

**Arnold Alvey**  
**Escalante Resident**

Interviewer-John Howe

Arnold, let's start out by talking about Grand Staircase a little bit. What did you think when you heard that the monument had been created, and Bill Clinton's way of doing it?

Arnold Alvey:

Well, we really didn't know what to think. It was kind of a surprise to us. Nobody knew. We'd heard a rumor that he was gonna make a monument out of this, but we still didn't, you know, visual that he would pull something like that. So, we really didn't even know what a monument was until after it was created and then, as time went on....

Interviewer-John Howe

What was the response here from the local community? How did most of the people of the town feel about it?

Arnold Alvey

Well, like I say, we didn't know that much about it. We felt like it was gonna be a detriment to us, but then we still didn't know what he was gonna do with it. He made the monument here, but we didn't know whether he had some plans to come in here and build some roads, or do something besides what he done, just lock it up.

Interviewer-John Howe

What was the response of the community here when Bill Clinton established the Grand Staircase National Monument?

Arnold Alvey

Well, it's like I said, we really didn't know what a monument was and we were just all kind of stunned to think that he'd create something without even knowing what he was creating in our area. They'd been trying to create a little deal down here on the Escalante River to make a monument of some kind, but we had no idea that he'd come in here and make a monument of this magnitude. We felt like it was to lock this coal up out here. We got some of the purest coal in the world, and we felt like he done it so we couldn't utilize it and we felt like he had some holdings over in Indonesia that was, he didn't let us--they was already to mine this coal down here when he made this a monument but then that stopped all of that. See, they even had some of the roads built down there, but then when he done that why then, that ceased all of that.

Interviewer-John Howe

What would you like to see happen here? You were talking before about having roads and other things in here that would help the community.

Arnold Alvey

What I'd really like to see now that he's made the monument, I would really like to see a Visitors Center down at the Hole-in-the-Rock and then come back upon each one of those points that

goes out towards our Escalante River. And make some roads out there and some rest areas and some lookouts, because it is beautiful. And then make the people all come back into Escalante, or Boulder, or Tropic, or someplace to stay of an evening, of a night. Then they've done something for our area. We used to depend on livestock and that for our livelihood around here. This town used to be right in the neighborhood of two thousand people, and I think it would get back to that. The way it is, my wife and I work down in the information booth and we have to tell the people, more or less, you have to stay on the oil road. And that isn't good for tourists. It isn't good for us people. People just come straight through and don't spend any time to see what really we have got.

Interviewer-John Howe

You mentioned you were coming out of the ranching business. How was it like to work with the BLM in the ranching area, and how has that changed?

Arnold Alvey

Well, years ago when we first started, then the BLM wasn't even in existence see, in '36 they were good to work with, but then it just kept getting a little tougher all the way through, and it just kept getting a little worse and a little worse. My dad said to me one day, he said, "Arnold, what are we gonna do with this stuff?" And I said, "They'll sell it," And he said, "Well, that'd be alright for me, but what'll you do?" And I said, "I'll go to training horses." He said, "You'll starve to death." I said, "Well, we're starving to death anyway." So, we did. We put everything up for sale, our farms, our cattle and permits and sold it, and I went to training horses. I filled this barn full of horses, and I had horses from all over the western United States that I trained and broke and that. I had an awful good business. I had that for about thirty-three years and when I quit I never had five cents left on the books. I collected every dollar that people owed me.

Interviewer-John Howe

When tourists come through this area, like at your booth, what do they tell you about Grand Staircase?

Arnold Alvey

Well, I don't exactly know what you mean, what do they tell us?

Interviewer-John Howe

Do they like it? Do they think something should be done to improve it?

Arnold Alvey

Yeah, they can't go to the Hole-in-the-Rock on account of the roads, or in these little rental cars and things, and they're quite perturbed to think that they're here but they can't see anything.

Interviewer-John Howe

What do tourists think?

Arnold Alvey

Well, the tourists when they find out really that we're right in the middle of this Grand Staircase, why they're kind of dumbfounded to think that they made this big of a staircase and not created

nothing. They want to know where the staircase is, and we tell them if they find it, boy to let us know too.

Interviewer-John Howe

Do most people feel like they have adequate access to the Grand Staircase National Monument?

Arnold Alvey

No, we don't. We haven't any access to the monument; none whatsoever, even the ranchers complain that they can't even go down there after their cattle. Some of them have tried to fix the roads a little bit so they can maintain their cow outfits and they get in trouble by doing that even. So, it's a poor situation to all of us the way it's created and the way it's locked up. We've got these rangers here that kind of just ride the area and jurisdictions where we can go and where we can't.

Interviewer-John Howe

Do you think it's too heavily regulated by the BLM?

Arnold Alvey

Well, yes, especially when they're not trying to do anything with it to improve it. They're just letting it go down grade and, if they were trying to improve it then you could see that a few regulations might work on it, but they're just holding this in, and no improvements, no nothing. They're not spending any money on it, only for the rangers and things.

Interviewer-John Howe

What has that done to the economy of this town, and areas like this? Has it been helpful or hurtful? Has it been good for this town or bad?

Arnold Alvey

Well, here for a few years after he made the monument it just kind of dried us right up. Everybody was scared to do anything; but it is coming back a little right now, but if they would, it's what I say, if they would fix us some roads down here and do something to try to feel like it, they was trying to be part of us and help us, then I feel like it would do us some--and all of us work together, I feel like it'd be a quite a nice add to the government, and to the people here.

Interviewer-John Howe

Do you think the government and the BLM, do you think that they're helping the community in favor? Do you look at them as an asset, or do you look at them as a liability? Or do you think the community could do it better on their own?

Arnold Alvey

Well, I think the community could do better on their own because they, just like they was a person went up there to the BLM office to talk about this little park down here, and that lady told them said, "Well, you'll have to call Washington D.C." That's the kind of response we're getting from the people up here. Now, whether she was told to tell the people that they had to call Washington D.C., or what, I don't know, but we don't need those kinds of regulations out here.

Interviewer-John Howe

You were mentioning you might write a letter to the President. If you were--and lead this off by saying, "Well, if I was to write a letter to the President--" what would you say in that letter?

Arnold Alvey

Well, I would, I believe I'd start it off by saying, "Dear Mr. President, You're a Democrat president that's in office now, and we had a Democrat president that came in our area and made near a two million acre monument, and then he walked off and left it, and we'd appreciate it if you would come and look it over, and see if you could do a little something to help the tourism and the people in the area to justify helping everybody instead of doing nothing with it."

Interviewer-John Howe

What do you see for the future of this area? What do you think is going to happen over the next few years?

Arnold Alvey

Well, it's going to stay the same unless we can get some help on this Grand Staircase and get some, a few roads down there and get--if the government would put a little money in this area, then it would enhance the tourism, but this isn't a vacation for people to come here, try to go to Hole-in-the-Rock or someplace and break down and have to have a tow truck come and get them. That isn't a vacation. Let's fix it so as people can have a vacation, regardless of what we do, let's better it.

Interviewer-John Howe

How do you feel about roads in the monument? What do you think should be done there? Should there be more roads, or fewer roads?

Arnold Alvey

I say, I don't think we need more roads. I think we need the roads that we got taken care of and maybe build a few roads, like I said, out on these points, lookout points to where the people could drive out there and look off into the river and those areas, but as far as building more roads, no. We've got plenty of roads, but they won't let them maintain them and take care of them.

Interviewer-John Howe

We were talking about that ranch management story. Tell me that story.

Arnold Alvey

Yeah, I had a couple of BLM guys on the Fifty Mile Mountain. I took them down there from the packs and the horses to, they was going to give Wilson thirty percent cut, and we was going out across by Pulhauler one morning and I said to this range manager, I said, "What is range management?" Well, he said, "Arnold, I don't know how to answer that," and I said, "Didn't you graduate from college a range manager?" He said, "Yes, I did," and I said, "Well, what's the definition?" and he said, "I..." and finally he said, "To be honest with you, I don't know I can answer that." And he said, "Do you know?" and I said, "Yes, I know." And he said, "What is it?" and I said, "Common sense, and you haven't got it." Well, the cattle was all, about 11

o'clock and they were all full and shaded up in the trees and serviceberries and that, and I said, "When you see cattle that's filled up that early in the day and not hungry, I don't feel like anybody needs a cut on the cattle situation." We went a little further and finally he said, "Well, I believe we just walk back to camp and pack up and go home." And so we did. We come off the mountain and come home and, and Wilsons never heard a thing about the cut from that day on.

Interviewer-John Howe

Tell me the story of wild horses from your day that you were telling earlier. What happened to the wild horses in this area?

Arnold Alvey

Well, we used to have a lot of wild horses in this area. That was our livelihood, roping a lot of these wild horses. My brother took me down there. I was about eight years old and put a sirsingle we called it, on one of his best horses and he'd pick out a horse in a bunch that he'd want, and he'd say, "Now Arnold, when I run them to you"--he'd slip around to where he could run them to me, where I could get a good run at them, and he'd say, "Now you rope such-and-such a horse," and, I would. I was on that horse bareback with a sirsingle and when those wild horses would come to me, why I'd fall into them and rope the horse he wanted me to rope. One day I roped a little pinto colt, instead of the one he told me to and he said, "How come you roped that colt?" and I said, "Oh isn't it pretty?"

Interviewer-John Howe

So, what happened to the wild horses?

Arnold Alvey

But then, as the time went on, in about, oh, it was about '41, '42, the BLM hired my dad and my brother and three or four other guys and they went down on the desert and shot them all, all the wild horses, and the ones that was out, close to town here, why, they rounded all them up and brought them in here, and the Fish and Wildlife outfit come in and slaughtered them and took them for fish feed, and had the hides tanned. They killed, oh heck, I don't know how many horses, the Fish and Wildlife.

Interviewer-John Howe

How did the ranchers manage wild horses?

Arnold Alvey

Well, we used to manage them real good. A lot of our saddle horses came from a string of horses, you know. We'd take some of the better stallions down there, turn them loose with those wild horses, and we had a good string of wild horses in this area. They were pretty nice horses. And when we'd go down there in the spring or in the fall, why we'd usually rope a few colts and bring them in and raise them up as--and then, when they go two and three years old, we'd break them for saddle horses, everybody rode mustangs, we called it; but then, after the BLM come in and slaughtered them all, why then we just didn't have any so.... Them days we had a lot of remount horses--government horses --come in here, stallions that bred our mares up and we had a lot of good horses in this valley, just a-lots and lots of good horses...and good cowboys.