Utah Valley Orchards

Interviewee: Glen (GZ) and Lucille Zimmerman (LZ), 650 South 590 East, Orem
Interviewer: Maren McRae (MM)
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MM: You were speaking about Nina Clegg.

GZ: Yes, just that she was an outstanding elementary teacher, and I knew all of her brothers and the whole family. They were one of the first settlers on what they call the Provo Bench.

I taught here for 51 years. First I was the football coach, assistant basketball, assistant track, tennis coach. I did it for ten years and then I became the Assistant Principal of the junior high school. I’ve been retired going on 23 years.

MM: Did you and your wife serve on the city council?

GZ: Not my wife, I served twelve years.

MM: What did that job include?

GZ: Making the laws that govern the people of the city. It’s legislative in nature, one of the three branches of government. The city council is the legislative branch.

MM: You’ve seen a lot of growth in Orem?

GZ: When we came here there was about 1800 people, and now there is close to 100,000. At that time they had the Lincoln Junior and Senior High School in one building. My football field was in what they now call Lincoln Square. We had around 380-390 students from grades 7-12. Now they have three high schools, all around 2000 students each.

MM: What was life like?

GZ: Very sedated, very country style.

LZ: There wasn’t the University Mall. We had to go to Provo to shop. We had a grocery store on about 8th South and one on about 8th North.

GZ: A drugstore over here and a grocery store across the road from the SCERA Theater.

LZ: The Park’s built one later.

GZ: But that was quite a bit later. There was a restaurant over on 8th North on the corner. There were three wards here in Orem: Timpanogos on 8th South, Sharon on about 5th North, and Windsor on 16th North. Our ward was Timpanogos, and included from Utah Lake to the mountains from 1600 South to Center Street. Now there is 360-370 wards in the city. Orem was mostly covered with orchards and berries.

LZ: Our boys worked picking cherries which children don’t do nowadays. They picked fruit and strawberries. That is how they earned their spending money. Not just our kids, but all the kids. Then they got so that they didn’t do that.
MM: Did you grow up here Lucille?

LZ: No, I grew up in Ogden.

MM: Were you involved in the orchards?

GZ: No, in the summer I generally worked the recreation.

LZ: All the mothers put up bottled fruit. I don’t know how many still do it, but not anywhere near what used to do it.

GZ: We didn’t have to go very far to get it.

LZ: And it was quite cheap, so we bottled all kinds of fruit and pickles. It took up most of August and September.

MM: Lucille did you move out here when you met Glen?

LZ: No, after we were married.

MM: After you met in Logan, at Utah State University, you eventually moved out here?

GZ: We went to Mount Pleasant one year, and I taught and coached.

LZ: But we have lived here for 51 years.

GZ: 51 plus. This area was the Edwards’ farm. LaVell Edwards was born and raised just around the corner here; all twelve kids were raised there. This was all his Dad’s farm, from State Street over to the break in the hill, and from University Parkway to about Fourth South. Then the Loveless farm was from here over, and then Edwards’ down south.

LZ: Shirl Loveless is a character, a really neat fellow. He taught at the same school that Glen did.

MM: What sort of qualities or characteristics did people learn then as opposed to now without the orchards?

GZ: They were family oriented. They were mostly LDS at that time so that defined family oriented.

LZ: They had to help on the farms.

GZ: They were farmers. They were workers. When I was teaching math parents would come visiting daily saying, “Why don’t you send homework?” I said, “Because I don’t let the kids bring their cows in here to milk!” That’s true because they all had work on the farm. A lot of
them lived in Vineyard and they had to walk three or four miles after school—no busses at that
time. Life was very reserved. Everybody got along well.

LZ: They had the SCERA Theater built.

GZ: Just about the time we got here.

LZ: Then they had recreation—things for the children to do in the summer time. They had a
program where they had all kinds of arts and crafts.

MM: At the SCERA Theater?

LZ: Not at the theater but in the park.

GZ: They took over the recreation facilities for the city. The city subsidized it through them.

MM: Tell me more about you job. How involved was it with the changes of the land? For
instance with the huge University Mall being put in.

GZ: It was a whole orchard.

MM: Were there problems, disagreements?

GZ: Oh yes. Oh yes! I was on the council when the people came in for approval of the Mall and
other facilities throughout the city. We were starting to grow, a lot of people were moving in,
particularly from California. We had a lot of people that did not want the Mall because it was
going to change the lifestyle of the people. Everyone was pretty happy with what we had. It was
a quiet, little country town. We had to go out of town for anything that we wanted to purchase,
vehicles or anything. They had no big stores, just little country stores on the corner. But the
council persevered. We helped them with some tax breaks to get started on the Mall. It finally
opened. One of the reasons they came was because the city was willing to help them with their
tax breaks. They didn’t know whether to come here or Provo, but we convinced them this was
the place to go and then helped them financially. They’re still doing the same thing with other
businesses. But that was the beginning of it. They built a new city hall which they still use, but
it’s not new any longer. After the mall opened up the University Parkway, developers started
buying up the property, and on both sides of the road now as you can see it’s development from
the freeway to University Avenue in Provo. Then Center Street opened up. 800 North opened up
from the canyon clear down to the freeway and so on. We have the three major roads that are
pretty well taken care of financially through city assistance—tax breaks on the property taxes
and so on.

LZ: Out where Smith’s is now on State and Center Street used to be a Safeway. They had a
couple of little dime stores and a clothing store. Well, Mr. Mac’s was out there.

GZ: That was his first store in what they called the Mountain Shadows Development south of
City Hall, at the corner of Center Street and State Street. That was our first mall, but that was
orchards when we first came. I think it was apples. Where the city hall is now was Stratton’s old home. The property going east is where the park is, where the ball fields are. Now they are building a new public safety building. They just finished, several years ago, a new judicial building.

LZ: The Library used to be on 8th South in the basement of a home, and then they moved the library up to the basement of the City Hall which was Stratton’s old home.

GZ: The city bought that property from State Street to Fourth East and from Center Street to First North. All that property, we got it for practically nothing. But we didn’t care about the property, we wanted the water rights. The city was growing and we needed more municipal water. The land we got for practically nothing for the water usage. The same thing at the golf course. The city bought that because it had the Alta ditch which drains from springs at the base of Timp way up around Provo Canyon. For years it came down in an open ditch to those farms, those fruit farms. That was their water and the farmer’s owned the Alta ditch. Orem City wanted the water. We needed more water, and so we bought all that property where the golf course is now. It was all orchards, for the water purposes only. Then the Stratton’s said, “Well, we want to put a golf course in there.” So the city helped them and they went ahead and put a golf course in their orchard.

LZ: The other area, they made baseball fields out of it and a park.

GZ: Yes, we made a park on Center Street.

MM: Did they have to get water from other sources then?

GZ: Yes! While I was on the council we dug six or seven deep wells. Most of them were between 450-550 feet deep. That is where we were getting most of our water from. Then Deer Creek came in, through this Central Utah Water Project. They bring the water in from the Uintah Mountains. It comes into Bear Lake, and it goes down into Spanish Fork Canyon, some of it. They brought it from clear up in the Uintah Mountains through tunnels. They dug tunnels several miles long, and used big 12 foot tubes into the treatment plant, up above the golf course. Then when we got that we didn’t need to use our pumps to pump our wells, because that was expensive. We used diesel pumps at first and they kept screwing up and faltering, and so we had to go to electric pumps.

I don’t think many people know it, but we considered using the pump water, and it didn’t have to be treated because it was pure. It had always tested pure. When we went to the water treatment plant it had to be treated, and that was more expensive. But as part of the Central Utah Project, every household, every piece of property is taxed so much for the Central Utah Project. The treatment plant is there for anyone to use it if they file for it. Some of us did and some didn’t. Lehi didn’t, I think Spanish Fork didn’t because they had Spanish Fork Canyon that they were getting their water from and so on. But even though they are not getting it, they are paying or it. So Orem City is coming out beautiful. We pay a fraction of what the water costs us, because these other people are subsidizing our water usage. That’s terrible, but it’s a fact.
LZ: But they wouldn’t get in it.

GZ: They wouldn’t sign up for it. That’s the way it goes. But there are several ditches, including the Alta ditch, and three major canals that come up the Provo River to the farms. They are old canals, and still in use. There is one down south that comes along, and there’s one up on Fourth North. One up on Eighth North that comes down and takes part of that country up there, the north part of it.

LZ: There are some people over here that still get irrigation water.

GZ: Yes, they have extended lots and they are still using the water.

LZ: Some of these lots, just over here a block or so their lot is. . .

GZ: About triple the size of these, about four times. . .

LZ: Yes, they are huge! Because that is how they allotted them, and they gave them water rights and some of them still take their water.

GZ: When they put all these sub-divisions in they had to cover all the water. They put it in tubes, in concrete conduits. To get to these two or three homes over here, they probably have a couple miles of tubing.

LZ: Mrs. Crawford, her husband used to be Mayor. She gets water, and that’s how she waters her yard. The neighbor waters it. So does Herbert, doesn’t he?

GZ: Yes.

LZ: All of those people, just a block down and over a block still get their irrigation water.

GZ: They were all put in to irrigate the farms, the fruit farms.

LZ: The city wants them to sell their water rights. But some of them don’t because they are worth a lot of money.

GZ: When I was on the council we were buying all the water. As the sub-division would come in, we would buy the water from the owner. There were water companies. We had a quarter of a share when we lived up on Ninth North for about ten years. A quarter of a share was for a quarter of an acre. An acre would irrigate about one full share. We could sell that. The city, or somebody, bought it from us for around ten or twelve dollars a quarter of a share. When I was on the council, we would buy all of this that would come up as a sub-division. Once I screamed like a mad Mohawk because a guy wanted $20 for a share of water. I said, “You’re really taking the city!” Now, it’s going for seven or eight thousand dollars a share.

LZ: Oh! They used to have water fights.
GZ: Shovel fights.

LZ: People would fight over the water, because it was timed. Say our time was from 12 to 1. If we didn’t get through with the water for it to go to somebody else they had all kinds of water fights over it.

MM: Did orchard owners have water fights?

LZ: Oh yes!

GZ: Oh sure! A share of water depended on the ditch and the canal as to the length of time that you water. If somebody would come up and pull the dam early, I would go over there with a shovel and try to club him with it. Oh yes, that was very, very common. A lot of people in the west have gotten killed over water rights. Fighting for water rights. There have been major battles. There have been family feuds over water.

MM: Here in Orem?

GZ: Anyplace in the world. Oh yes, we are no different. We were no different. We were watching this travelogue on Africa last week. Salt was the medium of exchange and it was the same price, same value, as gold. In Africa, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, and Iraq, at one time salt was the medium of exchange. Just like gold is our basis now. Water is exactly the same thing. Every once in a while an article comes out that water will be the medium of exchange eventually because it is the most precious thing we have. We are dumping a lot of crap into it. Like the big cesspool down there. When we came, sewage was in open ditches and taken down to Utah Lake and dumped, raw.

MM: Glen, you mentioned a lot of people were against the mall because of the lifestyle changes that would occur. What lifestyle changes do you think they were worried about changing?

GZ: Traffic! Traffic always came up. “You’re going to kill all our kids! You’re going to put more cars on the road and you’re going to kill our kids.”

LZ: There was a big fight about making the road go through from Fourth East, they wanted it to go straight through to the Mall. Those people that lived over by the Mall absolutely would not have it on that road.

GZ: They had to go clear over to Eighth East to get into it.

LZ: Then they insisted on building that fence.

GZ: Oh yes, they made me put up that tall fence.

LZ: We were well acquainted with some people living over there that just hated it! The idea of the mall being there and having the lights on at night, and the noise, and everything.
GZ: In fact, Mannsfield owned part of that fruit farm there.

MM: Owned part of the fruit farm that the Mall was on?

GZ: I don’t remember whom we bought that ground from, but Mannsfield was there.

MM: How long ago was that ground bought?

GZ: When did I start the council? How long ago did you start at ZCMI?

LZ: It was about 1972, 1974.

GZ: I think it has been at least 27 years. It would have been 5 or 6 years before I retired.

LZ: The thing is that everybody over that way didn’t want it because it was interrupting their lifestyle, because they had to have the lights and all the traffic. People out this way wanted it because then they wouldn’t have to go to Provo. But Provo didn’t really want the mall.

GZ: No. When we came, we lived just across the street from the SCERA Theater for two or three years during school. I was going to Utah State University in Logan during the summers working on an advanced degree. You could go from the SCERA into the middle of Provo and never pass a car. Brigham Young University had around 3,000 students at the very most.

LZ: They used to have a swimming pool that in a different place than where it is now. It was where the parking lot is, I guess, by that apartment house. Is that where it was?

GZ: Yes.

LZ: That was pretty neat for the kids, because I don’t think Provo had a swimming pool.

GZ: Yes they did. They had one over at North Park.

LZ: Oh yes.

GZ: Down where Utah Valley State College is, Jensen’s owned all that property, and they had orchards.

LZ: And how about Akins? Where was his?

GZ: He is north of there. But he only had about 10 acres.

MM: Did your friends in the orchard businesses ever explain to you why they were interested in giving up their orchards or selling them?

GZ: One basic reason, money. The city bought the ground from the Gillmans and then we sold it to WordPerfect. When the Gillmans said how much they wanted for it, (I was on the council at
the time) I went right through the ceiling. The home was still there, about 20 feet above the property. It was atrocious what they were asking for that ground! But we gave it to them. They wanted $20,000 per acre. Now a building lot is about $80,000. They took it on a 20 year contract. I think each of the Gillman brothers got two million dollars. Now it would probably be several hundred million.

MM: How much did WordPerfect pay for it from Orem City?

GZ: WordPerfect and the Gillmans worked out the contract that was paid $100,000 or $200,000 per year? I don’t remember exactly. But you asked why did they close up the farms?, money. Some of these people over by the mall, they were getting, probably 6-7 thousand an acre at the most. There was no demand for it. There was no competition. You couldn’t put them on a bidding table or anything.

LZ: The farmers they had to put in, what did they use that made that big mess? Those smokers when the fruit froze? Oil!

GZ: Oil heaters to keep their fruit from freezing. The E.P.A. said you couldn’t do that anymore because it really made a mess, all the black smoke. They put in natural gas lines and used natural gas. Some of them put in sprinkling systems so when it would freeze it would sprinkle the trees, and the ice would freeze on the buds and blossoms and small fruits. When it would freeze on that way it would protect them. The ice produced heat, and that would keep the buds and fruit from freezing. So they had to put in all these extra lines for those other means of frost control.

LZ: That would be a concern too, because they had an expense in doing that. Then the kids quit picking. The parents wouldn’t let the kids pick anymore, it was too dangerous climbing the ladders, and then they had to bring in the Mexicans.

GZ: They still do.

LZ: There was always somebody complaining about the migrant workers staying and making problems here. So I guess some people just thought, “Let’s get rid of this.”

MM: When did migrant workers first come on the scene?

GZ: We came here in 1948, and my guess would be around 1960.

LZ: This was a bad year for fruit.

GZ: They didn’t have to pick, nature took care of it this year.

LZ: No peaches, no apples.

GZ: Sherill Loveless just sold a major part of his farm to the LDS Church to build a chapel on the east side of the street. He sold some land for another chapel several years ago. This was up in Edgemont.
LZ: Some of them that sold here went over to Santaquin and bought fruit farms.

GZ: The Rowleys went over there and bought hundreds of acres. They have mostly apples and pie cherries. They did have peaches, but not very many. It’s right on the freeway in Santaquin that they have their big processing plant for apple juice, sour cherries, making maraschinos, and things like that.

MM: Why did your sons stop picking fruit?

GZ: Why did the kids stop picking? I’ll tell you why! Their parents gave them the money, and they didn’t have to work for it.

LZ: They found other jobs. Our son found a job over here helping with the recreation, helping teach kids how to do creative things over here. The other one found another job that paid more too, because picking cherries and that kind of stuff didn’t pay very much.

GZ: One of the boys worked for one of the Strattons for several summers kind of supervising pickers when he was in high school.

LZ: He hoed strawberries.

GZ: Yes, he hoed strawberries and worked on the golf course. They did everything. But mostly the kids that moved in weren’t farmers. When we first came, all of the kids were farmers and that’s why they worked on the farms. Either that or they didn’t get their supper.

LZ: Once in a while they would get some kids that would be goofing around and somebody would fall out of the tree, or the ladder would fall, and somebody would break an arm. The people that owned the farm had to pay to have insurance for the kids. That got to be a problem too because people couldn’t insure kids to come in and pick for such a short time. You can’t blame them for that!

GZ: But farming has been good to the people around here. A lot of them became semi-wealthy. As much as farmers could. But most of them had large families, so that they didn’t have to pay the pickers, and water, and irrigators. They did their own. As a result, they didn’t have their expenses. When their kids left then their expenses started coming in. The best thing they could do was sell it for real estate purposes.

LZ: When they got older they couldn’t do it all themselves either.

MM: Do you think orchards taught your children good values, strong values?

GZ: Sure, if they want a bike, go pick cherries. Anytime that young children are taught work ethics, it’s going to be helpful because it will teach them that work is a part of life. Everything doesn’t come free. Mom and Dad are not always going to be there to give it to you. We taught our children how to work, and if you want something, go get a job. This was a good area for our
children to grow up in. Most of the fruit growers and farmers were wonderful people. They knew how to treat kids. So we turned our children over to them to pick the fruit or work in their orchards or whatever else. They would work with them and teach them. It is amazing how many fruit farmers had children that went into education. The Strattons, nearly all of those people went into teaching. Yes, many of them did.

One other thing, we had to invent our own entertainment, because we didn’t have much. The LDS Church did some. The factory members would have parties. The group that we would be working with in the schools would create our own entertainment, and it was the same for our children. In other words we couldn’t turn them over to someone else to entertain them. We were the entertainers. We used to go up Provo Canyon and cook our breakfast alongside the river on Saturdays.

LZ: In the wintertime we’d go ice skating up there at Vivian Park.

GZ: Or at Utah Lake. The entertainment we did was family oriented. When we went deer hunting the whole family went. It’s now gone to somebody else to entertain. Send people out, send them to a movie.

LZ: Mine were all into sports too.

[There is a break in the tape.]

GZ: Alluvial fan, as it comes out the canyon it fans out like this and brings the soil, which is very rich, out of the mountains and gravel. It placed the gravel first, and then the topsoil comes on top of it. An alluvial fan it’s called and the Provo Bench is exactly that. You go over here and you start down University Parkway and it drops off and at Lindon it drops off. That’s the fan, as it comes out of Provo Canyon it fans like this and goes right on down to Utah Lake.

MM: That makes sense why it was good ground then for orchards.

GZ: Yes that’s right, because it had good drainage and good mountain soil on top of it.

[There is a break in the tape.] The LDS Church welfare orchards that we have over here, and there was one up on 1600 North also, were in direct competition with the other fruit farmers. So anything that they did not can they pulled those trees up. In other words they keep the pears and peaches. I think that is all they have over here now. They used to have cherries, sweet cherries and sour cherries. They might have some sour cherries, I am not sure, because they can those. But the LDS Church is getting pretty well out of that welfare program as fruit, well even their beef. They have a big beef ranch up on 1600 North also, and they have done away with that. They were in direct competition with the beef producers. In other words, they don’t want to be in competition with these people because it creates bad feelings.

MM: The LDS Church is considerate about that.
GZ: Yes, but it sure took them a long time to decide that. I think it took a court hearing in order to convince them.