

RODNEY W. TEW



This is a tape recording of the interview with Rodney Warren Tew, a former bishop of the Goshen Ward of Shelley Stake. Taken at the Tew home at West Firth on July 28, 1976 at 8PM by the Oral History Correspondents of the Firth Idaho Stake of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Bryant and Miranda Stringham.

Those present were Rodney and Noma Tew and the correspondents.

"Bishop. Rodney, let us start by hearing about your ancestors, then go into your life story."

Rodney:

I am the eldest son of Warren Snow Tew and Vera Elva Hill. My ancestors came across The English Channel, to invade England in 1066 with William the Conqueror in the Battle of Hastings. I am an eighth cousin of Winston Churchill.

My great grandfather, Thomas Tew, came to America with a friend, Walter Bird, at the age of sixteen. He earned money to help bring the rest of the family over. The Tews made their home in Springville, Utah and later settled on Mapleton Bench east of Springville.

The Hills were also from England and my great grandmother walked across the plains to Salt Lake Valley as a young girl. My grandfather, Leonard Allison Hill, served as a patriarch for many years at the close of his life. My grandfather, William Thomas Tew served as a bishop for over thirty years in Mapleton, Utah.

My parents were married Nov. 1, 1911 in the Salt Lake Temple. My father left in a few days for a mission in England. Mother went out in Nevada and cooked for the rail-road crew, with her sister in law, for a dollar a day. She saved her money and went to England and did missionary work with Dad for his last six months.

I was the second child and first son in a family of nine children, five girls and four boys. I was born in Arco, Idaho, Butte Co., Feb 19, 1917. Mother said they could see the sky through the cracks the night I was born. It was so cold that a pan of water sitting under the stove with a fire in, froze. My father was the town Marshall. I was ill and they called the doctor. He had the druggist give them a prescription. A few minutes after the medicine had been given to me the druggist called and said he had made a mistake and had given them poison. They had to have my stomach pumped. They gave me my name. They administered to me and my life was spared.

I grew Up in Lost River, and can remember when Apostle Melvin Ballard came to our place and stayed. Father was then the first bishop of Ballard Ward in Lost River. He stood to the side of my father in the sleigh, commented on the clear beautiful night and the many stars in the Galaxy, and made a statement about "other worlds with people on them". After conference he went home with us again and sat down to bread and milk with us and seemed to enjoy it., This great man left lasting impressions on me, as a small boy.

I started the first grade in Lost River in a small schoolhouse in Leslie. After about the third day I took my mother's chalk box of savings to school and got with a big boy with a buggy. We took the cute girls for a ride and bought treats for them. Because we did not take my older sister, she told on me. My folks took me out of school because I was only five and they thought I was not mature enough.

We had to move to Lehi, Utah because a younger brother had to be fitted with an artificial leg. I went to work in the beets that fall for a neighbor. I would run home from school, change clothes and run over to his farm. I was so excited to think I, was making some money to take home to my mother to help. It was hard work, loading beets until dark each night. Well, when we got through he just told me "Thanks". I have never been paid yet. The last time I ever saw him was in the Bureau of Information in the Los Angeles Temple in 1965. I was just about to dun him. (laughs)

We moved to Shelley, Idaho where I finished elementary school as salutatorian at the Stanton School, near my father's farm. I graduated from Shelley High School. in 1935. My last 2 years I worked graveyard shift at U & I sugar factory during the beet run. I saved may money and went to the Ag College at Logan for 2 years and graduated from the L D S Institute.

I was called on a mission in 1937 and started out in the Birmingham Conference area where my parents had labored. I found many people who knew and thought the world of my parents. One sister had the hat my father had on when he was tarred and feathered. I spent 3 months here. Then I was transferred to the Hull district, where I labored for about nine months. I became very close to Hugh B. Brown in the London District and had his son, Hugh C., as my companion for some choice experiences, with both of them. I was released one month early because of the war in Europe, it was the beginnings of the second world War. Three of us elders toured the continent-enriching our lives. We traveled east as far as Budapest, Hungary, seeing many of the countries of Europe. We saw all of the leaders who were ruling at that time, except Adolph Hitler. Everyone had to stand and salute them. In Rome we were taken into a room where they showed a large map of the world, the known world, and it said, "TO BE A ROMAN IS TO FIGHT. ONCE A ROMAN ALWAYS A ROMAN." They showed the old Roman Empire and what they, Mussolini and Hitler, expected to make of the present world.

On my return from England, I visited the church historical places in the Eastern States, the Sacred Grove, Carthage, Nauvoo and Independence. I arrived home in August 1939. The first work I did was shocking grain. That was quite different from the kind of work I had been doing, two years of no manual work.

I worked one year on Dad's farm. Then he signed with me to help me get a farm at Blackfoot. On March 17, 1940, I loaded up all my earthly possessions for farming, a few hog troughs and such (*I didn't even have a pitchfork-I fed hay with my hands*) on an old iron-tired wagon with an old gray mare and a colt for a team and headed for Blackfoot.

I earned my board and room at the neighbors for running their farm. They told me of their Ward Reunion that night. So I hurried up and got ready. When I arrived it was all married couples, except for two girls. I inquired about one of them. Her name was Noma Christensen. "These girls had been asked to help serve the dinner. I ended up dancing all the dances with her and taking

her home. She was Norwegian by descent, her mother is a convert from Norway. Her father was from Denmark. Our courtship was not much to talk about., I didn't have any Money. I would go over to their place to eat sometimes and fall asleep (I was working so hard. They accused me of sleeping whenever I sat down.

We were married Aug. 15, 1940 in the Salt Lake Temple. Father and Mother and Noma's Mother took us to Salt Lake. We had Klea & Ferron Blake, my sister and husband, and Ove & Beula Christensen, Noma's brother & wife, at the temple with us. I had borrowed ten dollars from my dad and it took five of that to buy a wedding ring. I did not have money to get a hotel room, so we stayed with relatives. The next day we returned to Blackfoot and to work.

In November of that year we sold the farm and moved to Roberts. Again I took the iron tired wagon and Noma rode with me to Shelley. We were both frozen when we got there. She stayed with my family in Shelley and the next day I drove on to the farm in Roberts. We lived here for the next seven years, operating and improving our farm. While here, we, had four children born to us; Jeanette, Warren, Sonja, and Kent. Our home was two rooms and a porch. I taught in the MIA and as a counselor and then Supt. of the Sunday School.

In the spring of 1947 we bought the old Ziegler place south of Goshen. We farmed there for 14 years. Five more children were born to us while we lived here; Bruce, Craig, Tamara, Rebecca, and Kurtis. We now had 5 redheads, 2 brunettes,, and 2 blondes, nine very sweet and choice spirits.

In my 59 years I have seen many changes come in travel, science, medicine, living conditions, education and growth of communities. We started out not knowing what an automobile was. We went to Primary, Sunday School and church in the buggy or sleigh. Along in the twenties, my father bought a Model T Ford. He traded the family milk cow for a down payment. Mother was really upset about that. Then we started riding in a. car-we became too good for the buggy and team. We have gone from that to traveling by jet through the clouds. Both the radio and the television have come. Nearly all the conveniences we have, tame during the last fifty years. We still have hard benches in church but they are not so slivery. Changes have also come in missionary work, with the plans, and languages. The missionaries are so much more effective. I have wished I could go on a six months mission just to get to use the new plans. They did not have them when I served as a missionary, we just did tracting and street meetings.

You asked me what our philosophy in raising our family was: We taught them respect, obedience and how to work. When we had them in church we never let them get down and run around as we see them do today. We kept the small ones on our laps. We never used whippings, but tried to gain their respect enough to mind us. None of our children can say they were ever severely punished. We took them to tithing settlement from the time they were real small and all paid some tithing, even though it was only a few dimes.

They were taught to sit still and it made quite a room full to have them there all at once. This principle they have always seen. They have heard much about missionary work, (all 4 grandparents have filled missions as well as many aunts, uncles & cousins) and all 5 of our sons have gone on missions. That is one thing I contribute to having heard favorable reports and faith promoting experiences while growing up. They did not get any special allowances but knew they would be kept at school or on a mission when the time came. And that we would help when it

came time to go on their own. At the time they were all home, I was operating several farms. "At the time I was bishop I farmed our home place, a farm west of Shelley, and a piece of land on the Reservation. Our home place was just a stopping place. Every one of our children have grown up and taken their turn on the old spud bulker. All ten of them have worked on it. We taught them to stay close to the church.

We have not had any failures nor any boom years financially. We have Missed the spuds years that were good, but we have managed to keep going. We were able to keep our sons in the mission field and 9 sent to college and things always worked out from one year to the next. We have fed cattle, lambd sheep, fed hogs, milked cows, fed lambs besides running a row-crop farm. It has been hard work but we have all worked together.

One thing we have done with our family is to take them all east to get a new car and visit the church history places of interest. We have had some of them in Church in Washington D C, as far south as Florida and Mexico and as far north as Toronto and Cardston, Canada. They have traveled quite extensively in USA. I remember once when we arrived in Chicago with six of them. We all had our arms full of suitcases and blankets as we got off the train there. Nona asked me what I was going to do first and I said, "Find a psychiatrist and have him examine us to see what is wrong with us to land here with a herd of kids." (laughs) Once me had nine of them in California, as we were trying to get in our car, people were trying to get a count on them. Bruce called out, "Eleven". We have had a good time with our family while traveling and have seen many wonderful things. As a family we have many choice experiences to reminisce about.

You asked me if I had any advice to leave with the future generation. Only this "STAY CLOSE TO THE CHURCH AND THE PROBLEMS WILL NOT SEEM SO LARGE, IF WE FOLLOW THE ADVICE AND COUNSEL OF OUR LEADERS AND LIVE A DAY AT A TIME."

As far as catastrophes are concerned I do not remember too much, only the depression of the thirties. I was a grown young man before I received my first dollar. My dad gave me a big silver dollar, and I was old enough to go with girls. He said, "Now don't go spend it all in one place." I had been with other boys who had spending money and flashed greenbacks, but that was my first. Money was mighty scarce, and Dad had a bad time with the farm in Lost River and lost it. He had a large family to support. When he came to Shelley he purchased a run down and unlevel farm. It was rough going for him and we all tried to help him. I was the oldest son in the family. During those depression years, if I do say it, I put in a man's work each day, all the while I was going to school. All through the summers I did a man's work and about all I got out of it was my board. I worked all day for \$2.00 on a threshing crew, all day long you had to keep pitching the bundles of grain into the thresher. There was no time to even wipe the sweat from our brow. No one, no one, who has never passed through a depression can understand or ever know how hard times were.

I served as a teacher and officer in the ward M I A and Sunday School. And then was called to serve as a counselor to Pres. George Grover and also to DeLos Huntsman in the Shelley Stake Sunday School. I was serving as one of the Seven Presidents of the Seventies, of Shelley Stake, when called to be Bishop.

The way I was called to be Bishop was through a call to Noma (she was a counselor in the Stake Primary). She was asked if she would bring her husband with her. I expected it to be a change for

her. The Stake Presidency visited with us a little while. Then Pres. Grover read us a letter from the First Presidency calling me to be Bishop of the Goshen Ward. At first I was ruffled - thinking I was too young, I was 41 years old then. I thought I should be left until I was more matured. I had seen my dad live through two terms as Bishop and I thought I could never sit through that many meetings. It was not my desire to have such a calling. But I had many wonderful and spiritual experiences as a bishop. I was set apart and ordained 18 Jan. 1958 by Adam S. Bennion. We would not have known the true worth of the Goshen people if I had not been so close with them from day to day. We have many dear friends out there still. I used to go fishing with one ward member that would say after we'd been out 2 or 3 hours, "Bishop, I've got to have a smoke." I'd tell him to go ahead and we'd have a good talk and a good time. Well, he quit smoking. They moved to Utah and they sent their son on a mission and they have both been teaching in their ward. She has served as a Relief Society president. Their family is all active. The tears roll when he starts sharing his testimony with me.

I had one counselor, Bro. John Peterson, who was very devoted and dependable. Several years after we had moved away and were both out of the bishopric, his wife called me down to their home in Burley to see him once again before cancer took him. It was one of the hardest things I ever did in my life, to say goodbye to him (a man I loved and respected). As I went down the hallway, I looked back and waved to him he waved back, the last time I saw him on this earth. It was very hard for me. He was a very wonderful man and I know he is in the Celestial Kingdom. That is how I feel toward him.

My entire family gave me undivided support, or I could not have done-what I did. We were coming and going between those three farms that I was operating in about a 16 mile radius. It was hard to make the visits to the people of the Ward. My wife just reminded me that at one time we had eight members in the hospital at one time, during the busy spud harvest,- and one was for amputation of a leg. We also had a funeral that same fall, but I seemed to get around to it all and everything seemed to fall in place, I kept on the go night and day but things worked out and the years flew by.

During the time I was bishop most of the money for the remodeling and building of the new chapel was raised from cattle projects. The farmers and all that could, took cattle and grew them out for the Season. We had several of the cattle get loose and could not find. them. When we did they would be in Roy Fielding's fattening corral. He finished them out and fattened them for us and sent us the check. He had more interest in that new chapel than many of our ward members did. When the cattle got out they would head north and always end up in Roy's corral. He did that for several wards; not only ours: I had moved away before the chapel was built but much of the funds had been raised while I was bishop. Cattle raising was a very successful fund raising project in our ward.

I performed several marriages when I was bishop, and most have gone to the temple since. Three of the couples still keep in touch with us. One comes to see us from Washington.

We had good 24th of July celebrations with a splendid participation. A real good spirit there. We had many tri-ward dances with Basalt, Firth and Goshen participating. The cultural hall would be packed with everyone having a good time mixing together.

There was a flood the year after I was out of bishopric but I had moved to Raft River and did not have -the responsibility of offering the assistance as did those who were in the ward. We Watched it on T.V..

While we lived in Goshen a tornado hit our farm and tore up 9 trees, tearing the eaves off one side of our house. They fell on the telephone wires, electric wires, one on our garage and one fell in the middle of our apple tree, splitting it to the roots. The strange thing about that freak storm was that our place was the only one it hit for miles and miles, People came to see the sight but they couldn't go far because of several trees across the road.

In the spring of 1961, we found a large piece of ground in the Raft River area. We sold our place here to Rone Clawson and moved away from the bishopric and the Goshen Ward. We went pioneering to undeveloped land. We attended church in the Declo Ward. We moved to Raft River in time for our children to start school in August. We lived so far out that our children did not get in for Primary or M I A, but we did do a lot of things together and the children enjoyed a lot of nature walks.

On Jan. 22, 1962, the coldest night in over 40 years (*it even froze the gas furnace lines and broke the electric cable into the valley*) Marlene, our number ten, was born in Rupert, Idaho. She was our fifth daughter. Two days later I had to be rushed to Idaho Falls for gall stone surgery - which left 6 children at our farm home alone. Our 2 oldest were in college in Logan.

We were trying to develop virgin land and had so many misfortunes there we decided to move back. We purchased this farm in 1963 on the west side of the river from George Stallings where we have lived the past thirteen years. I still have cattle and raise feed and hay.

We have had five boys fill missions, four graduated from college and four from Junior College. At this time we have nineteen grandchildren. Nine of our ten have been through the temple. Seven are married in the Temple. Now we belong to the Riverview Ward where I teach the gospel Doctrine in the Ward Sunday School. I still love to hear the story about the Prophet Joseph Smith. It has never grown old to me. I love the gospel and I know it is true. I love to hear any faith promoting experiences about the gospel or leaders of the church. The more I see it the more beautiful it becomes.

The more we see what is happening in the rest of the world the more we appreciate what the gospel has done for us. When we compare our lives and family other mixed up lives in the world we really appreciate what the gospel has done for us.

Noma:

I am Noma Tew, the wife of Rodney Tew, mother of ten children. We have had joy in raising our lovely family. It was a choice experience to be at Rodney's side when he was called to be bishop of Goshen Ward. I was a counselor in the Shelley Stake Primary when he got his call. So I was released to give my assistance to him in the ward. The spirit and attitude that our family had was gratifying. Our oldest was seventeen at the time of her father's call to be bishop, and we had them on down to one year of age. I sat in the car with those nine children night after night and day after day, (after meetings and when he had interviews) and never once did I hear them complain about waiting. They made the time pass faster With their pleasant attitude and sweet

spirit. They were always willing to help and to be on time so he would not be late for his meetings.

The only M I A meetings he missed while a bishop was three and two of those he was at a meeting with the Stake presidency and the other was illness. He did a lot of work with the youth and won their respect. He was a man with good judgment and wisdom and they accepted his advice and counsel. He gave others who made mistakes the same understanding and help that he would want his given, and he was loved for it. They were youth then and now as adults they still address him as bishop. He loved all of his Ward members and I still meet people in town that tell me he was their favorite bishop. (tears) Some are people who are older than he who have had a number of bishops. He put his all, into his calling but still never neglected his family. He continued to show his love for his family by doing things with them.

I would like to tell about our family home evenings. We used to read the children Bible stories (*this was before we heard much stress put on this program*). Our family really loved to hear these stories and they would ask for another and another. It would get so late we'd tell them they had to go to bed^o and some of our children would take the books down to their rooms and read until falling asleep.

We always took our children to church instead of sending them. I have seen Rodney take his sons to Priesthood Meeting when his back was so bad he would have to leave and go lay in the seat of the car. But he always took them, to set the proper example. I feel that, is the reason all five have served in the mission field, because of the good example of their father.

He used articles in the newspaper and stories he heard as teaching aids for putting over a point or principle to our children. Hoping they would, refrain from making those same mistakes or would be inspired to great goals for lasting happiness.

Rodney always has shared everything good with his family. He has always honored our parents, those in authority over us and shown respect for women.

We were both raised in homes of great faith. We have seen miracles through administration and fasting in our homes. I know that my life was spared through fasting and prayer and that I am able to walk today because of special blessings. I can remember as a child getting well from the gentle stroking of my fore head and hearing the loving words from my father, a Patriarch. And it always brought tears to hear my mother tell of her conversion and bear her testimony.

I hope we can live worthy to someday be with our parents and this sweet little grandchild that was called home, and other loved ones. I love the gospel and I'm grateful for what it has done for me and my family.