

Wellington Street

Interviewer: Jeff Elsey (grandson), 5/5/24

Jeff

Okay, so the first question is, tell us about your house on Wellington Street.

John C. Elsey

Oh, the house there on Wellington Street.

Jeff

Yeah, some of the notes that my dad put in bullet points were that your dad built it.

John C. Elsey

Is what?

Jeff

Is that your dad built the house?

John C. Elsey

No.

Jeff

Okay.

John C. Elsey

We were living in Brigham City, and the Second World War started in 1941. My dad got a job at the arms plant, so we moved to Salt Lake, and they were building new houses. There were four houses on the street.

It was a dead -end street, and eventually it turned out to be 15 or 20 houses on the street, but these were the first four. They were all identical, small. I don't know. I think I'm going to say 900 square feet with a full basement, though.

I had two bedrooms, a bath, a kitchen, and a living room.

Jeff

Was the 900 square feet including the basement?

John C. Elsey

I don't think so. I'm not sure. 30 feet by 30 feet. I think that's probably what it was. I think the lot was only 50 feet wide and 100 feet deep. That was 5 ,000 square feet. There were four houses that were just alike, but there was nothing around it.

So we were playing in the fields and did trenches and holes and all that stuff kids do.

Jeff

And did you live there, how long did you live there for?

John C. Elsey

I lived there until I left on my mission and then back for graduate school, but my parents lived there until they

died. So it was 1942 and they bought the house. I think they paid \$4 ,500 for it. Then in 1946, 1947, somewhere there, they remodeled it and added two rooms in the basement on the back.

So it became almost about a 50 percent increase in the size of the house. My dad did that, or at least he did most of it, and I did a lot of it too. I did flooring, framing, shingling, all that stuff.

John C. Elsey
I was 12 years old.

Jeff
Is that where you learned a like to make things?

John C. Elsey
Yeah, I learned a lot about building.

Jeff
So did you do a lot of projects like at the house in Orange too, if you have a lot of building projects?

John C. Elsey
In Orange?

Jeff
Yeah.

John C. Elsey
Yeah, I built a little shed. I put the room on the back there that was the patio, where the pool table was. You remember that, huh?

Jeff
Yeah. I mean, all my memories of that house are very faint now. I remember going there when I was younger. But I do remember the pool room. I remember the, like, the Clementine trees in the backyard.

And I remember some bits of it.

John C. Elsey
I've changed those trees in the back a lot in that house, and I added that room on and relied on what I learned from my dad when we were building that addition on Wellington street.

Jeff
I just remember how big of a project the landscaping the backyard was for you yeah how long it took to finish all that

John C. Elsey
I remember when we added the room on in California, my wife said, how long will this take? I said, a year. She said, a year? I said, yeah. It took two years, actually, to finish. You only work on Saturdays or nights or whatever you have time, not when you're working full time doing other stuff. You can't spend a lot of time out there.

Jeff
Maybe I'll be brave and I'll try to finish my basement and my house by myself. I don't know if I'll ever be able to do that. Well there's some things I don't think I'd be comfortable with like doing electrical work or plumbing.

I don't think I'd be able to do that.

John C. Elsey

I would stay away from plumbing, but electrical stuff I could do, but in fact, I moved the power box out of the house in Orange, moved the main box, and figured out how to put circuit breakers in there.

I had another box on the back of the house with a main breaker outside, yeah, did some of that.

Jeff

Was that scary? You have to cut the power of the house for a while, right?

John C. Elsey

I don't think we really lost much power, and it was just switching over, and it didn't take much.

Jeff

so that the Wellington house, how old were you when you moved there?

John C. Elsey

How old was I? Seven. About seven.

Jeff

And that's the house that had the shooting range, the house that had the shooting range in the basement?

John C. Elsey

Yeah, Dad was a model railroader and he did a lot of that stuff. People would come over and work with him and they would come over and just see the trains and stuff. It was fun.

Jeff

And so the... was the model train was all that stuff in the basement too?

John C. Elsey

Yeah, I went all around the basement. We had a bathroom down there and it went through the bathroom.

Jeff

Um, so the model trains that you, so you had here for a little bit, but they were, I remember them more in California where those, how old were those ones? Like you still having the other model trains from that your dad had?

John C. Elsey

Not really. I built the one that you set out at Christmas time. You remember that one probably with the figure eight and put the Christmas tree in one of the circles and a mountain in the other. But my dad used O-gauge which is about a quarter inch scale to a foot.

So his tracks are probably two inches wide. HO is very popular as its half O, is HO. But you can get a lot more on a smaller area. So dad didn't like HO because he said it was too small to work with. But O-gauge takes a lot of room to lay stuff out because it's twice as big.

So he worked O and all I did was with Christmas and the only thing I really built with was HO because we didn't have large spaces to use for O-gauge.

Jeff

Okay. So was that, did you spend a lot of time working on the model train with your dad?

John C. Elsey

No, I really didn't. I think Dad had wished we would, but we didn't get that big an interest.

Jeff

So where did the interest come from? Later...

John C. Elsey

Oh, just the fun of having a train, and I didn't really do much model railroading. I didn't build any cars or engines. He did. We had a nice shop in the basement that Dad had. He was a machinist.

I'm not sure how he learned to become a machinist, but he worked as a machinist in the small arms plant in Salt Lake. So we had a lathe, we had drill press, grinders, jig saws, bench saws, woodworking equipment.

But the lathe was probably the biggest metal working thing. I worked down there a lot on little projects. I built my own handgun, fired a .22. I drilled the barrel on the lathe and worked out the trigger mechanism and all that stuff.

That was kind of fun.

Jeff

Wow! So would you just slide a single shot down the barrel and then pull the hammer back and then you figured the mechanism where you could pull the trigger and it would release the hammer and hit the....

John C. Elsey

Yeah. Exactly, exactly... it was a single shot, it didn't have a repeater or anything like that.

Jeff

Was, was there a bit of a kick on that or not? Well, I guess it's only 22. That's funny.

John C. Elsey

Yeah

You got a crack. You got to shoot it on the, on that tiny shooting range that you had in the backyard?

John C. Elsey

Yeah

Jeff

So how did that get, how did you dig that? Or how did your dad, did you have to dig that in the yard?

John C. Elsey

Yeah.

We wanted it to be 50 feet and the basement only had a well, it was probably close to fifty, but in order to get enough range, we put 24 -inch concrete pipes. When Dad remodeled the house, he added two rooms on the back, and so he just put 24 -inch concrete pipe, another 20 feet beyond the back of the house, and built a concrete box with a backstop, a quarter -inch metal plate that would stop the shells, and it was at an angle, so

it would deflect them down into some sand that we had, and we had a steel door on the top of it, so the shots really couldn't get out.

As long as they went down the concrete pipe, if you missed a pipe, then you had a problem.

Jeff

How would you okay, so would you be shooting like an open room like at the end of a room you aim... So like if you weren't lined up with the pipe you would just end up shooting a wall

John C. Elsey

Yeah Yeah,

Jeff

...you'd have to have some sort of name you couldn't just...

John C. Elsey

Yeah - you had to go down the pipe. I don't think we ever missed, I mean it was a 24 inch pipe, that was a pretty big target there.

Jeff

And so did you... so was your dad a big hunter? because I know you went hunting

John C. Elsey

Yeah, I did. I went with him. I went with him a lot. We had a lot of good times together. We'd hunt ducks and pheasants, some dove, a couple of times deer, ... rabbits ... sometimes.

Jeff

What are some of the most memorable activities that you did while at the Wellington House or in the area?

John C. Elsey

Well, hunting was, I a thing Dad and I did in the fall. We'd only go on opening days. These things got pretty bad after that, but we'd hunt ducks a day or two at the beginning of the season. Pheasants would drive over to different places like Vernal almost, Duchesne hunted there.

And we'd go with the Lucases to the deer hunts.

Jeff

That's pretty far. If you're driving all the way to Duchesne from Salt Lake, that's quite a drive. .

John C. Elsey

Yeah, it's a couple hours. We'd go duck hunting early in the morning. You wanted to get there just when it was getting light and we'd go out to Ogden Bay. So we'd get up at three o'clock in the morning and then drive up to Ogden and out to Ogden Bay and walk a couple miles to get out to the marshes and try and do that to be there at the sunup.

John C. Elsey

So you could first see the ducks flying around. So yeah, we got early in the morning and then we'd come home, clean the ducks. That was a yucky thing.

Jeff

Cleaning them was?

John C. Elsey

Yeah

Jeff

What was worse was it like gutting them or was it like plucking all the feathers?

John C. Elsey

Oh yeah, we'd pluck all the feathers off the ducks and then cut them open and reach in and grab all the innards and pull those out. It was odorous.

Jeff

I mean, the only experience I have with gutting anything is just fish, because I've never been hunting. And even fish, it's not fun to do, but I couldn't imagine doing it on like a bird or like a deer or something like that.

Did you always eat what you killed?

John C. Elsey

Yeah, pretty much. Except rabbits... we just hunted those, I don't know, just for fun, I guess you'd say. They were a scourge to a lot of the ranchers. The ducks, the pheasants, doves, deer, yeah, we ate all of them.

Jeff

I guess the only thing I've been shot at is we would go, you'd go spotlighting and I did that with one of my friends where we would go look for coyotes out in like West Desert where you'd just be driving around with spotlights and then if you'd see one you'd try and spotlight on it and just shoot it from the side of the road.

John C. Elsey

Did you get any?

Jeff

Yeah, I shot a couple of them. Because I think we never went and retrieved them but I think the state, depending on the year, they'll pay you to kill the coyotes.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, that's what I understand, that there's about it. What kind of rifle did you use?

Jeff

Those were just .22s.

John C. Elsey

Oh, you used .22s on the coyotes, huh?

Jeff

Yeah.

John C. Elsey

Oh, okay.

Jeff

Yeah, I don't think you need anything very big.

John C. Elsey

Oh, okay.

Jeff

So did you ever did you ever fish or was it mostly just hunting?

John C. Elsey

No, we didn't really- a little bit we'd fish occasionally, but not really. My dad, I don't think we ever really went fishing, just a time or two.

Jeff

Were there any other activities that are memorable that you would do?

John C. Elsey

Well, we'd hike. We liked the hike, and Dad did too, and we would climb some of the peaks around here. Climbed Mount Timpanogos, and my Dad was 50, I think. He died when he was 66, so it was getting towards the end of his life, but I remember going up Mount Timpanogos with him when I was about 20, I think.

Jeff

I remember... I think I only remember going on one hike with you and that was... do you remember going to Silver Lake with the family?

John C. Elsey

I think so yeah you were way ahead.

Jeff

I can't remember how old I was. I think you guys were in this house at the time or maybe not sure because you guys have lived up here for...

John C. Elsey

We moved into this house in 2002, January, and you were only, you were born in 1992, weren't you?

Jeff

Yeah.

John E. Elsey

Yeah, so you were ten.

Jeff

Yeah, I remember that and I remember the house you rented on 200 South while you guys were building this one.

Let me lift up the next thing. So did you have chores that you're responsible for?

John C. Elsey

The jobs?

Jeff

Yeah, like any chores, or what were your responsibilities growing up in the house?

John C. Elsey

In the house? Well, we had the lawns. We cut the lawn, mow the lawns, and water the lawns - we didn't have a sprinkler system, so it had a hose with a board that had a sprinkler on the end of it, a sprayer anyway.

So we were responsible for the lawns keeping them mowed and watered. Taking the trash out, I guess, shoveling the walks in the winter. I remember one year we had so much snow that Dad was afraid that it might collapse the roof, so we shoveled the snow off the roof.

We had about two or three feet on the ground. So we shoveled it off the roof onto the driveway, then we had to shovel the driveway off of there.

Jeff

What was the pitch like on the roof? Was it pretty shallow?

John C. Elsey

No, it was a pitched roof much like we've got now.

Jeff

So it was that there's just so much snow on there.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, there's so much snow on there.

Jeff

I don't know if I've ever been worried about that.

John C. Elsey

We've not had that much snow, I don't think, since I've been here to worry about it. That's the only time we did that in the 15 or so years I lived in that house.

Jeff

So you had the lawn, taking the trash out and shoveling the walks. That was your, that was the main chores that you had.

John C. Elsey

I think so.

Jeff

Okay.

John C. Elsey

I don't know if we washed dishes. We didn't have a dishwasher. I don't think we... I don't know... we may have had to wipe dishes or something, I'm not sure.

Jeff

What was the neighborhood like? Were there other kids around your age?

John C. Elsey

There were these four houses that were identical and had young families in them. We had a lot of kids. We played football on the front lawn and baseball. The church building was just up the street, very close, we'd play a lot of basketball up there.

I can't remember. I think we had a hoop on our garage too to shoot some baskets out there.

Jeff

Did you play any sports in high school?

Jeff

No. Not really.

John C. Elsey

What were your interests in high school? Or did you just go to school? Because you had a couple of jobs.

Yeah, I had a paper route when I 13 or so.

Jeff

Um, any other memorable things, what would you guys do for Christmas? Like, would you have Christmas at home or would you travel or what were your holidays like?

John C. Elsey

We were always close to the Lucas's, my mother's sister. My mother was the youngest of six children, and Aunt Marie was the next one up. They were close, and so our families kind of grew up together.

Although the Lucas's, there were four older boys, and the youngest of those four was about five years older than I was. But we spent a lot of time together. I think we spent every Christmas in Ogden... typically they would come to Salt Lake for Thanksgiving.

We would go to Ogden and spend Christmas there, go up the day before, spend Christmas Eve when we were younger. When we got older and had paper routes, we couldn't do that. Yeah, we spent every Christmas in Ogden, and that was a lot of fun.

I went on the deer hunt with the Lucas's, that was always the fall thing to do.

Jeff

Would you have to get tags like you do now, or would you just go hunt?

John C. Elsey

Yeah

Jeff

You would have to get tags.

John C. Elsey

You would have to get tags, but you could...You could get a license and tag, I mean, it wasn't... I understand that you have to draw now, right?

Jeff

Yeah, it's really difficult now, depending on what you want to get. Like I think if you just want to go get like a doe or something, it's not that hard. But if you want to get like a buck, you want to go get an elk, it's a lot more difficult to do that.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, we'd get a deer license and a tag.

Jeff

You could get that without doing anything, you just go purchase it.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, just go purchase it at sporting goods store, yeah- a license and tag. If you wanted to hunt does you had to get a special permit and that took some doing but for bucks you don't. I don't think they hunted elk when we were growing up, or moose. I don't think they did either but it wasn't elk or moose.

Jeff

I don't know if you can hunt moose now.

John C. Elsey

I don't know if you can either.

Jeff

I should give it a try. My friends keep inviting me to go hunting, and I never do. Maybe it's just because I don't want to take time off work to go and do something I've never tried before. But I should probably try it sometime.

I know it's never interested my dad.

John C. Elsey

We used to shoot a lot. I had a target shoot with my 22, and I belonged to the Salt Lake Small Arms Club. We would shoot every Friday night at South High School. They had a shooting range in the basement of the school.

Jeff

Oh at the high school?

John C. Elsey

At the high school, yeah. They had kind of an ROTC program in the high school. I think they used that shooting range for part of that, but the Salt Lake Small Arms Club used it onâ€”I think it was Friday night.

I would haul my gun there and go shoot. I bought a target rifle, which wasâ€”I still have it â€”it's really a nice gun. A .22.

Jeff

What's the difference between a target rifle and a regular rifle?

John C. Elsey

Well, a target rifle has what I call a bull barrel. It's really about an inch thick, much, much heavier than the sporting gun.

Jeff

Are you resting, since it's heavier, are you resting it against something to shoot? Like are you laying down or are you like...

John C. Elsey

Well you can. We used a sling in the prone position, but you shoot it offhand, standing up, or kneeling our sitting, but without the rest.

Jeff

It's interesting. I couldn't imagine, well I'm just thinking about having a shooting range in the bottom of a high school today and I don't think that would ever that would ever be okay just because of how strict they are with guns in schools now. It's probably still there? Is South High School still there?

John C. Elsey

Well, it's not a high school. I understand it was a junior college or something. It was some other function, like it was at junior college or...

Jeff

They had an ROTC program there?

John C. Elsey

I think so, yeah.

When I went to the University of Utah, all freshmen were required to take an ROTC program of some kind. They offered Air Force, Navy, and Army, and the Army one was only one quarter, so that's the only one I took, I only did one quarter.

But I got on the rifle team there, but I didn't reallyâ€”I don't think I competed any matches with the university ROTC program.

Jeff

Did you like doing it? like the Army portion of it?

John C. Elsey

No, I don't know.

Jeff

What other things would you do besides rifle shooting? Because you said there are like programs you could choose to do like the army.

John C. Elsey

The university offered, they had a Naval ROTC program and an Air Force ROTC program and the Army. So I chose the Army because you only had to do that for one quarter. The Navy, I think, you had to commit for four years and you got a commission when you got through.

A friend of mine did that. The Air Force, I can't remember that one.

Jeff

Uh, what was your, what was your ward like?

John C. Elsey

It was good- it felt like the ward today. It was interesting that we had to “in those days you did a lot of work on your own building and the Church just didn't build your building and say, here you go, like they do today.

Jeff

So like local funds would help?

John C. Elsey

Yeah, they had building fundraisers, dinners and whatnot that you'd pay for and use the funds to help fund the building. But I think the ward locally had to pay for a lot of it. I don't know thinking about it.

The chapel we built was huge. It had a chapel and then it backed into the cultural hall, which we called the gymnasium. But the gym had, you could put two basketball courts side by side, you could play two games at once.

It had six hoops in it, two on each side and one on each end. If you played a regular game, you'd just use the whole gym, but it was big enough to put two gyms side by side. We had locker rooms, men and women down below the stage with showers and lockers. It had a stage on it.

Then they built another stage to the side because it became the stake center and they wanted a loft for the choirs and whatnot. Well they didn't use the regular chapel because the stand was too small or at least they could make a bigger one there.

And then a lot of people decided that the cultural hall was just too big to decorate so they built a smaller cultural hall off to the side for socials.

Jeff

Were these expansions that were added later or was this all done on the original?

John C. Elsey

The original building had the big gym, the stage, the cultural hall, the chapel. The stake center stuff was built add-on, and the other smaller cultural hall was an add-on. That building's still there, still used a lot.

Jeff

Really?

John C. Elsey

Yeah. I'd like to go back and look inside and see if that gym was still that big, but I mean, like it had locker rooms, showers.

Jeff

That sounds amazing. Ours is really small... ours is our cultural hall... it's not a full-size basketball court. It's like maybe like two-thirds of a basketball court like the length and then it's not even wide enough to have the three-point line go all the way out- like the three-point line cuts off at a certain point.

What kind of callings did you have like in the Deacons quorum and teachers quorum - you remember any of that?

John C. Elsey

I don't remember in the Deacons quorum, but a lot of the scouting “I think I was 19 or so “I became the assistant scout master. I was really running the scout troop, but the scout master, I'm 19, I had to be 21, so I couldn't run it.

So we had the scout master- he was a fireman, and he was involved in other things a lot of times. So I was essentially running the troop for a while.

Jeff

How does... so was scouting back then, was it similar to how it was like when I was doing scouts?

John C. Elsey

I think so.

Jeff

You would get your merit badges and you would have them for different reasons. All the way up until you got them.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, yeah, scout camp.

Jeff

Yeah. What kind of scout camps would you go on? Did they have big organized ones?

John C. Elsey

Now, with Camp Steiner, which is up in the Unitas.

Jeff

Yeah, I did that one.

John C. Elsey

Oh, you've been to Steiner?

Jeff

Yeah, that was one of the ones that I went on.

John C. Elsey

Huh. I don't think it's there anymore. We drove up to Mirror Lake a couple of years ago, I guess, and I was looking for that.

Jeff

You couldn't find it?

John C. Elsey

I couldn't find it. We drove up and down the highway there, where I thought it was.

I couldn't find anything. Because you had to walk in about a mile, I think, from the highway, right?

Jeff

I think when I went you could you could drive up with all your camping gear to all the campsites.

John C. Elsey

Ok. You could bring trucks in, but we always walked in. I think we brought some trucks in, yeah. So yeah, with Camp Steiner in the summertime.

Jeff

I just remember the lake was very cold, but that's how all the lakes are up in the Uintas.

John C. Elsey

Yeah, over 10 ,000 feet.

Jeff

Yeah, we went to that one, and then my other year we went to Thunder Ridge. I think that was more... I think that was closer to Boulder Mountain.

John C. Elsey

I don't know that one.

Jeff

That was like more central Utah. But I think that was probably the loudest, one of the loudest thunderstorms I've ever been in. Because Boulder Mountain gets a lot of rain, and they get a lot of thunderstorms in it.

Since it's so high up, the thunder is really loud.

John C. Elsey

We used to go up that mountain by Camp Steiner and roll boulders off the top. I don't know if you'd... probably get in trouble trying to do that now.

Jeff

Was that in Scout Camp? Yeah.

John C. Elsey

Well, yeah. For two years, I was at Steiner.

John C. Elsey

Then one time we went to that same area but camped off by ourselves in that area. Then we'd go up on that mountain and roll big boulders and watch them crash down off the mountain. You'd probably be in trouble doing it now.

Jeff

Yeah, I don't think you'd be able to do that.

John C. Elsey

Good old days riding on the back of a truck. The way we went up there was to ride on the back of an open bed truck.

Jeff

You'd drive that the whole way?

John C. Elsey

Uh huh. It was a big truck. Bishop had a construction company, so it was a big truck. It was open on the back, on stakes on the side, and throw all the gear in, all the kids would climb in. Away we went.

Jeff

Awesome. I'm trying to remember Camp Steiner for us. I remember Brother Stewart got mad at us because we'd have a lot of down time in between like the merit badge classes that they would do, and we'd play this game where we'd like split into two teams, and one team would go to like the top of the hill, the other team would be at the bottom of the hill, and they had all these like tiny twigs on the ground, and we'd basically just throw twigs at each other, and then after like an hour of that, someone got hit in the head, and they were like bleeding on their forehead, and then we all got in a lot of trouble for that.

But Brother Stewart, do the Stewarts still live in the ward? But they moved a while ago, right? I don't know. Ken Stewart? I don't know. No. I don't know. No. That was... I think they did move a while ago.

John C. Elsey

No. I don't know. No.

Jeff

I think that's all the talking points I have on the Wellington Street House. Is there anything else cool about the Wellington Street House?

John C. Elsey

Oh, I don't know. It's still there. Yeah, we've driven by a few times. It's been interesting because the house was built in 1940, so it's almost 90 years old, 85 years old now. And I was wondering, it would be quite dilapidated, but they've kept it up.

The families have bought it, and they've remodeled it, they've resurfaced it. We went up there one time, and we used to just drive down the street and take a look at it. One time when we did that, a man came out of the door and sat on the front porch, and I thought, well, I'm just going to go talk to him and say hello.

So I went over and introduced myself, and he said, oh, yeah, the Elsey's, yeah, I used to have a house. And he said, do you want to go through it? I said, yeah. I said, let me get my wife. They were very nice.

We went in. They changed it a lot. They added on to it from what was added on. They'd taken walls out, which is what we did, too, when they had remodeled, but they'd taken out walls and made it a lot bigger and added, made a double garage.

It was a single detached garage, and now they've got two. The driveway was solid concrete, whereas when we were there, it was two strips of concrete going down, and they made it very nice. The house next door, which was a single -story house, they added a second story on to.

Some of those houses, at the end of the street, I think it must have taken one house down and built a big house. I heard it was going for a million dollars, but it was a modern type house. The street has really been well taken care of.

It was quite pretty trees on both sides. One thing we used to do in that house, the golf course was right across the way, the number nine fairway. It was the tail end of the Salt Lake Country Club. The club house, and the facilities were up quite a bit further east.

But this was the tail end, and it had this big fairway, so we'd go over and play football on the fairways. Whenever golfers came, we had moved out of the way.

Jeff

Did they get mad?

John C. Elsey

I don't remember seeing many golfers, but there was a policeman there who had a cart, and he would come with it.

Oh, here comes Cluff, who was the policeman, which would run like crazy to go and get across a little field there underneath the barbed wire fence. He didn't chase us after that, but I remember we'd play over there a lot, and he'd chase us.

In the wintertime, they had some hills. It was a gully, so we'd go sledding over there. There was a nice hill, probably, I don't know, 30 feet high or something like that. We would take our sleds and slide down.

We'd have a lot of fun in the wintertime.