

**Providence City Oral History Project**  
**AUDIO TAPE LOG**

**Date:** 5 September 2006  
**Location:** Providence, UT  
**County:** Cache

**Tape Number:** PCOH 2006 ARG-08  
**Interviewee(s):** Alma Leonhardt  
**Interviewer:** Rachel Gianni

**Recording equipment & mic:**

Sony TCM 200 DV/150, mic: Radio Shack 33-3013

**Transcribing equipment:** Panasonic VSC RR-830

**General description:** This is a word for word transcription with questions included. Alma Leonhardt lives at 417 Cobblestone Drive in Providence, Utah. Tape numbering starts over on Side B.

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(Log #), Interview question, contents

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**Side A, Tape 1 of 1**

**(004) Can you tell me where you were born and your birthday?**

I was born April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1942 in Logan but I was living in Providence and have lived here all my life.

**(006) Who were your parents?**

My name is Alma H. Leonhardt and his is Alma Leonhardt, and my mother was Minna Leonhardt.

**(008) What was your family situation, what did your parents do?**

My family, both father and mother are German decent. They both came to this country from Germany. My father was a do-it-all carpenter. He did cement work. He was mainly a custodian for years in the Providence school. My mother was a cook at the Bluebird for many years, after she got here. She came to America when she was about 19 or 20 years old. She didn't speak a word of English but she learned it here on her own. She moved out here to Utah and met Dad and got married. He had had a wife before that and she had died, so I have brothers and sisters that are quite a bit older than me. I have seven in all as a family.

**(019) What brought your mother here?**

Probably the Church more than anything. She joined the LDS church over there. When she left to come over here to Salt Lake she stayed in New York for about a year and came to Salt Lake and ended up eventually in Cache Valley.

**(022) How many brothers and sisters do you have?**

I have seven. Just one sister that's my full sister but the other five are step brothers and sisters.

**(024) What was life like as a child?**

As a child I spent most of my time doing things that they probably can't do now. I spent a lot of time in the day herding cattle, riding horses, topping and thinning beets and just hanging around the old water holes with the kids my age. Things that the kids don't have a chance to do nowadays.

**(030) What kind of games did you play?**

I remember getting one of the first corner street lights on Third East and Center in Providence. We lived right near there, so about two nights a week we'd end up having a game of Kick the Can: put the can out and somebody would stand there by it and try to catch whoever came out of somewhere. We spent most of the time doing that.

As a youth, and getting a little older, in the winter when they wouldn't plow the roads, they wouldn't use salt so the snow would stay on the road for some time. We would hook up a old car hood, at first behind a horse and later a Jeep when we were old enough for somebody to drive it, and then run around town with that hood on it as a sleigh. In those days there was only one marshal in town. He usually didn't come out till after seven or eight at night. You could kind of do what you wanted and there were very few cars on the road then. That was the activities we did then, it wasn't something the kids could do nowadays.

**(044) What did you do in the summertime?**

I spent most of my time in the wooded areas of Providence, fishing and a little bit of hunting. Mostly when I was younger with small bee bee guns like that, then later with the bigger guns. We spent most of our time playing around in the foothills and the wooded areas around Providence.

**(048) Who were some of the kids you hung out with?**

Mostly some relatives and other families who had kids my age. There were probably half a dozen kids in our neighborhood that were similar to my age. We used to all do a lot of things. Getting into our teenage years, we fixed up an old, we called it a "whizzy car," but it was just a frame with four wheels and a seat and an improvised brake. We'd have somebody pull it up here on the Bench and then we'd free-wheel it down the Bench in the town and hopefully we didn't hit any cars coming down the way. There wasn't many then, but we did that probably two or three times a week. We never had anybody get hurt or serious injuries. Basically the City only had ten or twelve asphalt roads then. A lot of the roads were still gravel. That was even better for something like we were doing.

**(062) What were some of your chores?**

My father was a custodian of the elementary school when I was growing up. My assignment was, every night after school, I had at least three or four rooms I had to clean each time. That was one of my chores, plus I got to ring the large bell from the bell tower

in the mornings, most morning when I wanted to. Also, about twice a year we'd climb up to the top of that bell tower and grease the bell and movements on the bell. I liked to go up there because you could see the whole city from up there. I thought that was a lot of fun, I always enjoyed that as a kid. The bell would ring ten minutes before school started every morning. I don't remember what times that was, but it was somewhere around the eight o'clock time period.

**(075) Did you ever do any farming chores?**

Yes. I herded cattle. We'd herd cattle from the barn which is in Providence to some fields north of Providence every morning and bring them back at night to milk. We'd do that all the time. It was all milked by hand. We'd go out and haul hay in the summer and again in the fall. They let school out every fall for two weeks for people to top sugar beets and stuff like that. We did a lot of that.

**(083) What were your memories of the pea vinery?**

Oh boy, in the fall, when they were running the peas and the vines down there, that was where most of us were. We'd ride the trucks down and the wagons down with the peas on them and then we'd sit there and eat peas out of the pods for several hours until we got done and then we'd go home. We enjoyed the pea vinery then. Then, later on in the fall, in the winter, it got smelling really bad. I know whenever you'd drive by there, you'd have to hold your breath for at least two or three blocks as you came by there. There were a lot of fun memories to it. I do remember the pea vinery very well. The main road that came into Providence, that came right by the pea vinery, was one of the first roads in Providence and it was all cement. It was six inches deep. Now it's been covered by about four inches of asphalt. That was one of the first cement roads in the valley actually.

There was a foreman that run the pea vinery and sometimes he got a little irritated with us kids being there all the time. I can understand that because there was a lot of machinery going on. He didn't want us around there too much. We usually had to grab some vines and go out behind it and eat them. Most of my memories for the pea vinery was fun. I enjoyed it and it was something you never forget.

**(107) Can you tell me about your school days?**

The principal at our elementary school was Spencer Griffin. He had what he called a "paddle," a little wood paddle that he had made and he would go around during the day. My father would support him 100% because he was the custodian. He would go around during the day and if you were a little out of line, I never saw him really hit anyone with it, but he did go around and he'd come up behind you and tap you on your shoulder or tap you on the back and remind you that he had a paddle and it was time to get into class.

I felt that teachers were very personable then. They would sit down and talk with you. There were a lot less students per teacher then. We had some really good teachers in my elementary years. There was Mr. Campbell, Principal Griffin. The majority of them lived in Providence. Mr. Neilson from College Ward, Mr. Anderson. There was a number of them and they were all good teachers I enjoyed being around.

**(124) What programs or activities do you remember happening?**

It seems like we'd go on fieldtrips quite often. In those days, you didn't take a bus and go somewhere, you just all walked to a place there in town somewhere where we'd have a little field trip out in the barns or whatever to learn a little more about cattle. The AA, which was a farmers administration then, local farmers had activities that they would have you do. That was big then. There's very little now because there's so little dairy work in the valley now. That was mostly the activities, on farms or a couple of fish hatcheries, stuff like that.

**(135) Were you in any sports?**

I played a lot of softball and baseball, both in ward activities and in high school. I wasn't large enough to play much football, so I stuck with baseball and softball.

**(141) What are your memories of the railroad?**

I never did ride it much. I think I was taken on it as a very young child, but I do remember it and I remember the tracks. I especially remember the ticket office and the freight office that was in Providence. As a child, my oldest brother who was quite a bit older than me then, and his wife, my sister-in-law, she ran the ticket office and he ran the freight office. They were Elwood and Fern Leonhardt. She would go down in the mornings and once in a while I would go down with her. There was a big pot-bellied stove in the ticket office that we'd sit by for a while until it warmed up. She sold tickets in Providence to the tracks and Elwood took care of all the freight that came on and off the train. The coal yard was right next to it and he ran the coal yard for the coal company at that time. I don't remember the name of it. The old freight office is still actually here in Providence, probably owned by an individual. The ticket office is long gone.

I remember as a child, I was a little older and they had closed the ticket office, and the train wasn't running anymore. We got in there one night, we went in through the back door. We went in to see what was going on as mischievous kids. We found a couple of ticket books and I took one home because I thought it was pretty cool to have one. My father found out and he took that ticket book and he took me back there by hand and made me go back in there and put it back where it was and come out. I had to do a couple days of work to pay for getting in that building when I shouldn't have.

My brothers and sister all rode the train to South Cache to school when they were going to school.

**(168) What businesses do you remember in town?**

When I was younger we had two or three main businesses and that was about it in Providence. That was Theurer's store, the service station and the barber shop. I remember Mr. Mathews was the barber. At that time he was in his eighties. I was always worried when I went to get my haircut because he was shaking quite a bit. Back then they still used the straightedged razors. I was always a little apprehensive to get my hair cut. He never hurt me. He was a nice old guy who you always enjoyed talking to. They were the only three businesses when I was growing up in Providence

**(180) What was Theurer's store like?**

It was just the old country store. It had a butcher shop in it. To us then it was the big store. That's where you got everything. My mother and dad would send me to the store and I'd go down and get whatever they wanted and then I would just tell Mrs. Theurer to put it on our bill and leave. Nothing would get signed, she'd put it on the bill, write it up and stick it in the drawer and then Dad would go in once a month and pay it. There was never any question as to whether we got charged for this or that, it was all very much trust, never sign for anything. It's a lot different than it is now, that's for sure.

**(191) What were the celebrations like through the years?**

When I was very young, I barely remember the celebrations when they had wagons and horses and the town square. They would have a sham battle. The Indians would come in and steal the white girl. The settlers would go out and grab a couple of the Indians and bring them back in as a mock celebration. It was a lot of fun. It was a case when everybody in town was there. I don't remember it heavily until later years. In earlier years, all my sisters and brothers were involved in that. It was fun.

**(203) What were Sauerkraut Days like?**

Sauerkraut days then were the highlight of the year for the citizens of Providence. We would start two months before the celebration in doing sauerkraut in the barrels and we'd usually do ten to twelve barrels of sauerkraut each time and let it ferment for two months. Back then, we didn't have canneries so they would just sell it as you wanted in pots in pans. Later we started selling it in cans. The day before the celebration and the dinner, they would take out anywhere from 50 to 60 turkeys to different homes and have the ladies cook the turkeys. About an hour before the dinner, they'd bring them down and carve them and get that all ready. Different ones were cooking sauerkraut. It would be two nights. It would be a bazaar in the top of the school and then in the basement in the cafeteria would be the dinner. I remember, they'd serve 1500 to 1800 people every night. Everybody in Providence was there plus the smaller towns around. That was a huge celebration. I remember later in the years after I was married and got back from the Army, it was kind of dying a little bit. When I became mayor I decided we couldn't let that tradition go so we started doing a lot of canning sauerkraut and doing the parades and the celebrations again, more like they were years and years ago.

**(226) What years were you mayor?**

My family was involved in politics for some time. I had a brother and three first cousins that were mayors. After I was a little older and I had an accident and ended up in my wheelchair, I think that was what propelled me into thinking I needed to take my turn in politics. Besides that, two of my first cousins were in wheelchairs and were mayors too, so I didn't think that was going to be much of an obstacle. So I decided to run that time for the city council. There were ten of us running for three seats and I got one of those seats. Shortly after I was elected, the mayor that was elected the same time I was elected to the council, the mayor got remarried and went on a mission with his wife and so his seat came up for election. So I decided to run for mayor. His name was Nate Done. I won that election and then two more, a term of twelve years as mayor, 1994-2006.

**(245) What were some of the notable things that happened through those years?**

A lot of things happened. First of all we went from about 2900 people to over 6000 in my 12 years as mayor. One of the first things I wanted as mayor was to get us a library in Providence. We didn't have a library, we had to go to the other cities for one or we relied on the Bookmobile. The post office had just moved out of that building and went down to another new building. We actually owned that building as a city so I decided we'd remodel that and make that into a library. At that time, the Huntsman Corporation had a matching grant that they would only do with libraries. So I called and talked with Leonard there, I think he was actually John Huntsman's grandfather. He said, "Sure we've got a grant, especially with somebody that's named Alma. We'll give you a grant anytime." So we worked out a grant with them. "Friends of the Library" was instituted and several ladies on that really helped. We got that grant and went ahead and fixed the building up. It ended up at about \$100,000. When we got it finished, John Huntsman junior, who is now the governor of the State, he brought the money up and presented it to us for the library. That was about \$50,000 with their matching grant for our \$100,000 building. We needed books, and at the time when we started that, I knew that the Bookmobile was stationed down in a warehouse somewhere and they had 13-15,000 books and only 2500 at a time on the Bookmobile. I thought it was crazy to have all those books in there and not being used so I talked to the State and they said, "If you'll build the building, we'll gladly bring the books and put them on the shelf." That's how we got the books, we didn't have to pay a dime for a book but yet we have a library with about 15,000 books. It worked out really well. That was about '94-5, the first half of my first term.

In that period of time we put in two new wells in the city and two new reservoirs which took us from about a million and a half to five million which is only second to Logan in the valley. Then we added two new parks, three soccer fields, extended the cemetery by 40 to 50 years. We also purchased a well out to the cemetery that takes care of the cemetery so we don't have to use any of our water resources from the city for the cemetery. We built a new little league ballpark. We put in 30 new blocks of roads and put a large new parking lot up Providence Canyon for a staging area for snowmobiles and stuff like that to get them off our streets.

We went from about five businesses in 1994. Now with all that's going on now, we have put in about 35 new businesses, some of them being large, large stores. Our tax base has quadrupled in the last six to eight years.

**(210) What were some of the issues or concerns during your terms?**

There have been two that have been the biggest: that's growth and water. Providence is in really good condition with water. We've got the canyon, and what we don't get out of the canyon, we have four really good wells. We did have an issue with many citizens that felt like people coming needed to somehow assure water for building new homes. So we made a policy for all the areas that there wasn't water now, they had to somehow bring water or water rights. We've had several companies that come to build large subdivisions and the Bench areas and we've required them to bring the water and they have. They've actually purchased large farms in Lewiston and Richmond areas and brought the water rights to Providence which assures us we can dig at least one or two big wells.

Many of the people in the city don't like the idea of us growing as fast as we are growing. In a study I had done by the county, they told us that almost 80% of the people moving into Providence are second to third generation people whose parents or grandparents have lived here. Most of them are our own children or relatives. It's not that strangers have moved in, they're our own people we're trying to take care of. We've grown quite fast but we've grown in a way that we can keep up with our resources.

**(337) What are the big changes you've seen in Providence throughout the years?**

When I was younger it was laid back and it seemed like I knew almost everybody in town. For years and years growing up, I knew pretty much everybody in town. Then in the early '60s and starting in the '70s it started growing quite fast. We went from about four or five wards up to 21 wards now. It started growing faster so you don't know everybody in town now. It's so much faster moving now. The individual thing that you used to do isn't there anymore. You're doing so many things at a time. Life's gotten a lot busier than it used to be. It used to be so laid back and it seemed like days would go on forever. Now the day is over before you get started. That's a big difference from then and now.

(360) I was also a member of the Lions Club and still am. The Lions Club used to be extremely active in Providence. Most everybody in it now is getting older and they've backed off a bit. The Lions Club was very active. They participated in almost all the large buildings and activities we've done in Providence. They were actually part of building the new city office buildings. Where the pavilion used to be is where the new city office building is now. I remember the Pavilion back years and years. I remember it as a vacant building, but my father actually played in the band when it was used as a city center at that time. It was a time when it was fun to be a kid.

**(377) Can you tell me about the Old Rock Church?**

I attended the Old Rock Church from when I was born. That was where we went to church. I went there until probably three years after we were married. It's the only church I went to for so many years. One of the main activities I remember was, when I was about six years old, President George Albert Smith came up and dedicated the new part of the building where the classrooms and all that was and also the monument out front. I remember him so well. To me as a six year old he looked like an old, old man. Through most of the ceremony I thought he was sleeping but I know he just had his head down. I remember that vividly, him being there and that celebration and putting that time capsule in the monument out front. I don't remember what was put in it except my father told me years later that they put in a phone book, which were very small then, and a newspaper that day and several people put their history in it and all about Providence in it up to that point. We've tried to find out for some time where that capsule went or what happened when they tore that monument down but nobody seems to know where it is. The monument just went to the landfill and there was a plaque on it that we're not able to find either. It would be nice if we could find out where that all went too.

(415) My family and I had shares in the Spring Creek Water Company for many, many years and some of my family still does have some. When we sold and moved down here,

I sold the water shares with my home up there. That was one of the reasons we moved down here because with me in a wheelchair it's hard for me to do much in the yard. That made it so my wife Pam was doing all the irrigation and watering before we got our sprinkler system. By the time she got all that done and the rest of the work, she had pretty well had it. That was one of the reasons we were going to move to a place where it was done for you. The older part of town used a lot of flood irrigating through the irrigation companies.

**(432) What did you do for your profession?**

As soon as I got out of high school I went into the Army. Then I came back and went to work for the Pepsi-Cola Company in Logan for several years and went to work for Miller's Meat Company in Hyrum, selling and marketing several of the western states as my area. After many years doing that, at Miller's we had a private plane and we had a pilot. I was coming back from Reno one day and I asked the pilot where he was headed that weekend. He said he was taking a load of employees to California. At that time I was in the National Guard and that weekend we heard in Big Bear Lake that a plane had gone down. I knew that they were down there that weekend so I got on the phone and found out it was our plane that went down and took seven people with it. That was down in the San Bernardino area by Deer Mountain. They got in a bad snow storm that came really quick. Seven of them lost their life, including one of the Miller brothers. I left there shortly after that and went to work full time for the National Guard before I got in my accident. After a few of being in there, I retired from the National Guard and went to work for a circuit board company in Logan. I went to work as a full time mayor for the City of Providence for five years and retired to where I am now and worked as a part time mayor the last half of my last term and that's pretty much to this point.

(474) I don't remember a lot about the quarry when they were using the wagons, I was really young then. But I had a brother-in-law, but he was so much older than me, I always felt like he was my uncle, and he was one that drove horses and wagons out of the quarry. A little later, I remember when they got a whole new fleet of old army trucks that they used up there, so that pretty much took the horse and wagon out. One of the problems they had with those was down in the steep areas of the canyon the brakes would let out once in a while, if they were a little too fast, the brakes would give out and the guys would have to jump and let the truck go into the mountain or into a ditch or somewhere to stop it. I remember one driver actually driving in one of the wrecks. But most of them, they just jumped free of them and let them go. It was a big change up the quarry when they went to trucks. I remember I was down quite a ways from the quarry several times when they would blast up the quarry. When they'd blast, there would be a big plume of smoke and dust out of that canyon that would cover the whole canyon and they would do that about every three or four weeks, they'd have to blast.

The quarry was a big, big employment generator for Providence for many years until the sugar beet business dwindled down, so they didn't need as much out of the quarry anymore. In my later years when I was old enough to drive we spent a lot of time up the quarry in an old truck up there because it was such a unique place up there in the big old canyon. You could talk to each other and you could hear each other clear across the canyon because of the big rock walls. The quarry was a big place for Providence,



many Providence citizens spent a lot of time up there. I never worked there. I had some friends older than me that actually drove out of the canyon. I never did, I was never old enough before it started to slow down.

**(530) Do you have any stories from your ancestors?**

My father's family came to Providence in the 1880s and he was actually born here in about 1890. Mother came right after 1900. I remember when I was younger, my grandfather and grandmother came over for a while and they went back and that was when the War started and they couldn't get back here anymore. My grandmother came back, my grandfather died in Germany. She came back and lived with us for several years. She never spoke any English, so it was hard for me to understand her. I think I understood some cuss words more than I did any others. She was a wonderful person. She lived with us about ten years before she died. Her name was Augusta Heidi Leonhardt. They were from the old country.

(548) When I was younger, my dad was sexton for the cemetery for many, many years. When I was in high school, I would go out there and work in the cemetery to make a little extra money. That was before backhoes, so myself and my cousin would dig all the graves by hand. There was nothing I enjoyed more than seeing the backhoe come in. By the time you would dig one of those graves, it would take six, seven hours and your hands were just the shape of a shovel handle. It was a good experience. We'd dig usually about five graves a month. That was a good experience for me. That was a good chance to work with my father too.

(586) I think back, and I remember years and years how Providence was so laid back. There was so much less pressure. Kids could be kids. I think that's what I most enjoyed about Providence as most smaller communities did in that same way.

Providence is pretty much German and Swiss settled when they came here. As a German family, we fit right in. My grandmother would tell me, on my Leonhardt side, how when they first got here, they would have contests on who made the best sauerkraut, the German or the Swiss recipes. My recipe that I've seen with sauerkraut that we've had over the years has been just a lot of salt, just fermenting just right. There's not a lot to it, but it just depends on how you salt it and everything else. We still have a few people who know that and remember how to do that.

**Side B, Tape 1 of 1**

(000) I think the city is still going to try and do sauerkraut this year. The health department is so tight now on what you can and can't do and so it's really hard to do it and do it right for them now. Years ago, they could do it wherever they wanted. They made a lot of sauerkraut in barns and things and everything else. I don't remember anyone who died from sauerkraut. Most of the cabbage was grown on Providence years ago and then you'd cut it up and shred it and there was a shredder that would shred it and put it in barrels and salt it and put more in. There were several ways to put it. It had to have pressure on it to cure it. It was all made then, and even now it's still made that way. It's totally different than what you buy in the store. It was all made and done here. We

actually buy boxes or pallets of cabbage in the boxes and cut it. Very few people raise it anymore. A few people still do it in town. We as a family did it in a five gallon crock pot or something like that. There's a few who still do their own, but it's kind of dying with the old timers. The young children don't care for it. My grandchildren won't eat any of it. My children do, my two girls do, but our grandchildren won't have much to do with it. It's kind of losing its popularity with the kids. It was something we grew up on.

**End of interview.**