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TRANSCRIPT

Shirley Athay – edited video

Today is May 23rd of 2008. This is an interview with Shirley Athay about the time she spent in Stanley, Idaho during the 1930s. Shirley, my first question for you is what brought you to Stanley?

*My father, Preston Linford, was a civil engineer for the Bureau of Public Roads which is now called the Department of Transportation and he was a surveyor and construction engineer, and they were working in Idaho, up in Gibbonsville, and they had finished that project, and we learned the next spring, the spring of 1929, that we had to break camp and go to Stanley.*

How long were you there for?

*My father and his family; my mother, brother, and I were there from 1929, the summer but probably was May after school was out for my brother, to 1935. I was 5 years old when we arrived, and the last summer I spent was my 11th year, so I really spend a great deal of years as a little girl, but growing up. And it was wonderful.*

Now were you there all year long or were you only there in the summertime?

*Due to construction, my father usually left often to go to select his crew and to get in touch with the contractors and so forth and he would leave in May and then after school was out, possibly the last of May, he came to Ogden and picked us up with all of our belongings and we went to Stanley for the first time I was 5 years old and we were so excited because we had been to Ketchum and gone over the summit. My father had had worked on the roads from Hailey up to Ketchum years before and when we saw the mountains, the valley we were so excited, and we could hardly wait to get to Stanley and get out of the car and Play. And when we turned up the street, the road to Stanley from lower Stanley it looked so barren. Where are the homes? No homes. Where are the people? No people. We came to a halt and my father said here we are. My brother and I looked at each other and there wasn't anything else and we both said together where are the children? We were propped in front of a stone, a stone, a wood frame, not even really a cabin. It looks like more of a tent-style building. Two rooms and one big room with a partition between. Well we were... our faces just dropped and we both ran into the street calling names for children where are you? Well, finally three young children came forth from this big building which later learned was the local store, general store and their name was Gillespie. And the oldest girl, my brother's age, at that time would have been seven, and then another daughter my age and then a little boy, Jack. So, there was Gertrude, Doris, and little Jack and that was the children, those were the children of Stanley that we enjoyed for all those summers. and they were rioting years.*

Shirley, tell me what your house looked like, inside and out.

*Well, Adriann, I mentioned that it was kind of like a tent. Wood frame around it, but it seemed to be a tent. We had one large room inside with a partition. And in the front, as you go into the house from the road, was one bookcase, and there was one chair, and one cot. Then in the next room, in the corner, was a huge black stove, iron stove and a cupboard and then a stand with a wash basin, and a pitcher, a mirror above it and a potty underneath. And then there was a table with four chairs, wooden chairs, very primitive and a big double bed, a double cot. And a few years later they put a, built a screen about 4 feet away from the house, from the back door around. We had no water, running water at all. There was a pump, oh about 10 ft away, and of course our lavatory was an outhouse. It was quite a shock to us. Next to us was the office of my father, with the young draftsman and his men that he chose to work with the construction people. And they were lovely young men. In fact, it was exciting because several years after*

*being there, two of them married and brought their wives to Stanley, of all places. And, of course, that was wonderful for me because they were in their early 20s and I kept house for them and then they gave me their clothes to dress up. We had such fun. Now, they, as I said, there wasn't very much in Stanley, but they had built several cabins across the road and behind the General Store where these two young couples lived. So, it was very exciting for me. But, as I said, no running water so all the water had to be heated on the stove, washing dishes or washing clothes. You see, we had no refrigerator at all, so everything was prepared that day.*

Can you tell me what kind of food they had in the stores that you could buy?

*If I remember correctly, it was not a grocery store like we have today. It was mostly candy and nuts and pop and cigarettes. I'm sure provisions like wheat or flour, because my mother baked all of our bread and pies and nutcakes. I don't ever recall going over to Mr. Gillespie and buying meat. We had lots of chicken, and of course my mother had to kill the chicken. And that was something to wring the neck and then de-feather them and burr and then cut it up and feed it out. My brother, to his dying day, would never eat dark meat chicken because he had to clean the chickens. It was quite an experience and so we had lots of potatoes and I know for some reason my father always had a good breakfast because of course he was a construction engineer and out on the job. And I'm sure we had eggs and bacon and homemade bread toasted. And dinners I know that they were wonderful, because I, of course, was a chubby little girl and enjoyed all the goodies. Mother made tremendous pies and so I think the fruit came from canned fruit only. And in the summertime, I recall about once a year in the summer, a truck would come, and they would have fresh produce of apples and so forth. But at the General Store we could buy little Vienna sausages, I remember Fig Newtons and pop. Our pop was cream soda, root beer, orange crush. We didn't have Coke. I never remember Coke at all. But, we always had great food. So, we must have gotten meat, but I never remember a steak or a roast, but lots of chicken. And then, of course, in the summertime when the fishing was on, we had wonderful trout. My father would come home from the work, change his boots, and get his tackle and away he went. And in an hour, he would be back with the most beautiful rainbow trout. And he had cleaned them and mother had the potatoes and onion and bacon cooking and we'd have lots of trout in the summertime and homemade biscuits. Picnics, we had lovely summer picnics, particularly up at Redfish Lake. They have this lovely picnic area. We would have potato salads and different salads, but no fresh lettuce or anything like that. But homemade ice cream. Now how did we get the ice cream? Well, Mr. Gillespie's store had a very high, high room, maybe two or three stories, and you climbed a ladder and went to the first level, and you would see these huge ice blocks covered with sawdust. And when you wanted ice, you went over and asked him to go up and chip it off you made your ice cream. But in the wintertime, you see, the lakes were frozen, so they hauled these gigantic pieces of ice, and he stored them.*

Can you tell me a little bit more about some of the other locals that lived there?

*In our little area, as I said, it was the Gillespies. And Mrs. Gillespie was the only woman in Stanley, as to have my mother that they were friends. And that was wonderful, thank goodness. And Mrs. Gillespie had a great sense of humor and my mother, and so it really kept her summers better. Indeed. Then, there were no other people except Juggy and Trapper Green who were old timers that had come there in youth from the East, I suppose to mend their broken hearts or search for great wealth. And Juggy was the gas station attendant. He had one pump and a little tiny shack. And we called him Juggy because he was always just a little bit on the fun side with a, kind of like the reindeer with the red nose, and happy. And Juggy was short, maybe 5'8" and then Trapper Green was a tall, handsome, about 6 ft., very muscular man. And he did do a lot of trapping. And he had a little cabin there, so we had them. And then later, a few years later, they*

*built two rooms I call them buildings, two buildings, but they were just like two rooms, and it became a Café. And so, you would have on occasion, the ranchers would come into town to get some supplies. I'm sure particularly cigarettes because that was a very popular diversion. We would see them. But we never saw ladies, except on Saturday night dance. The dance hall was across the street, on the same corner, the opposite corner of the grocery store, and it was an old building that was beautifully, at one time, constructed. Had a wonderful stage and wonderful dance floor. [inaudible] gorgeous. I can't remember really if it was once a week or once a month, they had the dances. And of course, they had a violin and piano and, I think, a horn. And they were the good old songs at that time. And the dancing and it was lots of fun. And particularly for Doris and Gertrude and my brother and I because Sunday morning, instead of going to church, because there was not a church there, we would go over and pick up empty whiskey bottles. And then we would take them to the store where a man would pay us for them. And that's the way we earned our next year's, next Fall's spending money. But they also played wonderful waltzes and I believe it was my last summer there, at age 11, where my father finally said that we could go over to the dance. And I remember that they had tables around, a few tables, where people sat and enjoyed their drinks. And my father invited me to dance and taught me how to waltz.*

Did you get any schooling, was there a school up there, and what was that like?

*In the summertime, of course, there was no school. But they did have a schoolhouse, quite old, dilapidated. Now, since my father's work concluded generally by the late September, sometimes he stayed until October, he took us back to Ogden for my brother and I to attend school in Ogden. But there was a schoolhouse there and one fall my father said I won't be very long, the weather is going to be good, won't you stay and then we'll go home together. I entered the first grade in Stanley and my brother was in the third. It was quite exciting because there were children from all over the area and there were, I think, about only 10 of us. It was interesting to meet a few other children. But we stayed only for one month. Of course, all those grades in one class. There was a school bell, and you had to behave properly. We had recess and we all brought our lunches and played games and got mad at each other and threw mud pies at each other. But all in all, it was a wonderful experience.*

*Stanley, to me, was not a resort area. It seemed to me people were going through there, going to other places like to Montana, going on up to Salmon City, or going to Ketchum and coming from Boise. There was a beautiful drive from Boise over through an old mining town called Idaho City. Well, the lakes were beautiful. People liked to fish. There were no hotels. There was a small cabin or two down in lower Stanley, on the river, but we never stayed there. And then, of course, the famous Redfish Lake with their lodge and that finally developed to much larger accommodations. So, there were no motels, no fancy restaurants. Well, there were places for people to camp. Now, also there was a great coming and going for sheep. So, in the summer, midsummer usually if I remember correctly, the shepherders would bring their sheep through. And, of course, they would stay in Stanley down by the river. That was kind of exciting because that was new people coming in that stayed there so you could talk to them. And we had great fun enjoying, in fact, lovely lamb dinners and saw their inside of their cabins and learned how very wonderful people these are, taking care of their sheep. And one summer this nice shepherd presented me with a little lamb as a pet. They did have these great ranches of beautiful old cabin homes that the wealthy would come out and spend the summer. I became acquainted with two ladies that lived in Chicago and they owned this tremendous ranch. And that's when they would come into Stanley to buy their cigarettes. They were ladies of great culture, but when they were there, they were in dirty jeans, boots, no makeup, sloppy hair. But*

*when I was invited to tea in their living room it was elegant. And you had to really have manners. But that was a lovely experience, they were wonderful people.*

So, when people weren't working, what kind of things would you like to do for fun?

*We had no TV, no telephone, no radio. Well, we did have a telephone my father had because of his position, but we couldn't use it. So, we had our books and toys and games that were packed and brought there from Ogden. We'd take an afternoon or a morning to afternoon walk up to Stanley Lake and have our picnic and come back. Or or we would go hunting for Indian heads, Indian arrowheads in the sagebrush. Since we weren't in the big city to do things, we had to make up our own games and so forth. Of course, my brother was the big shot and the most brilliant of us, but he was quite a thespian. He said let's put on a play. So, I do not remember the subject at all, but we had our lines and a story to go along with it. And at the time I was given a little baby lamb, maybe 3 or 4 months old, by one of the shepherders. We decided to incorporate this very bright little animal into our play. And, of course, it being my pet it obeyed me. It would not obey anybody else. So, we rehearsed everything very nicely and she did very well when she was called and so forth. Well, the night of the performance, which was sold out in fact, and we don't know where the people came from really because we never saw them in the daytime. I would say there were 100 people there. We had the first act just beautifully done and I remember along the second act, that was where the little lambie took over, and she wouldn't budge. She wouldn't do a thing and all of a sudden bang across the stage and out of the whole auditorium in a jiffy. Well, of course, I stood there stunned, and made a bow. I'll never forget that. So, people clapped and clapped like that that was supposed to be in the play. Then we didn't have holidays up there, of course, except the 4th of July. And one day my father, which he always did early in the morning, go to work. He came home with quite a few packages and that was strange because there weren't any stores around for us. So, on the 4th of July, we were kind of sad, my brother and I because in Ogden we had great fireworks in the park, and we had our own little street of fun fireworks. Well, that evening my father said now I want you to look over that mountain at such and such a time. Well, all of a sudden from the, out of the mountain were brilliant, brilliant skyrockets, colorful, all kinds of wonderful fireworks and colorful, showing off all the valley. And then pretty soon everybody who was in Stanley at that time, I still say there were maybe 10 people, were in the street clapping and we were singing God Bless America and all of these songs. But we had a good time thanks to my father. He had gone up early, climbed the mountain, set everything up in his very scientific way. And I think I understand now that they still have this experience every year. But my father started it. Mr. Linford started it. Now, Adriann asked me about why did people come there and I was not thinking very well because of course they came for the mountains. There was, at that time, built a dude ranch near Alturas Lake. It was a... you entered it in an old frame gate. As you entered into the right were about a half a dozen cabins, connected, wood cabins connected, with the prettiest white curtains in the window. And these were similar to what we have today as motels. And then you walked quite a ways down and there were three pools, beautiful swimming pools. There was the tennis court, several courts, but I remember the tennis court because people were playing then. Then you walked further and there was the section for the horses, and they had a massage parlor there and a dietician and all of this fancy living. But people came there also to climb the great Sawtooth Mountains. They came from all over the world. And, across from the Dude Ranch was a huge, huge farm and it was owned by a family named Williams. And I don't know how I became acquainted with the daughter of the owner, but she invited me to come up and stay one weekend. That was lovely. You climbed quite a ways up to get to the house because it was up on the hill but then she had her bedroom on the second floor and it seemed like it was close to heaven. And you could look out and the stars were as bright and pretty as diamonds and you*

could reach them. And the sky so blue. The other farm that was interesting was right down in lower Stanley across from the little store and gas station and it was called the Woolley farm. At that time a lady, a middle-aged lady and her daughter were the only inhabitants of the farm. Well, this daughter was just beautiful. She met a man from Chicago and married. And he was an extremely wealthy man.

In the summertime, there was a rodeo. And not until I was old enough, because my father was very protective of me, did he take me to the rodeo because you had to sit on a fence or stay in your car to see the rodeo. And they were real cowboys, and they had those old shirts with their kerchief tied around their neck and were there bucking broncos. And some people were hurt. But it was quite exciting, finally when I was old enough to go, because my brother used to tell me all about it. Because, of course in Ogden, during the summer Pioneer Days, we call them, they do have rodeos but they're more commercial kind. But this was the real thing, real wild, wild horses trying to be tamed.

Can you tell us what the weather was like?

Weather was quite unpredictable. In the summertime, of course, it was very hot because we lived more on the plateau, upper Stanley is more on a plateau. Of course, we had no trees, no shrubs, no flowers in that little area. And of course, away from it was all sagebrush. So, we had these hot days and then these horrible winds and they were fiercely blown. Fierce and blew dirt, it was dirt. The windows would be covered, you couldn't see through them. Then, on occasion, we would have these horrible rainstorms. Lightning and torrential rain and you'd think that your cabin was going to fall apart. But that did cool down things for a while. Because of the very... amount of heat that we had, fires, forest fires were prevalent. And they would come very close, they would be on the east side of the river, however in those mountains or quite far away on the west side. And that smoke and the ashes in the morning, Mother again would say well we've got a sweep up to do and opened up the back door and the ashes were just about a half an inch thick all over and again on the windows and came inside our house. So again, you had to stay inside. And being inside, what could we do? Well Doris, my friend, would come over and at that time we had the Sears catalog and the Montgomery ward. And in those they had the paper doll sheets. So, we would cut out the paper dolls and then go through and cut out the clothes that we were to put on these paper dolls. Or we would play with my own little house that my father brought, my doll house. And we would read, play silly card games; but we couldn't go outside.

Tell us what kind of wildlife you saw.

Well, the wildlife I saw was a bear or two, about once every summer, tied up to a post down in lower Stanley across from the little store. And I think it was more of a gimmick for people to stop and buy their gas there. These were black bears, and they were mostly cubs. I never saw a large one. But around Stanley, no I never saw any wildlife. And it was a wonderful experience to see the returning of salmon from the ocean to come back to spawn. It was wonderful to see them come upstream. And then you would really watch the little family. How they would, it was kind of like sentinels, they care for their mother, and they go by her so that no other fish will come by and eat the eggs or hurt her in any way. The sad part was, upstream they built a dam, but these salmon had to get up over that little barricade. As water was coming down, they had to jump up and go over but so many, many, many could not make it and would get caught in the nails and the debris. And then there would be these people on the side with their nets or their pole to go fish the fish off of the barricade. And that was very disheartening to us.

Also, one of the pleasurable times to do was to go up to Redfish Lake in the evening. Several times, of course, one of the parents would take our gang up there for a little picnic late in the day and we could stay and watch the sunset. And they would go on the canoes across and have a good time. And at that time people were so respectful of the area and the lake. And 40 years

ago, my husband and I returned to this area. I wished my daughter, who was five, to see where I was when I was 5 years old because she had heard so much about my life. And we stayed at Redfish Lake and oh it was terrible. We heard boom boxes and squealing and vulgar laughing. It broke my heart to see how disrespectful they were to this gorgeous nature that they were around. They were spoiling it. I don't know if that still occurs or not. It was heartbreaking to me because it was so gorgeous and so quiet. No matter what your thoughts were or your problems you could just go there and you were renewed from the beauty and the feeling of spirituality and the respect people had. I hope that that has come back.

Well, my father, as I said, was a civil engineer for the Bureau of Public Roads at that time which is now called Department of Transportation. And he was sent out from the district office which was located in Ogden, that was the Idaho, Utah and Wyoming. And in the wintertime, they did drawings...preparation of schematic drawings... for where the roads would go. Very detailed, of course, because they had these surveyors go out earlier, years earlier, to find which is a best route and what the problems were to construct a highway. My father as a young man started in 1915 as a young surveyor and worked his way up. So, then they planned all of what they would do, how many miles the project would be for the months that the weather would permit construction. Now at that time the Morrison-Knudsen company in Boise got the bid for this amount of highway construction. So, they provided all of the equipment, that is the steam shovels, the trucks, the graders, and lots of the crew. My father was the supervisor. The equipment was very interesting, of course. Bringing over steel for the bridges. Well, of course, they had to use dynamite lots of times to cut out certain parts of the earth to provide for the road to be built. And then, after that you see, we had to carry away all the debris. And then there would be the grading. So, the equipment came from Boise and a lot of the crew. Then, of course, the actual design was done by the office in Ogden, under the direction of my father. But it was very exciting to see the steam shovels, of course, picking up the Earth and dumping it into these big trucks.

I think of Stanley so much and I've had many, many, many experiences. And I have lived in Europe, I have lived on the east coast, but Stanley was always in my mind for relaxation, comfort, good people, good living, and a beautiful childhood. And it has been quite an emotional retake for me as now I am 84 years old. But it has also been a very wonderful experience and I thank you for it.