

## **Interview with Alan Eskam**

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**By Derek Bogner**

**DB:** Today is January 21, 2017. I'm Derek Bogner, and I'll be interviewing my grandfather, Alan Eskam. Alright, Grandpa, we're going to start the questions now. Think back to when you were my age. Where were you living then?

**AE:** In Cimarron. You know where Grandpa Pappy used to live? Up on Third Street, in Cimarron, and I lived in the basement. I had a bedroom in the basement. And had a pretty good life, about like what you have.

**DB:** Who was living in the house with you at that time?

**AE:** Well, Vicki was already married at that time. And by about that time, she would have had Randy, and Rochelle both would have been born.

**DB:** Wow.

**AE:** So she wasn't at home, so that left me as the oldest one living at home, and then there would have been Jerry, Donna, and me. There were three kids still living at home yet. And then, my mom and my dad.

**DB:** Well, you already said your siblings' names, so we'll just skip that next question. Where was your dad working at that time, Grandpa Pappy?

**AE:** He was the bus mechanic at the school. That's what was supposed to be his job, but he also took care of the football fields. The practice fields and the football field. And he kept them watered and mowed, and everything. So he had a big job. I think they had like nine buses at that time. I think there was only, you know, a charter bus.

There was a couple charter buses, and the route buses. He took care of all that stuff. He did all the work. He overhauled them and fixed all the tires. He didn't take anything into a shop or anything. If the bus needed overhauled, he did it.

**DB:** He did it himself.

**AE:** And if there was a flat tire, he didn't bring it to a shop. He did everything. It was a pretty big job.

**DB:** He was a very good mechanic, huh?

**AE:** Yes, he was. Yeah, he was very good.

**DB:** Where was your mom working at the time?

**AE:** Oh, by that time, she was working at the Co-op.

**DB:** In Cimarron?

**AE:** Yeah. It was the Cimarron Co-op at that time. They weren't with Dodge City or anything. She worked at the Co-op.

**DB:** What were your means of transportation when you were my age?

**AE:** I had a motorcycle.

**DB:** (laughs) A hot rod?

**AE:** Yeah, I had a motorcycle. My brother had a motorcycle. My dad wouldn't let us get a car because he thought it cost too much money. If we needed a car, we had to borrow his. The family had one car, and Jerry had a motorcycle, and I had a motorcycle. I rode it in the snow, the ice, and the heat. I rode it all the time. I put a lot of miles on it.

**DB:** Did you have a part-time job during school, or was it strictly in the summer?

**AE:** I worked for the lumberyard some of the time, and I helped Charlie [his brother-in-law]. I drove a truck a lot of the time. I didn't have a specific part time job, because I always had people that wanted me to work for them, and do stuff. Yeah, I worked all the time doing stuff. I always worked hard.

**DB:** Sounds like fun.

**AE:** (laughs) Well, we had our fun.

**DB:** Do you remember what you got paid per hour?

**AE:** Oh, not very much. (Laughs.) When I started helping Charlie, I didn't even get paid. I worked for free, because he needed help. I remember the first time I got paid was thirty cents per hour. I put in a lot of hours for thirty cents an hour, but that was when I was quite a bit younger. I can remember getting paid a lot of the time a dollar an hour. Oh man, I remember when I was in high school, I would guess it to be at a dollar and a half an hour. But money went a lot further back then too. I remember when hamburgers were at 35 cents. You could get a hamburger and fries for about a dollar. So things were a lot cheaper. When you say you got paid a dollar fifty an hour, it went kind of far.

**DB:** What kind of classes did you enjoy taking in school?

**AE:** I didn't take all the math classes I could take, but I took a lot of math classes. Of course you had to take English every year. I took Algebra II, trigonometry, physics, chemistry.

**DB:** Did you have any electives that you liked a lot?

**AE:** I didn't take very many shop classes, but I did take welding class. If you took that other stuff, it didn't leave time for much. You know, I only had two shop classes. My

senior year I took a welding class, and my freshman year I took a shop class. I didn't have many shop classes. We didn't have the stuff like you have now, like your Ag. class. We didn't have that back then. We just had shop classes. Most of the time, they were goof-off classes anyways.

**DB:** What were some sports or clubs that you were in?

**AE:** I was in C-Club, most of the boys were. I was so busy, you know with sports and stuff. I did football and tennis. If you were in sports all the time, it was hard to be in that other stuff. C-Club and student council was about the only clubs I was in.

**DB:** Was there anything memorable in the sports you were in?

**AE:** I enjoyed sports a lot; they were a lot of fun.

**DB:** You played sports in college too.

**AE:** Yeah, I went on and played football at college for a couple of years. It was a lot of fun. I probably wouldn't have been good in school if I didn't have sports. That's the main reason I went to school, thanks to sports. School was just a necessary evil.

(Laughs.) I enjoyed school; I had a lot of fun. I didn't study like I should've. (Laughs.)

**DB:** What did teenagers do for entertainment when you were my age?

**AE:** That was the era of the hot rod car. (Laughs.) Everybody cruised up and down Main Street. Of course there wasn't TV. TV was pretty new back then. There wasn't much on back then. It was just a black and white TV; there wasn't color yet. We played a lot of basketball and hung out. We used to have a drive-in here. People would drive out there and hang out.

**DB:** Where was that?

**AE:** Right across the street here. (Laughs.) Where the old gas station was at; that's where it was. The kids hung out there a lot.

**DB:** Is that where you consider that people would go on dates?

**AE:** I didn't date a lot. I didn't date much until my senior year, and even then, I didn't date very much. I was too busy having fun I guess. (Laughs.) Why mess up a fun time with a date? I run around with a few girls, but most of the time it wasn't even a date, you know. We'd just be friends. A lot of kids did date, and had steady relationships.

**DB:** Who were some of the bands or entertainers that you remember?

**AE:** Oh, that's when all the Beach Boys and the Beatles were. All those bands like that played a lot. Elvis was a little before my time, but he was still popular during that time.

**DB:** What did you think about the foreigner music becoming popular, like the Beatles?

**AE:** They were just different people. (Laughs.) All the girls went crazy over them because of their accents. I didn't really like the Beatles as much as the other bands of the time. They were popular and had a couple of good songs. That's what everybody listened to, so that's what you were stuck with.

**DB:** When you first got a television, how old were you, and what shows were on it?

**AE:** Oh man, when we got our first TV, I was probably about in the third grade or fourth grade.

**DB:** Was it a big surprise that you got it, or were you saving up for it for a long time?

**AE:** Oh, it was a lot of money to get it back then, you know. You couldn't see it very good because the stations were out of Hutchinson, Great Bend, and Wichita. You had

to have 60-foot towers to receive the channels. It was black and white, and it was real snowy. I remember watching baseball, and if you could see the ball, you thought you were really doing something, you know. (Laughs.) Hey, you can see the ball! (Laughs.)

**DB:** It was a lot different than today.

**AE:** Oh, yeah, it was a lot different than today. I remember when they built the first station out here, Channel 6, south of town here, everybody went to go see them put the antenna on top of the tower out there. There must've been 40 cars out there watching them all day. Then we could get pretty good TV, but that was just one channel. Then other channels came in, and then we had three good channels. Then some channels became color, but then you had to buy a color TV. (Laughs.) We didn't get color until Jane and I were married. By the time me and Jane got together, we started to get a lot of color out here. It hasn't been that long ago; we've been married for 47 years. So yeah, things have changed a lot, just within my lifetime. *The Little Rascals* were on a lot, the same with *Howdy-doody*. You always had the six o'clock news, the same with the twelve o'clock news, you know. A lot of those shows crossed over from radio. I remember when I was little, about Alyssa's age (9), that I would listen to the radio, and *The Lone Ranger* would be on. *Roy Rogers* and a lot of them shows would be on there. They were like TV shows, but they were just on the radio. They were fun to listen to, you know; they were like a book. You didn't know about TV, so you were happy when it came on the radio. They had a set time every week, just like TV shows, you know. Some of them transitioned onto TV, and then you could actually watch them.

**DB:** Who was the president when you were my age?

**AE:** Oh man, that's when I was in high school, so I think it was Nixon.

**DB:** What was going on in the world when you were my age, or on the news?

**AE:** Vietnam, every day. It was a hot topic. You had the hippies protesting.

**DB:** Were there a lot of hippies out here?

**AE:** Oh, there were a couple kids out here who thought they were hippies, but they didn't know how to do it right. (Laughs.)

**DB:** What were some inventions that were taking place?

**AE:** Probably the biggest thing, that changed more things than anything, was the calculator. When I was a senior, I paid fifty dollars for a calculator. You know, back then, you had to work everything out by hand, so a long problem could take you all day. There wasn't anything that could multiply or divide. Now you can do a problem, in seconds, you know. The calculator that I bought, could only multiply and divide. It couldn't do anything that free calculators can do. That was a lot of money. It's like giving five hundred dollars for one now. I was just fascinated by that. I hadn't seen anything like it before. The Space Age is what did that. It developed technology like that. NASA and the Space Age is what did that. It brought on tons of new inventions. It changed how you did math problems, and what you could do. It completely changed the mathematical and scientific world. It changed how the world operates. They used to have computers back here at the insurance agency that would take up the whole room. They used to have cards that you would punch into the machine, and that's how you got it to work. It helped the company do premiums and stuff like

that. That huge thing couldn't do what this computer here could do by itself. I think that was the biggest advancement of my lifetime.

**DB:** Were any of your friends in the Vietnam War?

**AE:** Yeah, several of them. A friend that I was pretty close to died over there. It changed them all though. You just can't go over there, and not be changed.

**DB:** Were you close to be drafted to go to Vietnam?

**AE:** Well, yes and no. If you didn't go to college, you were going to go, unless you were missing a leg or something, you know. I went to college, but if I got out, I'd have to go. If I got out of college with a degree, I could be an officer though. When I was in college, they came out with a lottery. Jerry and I both went into college, but Jerry went into ROTC there to train. He was in the Air Force, and he was getting his flight training. Well, I got a high number in the lottery. There's 365 days in a year, and I think I got a 235 or something like that, so that meant I wasn't very likely to go.

**DB:** Were you relieved when you found that out?

**AE:** Oh, yeah, but Jerry got a low number, so he was going to have to go.

**DB:** Did he see Vietnam?

**AE:** He flew in and out of there a lot of times. He didn't have to stay over there. He was flying C-141s at that time. He flew on in and flew on out, because they didn't want that huge plane over there to be shot.

**DB:** Were you very nervous for him?

**AE:** Yeah, we were all pretty nervous for him. Brandon [Jerry's son] has been over to Afghanistan. He's seen a lot more action than Jerry did, because he's a fighter pilot.

**DB:** Well, that is the end of our questions. Thank you very much.



**AE:** Well, it's been fun.