# *Interview of Stan Russon*

2005

Interviewer: Susan Whittaker

with assistance from Layne Whittaker

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**Stan:** I apologize for reading some of this but being 84 years old I feel that I can say what I want to say a little better with some notes. I lived in a glorious period of time—to witness people traveling in a horse and buggy as they have for 2,000 years to the time of sitting in my living room and viewing man traveling in space and walking on the moon.

***Transportation:*** I might as well start with that. I came into the world in Lehi in the year 1921. At that time Lehi's streets accommodated lots of rubber tires, smoke belching, noisy automobiles, along with the traditional farm wagons, buggies, horse drawn coaches and so forth. Now it didn't change suddenly. When I was a trail builder, six or seven years old, my Primary teacher, Georgia Peck came to the church house in her one seated buggy and tied her horse named Peanuts to the hitching post in front of the church. There were many high class automobiles but the economical most prevalent was the Model T Ford. My father had spent the winter months from 1921 to 1931 working in the temple in Salt Lake City and had driven an old 1913 Model T Ford. Then it was retired. In my mid teens my brother and I inherited that car and began to learn about the mechanics and operations of a car. We remember Uncle Ben who had a sawed off Model T Ford with a truck bed, but we hadn't seen it for several years. We asked him if we could use it and where was it? He replied, "The last time I remember it was parked on the south side of the chicken coop. If you can find it you can have it." Now there was a fourteen-foot pile of straw over this spot and had been left there by the threshing machine several years before. We began to dig and finally found the car. We dragged it home and got it to run. That car polluted the atmosphere with dust and noise on Sunday afternoons with us and our buddies who had each contributed a few dimes and nickels for gas.

In 1936 we heard of Old Aldoph Hunger who had delivered groceries about this town in 1916. He had purchased a brand new Model T Ford coup to replace his horse and wagon. He knew he would have to buy gasoline. He reasoned that this car had a spark lever and a gas lever. He decided he would run the car on spark because it didn't cost money and gas did. He was much dismayed when he found it wouldn't run on spark. It still needed gas. His horse could run on the grass on the side of the road. So he put his brand new Ford on blocks in the garage. When we heard about it we had to see it. There it stood, magnificently brand new but covered with twenty years of dust. We purchased it for twenty five dollars and there after we drove it to Idaho and to Odgen and the 24th of July Parade. We felt quite respectable along with the 1937 streamline cars of the day.

**Susan:** Describe a Model T Ford. What kind of gadgets did it have on it?

**Stan:** It didn't have a gear shift like other cars. It has three pedals: one was reverse, one was the brake, and one was to go forward. It wouldn't go forward until you put the emergency brake forward. It was very late in the time of Model T's that they ever had closed-in bodies. Generally it was a folding top. As my father traveled in that thing at four o'clock in the morning to Salt Lake City all winter it had Isenglass curtains that you would snap on the side to keep the wind out.

**Susan:** Describe an Isenglass curtain.

**Stan:** It is like a celluloid, sewn into fabric so that you could at least see a little bit to the outside.

**Susan:** Did it have a horn? Did it have lights?

**Stan:** Yes, but they hadn't developed a starting motor, you still had to crank it.

**Susan:** How many miles to the gallon did it get?

**Stan:** Wow! It did better than some of the cars of today. I can't say exactly. But remember we could buy gas for ten cents a gallon.

**Susan:** Where were the gas stations here in Lehi?

**Stan:** There was one at the fork in the roads, where Lehi road leaves 89, east of town. There was a gas station there. There were a couple others in town. Remember that the pumps were not like we see them. They had a big glass reservoir at the top and filled it with a hand pump and as they put the gas in your tank you could see it go down gallon by gallon through the glass section that it was in.

**Susan:** Was it an honor system in how many gallons that you used or was the attendant there looking at it?

**Stan:** No, they pumped the gas. We didn't pump the gas. The attendant did it.

**Susan:** Did it have a heater of any kind?

**Stan:** Yes, there was a pipe that encased the manifold and it came right in to the cab. It had a little door that you could open to warm it up. It did have lights. It had a magneto that created enough electricity for a horn or a light, which functioned only when the engine was going. But they didn't know about starting motors.

**Susan:** How fast would they go?

**Stan:** Too fast for a bunch of teenagers. I don't think we ever got it over forty miles per hour, but that's dangerous.

**Susan:** What was a spark lever?

**Stan:** It was simply an adjustment for the ignition. The gas lever, as it came down, gave it a throttle effect; more speed. The spark just adjusted it so it would fire at the right time in the ignition.

**Susan:** You made mention that you bought that Model T Ford for twenty-five dollars. Is that what they were new?

**Stan:** No, I think you could buy a new Model T Ford for about five hundred dollars.

**Susan:** Where did you buy Model T Fords? Did they have car dealers back then?

**Stan:** Oh yes.

**Susan:** Did they have any locally or did you have to go into Salt Lake?

**Stan:** I don't remember there being one in Lehi.

**Susan:** What kind of an engine?

**Stan:** It was an inline four-cylinder engine. Water cooled with a radiator just in the same form as a modern car.

**Susan:** So as teenagers did you learn to be mechanics on those?

**Stan:** Yes! And in those days it was simple enough that if it needed repairs you could do it yourself.

**Susan:** Did they come in colors?

**Stan:** Black. Always black.

**Susan:** Go ahead.

**Stan:** ***Markets:*** I want to talk about the market in those days. In today's grocery markets, all of their goods are neatly packaged in cellophane bags and bright labels. One package might have grapes from Chile in December, another from Oregon or a package of cheese from Italy. We remembered the good old Larson Home Market in Lehi. Many of the potatoes, apples, corn, onions, tomatoes, and eggs came from the Russon farm up on the bench. They trusted my Dad to send the best. Today, any fruit or vegetable can be had anytime of year from all over the world. It is in season and available year round in our local markets. When I was a boy, the only exotic foreign fruit I remember were oranges. I saved my pennies and could purchase one for three cents. I would make a hole in the peeling and suck out the tasty juice. Then I would eat the tasty inside and finish by consuming the rind. All the while in our large farm cellar at home there were big bins of top grade delicious apples that were free for my taking. It was some surprise when I was sixteen on a trip to California to see an orange orchard look much like the apple orchards at home. And just a few months ago we could buy oranges for half the price of apples in the local store.

Today if you want a fine chicken dinner, you will find it in the market. A nice cellophane package with a whole chicken, or any parts you may

desire ready for the frying pan. Or better yet, one already cooked freshly and with your choice of seasoning and ready to serve. Now remember the good old days. When company came, you might be sent out to catch a big chicken, while you were running about the yard with a wire hook. Then you must hold its head over a log and whack it off with an ax. Then you throw the body in the weeds to avoid the blood shower. It would spring and dance as if they going through dire agony or exotic joy and then finally give up. You would then need to pull off all the feathers after scalding it. Then you would have to run it through a quick fire to burn off the hairs. Then you would carefully cut out the entrails and start the process of cutting it up fit for the nicest relatives. Today's methods are definitely better.

**Susan:** Let me ask you about your family farm. What did you raise?

**Stan:** First off, in my time on the farm we did not own tractors. We did all of our work with a team of horses, from the spreading of the fertilizer, to the plowing, and the finishing and all of that. Some of you today remember the smoke stack down in the southeast part of Lehi. There was a great sugar factory. It was built to process sugar beets into finished fine sugar. A lot of the farmers in all of this area had contract with the Utah Idaho Sugar Company to raise sugar beets. That crop was a little difficult because it had to be thinned after it was planted. It was one of the first to be planted and the very last to be harvested. I remember, in the fall long after school had started, long about the later part of September and into October some of us kids would be absent from school for the sugar beet harvest.

**Susan:** Where was your farm?

**Stan:** 9th North and about 13th East out of Lehi. We were not in Lehi City limits, we were in the county.

**Susan:** How big was it?

**Stan:** About 30 acres.

**Susan:** Did you raise other things than sugar beets?

**Stan:** We grew tomatoes, corn, potatoes, a lot of grain and hay to feed the horses and cows. We produced milk.

**Susan:** What kind of farming equipment then was horse drawn?

**Stan:** The two-way plow was pulled by three horses, you go one way on the field and then turn around and take that plow out of the ground and put one that throws the other direction and you go the other way. A harrow, a disc and the leveler prepared the land for planting. Of course, we had wagons. I remember distinctly when the farmers in Lehi began to realize that they could haul their loads on rubber tired wagons in preference to the old iron tire wagon because it rolled over the rough earth much easier. That made a big difference. We had a potato plow that would take the potatoes out of the ground, a beet plow that would take the beets out of the ground.

**Susan:** Then you would manually pick those up?

**Stan:** Right. Today the machine will go down the field and take the beets out, cut the tops off and put them in the truck. We would have to plow them and then pull three rows and throw them aside. And then we would come along using a knife with a big hook on the end and hook the beet, get it up, cut off the tops and throw them in this area of land we had pulled cleared. Then we would come with wagons. We would load the beets by hand and haul them down to where the old Sugar Factory used to be and they would be dumped into railroad cars and hauled off to other plants. This Lehi Sugar Factory was not in operation during my life time.

**Susan:** So the other farm produce that you grew did you live on that or sell it to the grocery store? What did you do with that?

**Stan:** I didn't mention our principle crop. The Russons on the bench raised onions. They were generally contracted and sold to a wholesale dealer. The tomatoes would be contracted to the canning company in Pleasant Grove. The beets would be contracted to the Utah Idaho Sugar Company. Apples, my father always kept a big cellar of apples and he sold them to various dealers.

**Susan:** What type of horses did you use? What type of haying equipment did you use?

**Stan:** Okay! Our horses weren't nicely mated like my Uncle Ben's. My uncle took great pride in his team. He had to curry them, he had to

make them look nice and have harnesses with big flashy designs on the horse. He made them look fine. Some of these old farmers loved their horses more than their wives! Their manes had to be trimmed and they had to look fine. Our old horses were scrubby old things, but they knew they had to work. The mowing machine has a bar out to right hand side, which was approximately five feet long. As it went along, the traction of the wheels furnished the power to the cutter. We would go around the field, time and time again, until finished. Handling hay was done in lots of different ways. In our case we used the old buck rake. It had two large wheels and was about 10 to 12 feet wide, with big tines that would come along ground level. You would go along this strip of cut hay which was now dry and ready to put into the barn. This would pick it up until you had a good load and then you would push a pedal which would cause the tines to come up and dump that load and immediately start a new batch. We would pitch it by hand on the wagon with a fork. We would then go to the haystack or the barn and have a fork come down into the hay load. Then we would have a team of horses, pull it up around to the stack and dump it. We did have some horse power to move it.

**Susan:** I understand that where the Peck Lumber Yard is that there was a cannery right there. Do you know anything about that?

**Stan:** Yes, the cannery was in the back. During my time the place where Peck Lumber is was Whipple Lumber. Behind it was the cannery, right between the hardware store and the railroad track.

**Susan:** What kind of vegetables or fruits did they take care of?

**Stan:** I didn't have anything to do with it. The one we dealt with was a large cannery in Pleasant Grove. So I don't know. But I'm sure they handled most all of the crops and things that were produced here.

**Susan:** Could you make a pretty good living doing that kind of farming?

**Stan:** I know that the larger farmers seem to be able to live on a higher standard than we did. You have to remember that we had milk, we had eggs, we had meat, we had the very best of vegetables and fruits of all kinds. Maybe, you can say that we weren't wealthy but we lived as well as anybody, with that kind of a setup.

**Susan:** What other kind of meat did you have?

**Stan:** It was normal for almost everybody to have a few hogs. Generally in our case it was just enough for our own use. Then we were always raising cattle, mostly milk cattle. Out of those would come a male once in a while which we would raise and make into beef.

**Susan:** How would you store that?

**Stan:** In those days there was some smoking of meat which would keep it for a winter. I remember a lot of beef that was put into bottles just like bottling fruit. We did not have refrigeration. Refrigerators came during our time and that made a difference in the keeping of meat.

**Susan:** What wood would you use to smoke the meat?

**Stan:** We didn't smoke it—we had somebody else do it so I can't say.

**Susan:** What do you remember about the winters, since you were based outside a lot?

**Stan:** Part of our farm had originally been a government experimental farm. It was covered with every variety of apple trees. Some of them were not very good being an experimental farm. As we pulled the apple orchard out, we would cut off the limbs and the stumps by hand and haul them up to the home where we had an old gasoline engine that was running a big saw. We cut these apple limbs into short lengths and burn them in a cast iron stove standing in the living room. We also used the same fuel in the cooking stove.

**Susan:** This is the first I have heard about the experimental farms by the government. What do you know about that?

**Stan:** The area that we had been in had been developed—not all the farm but that part that is below what is now 9th North had been probably developed by a university. The only thing I knew they experimented with was orchards. They may have had other things on other pieces of land in that area.

**Susan:** Read.

**Stan:** I want to talk about a couple of items in Lehi. Did you ever wonder why Wines Park in Lehi had a diagonal trail from the southwest corner to the northeast? Well, that cut off quite a few steps for the 4th Warders going home from school. I always thought they should have paved it for the heavy traffic and even bicycles. But one day it was dug up and planted with grass. A sign strongly announced that this was not a thoroughfare. Over the years I suppose the walkers have won out over the planters. Whether it is legal or not today in 2005, the rut still remains.

**Susan:** What did you used to do in Wines Park?

**Stan:** It wasn't as well developed as it is now. Let's say we are blessed in Lehi that they set aside Wines Park for an open spot in the middle of town. We did not have the pavilions for the picnicking as they do now or the playground for the children. I don't even think there was a restroom in the park, but it had a nice fountain. I do remember that on celebration days, Fourth of July and such as that there were many programs and many displays and picnics and lots of food was prepared and the shade was appreciated.

**Susan:** We have had people talk about several of the wards that were here in Lehi. We have not heard anything about the Fourth Ward. Were you in the Fourth Ward?

**Stan:** Yes. There was one ward in Lehi from 1850 until 1903. Then it was divided into four. The first one was in lower Lehi, the second was here in the middle of Lehi, the third was way out on the west of Lehi, the fourth the northeast. At first they met in a bank building down in town while a chapel was being built. It took quite a few years to get this thing done. The first thing I remember about the ward is that we had a chapel that was upstairs and in the basement was one big room. We would pull drapes to create classrooms within the one big room. When there was a dance or a program they would pull all of the drapes back leaving a big enough space to have a nice activity.

**Susan:** Tell us about a basic Sunday.

**Stan:** Things were different in those days. Priesthood meeting would be about 9 o'clock. That gave the farmers time to get the cows milked and the chores done (let's realize that most all in the ward were farmers. Our meetings had to revolve somewhat around necessary work). Then at 10 o'clock there was Sunday School. Once a month after Sunday School, would be Fast meeting. All of the other Sundays, Sacrament Meeting would be at 7:30 at night. That would give the farmers time to get the cows milked before going to church. That was pretty much the schedule. Youth activities like primary and the MIA would take place on Tuesday—Primary just after school, the youth activities in the evenings. The Relief Society would be on a weekday.

**Susan:** Do you know about the Relief society down here?

**Stan:** I do remember in those days the Relief Society was what it is called—a Relief Society. They had funds and means and supplies and granaries to physically and materially aid people in need. I remember well what we used to call—the Relief Society Bazaar.

**Susan:** Tell us about that.

**Stan:** We don't do that now. They would have a night when they would come together and anything that would make money was okay. They would sell things that had been made: quilts, dish towels, and all of that sort of things—cooked goods—pies, cakes and all of that. It was a joyous time. They would eat, they would dance, they would have programs and people were just in the mood to take part. They knew that the basic motive was to raise funds that would give the Relief Society the power to fulfill that wonderful calling they had.

**Stan:** I remember in Mesa, Arizona a Relief Society that would auction off a tractor, or even animals. I bid on a bull calf because I lived out in the country and I won. So I said where is my calf? A dairy farmer said he hasn't been born yet but the next one you get.

**Susan:** What was the last thing you have to read?

**Stan:** As we have noted, this was a farming community. Let's say most everybody had a farm. You might have lived in town but he was a farmer. People knew and loved their neighbors. I dare say that people out in the country know their neighbors possibly better than someone who lives less than ten feet from his house. This love of neighbors was expressed. For two years my father finished his crops in the fall and would

go on a short term mission to New York. When he got home in the spring his neighbors fields were fertilized, plowed, prepared and some were planted, while his field was just as he left it the last October. And he was normally the first to have all this work done. The day was set, the announcement was made in church and in one day the neighbors left their pressing work, and came to our place. The manure spreaders went first and then the plows. It was in 1936 and everything was done with horse power. No great tractors which could cover a field in an hour. They didn't leave until the whole farm was tilled and ready to plant.

I would like to say that I am honored and very proud to have grown up and graduated from Lehi High School with a group of kids that were decent, clean and of a good and religious spirit. I am proud of my background. Though we didn't live in Lehi city limits, we were not considered foreigners. We were as much a part of Lehi as those who lived here.

**Susan:** Can I ask you a few more questions? What did you do as a young boy throughout the day when you weren't in school?

**Stan:** A boy on a farm doesn't have much time to spend other than his day's work in the field. We had a bad habit of needing a piece of candy during the day so we would take a few cents down to the store and buy some hard tack in order to handle our habit for the next day. After we got the Model T Ford that pretty much kept us busy.

**Susan:** So did you use that Model T Ford to date?

**Stan:** NO! Nope, it had to be better than that.

**Susan:** Tell me about dating?

**Stan:** I was bashful and I was shy. Every social bungle that could be made, I made. I was just like everybody else. The time comes in life when girls who where just ordinary things that wore dresses before that, suddenly somehow became beautiful. And you would, sad to say, have your eye on one but you didn't get up the nerve to go and let her know it. I'm glad that in our school we had some socials which required us to learn how to dance and to learn a little bit of etiquette. I don't know how successful it is today. I read someplace where it costs a young man a fortune, five hundred to a thousand dollars, to have the right kind of clothes, and the right kind of car, and the right kind of activities to go on a date to the Prom. That wasn't our case. I'm glad that our schools and our churches did sponsor wholesome social activities. I did force myself to be able to dance. My buddy and I would go to a dance and we didn't feel we got our money's worth unless we danced most of the dances.

**Susan:** Knowing that you are an artist, what did Lehi offer you in the way of art training?

**Stan:** Not a whole lot, there was not really an art class. When I was in High School a good lady from Lehi, I don't remember her first name but she was a Schow—her married name was Potter. She knew that I had some inclination and skill and experience and she saw to it that I had lots of assignments to do some illustrating and some sign work and be on the decoration committees and such as that. Let me say that I was well treated.

**Susan:** Where did you go on to school after you left Lehi?

**Stan:** I went to the BYU some. When I broke away from that, my first commercial art was in the sign business as a designer, sketch artist and layout man in a neon sign company in Mesa, Arizona.

**Susan:** Do you do cartoon work?

**Stan:** Yes, I did a lot of it. Matter of fact I have a representation of our high school class that I would offer to do here in one of your programs which is already illustrated with a bunch of that.

**Susan:** We would like to have that. Can you think of anything else on the history part that you would like to share with us—any major event that you can remember? Or what you did on holidays?

**Stan:** Lehi generally had fireworks. I remember running to the car and hiding in the back seat down on the floor as low as I could get when we went to fireworks. Lehi has always had some very fine celebrations.

**Susan:** What did you do at them besides fireworks?

**Stan:** We all know that rodeo days have been indicative of Lehi for many years. They have many community activities connected with rodeo days in Lehi.

**Susan:** So have you lived here all your life except for that short time in Mesa?

**Stan:** I lived in Mesa Arizona from about 1952 to 1968. I also served a two-year mission to Missouri and served two years during WWII in the Philippines and Korea. I have also served missions with my wife in Puerto Rico, Chile, Switzerland, and New Jersey.

**Susan:** But other than that you have lived here?

**Stan:** Yes, this is home.