IDA-ROSE LANGFORD HALL

(Mom made this tape for her daughter, Sherlene H. Bartholomew, at home at 1711 N. Lambert Lane in Provo, Utah, on December 3, 1994, in response to my request that she help with a school assignment. I had been asked to interview four persons on "The American Dream" for Dr. Neil York's American Studies class at BYU.)

"I was born in 1921, and in my generation of women, I guess the idea of the 'Great American Dream' was to have a home and be well enough off to be able to give our children the necessary education. The hope was to be able to provide our children those things in life that would at least make them reasonably happy--without suffering, anyway. I think that was essentially what most American girls would have then said was their 'American Dream.'

"As I grew up in Ogden, Utah, one of seven children and the daughter of a plumber, my concept of the American Dream changed a little. As I got older, I realized that perhaps I would not marry and have children--so I thought toward a career. I liked to write. I like English. So I thought I might become a writer. This was a kind of a pie in the sky ambition, but it did help me to go into areas at school that would help me in that direction. I worked on the school paper, 'The Pilot,' when I was at Washington [school] and then when I was in high school, I worked on a little bulletin board type of publication that we worked up and put out daily, called 'The Tattler.'

"By the time I got to high school, I felt that I would like to go to college. I spent one year at Weber, majoring in what we at that time called "Home Economics." To earn my way through college, I had a part-time job at Woolworth's cafeteria, which my sisters had gotten for me, because they'd had work at the same place, while they were going through Weber college. At that time Weber was a two-year school.

"At the end of the first year, my Woolworth manager, Mrs. Michaels, liked me and my work enough, that she asked if I'd like to train as a Woolworth cafeteria manager. I talked this over with my parents and decided that it would probably pay me more than if I graduated from college and taught school. However, at that time, I don't think either my mother or I realized what becoming a Woolworth manager might eventually entail. It would mean my having to leave home, Utah, and my friends and family to probably move to an area where I had no friends or acquaintances. That, of course, isn't how it turned out. I wish now that I had kept going, so I'd have that other year at Weber. I spent that year working in the Woolworth cafeteria.

"During that year, I started dating Tracy Hall, who had finished at Weber College and was staying out of school to earn enough money to go back to the University of Utah and finish up his bachelor's degree. At that time I started to realize my American Dream as originally planned--that is, that I would marry and have

a family.

"Tracy went to school the year we were dating, and in September of 1941, just before his senior year, we got married and then moved to Salt Lake City, while he finished his last year at the college.

"Jobs were very hard to come by. We got married in September, and Pearl Harbor happened December 7. Pearl Harbor changed everything. Tracy had a part time job at Sperry Mills; also, the head of Tracy's Chemistry Department was very kind to us, as the only married couple among the students. People didn't get married early then--they waited until they got through school, because jobs were so hard to come by, you just didn't know what your future was going to be. But the Department gave Tracy a job teaching an explosives class after Pearl Harbor happened, so we got along fine.

"As far as my original idea of what the American Dream is--it certainly was fulfilled. We've had a wonderful marriage and seven wonderful children. Tracy's been able to support his family well--he had a job he liked. While we lived the seven years in Schenectady, [New York], I had a lot of experience working in the Church among the children and also in the Relief Society. This helped me develop any talents I may have had. After Tracy discovered the synthetic diamond, we came back to Utah.

It's been a very lovely life. We have a nice home. The children have all grown up and done well in school and in their lives. So as far as I'm concerned, I think I have accomplished the American Dream; and although I changed it during my teen years, it was essentially the dream that I had when I was young."

# # #

Our family had just stuffed ourselves on Thanksgiving, which we had at Homestead this year. We had agreed to gather in Mom and Dad's "Barn" room to play family games afterward, but until the others arrived, I took advantage of my parents' relaxed mood to tape their impressions of the 'American Dream,' 1994 style. This is what I got from Dad until my sister Nancy and her family arrived. On Saturday, December 3, 1994, I got Mom's interview, above, and some more from Dad, which I merged with what we got on Thanksgiving Day, for the following account:

HOWARD TRACY HALL

"What is my idea of the great American diamond--I mean dream? [Freudian slip.] Well, when I was young, I don't think I ever even thought there was such a thing as the American Dream. But in

retrospect, I could probably say something about it. I think when I was young, I looked forward to life. I enjoyed being alive and doing things. I was not concerned about politics or things of that nature, but I was curious about much. While I was still young--when I was nine years old, my teacher asked all the kids what they wanted to do when they grew up. I said I wanted to be a scientist and work for the General Electric Company.

"The reason I could say that was because my mother and father took us into town once every two weeks in the summertime, pulling a wagon, walking along the Southern Pacific tracks to get groceries, and then pulling them back the five miles' distance to the farm. While getting groceries, Mom put Eugene and me in the library--there was a Carnegie Free Library on 26th Street and Washington. So we'd load up with books and go home. I naturally fell to books about science and read about guys like Henry Ford and Harvey Firestone and Edison--particulary Edison. I remember reading in the newspaper that Edison had died. It made me feel real sad, because he had become kind of a hero of mine.

"I had an outlook very early--which I think was very fortunate--I don't know if that comes to everybody. I knew what I wanted to do. When I was young I saw lots of kids in our farming community, who didn't care about school and didn't care much about life. They didn't seem to have any American Dream about where they were going or what they wanted to accomplish. I cared. I decided early that I wanted to be a scientist, and I pretty much did that.

"We were very poor, but I could earn some money by picking beans, hoeing weeds for other farmers, and what you might call menial jobs like that. I never spent my money frivolously. I always paid my tithing. I remember keeping a glass jar--at one point I had ten silver dollars in that. I took my money and bought things like earphones and stuff so I could make a crystal radio set. When I was seven to nine years old--about 1931-32, I bought enough wire to reach from the house to the barn and listen to KSL radio.

"I was a scrounger, always looking for things. At the bottom of 12th Street--right next to the Southern Pacific Railroad, I discovered some illegal slot machines that government agents had confiscated, smashed with sledge hammers, so they weren't any good, and left there. Those slot machines had all kinds of mechanical gizmos and electronic gadgets in them, which I used for my experiments.

"There was also another junk yard over by the confluence of the Ogden and Weber rivers, where the trappers and Indians used to trade--so I got good junk out of there. I made things with my hands. I got a coping saw, and I remember carefully sawing a ring out of wood and making a microphone out of it--like I had seen

pictures of in magazines. Next you had to have earphones.

"Another thing you could find in those days was fine wire--and lots of it, because Model T Fords had what they called a magneto system for igniting the gasoline with the spark--and they were in sealed, wooden boxes. And they clattered like that, to make the spark. You could take those apart and just get miles of real fine wire. Somehow or other, we had these cones that string come on--you know those cardboard cones that are conical shaped? I wound tons of wire around a nail and had the head of the nail--I cut out the top of a can, cut it and bent it.. . .

"Oh, I bought myself tools as I went along. I remember buying a soddering iron. It took a lot of money to get a soddering iron. I bought it at Sears Roebuck, and it burned out with hardly any use at all. I took it back to Sears, and they wouldn't give me my money or a new soddering iron. So my Dad took me there, and he really told them. 'What are you doing to this little boy, who saved up his money,' he said. It probably cost a dollar and a quarter or something. Anyway, I got a new soddering iron.

"Then that was an earphone. So I had a microphone, an earphone, and next you needed a battery. In those days the telephone companies had to have batteries--they were dry cells--you know, about this big around and that long, and they would throw them away early. So I'd walk around where there were telephone lines to find these batteries, which still had juice in them--enough to play with. So my batteries didn't cost me anything. '

"I used to also be really interested in getting a light for my bicycle--I don't know where I scrounged up a light, but I remember putting these in series--you know the bar between the seat and the front. I had tape, and I'd tape these batteries around there, and I hooked it up to this light. I used to shine that light up in the sky on low clouds at night and wonder if you could go like that across the sky. It was like traveling a thousand miles an hour to me--here's the light over here and there you go over there--and I used to wonder, why couldn't you hook something onto that light beam, you know, and have it just go fast like that! Of course that was wishful thinking, but I used to think like that.

"As I kid, I can remember lying in bed and trying to count to a million dollars. After I'd counted to a million dollars, I'd lie in bed and try to count to a larger number. I didn't get much sleep that way.

"It was probably an advantage, being poor. I knew where to spend my money. Other kids bought candy bars and went to movies, but not me. I wasn't going to waste my money on that kind of stuff.

"We were skinny kids. During the Depression we didn't have much to eat--sometimes we went hungry. We went to school in a shirt my mother made and pants she reconstructed from hand-me-downs. She remodeled cast-off suits from grown men for her five sons. We never wore shoes, except when we went to school and church. Our feet got so tough, we could run across rocks and stubble.

"Opportunities came hard, but I always found a way to make money. Mom let me grow beans and cucumbers in our garden, and I'd take them into Ogden and peddle them from door to door. I used to think that I had gone to every house in Ogden, Utah, trying to sell this stuff.

This is how poor I was: When my bicycle tires got punctured, I didn't have enough money to buy a kit to go fix the tire. So I decided one time that air would leak out of my tires slower than water. I did have a bicycle pump. So I managed to pump the things full of water and wrap rags around my tires, and get to Ogden as far as I could. It wouldn't stay up the whole way, so I'd have to stop and push my bicycle. Mom had sewed for me some sort of a gizmo that would hang on the handlebars. I carried beans and cucumbers in that and made a little money that way. Sometimes I'd just make fifteen cents a day. But picking beans, I could earn forty cents in a day. My mother picked beans with Eugene and me--she was a champion bean picker. She could make a dollar a day. In those days, you could get a pair of J. C. Penney overalls for sixty-nine cents.

"A guy with a tiny automobile called an Austin would bring it down to the bean fields and sell popsicles for a nickel--I remember that.

"My parents voted for Hoover, because he was a respectable person, and FDR wasn't. It's a matter of morality. Modern day historians admit that Hoover was the smartest president we've had. He was more intelligent. (Mom interjects at this point that Hoover just didn't know what to do.) My parents didn't like the welfare system FDR started. Even though they were often hungry, they didn't expect the government to help them.

"I used to dream about someday winning the Nobel Prize. Of course I never did. Mom's dream was to marry a good man. She used to pray every night that she'd marry a good man. Guess that puts the pressure on me, doesn't it?

"Anyway, I read books, studied hard, and my idea of what I wanted to be when I grew up didn't change. I loved school. When school ended, the teacher would gave us all our papers. Those big old farm boys who beat up on me a lot would go down the street home about a mile and a half, throwing their papers away, singing "No

more teachers, no more books." I'd listen to them and would almost cry, I was so sad that school was letting out. So I obviously had a good outlook. But I don't think you could call it looking forward to the American Dream.

"When we moved to Ogden, we were thrown in with a lot higher class of kids. They didn't swear--might have been an off color joke every now and then--but nothing big like in Marriott. All nice kids--going to church. This was when we lived on 30th Street. I went to school in Wilson Lane for the ninth grade.

"In those early four room schoolhouses, there were four rooms--downstairs were the first and second grades. On the other side of the room were the third, fourth, and fifth grades--one teacher, teaching all these in the same room. This is how it was in all the boondock schools like Marriott. Upstairs were the sixth and seventh and eight and ninth grades. That year they didn't have enough students for the ninth grade, so they moved us to Wilson Lane--a neighboring community. So although we had moved to the city, I stayed at Wilson Lane.

"I liked school with three grades in it. The teacher taught the third grade, then while they were supposed to study, Miss Stallings moved on to the fourth grade, taught that, and then two of the classes were studying. You kept hearing the same thing over and over again. These teachers who talk about having thirty kids in the same room--here's a teacher with about thirty kids teaching three grades in the same room! So when I was in the fifth grade, I'd hear the third and fourth grades over. But when I moved upstairs to Mr. Shupe's place, I'd be doing fifth grade, but listening to the older grades.

"I met with Mr. Engstrom, the math teacher, a half hour early every morning to teach him how to teach his math classes. I was teaching the teacher when I was in the ninth grade. And the physics teacher wasn't too bright, either, so I coached him.

"When I was in the fourth grade, they gave an intelligence test to all the schools in Weber County. It was a progressive test, and I scored higher, as a nine-year old fourth-grader, than any kid in Weber County, including some of the twelfth grade students. They sent out three psychologists to look at me. I don't know what they talked about (Mom says, "They took one look and ran.") The only thing I remember is that they told my mother I wasn't getting enough nutrition--which is probably true.

"Those were Depression days--there wasn't anything to eat. Poor health has always been a problem for me. I was born a blue baby to start with. I've spent a lot of my life being sick. I've had high blood pressure ever since I was about seventeen years old. Those were hard times. My parents thought FDR was going to ruin the country. Some still think he did, with all his big government

programs. (My mother interjects that the WPI helped a lot of people survive those hard times.) Yes, and it made people work for what they got, which was good.

"When we got to 30th Street, we moved into a house that cost $8 a month to rent. It had a toilet, but didn't have any hot water. It had two lamps--you know those old fashioned lamps that had green cords hanging down from the ceiling. There were no lights in the two bedrooms. We had lost the Marriott farm in the Depression, because we couldn't meet the mortgage payments--that happened to a lot of people. Some guys with big bucks jumped out of windows, but we poor folks stuck it out. I was only seven or eight when the market crashed. My parents had five sons in that two room house in Ogden.

"In Ogden our first home was on 16th and Jefferson. My Grandmother Tracy was living with us then, until she died. She was with us later in Marriott, too.

"I continued my interest in science, and along the way, eventually took all the science courses I could--general science, chemistry, and math. By the twelfth grade, I was taking trigonometry.

"I was always interested in photography. As time went on, I started developing my own film. We had a real dirt-floor basement in this house we rented for $8 a month. I got cardboard and two-by-fours and screened off a dark room, so I could develop film for other people. Later I worked for a professional photographer named Checketts (the one who was always drunk).

"I was always a good student, but I didn't know there were such things as grants for students. My parents had never been to college--they didn't know such things. You had to buy your books in those days, and I remember feeling bad because I didn't have enough money to buy a text for my trigonometry class. The studentbody president made a big speech one day, trying to get kids to buy their studentbody card. 'Anybody who can't get fifty cents to buy a studentbody card, is blah, blah, blah,' he said, encouraging us to wash cars, etc. to earn the money. Well, I was already doing everything I could to earn money. That's another thing--I bought all my own clothes after about age eight--after I got above having Mom make everything. I sat in my seat with my head down when this president was talking that way, feeling sad that I couldn't even get a trig. book. I finally earned enough to buy that book, though.

"Some of my friends who liked science went to Weber, so it was natural for me to go with them. When it came time to go to college, my father reminded me that I had loaned him $20 to go to the Tintick Mining District in the Mammoth Mine as an underground

miner, trying to find work during the Depression. He did get work there and worked a little while. I'd forgotten I'd given that money to my Dad. So he gave me $20 to buy my books at Weber.

"By then I was also earning money playing jazz piano in our 'High Hatters' dance band. Me and President Howard W. Hunter, you know--I'm sure he was a lot better musician than me--he was a natural--he could play anything. I wore myself out. I'd get up and go to work as a janitor at Weber College at 4 a.m. and worked until 7. Then, nights I'd play dance gigs. See, in those days, the entertainment was a dance every Saturday night in every ward in Weber County--dancing was the "in" thing in those days. So we played all these dance jobs for $1 a night for each person. We tried to copy the big bands. I was the piano, and we had a drummer, three saxophones who doubled on clarinet, and we had a bass viol and drums--the whole works. We made musician plaques--fancy stands to sit behind--just like Lawrence Welk and wore special suits. (Just then my sister and her family walked in, so this interview ended, and I picked it up a few days later.)

"After Mom and I got married, I studied hard, but it was tough going. Sperry Mills offered me a great full-time job for a fantastic $.50 an hour. That tempted us sorely. We were tired of school and tired of being so poor, so we went in to Dr. Bonner, the head of my Department, and told him I was thinking of quitting. He acted like that was the stupidest thing he'd ever heard, and I'm sure glad he did. I don't think I would have been happy working full time at Sperry Mills, doing that kind of work for the rest of my life. I wouldn't have achieved my ambitions in terms of the American Dream at all, doing that.

"I went to Perdue to do graduate work, but it was very difficult to get married housing, so Mom couldn't come along. Then a professor told me that Dr. Henry Eyring had just gone from Princeton to the University of Utah. He admitted they didn't have anybody at Purdue of Dr. Eyring's calibre, so I decided to go back to the University of Utah. Mom had had the forsight to line up housing at Stadium Village in Salt Lake. Stadium Village was made from those houses where they kept the Japanese out in the desert during the war. That's what made up the married housing at BYU years ago, too, down here by the Marriott Center, you know.

"Well, we scrimped along, making buttonholes and making soap. I got $100 a month from the G.I. bill, and I also had a fellowship. We were poor, but we were still about the richest there at Stadium Village. Now we look back on those as some of the happiest years of our lives. Our main problems were always financial, but we struggled along on cabbage and wieners and food like that.

"When I got my Ph.D., we had three children, and I fulfilled my dream and got a job doing research at General Electric, in

Schenectady, New York. While at the labs, I was able to create the apparatus which could achieve the high pressure and temperatures to make synthetic diamond in a commercial process that made G.E. rich.

"I got mad at them, came back to Utah as Director of Research at BYU, and I'm glad I did. We feel the Lord directed us here--we're not sorry we made that decision. We've been blessed with wonderful children--that's a great source of satisfaction. We feel we're achieving our American Dream here and are continuing it. That's the great thing about dreams--they continue on. The dream doesn't end.

"Concerning the American dream now and what I would hope it might be for my children, there's no question that it's still there. The hope's always there, but it's up to them. It depends on their intellect, ambition, hard work, scrimping, and willingness to sacrifice luxuries for a greater goal. I hope they can figure out what they're good at and decide early what they want to achieve. It's important to decide early and start early. That's all I have to say on the American Dream for your class report, Sherlene."

Sherlene H. Bartholomew
January 2, 1995

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