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Bethine, tell me when and where you were born.

*Well, I always was a little embarrassed I was born in Salt Lake City because we didn't have a hospital that was equipped well near Mackay, so my father and mother had lost a baby boy 14 years before I was born and so they weren't taking any chances. So, we went to Salt Lake but I spent my first Christmas at the Ranch up in the Stanley Basin on the Salmon River which was called Robinson Bar Ranch.*

When were you born?

*In 1923, on the 2nd of February.*

Tell me a little bit about your parents, if you would please.

*Well, Pop was a lawyer and a governor, and he was in the legislature from Custer County and from Bonville County. So, he had a long career, and after he was governor he became a federal judge.*

And his name was Chase Clark?

*Chase Clark, yes. His brother was Governor before he was. That was Barzilla Clark. When Pop was working for the Governor in Boise (he was the Adjutant to the Governor) he went with the National Guard down to Mexico. On his way home after they disbanded, he had a car accident and hurt his arm. My mother said, "I think we should have you near the hot spring and there's a wonderful one by the stagecoach up at Robinson Bar." That was an old gold bar and that was why they called it Robinson Bar because it was where they took gold out of a bar right down at the end of the property.*

So, this would have been around the end of World War I?

*No, actually it was before, it was about 1914 and they homesteaded the ranch. And Pop, with the natural hot water spring, got his arm back and then the whole family came and stayed and made the two pools that are there. There are two natural hot water pools.*

When you say you moved directly there, did you move there from Mackay? Your family moved there from Mackay?

*No, they did. They moved from Mackay.*

Your Mom and Dad?

*Yeah, I wasn't born yet.*

But they had previously been living in Mackay?

*Yeah and, of course, Pop when he was over here with the Governor, he was in Boise and Mom came with him. Every summer we went there and Pop would drive up from Mackay, where he was a lawyer. At that time Mackay was a boomtown. They had a copper mill. There were fights between the sheepmen and the cattlemen and he was always involved with litigation, but he'd come up the river up over what we called Five Points.*

So, did he stay in Mackay and work and come back and forth?

*Yeah, he came up every weekend. And my mother ran the Ranch. And she could cut up a steer because her father had been in a butcher shop in Mackay and so there wasn't anything my mother couldn't do.*

How big was the Ranch?

*123 acres and when Frank wanted to make the SNRA, first they talked about making it a park, but it just got too complicated, and they thought for this small acreage having all those facilities to take care of park people wouldn't be a good idea, so they wanted to make it a Sawtooth Recreation Area. And while he was fighting that, our Ranch was on the far side of it, the Boulder White Clouds were right behind us, and Stanley was 19 miles from us and there were the Sawtooths. So, we were right in between, and we were in God's Green Valley. It was by Warm Springs Creek, and it ran into the Salmon River. And there were so many salmon that my father, when he'd come up from being in the law office (he'd be in his suit) and all he'd do is take off his topcoat, he'd get in the waders, and he'd go fishing on a fly rod for salmon. And you could just see them down at the end of the meadow, our lower meadow (we had an upper meadow and a lower meadow), and at the end of that was where the Salmon River made the bend around to meet Warm Springs Creek. And as it made the bend around, the salmon would just be thick there, and Pop would catch them on a fly rod. But my mother finally said we're going broke feeding people who drive up to here and say we can't go on up the road it's too dark and too late and we can't find our way and she said we're going to we're going to go broke putting them all up and feeding them. So, it became a dude ranch, and she ran it. That was when I was little. It had already become a dude ranch and Mom was running it.*

Bethine, you mentioned that you had an older brother that didn't survive. Did you have any other brothers and sisters?

*No, I was an only child, and I just came along by accident because they had been told by a doctor that they couldn't have any more children. Mom had been terribly ill with trouble with her kidneys and everything else and had almost died. My Pop took her out of Mackay on a special train to California and that was about the time that he spent all the money that year in California getting her well. Then he managed to have a really fine law practice until the Depression closed the banks. It closed the bank in Mackay and he was one of the Directors. And he said the little old people that had money there would not be able to get any of it back nor make enough. So, he sold everything he had in Stanley Basin. He had a lot of property in Stanley Basin with a friend from Salt Lake and they sold all the cattle they were running on it and he put the money back into the bank so that people could have the money that they had lost. And then we moved over to Idaho Falls, because my grandmother was there.*

Okay, so before you moved to Idaho Falls, did you go to grade school in Mackay?

*Yes, up until the third grade. And then, when we went over to Idaho Falls, I went to school there for 17 years, that is I until I was 17. I was in high school when we left for Pop to become governor.*

What was grade school like in Mackay? There probably weren't very many kids, were there?

*Oh, it was pretty full because everybody from all around the area came into Mackay to go to school. We had the Ranch after my mother didn't run it anymore*

when she was the Governor's wife. My Aunt Beulah, who was my mother's half-sister and had been raised from the time she was about 7 or 14, I don't remember quite, she'd been raised by Pop and Mom so she always seemed like she was my big sister and she was 20 years older than I was. And when Frank said, as the Senator, that he thought it would be improper for him to have an inholding in an area he was trying to make a part of the Sawtooth Recreation Area, because it was right on the edge of it and it could be put under easement and he said it would be a terrible thing for that 123 acres to be developed. He felt the same way about the whole Stanley Basin. I remember when we drove over Galena at one time, stopped on the viaduct, we saw down below, we saw them cutting roads and putting up telephone poles and making a very big mess in the valley. That's when Frank decided that they had to make an SNRA, and he was such a purist about taking any money he said there are people who get rich at the federal trough but I'm not going to be one of them. And so, we sold it for \$140,000 and we split it with Beulah.

When your father became Governor and you moved over to Boise, then your Aunt Beulah, she continued to operate it as a dude ranch?

She ran it for years after that. We'd go up there in the summer whenever Frank could get away and the kids. Our sons were nine years apart and she'd take the two of them for the summer up there so both Forest and Chase had a chance to enjoy it. But when Frank was Senator and had done the SNRA with McLure and Hanson and, of course, Cec Andrus and all of the people who were involved in making the SNRA, after that for a long time we didn't have anything in that area. And then he decided he wanted to do the River of No Return Wilderness and I went to every one of his hearings with him. And he had hearings in every part of the state, near Stanley in fact in Challis, all up in the north because the River of No Return Wilderness reaches up over a huge portion of that part of Idaho so we had hearings everywhere. But the hearing I remember most was the hearing in Challis, or Salmon, it was in Salmon. And they had a sort of a building that was just made out of wood and had wood steps and an aisle and they set up chairs and the people from the Senate were there at the end to hold a hearing on whether they should make it into a Wilderness and this man got a horse and rode it up the wooden steps and down the aisle and turned around and rode back out. And it turned out the man who was running the newspaper there in Salmon said, "Well Mrs. Church what did you think of that?" I said, "It's a mighty fine-looking horse." And Frank said, "I'm glad he asked you that."

Were the people in Salmon opposed to this?

Oh yes, deeply. And in Stanley, well Stanley was so adamant about the SNRA. They were adamant Frank was going to ruin the whole area. It was going to take away their livelihood. When Frank was dying at home for three months of the second cancer he had in his life, he'd had a bad cancer 36 years before when our son, Forest was born and they said he was going to die then... so, he always said he had 36 years to do what he wanted to do so he was never going to put his finger up in the wind and say will this get me reelected or is it the right thing to do.

So, he was able to do what he wanted to do?

*He did. From then on, after surviving that first cancer he said I've been given a lease on life so I could do what I think I should do. He thoroughly enjoyed being Senator, I think, up until the last year or so when everything got so contentious in Washington. Because before that, he worked with both sides of the aisle.*

Tell me about when and where you met Frank.

*I actually met him... I was in student government in Idaho Falls, he was in student government in Boise, and we had a Student Government Association meeting in Boise. I met Frank. He asked me out, but a young man who was a basketball player asked me first, so I said I'm sorry, but Frank wasn't deterred at all. He said that's fine we'll just go on being friends.*

Now how old were you then?

*About 16.*

And you were living in Idaho Falls and he was living in Boise?

*Oh yeah. He was born and raised in Boise. Born at Saint Alphonsus and was raised here. The year that I graduated (I was a year ahead of him), he became the student body president in Boise and I went on to Boise junior college.*

Did you finish high school in Boise?

*Boise and Idaho Falls. Our superintendent of schools said that I was so involved in both schools (I was only here a half a year, but I got so involved with Boise that I graduated there) but then he let me graduate with my class in Idaho Falls, too.*

So, you stayed in touch with Frank after that first meeting?

*Well, actually we went together while he was the student body president and I was out at Boise State. We went together to the dances at Boise High. We went out together.*

Was Frank familiar with the Sawtooths and the White Clouds before he hooked up with you or did you introduce him?

*No, I introduced him to that because I took him to the Ranch and Pop would take he and Carl Burke out to show them the mine on the other side of the river way up the mountain. And they'd go up Warm Springs Creek to the 12-mile meadow and we'd all camp out. But when he was a kid here in Boise, he used to go up to Warm Lake with his parents, up near out of McCall, you know the Warm Lake area?*

*I do.*

*And he'd go up there with them and they'd go fishing and hiking and all around. He became an intelligence officer.*

Now he was in World War II. That was before you were married, wasn't it?

*Yes, and he came back, and he hadn't finished college. So, he finished college. Then we were married, and we went on a two-month honeymoon, or 3 months almost, down to Mexico. Came back, and we went out almost immediately, packed the car and left for Boston. He went to Harvard for a year.*

And he was still in undergraduate school then?

*No, he finished just before we were married. He finished the week before we were married.*

Did he go to Stanford?



*Well, he went to Stanford but then he went to Harvard for a year and then he was having horrible back pains, and we were about to have Forest. So, I said we can't do this winter in Boston again; let's go back to Stanford. So, he transferred back to Stanford to get his law degree. And if he hadn't, he probably would have died because he had this terrible cancer. His backache wasn't just from studying, it was a testicular cancer and they told him that he was not going to live. But he went to Stanford to a fine doctor in the city who said oh yes, we'll put you on, we've got a new deep radiation. So, they really burned him up for about six weeks from here down to here. And I think that's what probably caused his pancreatic cancer 36 years later, but it gave him 36 years.*

Where were you married?

*On the front porch of the Ranch. It snowed madly over Galena two days before we were married on the 21st of June. And it snowed 2 days before and all of our friends had to go up over Galena which wasn't fixed then.*

Right, it was still a gravel road.

*It was awful and it was twisty. But I remember most of my family and most of his family didn't know each other.*

And at that time, they were accessing the Ranch over Galena?

*Over Galena, and it was horrible and it was a big snowstorm.*

Was it a big wedding?

*It was pretty big. I remember we had every room in the lodge filled, every room in the outer cabins filled. So, then we went out and had this long honeymoon and then went back east to Harvard, then back to Stanford, then survived the first cancer and then he died with the second, 36 years later. He'd had 24 years in the Senate, so he said he'd had a good run for it.*

You were talking a short while ago about people having to go over Galena to get to Robinson Bar for your wedding. Do you remember the first time you went over Galena?

*Yes. It was a Thanksgiving, and I was learning to drive, I think I was about 14. And we drove out of Ketchum and up over Galena. As we started up, I lost traction and my Pop said, "Well there's no way we're going to go on down now." He got out and I got out and he got back in and backed up to where we could get a little traction to make it back down the hill. So, we didn't get to the Ranch that time. And one other time we were going with my uncle Barzil. We were going up the road (that I reminded you was on the other side of the river, and it had five points) and we almost slipped off of one of them. And Uncle Barzil and Pop were holding the car on. My mother was driving and they managed to keep it from sliding off the hill, and so everybody walked in and they sent a horse and a sleigh back and picked up everything and then we had our Thanksgiving dinner there.*

*And I went in the hot water pool that one time in the winter when it was 45 below zero up there.*

Yeah, I wanted to ask you, I know for the Dude Ranch was a summer facility, but did you spend some wintertime up there?

*Well, we had spent the wintertime when I was a baby and when I was really very young.*

Was that because of the homesteading?

*No. It was because they thought...there was a lot of whooping cough and they thought they ought to get me away from it. And a little girl came through one night and they said they needed to stay and my mom let them. When we heard her cough, she knew we were in trouble. I got whooping cough and that was the second time in their lives they had to take the family down to California to get over something. My mother had and then I came down with the whooping cough. I was so sick.*

So, you went all the way to California?

*Yeah, because we had to get the warm air.*

Well, normally did you just kind of shut the Ranch up for the winter?

*Yes, usually we had the caretaker there.*

Were the winters pretty extreme?

*Oh, yeah. Those days there was just tons of snow.*

After Frank got into politics and he was in the Senate, did you get back to the Ranch much?

*Well, there were several years that the kids stayed there with Beulah, and we would go for a week or so. And then there were years after that that we would just go visit it, but after Frank was in the Senate it got very hard to do and finally, we got to the point where our vacations, we'd come out here and campaign in the summer, but our vacations were really usually at Easter time. We'd go down fishing in the Caribbean or something. It was just too hard on Frank to go to the mountains because they were always mad at him over Wilderness.*

In the early years, were you and he able to spend quite a bit of time there?

*Not really. Sometimes...I spent quite a bit of time in high school.*

When you were there, what did you do? Did you do a lot of fishing? Did you ride?

*Well, they always said that it wasn't very fun fishing with me because I usually went swimming.*

Did you have cousins that were there with you?

*Oh yeah, yeah. I had one cousin Dale Patterson whose son Scott just called me a few minutes ago. He lived with us because his father died during the first World War of the flu epidemic that was a lot like this H..I..Hiflu or whatever it is.*

The swine flu.

*He died of it, he was a doctor. And so, my Aunt Mabel and Dale came and lived with us. In Mackay, while he was in the war, she was Pop's secretary but later on, even when we lived in Idaho Falls and here in Boise, they often lived with us. And after he was married, she lived with Pop and Mom.*

So, even though you didn't have siblings you had lots of kids...

*Yeah, and that's one of the reasons I came home to Idaho besides the fact that I really wanted to do something other than what I was doing out there after Frank died. I stayed for about four years and worked with the Democratic National Committee. I really wanted to come home, but I didn't have any idea what I was going to do or where I was going to live.*

Frank passed away in...

*84 and I came back in 89.*

I was going to ask you a little more about the SNRA. I know Frank was very instrumental in that, along with a few other people.

*Actually, it was his idea.*

And that sprang from

*My Pop saying that was it was the most wonderful valley in the world and our having been there when it was pristine and beautiful. And he saw all the building in Sun Valley and all those places, and he just thought if they could protect that area and make it like a ranch area so that it looked like it had looked back in Pop's day, it would be worthwhile.*

And you were starting to see a lot of development?

*Well, what happened was we first saw they were going to build a new little city down there and they put roads and everything and that's when he decided to do the SNRA.*

Was that Obsidian?

*Uh-huh. And then when I came home and was here, I saw this article in the paper here that they were planning all sorts of building up in in the Sawtooths and there was someone who was thinking of making a major development again. And so, that's when I called everybody to make the Sawtooth Society.*

Do you remember who, I know there were a lot of the local people that were opposed to the SNRA, but who were some of the political opponents, do you remember?

*Oh, most of the people who were in the legislature and such, in the Republican-leg... were against it.*

The Idaho?

*Uh-huh.*

What about nationally?

*Well nationally they didn't actually, they didn't know Idaho existed.*

So, they didn't know where the Sawtooths were anyway.

*No, they really didn't. They didn't know where Idaho was. Every time they'd say that Frank was a national figure and ask where he was from and he'd say Idaho, they'd say, "where's that?"*

Through the years the forest service has been very instrumental in the Sawtooth Salmon River Country because they manage such a big chunk of it...

*And they haven't had enough money. And that's why I think it was important for us to be a private group who could help them with our senators so that we could get the land and water fund monies running again. After Frank went out in '80 they just decimated the land and water fund monies. They put it into everything else.*

And that money, I'm not familiar with that money. That money has historically been used...

*...yes, for the forest service and for the land Improvement, but it stopped coming in. That's what put us...90% of the easement was done with land with that kind of money. And when the US found itself going broke, they went into those funds and took them to use for every other thing, so they weren't available to the forest service. So, the forest service was cut down, though they had more people to cope*

*with all the time, they were cut down from the amount of monies they had and they really needed an advocacy group that was local that could help them. And people really cared so much. Idaho, they always have loved that area. And I think it has stayed very viable simply because we did work with the forest service. When we didn't agree with them, we told them so. But when we agreed, we backed them up heartily. So, we really came out very well on it, I think. And of course, the one reason they were able to get the SNRA is they let Stanley be itself.*

Stanley's pretty independent.

*Very independent.*

Were there any particular individuals in the forest service that you remember that were really instrumental or helpful in regard to the SNRA?

*Tom Kovalicky was always wonderful. He ran the Nez Perce and cared very much about the SNRA. And he'd bring a whole group of people in to build those log worm fences. And also, Paul Reese and a radio man from Ketchum. When I first got the idea, and they had the idea, we met, all the three of us met over in Ketchum and talked about what could be done.*

What about Forest Service people back in the early 70s when Frank was working on creating the SNRA? Were there people in the forest service that were very involved with that as well?

*Well, you know I try to think back to the ones that I met in their office back there and there were those who were rather big supporters and those who I think thought that putting more money into Twin Falls and into Idaho was a mistake. So, you know, you had people you were battling against then there was Jim Lyons who was just a terrific supporter.*

He's on the Sawtooth Society Board?

*Yeah, now he is and then he was working with the forest service in Washington.*

I was going to ask you a few more things about Robinson Bar. When you were a child there, did you have indoor plumbing? Did you have power?

*Well, they had a dam and they put a municipal power, I mean a power pump in the river that was run by the dam. It was a flume that carried the water down to it. And once in a while, sticks would get caught in it and all of our lights would go very dim and everybody'd have to go out and clean the thing off so that the water could flow through again.*

So, you sort of had your own power system there?

*Yeah, and we had indoor plumbing, but we didn't have toilets. We had the toilets down by the river, they were outdoor, right down the hill.*

And you obviously wouldn't have had phones back then.

*Well, we had the old phone that you went like this.*

The crank?

*Uh-huh. And we were on a line that everybody was on and you'd hear them and occasionally you'd have to say, if you could get off I'll be off in a few minutes. And I remember how many rings we had.*

When you were at the Ranch did you ever go visit places like Custer and Bayhorse?



*Oh, once in awhile we would go up to Custer. The dredge boys came down and would date the girls that were working at the Ranch. And then they would go up to Stanley on Saturday night for the Stanley Stomp.*

Did you do that?

*Uh-huh, but I was too young to really be a big part of it.*

So, when you were spending summers at the Ranch did you go into Stanley much?

*Oh, just on occasion. But we also, when I was really young, we used to camp at Redfish. Here we were, in a rustic setting of our own in our own beds and we would go camping at Redfish.*

Thank you very much. It's wonderful to talk with you.

