Mormon Well. And he had cattle and farmed. But a flood came down, I don't know if it was a flood down the Beaver Dam Wash or if a flood from the side washes. He couldn't get the water out. So he had those cattle up to Barclay, and he couldn't take them back down there, so he loaded them on the train, went to California with them, sold them, and came home with \$10,000 just as the Depression hit. And he bought up half the farms in the Washington Fields. He bought the pool hall here in St. George. He loved to play pool.

Webb:Was that the Liberty Pool Hall, or?

Iverson: No, it was, gosh, I can't remember what it was called.

Webb:Okay.

Iverson: It wasn't the Liberty.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: This was years ago. And so anyhow, he, he was involved in far—agriculture. Well, and here comes along the Second World War. And my two older brothers both went into the military, and he had all those farms out in the Washington Fields, couldn't take care of them, so he sold some to Schmutzes, Staheli bought some, and my sister's husband bought one of the farms that he had.

Webb: When you talk about the Stahelis, are we talking Woodrow Staheli?

Iverson: Woodrow. M-hmm.

Webb: And like Don, Don Schmutz and Ray Schmutz and Stan?

Iverson: I think it was Ray, I think it was Ray. Ray's family bought some of the property that he had.

Webb: Okay. And your, your farm on the Beaver Dam Wash. Was that, that was located south of what's now Lytle Ranch, right?

Iverson: Yes.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: And that's where Dean Terry was raised.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: M-hmm.

Webb: So did you have other family members that lived nearby, or relatives that lived near your home in Washington?

Iverson; I had an Uncle Walter, and he farmed in the Washington Fields, as well.

Webb: Okay. How did your parents meet?

Iverson: Of course I don't know the whole story.

Webb: But what were you guys, what were you told?

Iverson: I was told that my dad was actually raised down to Littlefield, but he'd come up to Washington, he'd seen my mother. My mother had dark hair, and he seen this young,

dark-haired girl, and he told some of his friends, "I've just seen the woman I'm going to marry." And I guess that's what worked out for him.

Webb: That's so cool. So tell me a little about your community outside of your family. What did your neighborhood look like? Where did you live, what neighborhood, or what street did you live on? Anything that stands out about growing up?

Iverson: Well, we still live on 200 North in Washington. Like I said.

Webb: East or west?

Iverson: 200 North 40 East.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: 200 North.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: And it was kind of a compound there. My brother Grant lived over on the other, one corner. I was right next door to the home where my, where I was born, where we built a home. And then another brother was around the corner and down the street. So.

Webb: Okay. Where did your ancestors come from?

Iverson: You know, my mother's side, they were from England, and I think there was some Swiss blood, too. Grandmother was a Reber. And on my father's side it was some Denmark and Prussia.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: Prussia no longer exists, but it was the area between Denmark and Germany.

Webb: Where did they first settle? Did they settle anywhere in northern Utah and then came to Washington, or just, how did that work out?

Iverson: My grandparents and great-grandparents settled in Mount Pleasant. And then Brigham Young, I think it was after he had sent the first group to Washington, and, but I think it was before the ones that came to St. George, but I'm not sure. But then he went to Mount Pleasant and sent a group of Scandinavian saints down to Washington.

Webb: To Washington. Okay.

Iverson: So that was the Iversons, the Neilsons, the Nissons. And anyhow, I hadn't been back to Mount Pleasant hardly at all. But I went back one summer and, gosh, I've been mad at Brigham Young ever since.

Webb: Why? Because Mount Pleasant is such a beautiful place, right?

Iverson Yeah, it is.

Webb: Did your family name change when your family immigrated to the United States? Some names changed, and some didn't.

Iverson: Well, in Denmark it's *s-e-n*. But I think back in the old script in Denmark, after being in Denmark on a mission, *son* in the old language was *s* and then *o* with a slash through it, *n*. So our name would have been, the *I* is pronounced long *E*, our name would have been *Eversen*. But they, of course, on your typewriters there's no letter *o* with a slash through it, so it changed to just *s-o-n*.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: But when I went to Denmark, my name is Dennis Hans Iverson. Over here I was Dennis Iverson. When I got over there, I was Elder Hans Eversen.

Webb: That's interesting. Okay. Are there any traditions that are still carried on in your family, even today? Anything that stands out? Any family traditions?

Iverson: You know, we used to like to go hunt pine nuts. My dad liked to hunt pine nuts. My dad rented the Indian reservation up here for five years, and he'd get up on Utah Hill up in some of those canyons, big pine trees. We would go up there and hunt pine nuts. I'll never forget, I would probably have been eight or ten [years old]. My dad was still young enough, he'd, those trees were thirty feet tall. And he would get up there and try to shake those cones off. One day he was up there and lost his balance, come down and peeled every limb off down the side of that tree. But it slowed him down enough it didn't even hurt him.

Webb: Huh. What hobbies did you have, and do you still have any hobbies to this day?

Iverson: We, when we were growing up, us kids played softball and basketball, in church tournaments, you know.

Webb: M-hmm.

Iverson: I used to pitch fast-pitch softball.

Webb: Okay. Was that, that was church softball, right?

Iverson: Yeah. M-hmm.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: We'd go to the All-Church practically every year.

Webb: All-Church tournament in Salt Lake City?

Iverson: Yeah. And Bishop Webb, he said, it'll sure be good when they divide the Washington Ward. Because we'd beat the Sixth Ward all the time.

Webb: That's so interesting. [Loren Webb's father Murray was the "Bishop Webb" referred to.]

Iverson: Well, I remember Stan Staheli, said, "Bishop Webb, if they divide the Washington Ward, the Sixth Ward won't even get to play for the championship. It'll just be the two Washington Wards." Well, it kind of ended up that way.

Webb: So pretty fierce competition, it sounds like.

Iverson: Some of those mothers they wouldn't let come back to the ball games any more, they'd get so excited.

Webb: Tell me about your grammar and high school education.

Iverson: Of course, went to—

Webb: You went to Woodward, right?

Iverson: You know, we had an experience, the first year I was to come to Woodward, somehow or another there were some kids over to Washington who had had a little trouble with ringworm. And so the first year I went to Woodward they made all of us shave our heads. So I came to school over to St. George with a shaved head for the first time. So I wore a baseball cap. I was a little embarrassed to have a shaved head. Nowadays it would be right in style again. But the, I remember Stan Schmutz wanted to know if I was planning on staying in the class. I said, "Yeah, I am." "Well, why don't you take your hat off?" then he said. So I took my hat off.

Webb: Did you have, what interests did you have in Woodward and Dixie High School? Any particular sports or things that you participated in?

Iverson: I played basketball in Woodward, played tennis in high school and college.

Webb: Okay. Did you have any influential teachers? Anyone that stood out?

Iverson: You know, I can still recite the poem, "Gunga Din." Mrs. Syphus, Beth Syphus, we didn't get away with things with Mrs. Syphus.

Webb: She was an English teacher, right?

Iverson: Yeah.

Webb:Okay.

Iverson: So, anyhow, I memorized “The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,” “Gunga Din,” and a few things. Those have stayed with me all these years.

Webb:Did you have any leadership roles in organizations or classes?

Iverson: In classes?

Webb:Yes, any, like senior class or junior class, sophomore class, anything like that?

Iverson: No, not really, I don’t think.

Webb:Okay. Did you read much? Any particular topics that stood out?

Iverson: I read a book called The Kid That Batted One Thousand. And I didn’t read a lot, but I can still remember that book. He never got any hits, he just fouled off, and then he’d walk. But it was a great book and a great story.

Webb:That’s great. Did you have any goals or dreams for when you were growing up, anything you wanted to be, you were thinking, I want to be this when I get older?

Iverson: Of course, we all wanted to be ball players, you know.

Webb:Yeah. Okay.

Iverson: I don’t know of anything else, just I certainly didn’t want to be a John Wayne, I don’t think.

Webb:Yeah.

Iverson: I was a John Wayne in the livestock business, and I was on horses every day.

Webb:What holidays did your family celebrate?

Iverson: All of them. [Dennis added the following information about holiday celebrations on April 11, 2024: “Soon after Jeri and I were married, my parents passed away. As our children grew up they had lots of cousins on Jeri’s side of the family. We always celebrated Easter together at someone’s home. After we bought the Terry Ranch, we have since always celebrated Easter at the ranch. “Great fun” for the kids with the pond, the zip line, and the great outdoors. The 4th of July on Independence Day was always celebrated in Washington at the park. Our whole family had assignments on the 4th. The boys had the game booths. The girls had the cake walk and face painting. I and Jeri helped with the food. Me at the Lions Club breakfast and Jeri was “15” a pie lady. So she helped make and bake the pies. Thanksgiving was celebrated with Jeri’s

family. Her sister Betty Jo and husband Clayton Neilson built a beautiful house east of Pine Valley near the first boundary. Clayton had pinball machines. Our teenagers loved to go there for Thanksgiving. I hope we taught them what they should be thankful for.

Webb:Okay. Any of them in particular that was one of your favorites?

Iverson: Well, Christmas, of course. The family would come together and we'd do the nativity. And I'd have the opportunity after I became father and a grandfather that we'd have a gift for each of the kids. I'd have them come and sit on my knee and ask them what their concerns were and give them a little advice, you know.

Webb:Yeah. What, do you remember what your house was like when you were growing up? Anything that stands out about the house that you grew up in?

Iverson: Well, to begin with, there was no heat in the bedrooms. And, of course, we didn't have air conditioning when I was growing up. Later on we got a swamp cooler, and oh, my gosh, the house was nice then. We, I think we had one electrical outlet in that house. ["That's where my mother would plug in her flat iron and do her ironing," Dennis added after the interview]

Webb:Hmm.

Iverson: It's been upgraded now, but, and we had a, an old oil furnace in the kitchen. And I'd have to go out and drain coal oil, I guess it was, out of a barrel, bring it in, and put it in that heater.

Webb:Is that home still standing?

Iverson: Yes.

Webb:Okay. Did you have any pets?

Iverson: Yes.

Webb:Describe them.

Iverson: I had a dog. Our dogs always chased cars, and then they'd get run over. I don't know if any, I'm sure anybody that lived in those days remembers, a car would go up a street, and all the dogs would chase it.

Webb:Yeah. How did your family get around? Did you ever, did you have a car?

Iverson: Yes. My dad bought one of the, a very nice Buick. And he built a nice garage at the side of the house. And we would use it to go to California to visit my sister down there. But I remember as a young boy I got in that car, and this is after my brother Grant come back from the Navy, and that car had cigarette lighters in the back seat.

And of course my dad didn't know Grant smoked. But I was around him when he smoked a little. So I said, "Huh, Grant ought to ride in this car." He said, "How come?" I said, "It has cigarette lighters back here." My dad said, "Does Grant smoke?" I said, "I don't know." ["I had left the cat out of the bag," Dennis added after the interview]

Webb: So do you remember when you got your first car, and what was it?

Iverson: I had a '36 Ford pickup, painted orange. And I painted a cowboy hat on both doors. And my friends and I would use that to drive to Santa Clara to visit the girls, and that was pretty much the first outfit I had.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: I had, at least.

Webb: So what was your first job?

Iverson: Of course I had a job from the day I grew up. I was down at that farm doing stuff.

Webb: How old were you when you started helping out at the farm, do you remember? Were you 5, 6, 7?

Iverson: I remember tromping hay. I'd have to get up on the load, we was still hauling hay, loose, and my brothers, Grant and Malin, were throwing the hay on the wagon, and I was tromping it. And, of course, if they found a shock of hay with a snake in it, they'd throw it up intentionally. But I remember one day we were, we loaded a complete load, and it was up high, and I was on top of it, and they were headed up to the barn, and I started to slide off the back. And my head was downhill, and I felt like I was going to slide off that and land on my head. Well, I started screaming and hollering, and one of my brothers came around and caught me just as I slipped off the load of hay.

Webb: Oh, boy. How much money did you earn?

Iverson: When we did the sugar beet seed, us kids would ride slip. We would have a horse that would pull a lumber-constructed slip that just slid along the ground, and they'd pile those shocks of sugar beet seed on them. And we'd ride those horses pulling that slip up to the threshing machine. We got paid two dollars a day.

Webb: Two dollars a day.

Iverson: Yep.

Webb: Wow. How much did you earn hauling hay?

Iverson: I think five cents a bale.

Webb: Five cents a bale.

Iverson: Yeah.

Webb: What lessons did you learn from doing these jobs? Anything that stood out? Any particular skills that you learned?

Iverson: I learned how to sweat. I remember when I went to the mission home to go on a mission they had you fill out a questionnaire. And they called me in one day before we left to go to Denmark, and said, "You have an appointment with a doctor." So I go to see the doctor, this is a psychiatrist, and he said, "Tell me about number nine." And number nine said, "Do you sweat a lot?" And I looked at it, and I said, "Have you ever hauled hay in St. George? You'd sweat a lot, too."

Webb: Okay. So what other additional jobs or career areas do you remember? Anything that stands out?

Iverson: You know—

Webb: Any particular jobs other than farming or ranching?

Iverson: I was in the insurance business, had an agency here in St. George for several years.

Webb: What was it called?

Iverson: It was called Localized Insurance.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: And Doug Labrum and I had the agency together. And I hated that office. I hated paperwork, and if you're going to be in the insurance business, you've got to do your paperwork. So anyhow, when I bought my father-in-law out and bought some of the other Pine Valley ranchers, I got out of the insurance business.

Webb: Okay. Did you have any particular influential mentors, anyone that really taught you or made an impact on your life?

Iverson: You know, I run cattle with probably one of the best cowboys in the world. I mean he knew how to handle cattle. Now that doesn't mean you know how to ride a horse. But he knew how to handle cattle. And that was Fenton Bowler. And Fenton and I, as we run our farming operation together, it was amazing how we got to where we were thinking on the same line, make decisions together. We got along great together.

Webb: He was, he lived in Veyo, right?

Iverson: Yes.

Webb: Okay. Okay. Did you attend college?

Iverson: I did.

Webb: Was this Dixie College?

Iverson: Matter of fact, I was going to Dixie when I bought the farm. And then I, when I came back from Denmark, I went back to Dixie.

Webb: Did you have a major?

Iverson: No.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: But I wanted to graduate, you know.

Webb: M-hmm.

Iverson: But anyhow, after, when I came back from Denmark I went to one quarter and after that quarter I went to my counselor, and he said, "Well, you can't graduate, you need to fill your groups." And to fill my groups I needed a phys ed class and a humanities class. I never did go back and get it.

Webb: Hmm.

Iverson: Sometimes I wish I had of done.

Webb: Okay. Any other successes or accomplishments or challenges or frustrations in your life that, when you look back?

Iverson: Well, I really felt good about the time I spent in the legislature. I felt like we accomplished some good things. You know, there was one time Ron Thompson, who was the manager of the Water District, came to me, and of course I was still on the Water District Board, too, while I was in the legislature. So I, he had a bill that he wanted run--some of the water rights that were owned by municipalities were going to expire. And the State statute said that if you have an application to develop water, and you don't do it within fifty years, it's automatically forfeit. So it didn't make sense, some of these water applications were coming up that fifty-year period. And so if we'd have forfeited them, it would have gone down the river. So I did run a bill that allowed the State Engineer to make a decision if that water was needed or be beneficial to these other communities, he could extend that period of time, and didn't

have any problem getting that one passed. It didn't make sense to not use the water and let it go down the river, you know.

Webb: Yeah.

Iverson: And, of course, where we live here, if we don't utilize the water rights we have here, it does go down the river. Other parts of the states, it just goes to the Basin, you know.

Webb: Uh-huh.

Iverson: The Great Salt Lake. So it's not that much of a concern. We hated to let that water go down the river.

Webb: Okay. And speaking of the Virgin River, in going back to the Quail Creek Dike failure, I remember my father and I were out at the Washington Bridge.

Iverson: M-hmm.

Webb: And we ran into you.

Iverson: Oh, yeah?

Webb: And my dad had a camera, and he videotaped you. Do you remember that?

Iverson: I don't.

Webb: Okay. Anyway, it was quite an experience. We were looking over there, and there was no bridge. Do you remember that?

Iverson: I do, yeah.

Webb: And what stands out when you saw that, that the bridge was gone and your farm was gone? What thoughts ran through your mind at that time?

Iverson: Well, to begin with, you know, it didn't look like it was going to be that serious. But then, I guess, all at once the dike went, and then it came down and took that bridge out, and, of course, I had been up to my farm, and it looked like everything was going to be fine. It was in night, and dark, you know, when it finally went.

Webb: Right.

Iverson: And so I, you couldn't get up to your farm the way I usually go, so I had to go up to Anderson Junction and back around, over to Hurricane and back down. Holy cow, when I got there and seen that, it was gone.

Webb: Yeah. It was a huge detour.

Iverson: Yeah.

Webb: Yeah. Okay. So as you look back over your life, in addition to what you mentioned with the State Legislature, is there anything else that you would like to be remembered for?

Iverson: To be remembered for?

Webb: Yeah.

Iverson: I would hope that my, I'd be remembered that I was a good Daddy.

Webb: Okay.

Iverson: And, you know, I, my kids are pretty close to us. And we still work together. I don't agree with everything they do. They probably don't agree with everything I say. But we get along pretty good.

Webb: Okay. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you feel is important to tell about your life?

Iverson: Well, you know, when I went to Denmark, the first thing, my first responsibility was to tell the Joseph Smith story. And I got there in November. We always had a conference at Christmas time in Denmark for the missionaries. And I remember all the missionaries lined up in their seats, and we had a testimony period. And they'd all stand up and bear their testimonies. And when it came to me, I thought, hmm, I'm not sure I know it's true. And so anyhow, I got up to bear my testimony, and I said, "You know, I'm here because I believe it, but I can't tell you that I know it's true." But anyhow, after the meeting, I remembered what Joseph Smith read, if any body lacks wisdom, you need to go to Father in Heaven to find out your answer. So I did. And I got that testimony, and that's kind of been the thing that has determined my decisions in life.

Webb: Okay. Well, thank you so much for joining us. We really appreciate all of you for spending the time with us on this interview. This is the seventh in a series of oral history interviews that we've conducted, the Washington County Historical Society has conducted, here at the Community Education Channel studios, and we want to thank the studios for their time and effort in putting this program together. Thank you, and we'll see you another time.