

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

**Date:** 6 September 2006  
**Location:** Providence, UT  
**County:** Cache

**Tape Number:** PCOH 2006 ARG-09  
**Interviewee(s):** Carl Spear  
**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 of an interview conducted by Rachel Gianni with Carl Spear about his memories of Providence, Utah. Carl Spear lives at 20 North 400 East in Providence, Utah.

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(Log #), Interview question, contents

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**Side A, Tape 1 of 1**

(000) **What is your birthday and where were you born?**

My birthday is December 6<sup>th</sup>, 1927 and I was born in Salt Lake City.

(006) **What did you do in the years before you came to Providence?**

Mainly I went to school. I like school so well, it was I hard to leave, I guess. In fact, I guess I really never did. I lived in Salt Lake till I was about 15 or 16 and then we moved to Thistle, Utah. My father worked on the railroad and it was during the War. I graduated from Spanish Fork High School and it was about a year after World War Two. I was all registered to go to the University, but I read in the newspaper that there were lots of returning veterans and they would have preferences for classes and it might be difficult to get the classes and things that I wanted. At the same time there were big, whole page ads about joining the Army and getting the GI Bill. That was 1946.

So I joined the Army two days before the GI Bill expired. I went to Japan. During the War, I really learned to hate the Japanese. I had read about all the terrible atrocities they had committed and so I was rather apprehensive sailing up about Tokyo Bay about a year and some months after the War had ended. But I found the Japanese people to be very polite and very law abiding. In fact, I got to know a lady that was a member of the LDS church and we used to go to her niece's home on Sunday and play games with them. It was a special time for me. So, I had a different opinion about the Japanese people when I returned home. In fact, I think war brings out the base nature in everybody on both sides. War is a terrible thing.

One of the haunting memories I have of going to Japan, was traveling between Yokohama, where we landed on the ship to a base near Tokyo. We traveled for about thirty miles across a completely desolate place that had been completely destroyed. During the War, they fire-bombed that area, and the Japanese all had wooden houses.

You could see where the roads had been. Once in a while you could see a chimney or a smokestack. You could see steps that were maybe leading up to a house, but everything was just burned right to the ground. I heard, I don't know if it was true, more people died in that fire bombing in that suburb of Tokyo than were killed in the atomic explosions. Both sides really suffered, and I guess that's true of every war.

When I returned in 1948, I went to Dixie College for a couple of years and then I went on an LDS mission. When I got back, I started at the University of Utah. I was fortunate that I joined the Army because the GI Bill paid for all my education, or at least my undergraduate education. Then I decided to go to graduate school. So, I really didn't graduate until 1960, so you can see I was in school for a long time. I got a degree in metallurgical engineering, a PhD degree.

My first job was with Corning Glass Works back in Corning, New York. We moved back there, I'd married Nadeane and we had one son. I only worked three years for Corning and decided I didn't like the politics and all the things that were going on. I thought I'd go back to school. I had an offer to teach school before I joined Corning. So, I found a job up in Moscow, Idaho up at the University of Idaho. We moved there and only lived there for three years. Then it was 1966 when we moved to Providence.

(065) My first recollection of Providence was driving up the Lane and looking up at Little Baldy. As we were going up the Lane, I said to Nadeane, "Well, I think this is where Sherwin Baer lived." We knew Sherwin back in Palmyra, New York when I worked for Corning. We rented a house just kitty corner to where Lex Baer lives now and just a block away from where Sherwin was raised.

**(073) What brought you here to Providence?**

I changed jobs. I left University of Idaho and went to Utah State to teach. I started out in manufacturing, but that program was discontinued and so I was in the mechanical engineering department for most of the time. I taught material science, that was really what my degree was from the University. That's why we came to Providence.

**(082) What were your first impressions of Providence?**

It was nicer then than now. It was kind of a sleepy little village. It was probably not much more than 2000 people. In those days I knew everybody in the north part of town. I think I knew every family in the Providence First Ward.

(089) I think, if I made any contribution to Providence, sometime in the early '70s, Mayor Lloyd Lenhart asked me to do a survey and see if it would be a good thing to do a sewer system installed in Providence. At that time the EPA was offering some real incentives to little communities to get off their septic systems and have a sewer. So I did a little study at that time and the EPA would pretty much finance the sewer. So I highly recommended it to the mayor that Providence should pursue that.

**(100) What was that study for the sewer about?**

Concerning the feasibility of having the sewer here in town, Logan already had the sewer going and at that time that I did the study, River Heights elected to have their sewer installed. But Providence didn't do anything about it. As the years went on and

there was more development up at Edgewood Hall and the South Bench there were lots of people down here at the lower end of town that were having problems with sewage and things coming up out of the ground and people's septic tanks not working. So the City government decided to look into a sewer again.

If I remember right, Clyde Braegger got the ball rolling and got a bond issued before the people and it was voted to fund the sewer by this bond. I'm not too clear about all the details at that time, but I think Clyde died, or at least he left office, and Gary Millburn became the mayor. I think it was Gary Millburn that got the bond issue passed. Then Gary left office and Pat Braegger, Clyde's wife became the mayor. Then the construction on the sewer was started and the whole town was torn up, all these streets had great big trenches going down where they were laying the sewer. A lot of the people were very unhappy. People's windshields were being broken in their cars and they had to go over these bumpy roads. It was taking a while to construct the sewer. You can imagine it had to go over the whole city. Some agreements with some of the people about easements and things hadn't turned out very well and so there was lots of unhappiness going on. I think it took a good three or four months to build the sewer.

Partly through the process, some people up on the South Bench became every unhappy. There was an engineer up there who thought the contractor was not installing the sewer properly. Specifications called for a certain amount of gravel to be laid down first for a bed to put the sewer pipe in. The contractor was not always doing that. This whole area here is alluvial. The stone and the gravel had been washed out of the canyon and it's just a natural bedding already without having to put additional gravel in the trenches. There was a fellow that worked at Thiokol that worked in contracts and he was saying that that contractor was not following the contract, not following the engineering specifications. The story that I've heard, I guess it's true, one Sunday in sacrament meeting they were passing around a petition to have the sewer stopped. The bishop saw what was going on and he stopped the meeting and found out what they were doing and he said, "There will be no more of that."

These people got ragging on Pat. Pat was in a wheelchair and she had had polio when she was a young girl so she was pretty much housebound. The people were calling and being very mean and just really got hard on Pat. I think she got so emotionally involved and felt so bad that she said, "I just can't carry on and be the mayor. I've got to resign." So she resigned with about two years remaining for her period in office.

And when these people came to the city office to complain about the construction and all the things that were going on, I was the only one on the council that would really stand up to them. I told them, "I don't think your fears are justified." I've talked to the construction people, to the design engineers and they say the sewer is going in and it's fine." These people who opposed the sewer were saying it would only last a year or two, it was going to fall apart, the city would have hundreds of thousands of repair jobs and things to do. They had all kinds of arguments of why we should stop. If the construction would have had to stop, then the construction people would have had to go to another job. To mobilize and bring their equipment back here would have cost maybe a half a million dollars more. I was very upset with these people.

When the council decided about who to choose to replace Pat, my name was put forward and I agreed that I would do it. I retired in '91, so that would be about two years before that. So that would have to be about '89.

So, we met as a council and decided what are we going to do about these problems. If they persist in their things and get a lawyer and get a judgment to stop construction of the sewer, it's going to cost the city a lot of money. Well, I had a good friend at the university who's a civil engineer who had designed sewers and supervised the construction. So I said, "Well, I'm going to have Reynold Watkins come." The council had already met with the engineers and the contractor, so we had their witness that everything was going alright. So I said, "I'll get Ren and come and then I'll have them meet with these trouble makers. We won't invite the whole city." I think we invited five or six people to come. So Ren came and inspected it and we sat down with those six people, the council did. We talked about it, and they said, "Well you must be taking money under the table to allow them to do these things." But Ren explained to them that they didn't need all that gravel for bedding the pipe. He had inspected the alignment of the pipe and they were perfect, they had used a laser so they had to be perfect. He said, "There's no problem. I've had a lot of experience." One of the men said, "Well, why should we believe you? Carl Spear is paying you to give a good report." Ren said, "We have not talked about money and I wouldn't accept anything. I've done this just out of friendship for Carl and the City of Providence." Well, that seemed to quiet the people down, then the construction of the sewer went along and they filled in the trenches, patched the roads and we kind of got back to normal. But, it was a pretty hectic time for a few months there.

Well, I finished out Pat's term and then I retired. I didn't elect to run for mayor myself because Nadeane and I wanted to go on a mission together. I had the same problem that Pat had, people would call up and rag on me too. I remember one guy who was swearing and really using some bad language. I just hung up. So, he called back a few minutes later and he said "We must have been cut off." I said, "No, we weren't cut off. I hung up. If you'll talk to me in a nice civil way I'll be glad to hear what you have to say. But I'm not going to have you swear at me and use that bad language." So, we had a good discussion after that.

**(233) What other notable things happened while you were mayor?**

We had, as I recall, about six years of a drought, so we really had a problem with the water. We didn't ration the water per se, but only part of the town could water on even days and part of the town only on odd days. We got through that period of time, but that's still a concern of mine. We just keep growing. We added a well. I used to be over the water department as a council member. We added a well at that time and got permission to drill another one, but never did. After I left, they did drill another well. So, that's helped, but all of the water has to be pumped from the lower part of the city up to the Bench. Because of the geology, the aquifers that carry the water are down in the valley, they're not up here in the benches, so all that water has to be pumped up at a considerable expense. I don't know what would happen if we had another six years of dry weather. I think water could really become an issue. We used to have a rule that you couldn't build above the 5000 foot level, but they're building houses above there now.

**(259) If you had a say in what was added to Providence's history from 1974 on, what things would you include?**

I remember when I served on the city council, Mayor Braegger said we had 3400 people in Providence. That was in the later 80's. Now, it's just about doubled. That's the big thing that I see. Providence is sort of becoming the new place to live. All these houses up on the Bench are very lovely homes.

**(272) What businesses have you seen through the years?**

Beth Theurer had a grocery store and Keith Watkins had a printing shop kitty corner to that on Main Street and Center. Bill Hughie had a service station just to the west of the grocery store. There was a little post office there. I think those were the only things we had in Providence. I take that back, we had two welding places in town. There may have been some other little things. Farrell Pickett just died, he had a welding shop down there by Keith Watkins.

**(288) What about the Old Rock Church?**

That's the church that we met in when we first arrived in town in 1966. It was kind of an interesting place, I quite enjoyed it. The benches weren't too comfortable, wooden benches. Everybody was so close. You knew all your neighbors.

**(298) What was it like moving to the community?**

Some of the challenges was not ever saying anything about anybody. If you spoke to anybody in town that was derogatory, that was a relative of theirs in some way, you had to be careful about talking about anybody because everybody was pretty much intermarried. We had no relatives in Cache Valley. It was a while to get accepted and adjusted. We used to say for years that we were still like newcomers to Providence. But all of that has changed over the years. We've seen a lot of our old friends when we first came here, like Glen Dattage, that have died, and Farrell Pickett and Stan Cardall and Clyde Demler. Lots of friends have gone.

(319) At the time we were meeting in the Old Rock chapel, we had a fund raising project to raise money to build the new church. It was a very active program to do that. We had little dinners and things where we'd bring in a group of people who would come to your home and pay so much money. We had the great big sauerkraut dinner at Thanksgiving time, the turkey and sauerkraut. We made cabbage. The family participated in those things and really enjoyed all of those activities. We learned to like sauerkraut. It was quite an experience.

(331) At the time we moved here there were a lot of old people in town that have since died. We watched as these people passed away, new people would come and take their homes. Usually they were young families and they had children, so there was sort of a renewal in Providence during the time when we were raising our family here. There were lots of children in the First Ward.

(339) We worked on the new building. In those days you had to raise 70%. The Church would contribute 30 and the local people 70% of the funds to build the church. So, it was

a serious financial burden. It seems like Nadeane and I were always in that situation. When we lived back in New York, we didn't live anywhere near Binghamton but they were building a church in Binghamton and we had to contribute to that because that was our district headquarters. We moved to Moscow, Idaho and they were building the stake center up in Spokane and we contributed to that. As soon as that building was completed, they split the Stake and then they were building a new stake center in Lewiston, Idaho and we had to contribute to that as well as raise money to build a chapel in Moscow. We moved here and the same thing happened. We were part of the Mount Logan Stake. They built a new stake center over there in the Island and as soon as that was built, they split the stake and we had to build a stake center then in River Heights. It seems like we were always building new buildings when we were first married.

(363) I think the big changes have been the number of people that live here, the businesses down there on the Lane. I remember Joe Baer, there were two Baer brothers that had the fruit farms up here on the East Bench. Joe Baer was on the south part of it and Von Baer was to the north to this area kind of back behind us. I remember talking with Joe once when he was young, he was saying that he didn't have any money, his mother had a hard time raising money so she could buy some needles so she could sew their clothes.

(380) The Lane there goes down there past the church and the school. It was a big mud bog in the spring, they could hardly get out of town. Joe said the whole town got together and hauled rock down there to build up that road so people could get about. Even when we moved here, usually they didn't have any snow removal. I guess just a year before we came the people had sleighs in the wintertime, that's how they got around, they had a horse and a sleigh. Later, as more people moved, then they got some snow removal equipment and salted the roads and remove it. But for the first few years there were some hard winters. The roads would be ice packed for several months. You had to be pretty careful driving around town.

**(394) What organizations were you a part of?**

I was a member of the Lions Club for a short time. I'm really not joiner. I dropped out of the Lions and that was the only group I belonged to. I don't think I participated in any big projects. We used to sell brooms. I think they collected eye glasses for people. I think at one time they even had a doctor that would come and examine eyes to see if you had glaucoma and those kind of things, but I really was not involved in those things.

I served on the city council for about eight years, counting the time from when I mayor and when I served on city council. Prior to that I served quite a number of years, maybe four years or something, on an adjustment committee where people that had things that were out of variance with the code and wanted to build. We would visit with them and the neighbors would either accept their proposal or reject it. We didn't have any authority, the committee would take it to the city council and they would decide then.

**(435) What were some of the notable things that happened while you were on the City Council?**

While I was there we did a study of the pipeline that comes down Providence Canyon. It had been built years before and it was corroding quite a bit. It happened after I left the City. They got the money to replace that line that comes down the canyon. We got money to install new pipes on the west side of town that were old in the water department. They were just little projects like that, that anybody wouldn't really remember.

(442) In the early days when we still had the Rock Church, we'd have a celebration in the summer. I can't remember his name, but he would bring his cart and give the kids rides in the buggy. Schiess was his name, I can't remember his first name.

(454) The old building, the school house was torn down and replaced with a new structure. That was part of the Cache County school district. That decision was made by those people.

(465) I think our roads have been much improved over the early days. I wish we had more curb and gutter in town. It's only in the newer parts that they have to meet those ordinances. Still, the old part of town is still pretty much the same as when we moved here.

(482) Overall, I think the changes that have taken place have been good for Providence. When we first moved here, many of the old timers were not anxious to see the city change and grow. They wanted to keep it the way it was. I think in those days there was a little bit of resistance that would increase the population in Providence. They wanted to keep it this little rural community. It was wonderful in those days.

I went on sabbatical in 1980 and we couldn't even find the keys to lock up the house. We were moving up to Boise, Idaho, so we just left the house open. We told Frank Fuhrman who had built a house right above us here to watch the house for us. Our son was going to come back and go to school in the fall. For three months, this house was just empty and not even locked up. We never took keys out of the car. Nothing was ever stolen. There were no problems at all, it was just very nice, peaceful. A nice place to live and raise your children. You didn't have to worry about your children. They could go out and play.

In those days there was nothing to the east of us here. Kids could go clear to the deer fence. We had a snowmobile and in the wintertime they could get on a snowmobile and go clear up to the deer fence and play all over these hills. It was a very nice situation.

Then as more people came to town, drugs became kind of prevalent. Then things started to disappear. You couldn't leave things out. We had to start locking our car. One night when I was away in the summertime, we had an incident here when someone was in our yard and woke up Nadeane. It really frightened her. Frank came down and he had a Doberman Pincher at that time and he chased them across this field here. From that time on we locked up the house a night. Those things change, but overall I think it's still a pretty nice place to live. It's a peaceful community. A lot of good people. I just really enjoy the people in Providence.

(561) We're fortunate that we landed in Providence. We had a house rented over in North Logan. We came and had a moving van loaded with all our belongings. We drove up to that house and there were people still living in it. We had rented this van with the stipulation that we would have it unloaded by six o'clock. They sent a driver with us to drive it over to Wyoming to move someone else. So we had to scurry around and find a place. The only place we could find was down there on the Lane, kitty corner to Lex Baer. We lived there not even a year and then we lived in Jake Fuhriman's house that's on the corner of First East and Center, and then we bought this house. Essentially, we lived in Providence four years before we built this house.

**End of interview.**

**There is nothing on Side B of the tape.**