

Susan Savage  
Interviewed by Loren Webb  
For the Washington County Historical Society

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Participants: Loren Webb  
Susan Savage

Webb: Hi. Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Loren Webb. I'm with the Washington County Historical Society, and this is our 13th interview. I'm going to be interviewing Susan Savage. She is a long-time resident of Leeds, Utah, and has served in a number of community functions there and is, I think, I believe still in the livestock business. Is that right?

Savage: Uh-huh.

Webb: So with that, let's get started, and tell us what your full name is.

Savage: Susan Savage.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: That's it.

Webb: Okay. And where and when were you born?

Savage: I was actually born right in Leeds in the little house. Several of us were, I think, that was 1946. I think a hospital was a luxury and the only one in St. George was a big house that was kind of where the office building is now that has, where Alpha Engineering is.

Webb: Okay. Who else was in your family?

Savage: Four girls. Dad didn't have any boys. And so I was the third. Amy Lu is the oldest; Maryann; and then I was third; and then we had a, our younger sister was severely handicapped, Elene.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And then we also had four Indian students who lived and partly grew up with us, three from the Indian Placement Program.

Webb: Okay. What were your parents' names?

Savage: Ross Savage and Ellen Savage.

Webb: And what was her maiden name?

Savage: Jones.

Webb: Okay, and what type of work did they do?

Savage: Before they were married or after?

Webb: If you want to say both, or?

Savage: Well, mom was a teacher.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: Mom's family were settlers who were sent into the San Luis Valley, which is part of the San Juan mission. And there were lots of Hispanic people there. She taught school, and then dad, before he was married, worked with the Forest Service and worked on the farm. And then afterwards, you know, Mom was a stay-at-home mom.

Webb: M-hm.

Savage: And Dad was like other people that they just found whatever job they could. They worked at a lot of different things.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And became competent.

Webb: Yes. Did other family members live nearby?

Savage: We had cousins, Dad's family mostly. We had one of Mom's sisters moved here, but mostly her family was farther away, and so we knew Dad's family better.

Webb: Okay How, how did your parents meet?

Savage: Well, Dad was, during the Depression he actually went for a year and a little bit more at Dixie College. And then during the Depression, he moved home to help grandpa on the farm. And Mom was in Colorado. Mom's dad had a big farm in the San Luis Valley. And during the Depression, he lost the farm and eventually had some health issues and died. The stress was tremendous. She was from, well, there were eight children in Dad's family and twelve in Mom's, so they really knuckled under to make a living. And so she, she had gone to

college and she had taught school, and she had become engaged to someone. But she told me that, she told me that her older sister, who had met her husband in a mine town in Colorado, she said, "They were the very first couple I knew in my whole life who were crazy about each other."

Webb: Oh, that's so cool.

Savage:: And so all of her friends just said, "Oh, Mary, somebody will take care of you." But she wasn't settled on that, and so she eventually ended up at BYU to take some more schooling and met Dad's sister.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And then came home with her.

Webb: So what did the community of Leeds look like outside of your family when you were growing up?

Savage: Leeds was maybe a couple of hundred people, and it was isolated from St. George, but it was cut right down the middle by I-15, which was what came after the Arrowhead Highway.

Webb: Right.

Savage: And the days of the Arrowhead Highway, then there were lots, it was a stopover community. But as we grew up, lots of farming, there were people who taught school, and, but the community kind of had what it needed. It had a mechanic, it had a barber--not a trained barber, a nurse--not a trained nurse—but she took care of everybody.

Webb: Where was the mechanic located?

Savage: He was

Webb: Was he on the main road?

Savage: He was on the main street.

Webb: Main street.

Savage: There's a corner there with historic buildings, and his mechanic shop was the shade of a big mulberry tree in the lane.

Webb: Okay. Tell me about your ranch, your farm ranch location.

Savage: We're north of Leeds, northeast, I guess, the freeway runs northeast. And Grandpa homesteaded there. So Grandpa was a son of Levi Savage who came with the Willie handcart company. And Levi eventually moved down through the state into Kanab and then into Toquerville. And then Grandpa, the Danish Ranch, which is six or seven miles west of Leeds, was there where Danish families who lived there and made a living on Silver Reef. And when Silver Reef shut down, they moved out, Grandpa bought the squatters right and finished proving up on it. And as he was going back and forth, he saw a lot of extra water. It was a wet time in the early 1900s, a period of maybe 10 years or so. And so no one had filed on this water, so he filed on it. And he and some friends homesteaded in Leeds, so he was working both places.

Webb: So was that 160 acres that he, because normally that was the number of homestead? Was that about right?

Savage: It's 160 at the Danish Ranch, but I don't know how it worked down in Leeds because I know that they had, the Division of Water Rights gave them water for 200 acres.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: So—

Webb: So where did your ancestors come from?

Savage: They came from Europe: England, Scotland, the Netherlands, and Wales.

Webb: And when did they come to the United States?

Savage: The earliest one [that] we, that I've read about came during the Revolutionary War. He defected from the British, and his wife turned him in, but he escaped out the back door, they say, with his children.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Savage: And came down into the Colonies.

Webb: So she was a loyal loyalist, then. Where did they first settle?

Savage: Mostly in Massachusetts, Massachusetts Bay. But it's interesting that Dad's mother was a Ross, and her family came into Virginia and Tennessee. And they were always, we always knew them as quite well to do and sophisticated, so we don't know if they were involved in, if they had slaves, or we don't know.

Webb: How did they get to Utah? How did that happen?

Savage: They joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and then they moved to Utah.

Webb: Okay. And did your family name change when your family immigrated to the United States?

Savage: No.

Webb: It doesn't sound like it did. Are there any traditions that are still carried on? Any family traditions that are still carried on?

Savage: I would say that my sisters are really, really good housekeepers, and I remember that dad's family was.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: They were very particular.

Webb: Okay. Can you describe your grammar school and your high school days? In other words, elementary, middle school, junior high, high school days. Anything that stands out during that time period?

Savage: We had a one-room school in Leeds.

Webb: Where was that?

Savage: It's where the town hall is now.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And that was a building that was moved. Silver Reef, when the mines shut down, the town was recycled. And that's why you don't see much there now. But that was the old schoolhouse in Silver Reef. It was, they cut it in half and moved it down to Leeds.

Webb: Wow.

Savage: And put it back together.

Webb: Did you graduate from which high school? Dixie High School?

Savage: Dixie High School.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: So I was going to say the Leeds School closed when I finished the fourth grade because the School District was consolidating the schools, and they closed the little outlying schools, and they bussed us into St. George.

Webb: So you bussed. What was the bussing experience like?

Savage: I think a lot of people did their homework, and I probably slept. It was a long, hot ride.

Webb: I bet. Did you have, what influential teachers did you have? Any teachers that stood out?

Savage: Oh yes. I remember Stan Schmutz was quite a stern person, but he taught us about Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. He taught us about that kind of music, and that's why I love it was because he taught it so well.

Webb: Did you have him for band or just music?

Savage: Just music.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And then Mrs. Syphus.

Webb: Yes.

Savage: We'd marvel at how Mrs. Syphus—

Webb: You had her for English, right?

Savage: We had her for English, and there was something about her, she was very proper. She had a little bit of kind of a British accent. or something, but she was never particularly stern, but nobody would have misbehaved in her class—

Webb: Yah.

Savage: For some reason.

Webb: So what were your hobbies or interests as a child?

Savage: Oh, you know, okay, we lived outside of town and way outside of St. George. So we weren't taking dancing lessons and things. like that. And our parents who had come from the Great Depression, and they were just, life was simple. They were just such solid people. And so we worked a lot together. We had jobs where we could earn a little bit of money. And we made our own fun. Dancing was a big deal. And there were lots of dances, lots of—there was a party for

absolutely everything. And a party consisted of talents, readings. We were always, our moms kept us memorizing things and learning to sing parts. And so, and at dances, it was the whole family, the old people and the little teeny kids, and they taught us, you know, the folk dances and ballroom dancing

Webb: Yeah.

Savage: And the Virginia reel. So we loved that.

Webb: Did you read much? And if so, were there any particular books that stand out?

Savage: We did. Mom was big on reading, and she used to say that the English language is a beautiful language and should be used properly, so she corrected our English.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: But we read together. We read a lot of different things. Mom introduced us to some hard realities in life. I remember when I was just a child, she read us a story of a little girl whose mother, they were marooned out somewhere in the snow, their dad was gone, and the mother was dying, and the mother taught the little girl how to take care of her, prepare her for death, and the little girl was eight. And then we usually read, as we were doing household jobs, one person would be assigned to read out loud. So while we were making beds or ironing and things, somebody was reading to us.

Webb: I love that. That's so and it's just so mesmerizing, you know.

Webb: Education-wise, did you attend college or university, and what was your major and minor, if any?

Savage: I did. We went to Woodward. And then when we got into high school, we were the first, okay, the high school and the college were housed together.

Webb: Were housed together.

Savage: We didn't share the same classes, but we were housed together.

Webb: And you were on the old campus, right? Down on Main Street [in St. George]?

Savage: Uh-huh. And they were building the new campus. And so some of our classes were out there. But, so when I was a junior, they were still together, but we were the first class to graduate from the high school when, after they separated. And then I was really glad to have gone to a junior college because Dixie actually had, I mean, world-class teachers. They were fabulous, and by any

standard. And so we had small classes, a lot of personal attention. And then my sisters, Mom had gone to Utah State and loved it and talked about it a lot.

Webb: M-hm.

Savage: My sisters went to Utah State, but when I was ready to graduate she said, "It'd be nice to have somebody go to BYU," and she knew I'd be homesick. I'd want to be closer to home.

Webb: So did you go to BYU?

Savage: I went to BYU.

Webb: And what did you major in?

Savage:: I didn't know what to major in, so I started out in English and art, but it never felt like my life's work. And at the beginning of my senior year, I ran into Margaret Force in an empty hallway in a basement. I had just decided to walk home a different way, and she told me she was majoring in special ed. See, I have been trying to, all the years trying to help my little sister learn things. And I said, "What is it?" And she told me about it. She let up and told me. And I said, "How did you find it?" She said, "It's just brand new this year." So I talked to my parents and I changed course and went an extra year. Later on, after I taught a while, I went to graduate school at Utah State.

Webb: So you graduated in special ed, education, okay, from BYU. And then you went on to graduate school, did you say?

Savage: Later on.

Webb: Oh, later on.

Savage: Years later.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: Uh-huh.

Webb: So what college or university was that?

Savage: That was Utah State.

Webb: Utah State.

Savage: They had a strong special ed department.



Webb: Okay.

Savage: And I'd been on a mission, and I wanted to be around people that I could talk to about life.

Webb: So you got a graduate degree in what?

Savage: In special ed.

Webb: In special ed as well. Okay. Did you have any influential mentors there, at either BYU or Utah State?

Savage: Okay, Gerald Olson [at Dixie] was my art teacher, and it was a design class, so this was a life lesson. He gave us an assignment and all the particulars, and everybody else went to work, but I didn't have any idea. So I was sitting there trying to think of an idea, and he came by my desk, and he said, "Just put your pencil on the paper and start moving it, and the ideas will come." That's what happens in life, I've learned. And then Marion Bentley, he was this wonderful theater director, very skilled, went to Rutgers afterwards and ended up at BYU, but he had us do musicals and plays that were beyond us, but he just could take people off the street and make them look like they knew what they were doing.

Webb: So you were in some plays.

Savage: I loved to participate in plays. And then he recruited a bunch of us into an acting class, and he found a play that had the right number of people and gender for that play. And we ended up getting most of the awards at Rebel Awards [annual Dixie College awards] night, because he just taught us what to do.

Webb: Wow.

Savage: He knew what to do.

Webb: Any other successes or accomplishments or challenges or frustrations in your college life?

Savage: No. I had a wonderful time at college. I loved it.

Webb: Good, good. Describe how you met Melvin (Kip) Bowler and the plans that the two of you had of getting married, right?

Savage: Well, Mel was a, and so some people call him Melvin, some call him Kip, and I say whatever, depending on who I'm talking to. He was, we first met in the sixth grade when the, when the small schools were closed, and I think the

Bowler family moved from Gunlock to St. George at that time, so he was, he came to East Elementary.

Webb: That's when you first met him.

Savage: M-hm.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: He was always an enigma--very gifted. He was quiet. I think he was the student body president of every school that we attended. He just had a gift for leadership. He was very bright and quick, but he was quiet and kind. He treated everybody exactly the same way. So everybody wanted his leadership. His style of leadership was to be able to reach out to other people and involve them, and then he'd step back out of the spotlight. He wasn't seeking it for himself. Anyway, so we knew each other all through those years, worked together sometimes on committees. And then when we went to Dixie College, of course, the boys in our grade joined the National Guard and then went on their missions. So when he came home, I was at BYU. And the year I had that extra year at BYU, and the year I graduated, he graduated from Dixie [College]. I came home to St. George to teach, and he went to the University of Utah. And then he began writing, and he would come home. And I just felt like he was so good to everyone. I saw him as a classmate, not as a potential for me because he was way above me, way beyond me. But we spent a lot of time together. I thought he probably thought I'd kind of been left behind because everyone else had moved away or gotten married or something. But there was a day that came when we were, we were in a room with other people. He was talking to someone else, an older person, and I guess I was thinking what a neat guy he was, that he related to everyone so well and they loved him. And all of a sudden the light came on for me that he actually cared for me and that I didn't want to be anywhere else. So then we were planning to be married, but we were in a car accident together and he didn't make it out.

Webb: How did that affect you when he passed away and you lived? It had to have been difficult.

Savage: Well, I filled out my papers to fill a mission. I think, one of the things that I thought was, "Wow, if life can be this fragile, maybe I'm not going to live very long. I'd better hurry and do the things that I should get done." It made me, what, I was a follower, you know. I wouldn't have been on his level, but I would have been a good supporter for the things that he wanted to do. But I needed to be better at decision-making and more productive. I had already found my profession, so I was glad that was in place. I went ahead with that. And then, you know, for my life, I think I've done things that I never would have expected to be able to do. That's been good for me.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: I trimmed my, a big thing was that I had to trim my thinking down into small increments. I couldn't look ahead to the future any more.

Webb: What led you to become a school teacher?

Savage:: Well, I talked to Margaret Force that day and learned about special ed.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And so I immediately changed, and that was a no-turning-back decision. Loved it. Those were my kids.

Webb: Where did you teach school and what year? Or years did you teach?

Savage: I taught at West Elementary the year that I was dating Kip. And then he—

Webb: At what grade level?

Savage: You know, at the time it was the first of its kind of special ed. There was a class for severe, severely handicapped students.

Webb: Oh, okay.

Savage: Our sister was too old to have benefited from that, so she didn't participate. And then I had students who could learn, would could learn academics but not probably in the regular classroom. And then I went on a mission and when I came back—

Webb: Where did you go on your mission?

Savage: I went to Argentina.

Webb: And you learned Spanish?

Savage: I did.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: When I came back there was an opening at Hurricane, and I taught at Hurricane Elementary. Loved it. Loved the people of the Hurricane Valley. And it was good for me because although they knew that my life had had a big upheaval, nobody ever asked me about it. And so that was good. They didn't ask me anything. And so I could go ahead. And then from there, I went to graduate school. And then I taught for a year in Smithfield for, in a pilot program for

Utah State, came to the Jordan District and taught for three years there. And then it just seemed like a lot of help was needed at home. I could help. I was single. What should I be doing but serving, right? First looking to my own family. So Dad was getting older and taking care of all the farm and the ranch, and our little sister was getting older, and as my parents got older there was more for them to handle with her. So, and I was a homebody. I loved home.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: So I moved home.

Webb: So what civic service opportunities did you have with Dixie College, Dixie Medical Center, and the U.S. Soil Conservation Service? You mentioned that in your book.

Savage: I mostly learned from people, I think. Your dad [Murray Webb] got me involved with the hospital board.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: Yeah.

Webb: And what did you do?

Savage: I sat in the meetings and learned from people, I think. I doubt that I had much to offer. I'm sure I didn't on the hospital board.

Webb: Okay, but I mean it just sounds so interesting. And U.S. Soil Conservation Service, what did you do there?

Savage: That was after Dad died and I was farming.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And so I learned a lot and got a lot of help and expertise from them, too.

Webb: So what led you to write your book *Hell and High Water in the Pine Valley Mountain Foothills, a Leeds Chronicle*? I love that title.

Savage: LoAnn Barnes from Leeds, she moved from Seattle. She wasn't a Leeds native. But she loved history, and she kept saying to me, "Water's a big story, and you need to write about it." And I had been on the L-E W-A Board, Leeds Domestic Water Users Association.

Webb: Thank you for spelling that out because I was wondering what that stood for.

Savage: Yeah, I actually, when I was teaching in Salt Lake, I just kind of thought, where should my life be going, before I decided to come home, and I was passing through, I was going to interview in Arizona and some places, and I went to a water meeting with my dad. There were about six people there, and they nominated me to the board and so I didn't know what to say but yes.

Webb: So say the name of that organization again, Leeds—

Savage: Leeds Domestic Water Users Association.

Webb: Okay. And you went to that water meeting and that was in Leeds Town Hall, was that where the meeting was held?

Savage: Uh -huh. Uh-huh. And so I ended up staying in Leeds and was on the water board. That was my beginning. And I remember I said to my dad, “I don't know enough about this.” And he mentioned a couple of people who were on the board and he said, “Listen to those two people and start learning.” And so that was the beginning.

Webb: So LoAnn got you to say, and you know what, I'm going to start recording or writing down some information about this. And then did she or you decide, “I think I've got enough material here for a book? How did that?”

Savage: Well, Leeds has always been kind of a crisis place for water. Our source is from Pine Valley Mountain. That's, the stream that's called Leeds Creek is actually Quail Creek, that's the real Quail Creek, and so that's irrigation water, and a spring near Oak Grove Campground is the culinary water.

Webb: M-hm.

Savage: So our area in the '70s was closed to new water rights. The rest of the County could apply for new water appropriations, but we couldn't.

Webb: Why?

Savage: We didn't ever know why. I have, I suspect some things now, because now, because now that's where the Conservancy District has these big wells that pump water to all over the County.

Webb: So tell us a little bit about the brief history of water development in the Leeds and Silver Reef area then. How did that come about?

Savege: When the—

Webb: And your involvement. Tell us a little bit about your involvement in these water projects.

Savage: Okay. When the early settlers came, of course, they, Brigham Young, sent them out over the rim of the Great Basin into the Dixie area, and they settled where there was water. They needed water. So first, they settled close to the Virgin River, and a little, maybe kind of where Quail Lake is now in that area. But they kept getting washed out, and they were trying to bring water, you know, from clear up above where Silver Reef is now.

Webb: M-hm.

Savage: And then they moved up into Harrisburg, but still they had trouble keeping the differences in soils, you know, some of it was like cotton candy. And so the ditches were always breaking out. And so they finally moved up into the Leeds Valley which had a lot of little springs and was closer to their water source. And they developed it there. And for the first years there was, they had a schedule where the people had till a certain time in the morning to dip their water out of the ditch, and then the cattle would be turned out to water. And then eventually they decided to divide, so Leeds doesn't have a municipal water system. It has two private companies.

Webb: Two private companies.

Savage: And that's worked well for us.

Webb: Okay. And what are the names of the private companies?

Savage: LDWA, Leeds Domestic Water Users. And the other's just Leeds Water Company.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: That's irrigation water. So in the beginning it was all, I think, classified as irrigation. And then because people needed culinary, then they divided and organized it and gave a portion of the spring for culinary water. And then from there, okay, there was a pipe. My earliest recollection is that there was a, the water came down the Creek, and then it came into the irrigation ditch, and then up at Silver Reef there was a little pipe in the ditch. I remember seeing it one time, it had a little screen over it. And I said to Dad, what's that? And he said, that's our drinking water. And it came down into a settling pond that was open. It would still let the dirt settle out, and then it went into a pipe in town. And then one day my aunt called and said, "Come over and see something over at my place." She had her hose just dribbling out on the back lawn, and there was a little pile of maggots at the end of it.

Webb: Oh, my!

Savage: So an animal had died up in the stream somewhere. So then they got together and piped the water, which is about nine, almost nine miles from Oak Grove.

Webb: Well this had to have been a little bit expensive, right? For a private company?

Savage: Right.

Webb: How long did it take to do that?

Savage: You know, that was in the, maybe the '40s. I was born in '46, so I wasn't very much aware at the time. I mean, I've talked, heard people talk about it, but—

Webb: But they provided—

Savage: I should be able to tell you how they financed it, but I can't remember right now—

Webb: Okay.

Savage: How they did it.

Webb: But this provided the entire town of Leeds with a piped-in water system, correct?

Savage: Uh-huh.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: Back in those days, and even when Dad was Mayor and was President of the water company and they needed to upgrade the water system, people paid their assessments by working. So when they put the line in from Oak Grove, the men in Leeds did it. They had to buy the materials, but they put it together. And then when they did improve later on, they also worked on the lines down through town. Not, they didn't hire a company or someone to do it like people do now. They did the work themselves.

Webb: How many years did you serve on the Board, and what are some things that you learned from serving? And are you still serving on the board the Leeds Domestic—

Savage: I'm not right now.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: I served initially for about 17 years, maybe. And then I served again for maybe a year or so later on when they were hard up.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: But what I learned was, I mean, I don't know if you can learn everything there is to know about water. There's a lot to learn. And this is why LoAnn wanted me to write about it, because people just, they didn't understand it. When you move to a desert community, if you want people to move in, you've got to know that they're going to have water. They're going to have to have water.

Webb: Right.

Savage: And so our system was kind of complicated, and it was not always consistent. You know, sometimes there was plenty of water, sometimes not. And so there's a lot to learn about the law, about water rights, and how the State handles all of that, and how it's distributed, and how you keep it pure, you know.

Webb: So with the water system that you have now, is it adequate for the City's current population and for increased population? What's how does it look for the future? The—

Savage: The LDWA, is it okay if I say it that way?

Webb: Yeah.

Savage: Since we know what it means now? They have water, they plan to have water for infill. But if someone comes, and I think they'll serve up to maybe two or three, I think that's a, what's that called, a mini-subdivision or something, three homes for infill. But they don't furnish water for developers. If a developer comes in, they have to bring their own water rights. And we often say, the short way to say that is they have to bring their own water, but that sounds to people who haven't studied water, that sounds like they're actually bringing in water, but they're not. They're bringing water rights from somewhere else, like from Washington Fields for instance. We've had people apply to the State to stop using their water down there and file to draw that amount of water out of our system. So it doesn't bring more water in, it pulls an additional amount out. So, and so LDWA just requires developers to do that.

Webb: Does it provide water for Silver Reef, the Silver Reef residents, as well?

Savage: M-hm. Silver Reef and El Dorado, which is, I don't know if you know that area between Leeds and Silver Reef.

Webb: Yeah.

Savage: Is part of—has been annexed.



Webb: Okay. So Silver Reef and El Dorado have been annexed by Leeds.

Savage: Uh -huh.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: Hidden Valley, which is around behind the hill, behind the cemetery, is, they have their own water system. They're not annexed into Leeds.

Webb: Okay. Describe the Danish Ranch and the part that you played in managing that land, if any. Did you—

Savage: You know what? I brought a picture.

Webb: Great.

Savage: I was going to show you a picture of my grandpa.

Webb: You've got some visual aids. Let's see those.

Savage: I did.

Webb: Let's see some of the visual aids.

Savage: I forgot when we were talking about it.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: This is my grandpa when he was homesteading. The government apparently brought—

Webb: This is Levi, Levi Savage.

Savage: No, this is Riley [Savage].

Webb: Okay.

Savage: This is Levi's son.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: My grandpa.

Webb: Riley's son.

Savage: Who built the home where I live now.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: Okay. So the government brought some of these big Clydesdales around the country to upgrade the stock. They sired a number of horses in Leeds, and Dad had a team of Clydesdales that came from him. At least one of them came from him. So Grandpa was, you know, I said to Dad once, "What did all this farm land look like?" And he said, "Just like everything else, rocks and brush." So he did the work on that. And so Grandpa, and then the ranch came to Dad. And then after I moved home, you know, I followed around with Dad and kind of handed him things. I was that person. And all of a sudden, Dad died. And so my sister said to me at the time, "Can you keep this going until our boys grow up?" And I remember the first morning after the funeral and everyone had gone home. I woke up, and it was raining. It was a rainy spring. And I actually said to myself, "I am not going to get out of this bed." I could just suddenly see the specter of everything, all the cattle and Danish Ranch, and we were ready to do a cattle drive to take the cattle up to the ranch, and Dad had crops that were ready to be harvested and bailed and hauled, and cows to milk. And anyway, I actually stayed in bed for a while, and finally Mom came to the door and opened it, and she said "Hon, someone just called and said it's time for us to take the water."

Webb: Wow.

Savage: So that was the beginning for me. You just step forward—that's what I've learned about life, you just step forward.

Webb: You milked cows. How many cows and what kind?

Savage: We just had two.

Webb: You had two cows. What kind?

Savage: Holstein, Brown?

Savage: Holstein and a Jersey.

Webb: And a Jersey.

Savage: We had.

Webb: Describe the Danish Ranch. I mean, it's kind of isolated.

Savage: It is.

Webb: And it's a fairly high elevation too, isn't it?

Savage: You know, it's actually not a whole lot higher than Leeds.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: Because you go, you get up quite high on the way there, and then you go back down, and it has a southern exposure. So when I was working with Dad, you know the north wind would be blowing in Leeds and it'd be so cold, and we'd go up there and take off our jackets and work.

Webb: So it was really protected.

Savage: Uh-huh.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: Yeah.

Webb: Okay. Oh, anything else about the Danish Ranch?

Savage: It's surrounded by forests, so that's really, that's really nice.

Webb: Okay. What domestic livestock do you raise on your farm, and what amount of acreage do you farm, and what crops do you raise, if any?

Savage: I raised for a lot of years after Dad died, I went ahead raising alfalfa. Our neighbor next door had been ranching by what, remote control. Dad ran, operated his ranch for him. Dad did his work for him. Then they moved up the very year that Dad died, and so he gave back. So he cut and bailed the hay, and then I hauled it. When I couldn't find, I hired people to haul it, and when I couldn't find people, or they would went on missions or got married or something, then I stood out there one day and thought, here in this field full of bales of hay, there's nothing to do but just go ahead and start hauling.

Webb: And you did it by yourself?

Savage: I did.

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Savage: I did.

Webb: That's, yeah. That's hard work. What kind of domestic livestock did you raise?

Savage: I just raised cattle. Dad had horses.

Webb: What kind of cattle, what kind of breed?

Savage: Dad used to have Hereford. And then we just kind of had a mix. Dad, my brother-in-law, had brought Dad a Santa Gertrudis bull, and he was a wonderful animal and raised really good stock.

Webb: How many acres?

Savage: Small birth weight, but then they grew fast and so on.

Webb: Okay. How many acres did you farm?

Savage: Well, I don't know how you, the ranch, the Danish Ranch, there's an orchard there, but there was a lot grazing, mostly winter grazing, as well, for a time, until Dad would bring the cows down and let the pastures rest. He had about 20 acres.

Webb: At Danish Ranch?

Savage: No, in Leeds, I was going to say.

Webb: In Leeds.

Savage: Uh-huh.

Webb: And then how many at Danish Ranch?

Savage: Well, that's what I was saying. He has an orchard there that's about nine acres, I think, and then the rest is just mixed in up the valley. It's a long valley.

Webb: Okay. What other civic or religious organizations did you participate in, if any?

Savage: Wow, I don't know. You know, part of what Mom did when she moved to Leeds was, and the other mothers did well, was they kept their kids doing things. They kept plays and, you know, as I said, talent shows and things.

Webb: M-hm.

Savage: And so Mom, you know, I mean, she involved us in 4-H and took piano lessons. I don't play the piano, but, and she didn't have money, so she would trade milk and eggs for that. And let's see, is that what you asked me about civic organizations?

Webb: Yeah.

Savage: And then everybody had more than one, I mean I remember having like six church jobs in the [Leeds] ward. It was a small ward, so—

Webb: Okay.

Savage: You might be teaching

Webb: Yeah.

Savage: And you might be the president of an organization. Maybe you were doing Cub Scouts and you might be leading the music.

Webb: Okay. I understand you've had poetry published in Utah Life and that you've also written a children's book, so tell us about that.

Savage: Well, LoAnn [Barnes] again got me interested in Utah Life. When I left for the mission field, it was such a tender time. It was right after Kip [Melvin Bowler] had passed away. And I left. I wrote some little poems and left them around home where my parents would find the one in Dad's pickup and so on. And when I came home, Mom had a surprise for me. She had sent those in to the New Era, the Church magazine, and they had published it. So, I had had, so they kind of encouraged me. I had a few things published in Church magazines. And then LoAnn got me thinking about Utah Life, and they have a poetry. And then I had a little girl at school in Hurricane who, she was from the Philippines, I think. I knew she wasn't, they weren't Christian. And she had lost a little sister. I think she was a second grader. She came in by herself one day and said, "Where's my little sister? What happened to my little sister?" And I said to her, "What have your parents told you?" And she said, "She didn't want to tell me." She said it was kind of hard to hear, and so I took her to the window, and we looked outside. And I just said, "Are there stars out there?" And she said, "No," and I said, "We can't see them, but are they really there?" And she said, "Well, yeah." And so the book kind of came, it was really dedicated to her.

Webb: So what—

Savage: The book came out of thinking of all the things that are we know are real, even though we can't see them

Webb: What's the name of your children's book?

Savage: It's called "Secrets."

Webb: "Secrets," and how can someone get a hold of this book?

Savage: It's been quite a while. I can't remember, I self-published it.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: But I think you would, I can't remember the name of the publishing company right this minute.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: You could just go online and Google it with my name, I guess.

Webb: Okay. What experiences stand out for you with your service on the Silver Reef Museum Board of Directors?

Savage: Oh, you know, Silver Reef is quite a story. And years ago we had a group who came through, the building was starting to fall apart, and they raised money.

Webb: We're talking about the Wells Fargo building.

Savage: The Wells Fargo Building. M-hm. And then the Cundicks have moved in, and they've, Ron and Pat Cundick, have taken over organizing, and they've done an amazing job with it. Our first experience with Silver Reef was when the freeway took our home. Dad had built our childhood home, and the freeway took it.

Webb: It did.

Savage: He had to tear it down.

Webb: It did take your home.

Savage: Yeah.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Savage: He tore it down, and the big house where, that Grandpa built where I live now was rented at the time, so it wasn't available. But Western Golden Uranium, who, who still owned the mining properties at Silver Reef, they hired people. There had been various people who'd lived in the Rice Bank. building, the little building at the side, and were hired by Western Gold as caretakers. And so that little house became available at the time, and so that's where we lived for four years until the big house became available. We didn't have a phone.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Savage: And there was nothing there but the wind blowing through. My sister Maryann and I, who knows your brother Merrill [Webb], we slept in the Wells Fargo building. Sometimes it was just a big empty shell.

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Savage: And, but anyway, that was our introduction. So, and Mom was so interested in history. So she was always, if people, she would hear the dog bark and somebody would be driving up to the Wells Fargo building, she would go out to meet them, and they would tell her stories about their ancestors or one woman who said, "I lived here when I was a little girl. It was a beautiful place with flowers and gardens."

Webb: Wow.

Savage: So then people would bring Mom relics and things that they had collected that they didn't think their families would value. So most of those things that they brought to her are in the museum now.

Webb: How long have you served on the Board? Are you still a current member of the Board of Directors there?

Savage: I am. How many years has that been? I don't know. Ten years, maybe.

Webb: Okay. So what's their mission? What is the mission of the Silver Reef Foundation?

Savage: Well, to preserve history.

Webb: And to preserve the history of Silver Reef, right?

Savage: Of Silver Reef, uh-huh. And now the County has given them the opportunity to use the Rice Bank Building, and I think they're going to tell some of the Leeds history. Leeds and Silver Reef were essential to each other

Webb: Yeah.

Savage: Because Silver Reef brought prosperity to Leeds, and Leeds furnished their food.

Webb: Right.

Savage: And their workers and their horses to pull the wagons, and they cut wood for the charcoal [unclear].

Webb: So they're really closely connected, aren't they?

Savage: Very closely connected, uh-huh..

Webb: I bet you really enjoy serving on that board and working with the people that you have there on the Board.

Savage: They're all a lot smarter than I am, so it's a wonderful ambience for me.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: For my slow brain.

Webb: Tell us about the oral history interviews that you've conducted with Leeds old timers, yeah.

Savage: You know, I wish I had done more, more and more formally. I didn't really know how to record things. Ray Beale, who just passed away, was just a treasure trove of history.

Webb: Was he married to Wilma? Wilma Beale?

Savage: He was her son.

Webb: Her son, okay.

Savage: Uh-huh. And, but then there are, you know, other people. Russell Peine, who moved here during the '70s. He was raised on a farm in Colorado, but he moved here to work on the freeway through the gorge when that started. And he has some amazing stories about that. One time they called him, he was working big equipment, and told him that there was a big flash flood coming down the Virgin River, and there were people, workers down in there who couldn't get a message, and he needed to rescue them. And he said when he drove out, the water was up to almost the level of those big tires.

Webb: Oh, my gosh.

Savage: He was driving. And so, so I've talked to him a little bit, and other people, but I wish I'd done it more formally.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: I'm working on that.

Webb: Tell us about, how did the Martha Hamm's interview with you come about, and who is Martha Hamm?



Savage: Martha Hamm works with Conserve Utah. They live at Silver Reef and have lived there. They have a son, they have raised him there, they lived there a long time, and she's done lots of projects. And she, anyway, she was doing a project for Utah Public Radio with StoryCorps. They brought their trailer down, and she was, she recruited a lot of people to record their stories, and that's how that came to be.

Webb: So you were on StoryCorps.

Savage: I used to, she, I am. She said in the little clip that you can Google and see, it's about, I think it was a 40-minute, maybe, interview, but it's about five minutes that you can Google. And she says, "I used to see you going up to the ranch on your ATV with your dog at night." She'd say, "I'd see you going up there at night." So she was interested in that.

Webb: Okay, wow.

Savage: When I was doing the ranch.

Webb: What is it about the Leeds-Silver Reef [area] that has attracted you to remain there during your lifetime?

Savage: You know, I just love home. I grew up loving it and wanting to help take care of it and my soul feasting on it, I guess. I loved being around home, and I wanted to help, and—

Webb: Okay. You have some other things—did you want to share with us?

Savage: Oh, I kind of passed that part in my story, I guess.

Webb: Yes, let's, let's—

Savage: You were going to ask me about Kip [Melvin Bowler].

Webb: Yeah. Well, let's see what, yeah, let's see what you have here.

Savage: I just have my own. So I just had a picture of us together.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And then I—

Webb: So this is Kip, Melvin Kip Bowler, and Susan Savage, a picture there.

Savage: Yeah. This is kind of who we were about that time.

Webb: Okay. That's great.

Savage: I didn't know if you'd be interested.

Webb: Yes. Very interested. Yeah, that's awesome.

Savage: So I write to him every night.

Webb: Oh, that's great.

Savage: Some people—

Webb: And then tell us about, is this your autobiography?

Savage: It is. When I—

Webb: Why don't you put that up there so that they can see that as well.

Savage: When I retired from school, from school teaching, I felt a real, what, impression that I needed to write my story, and so I got bogged down. I kept trying to write it and I kept getting bogged down. So finally I decided to set it aside and to just start at the beginning and write about how I had felt I had seen the Lord's hand in my life, and that turned into this. So I haven't written all the other things, but I feel satisfied if I don't get anything else written.

Webb: That's great. So when did you finish this?

Savage: This was in 2010, I think.

Webb: In 2010?

Savage: Uh-huh.

Webb: That's great. Okay. So as you look back over your life, what would you like to be remembered for?

Savage: Probably honesty, if I were to pick one thing.

Webb: Okay.

Savage: And faith.

Webb: Okay. Is there anything else that I haven't asked you that you feel important that you would like to share with, you know, this audience here?

Savage: I could tell you a couple of stories from teaching school. I loved it so much. Would you be interested in that?

Webb: Sure.

Savage: When I was teaching for the year I participated in the pilot program for Utah State, they wanted to try—there were three divisions in special ed. There were learning disabilities, kids with emotional problems, and then children who just struggled with learning. And they, they had been grouped according to their classification. Utah State wanted to group them according to age. And so I had fourth and fifth graders with them all mixed together, and it was really fun because I had them all day. Usually I was teaching it. I only taught a couple of times in the self-contained classroom. The rest of the time was pullout. But this was self-contained. And so the kids who were hyper and always getting in fights kind of kept the little slower ones awake, and the little slower ones had a calming effect on the other kids. And a boy in that class taught me how to teach reading.

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Savage: Because I had them all day we could, I could read them something, and I wanted them to see that the work of reading is worth it. Once you get past the mechanics of it, there's wonderful stuff in there. So after lunch, I was reading the "Little Britches," and after we'd gotten into the book a little bit and I was giving it voice and we were talking about what was happening, this boy said, "Would it be okay if I sat by you and looked at the words?" And so I said, "Sure." And so one by one, the other kids started doing that until we were all looking at this little book and I said, "Would you like to have your own book?" And they said, "Could we?"

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Savage: So then when I moved into the Jordan District, I had, and also that bunch of kids, we got some, there were some real behavior problems in there, but we worked those out. And so the fifth grades invited us to participate in the whole school program that they were doing. And the school had a set of baritone ukuleles, and those kids learned to play them. We did a song, and they all played ukulele.

Webb: Oh, that is so neat.

Savage: When I moved to the Jordan District, then I had a group of fifth grade boys who were their problems in the school because they thought they were stupid. They were still being given primers and pre-primers because they hadn't passed that. And I wanted, I loved the Little Britches. So I just thought I would take my student, Johnny, from Utah State's, what he'd taught me. And I just brought

them a set of books and said, "We're going to read this book this year." I said to them, "I'll do all the work if you'll do three things. First, you have to keep your eyes on the words, and second, you have to tell me the second you get lost. And third, you have to tell me the second that you think, 'I think I do that.'" And they all, so there were other steps that kind of came to light as we worked through it, and they all ended up being good readers that could read that book.

Webb: Isn't that great.

Savage: I wanted to pull them out of, they were trying to sound out every word.

Webb: Yeah. And that was tucked back in there somewhere in their brain. They had those mechanics somewhere back in there, but they didn't need to focus on it. So I started out reading them a couple of chapters and giving it voice and saying, "Why do you think he did this?" You know, "Did you have a favorite part? Let's read it together."

Webb: Yeah.

Savage: "Do you have time for one more?"

Webb: Yes, one more.

Savage: When I was teaching in Hurricane, I volunteered to supervise lunch detention. So the kids, there was a school police force and the kids would get citations and then they'd bring their lunch into my room and they couldn't talk, they could bring a book, which no one ever did. And so then they'd sit there and get mad at the kids who gave them the citations and the next day they'd be back again. And we were hearing stories from Vietnam POWs about how they kept their sanity, and they had memorized things. So I decided to have the kids memorize poetry. And I put some moral poems like "The tree that never has to fight for sun and sky and light," things like that one.

Webb: Yeah. I loved that one.

Savage: And so, I would just say to them, you can pick a hard poem or an easy poem, anything you want, but you can't get out of detention until you've passed off one of them. And so, we had some great experiences. And a few weeks ago, there was a tree trimmer in Leeds, and I'd driven past and watched him work, and one day he was down cleaning up, and so I stopped and just said, "It's been neat to watch you. It's beautiful." And he said, "Are you Miss Savage?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "I still remember the poem you taught me."

Webb: Wow.

Savage: They would come up, when they felt like they'd memorized it, they'd come up and pass it off to me with their back to the other kids. And I didn't ever talk to them about their infraction, but I would just say to them, "What do you think this means?" We just talked about the poem, and you'd see their faces change.

Webb: Oh my gosh.

Savage: So that was a neat experience.

Webb: Yeah. So teaching was important and you felt like you were making a difference in people's lives, right, when you were teaching.

Savage: You know, when the door opened and the kids walked in the room, I felt actually almost like a different person. I just loved it so much.

Webb: Yeah. Yeah. Well, I really appreciate that. We sure appreciate you taking the time to meet with us today. This is the 13th in a series of oral history interviews that are being conducted through the Washington County Historical Society. And my name is Loren Webb, and we want to thank you again for joining us here with Susan Savage, and we will talk to you next time. Thank you so much.

Note: This program has received funding from Utah Humanities and Utah Historical Society.