

Just Before Green River

Stephen Garrett — my father

(Sunday, September 28th, 2025. 6:21 PM. Driving west on I-70, about an hour after having passed into Utah from Colorado, just a few minutes outside of Green River. My father sits in the passenger seat of my 2017 Toyota Rav4, filling it up with his arms crossed, obviously much more comfortable in his Ford F-150. He doesn't know he's being recorded as he answers my question, "What does it mean to live in Utah to you?" He was born in Arizona and was there till he was two, then to Shawnee, Oklahoma till he was 14, after that it was Idaho Falls till 16, and then back to Arizona. He was raised on trips to Utah and always saw it through a mythical and magical kind of lens. He's lived everywhere from The Avenues, to Ogden, Provo, Boulder, and Escalante. He now resides alone in Daybreak, South Jordan. He is a complex man who loves his motorcycle, football, and Barbeque, although he was raised in the theatre, playing the piano, ballroom dancing, and spending time with his incredibly devout LDS family. He served a mission for his church at 19 years old in Boston, Massachusetts and then returned to Utah for school. He's been here ever since, mostly after having had me as his only child and not being able to leave despite both divorces. He spent most of his professional career as a real estate agent and loan broker, wearing a suit, working corporate, driving around with his wealthy buddies and going golfing, but now runs a small construction company and has a 500-day streak on Duolingo for Spanish and is quite happy with himself.

So, with regard the latter, easy enough, I feel like we're so- we've become really popular- like world destination, you know, like, worthy. In- you know, internationally people who know the area and they like it. And so, we're losing ourselves, you know, we're selling out. That's **my** biggest, observation that, everything's- everything that's cool is selling out more and more and more. And I like that President, Clinton made the Grand Escalante staircase, and the other one down there, by there, what's it called? Capitol Reef. They made those, the biggest they've ever done, ever. So that- instantly it's protected land you can't drill you can't do weird shit on it, because that is pretty magical country that **needs** to be protected, you know? So, **my** concern about the ge-ology- for some reason what goes to my mind is outside money, kib- you know, taking it. More and more and more. Because money will win the day, they just straight up buy us. I mean, it's not ours- kind of. And that's, that's my thought. That's a bummer.

But how I feel about it, I have nothing but love. I've got uh, I love Utah, a lot. I love the *economy*. I love the *people*. I love the *safety* and *security*. I love the- I love the *looks*. There's a lot that- **sure**, nothing's perfect, **no where's** perfect. Yeah, I'd like to have Dana Point streets and flawless infrastructure put into Utah, and I'd love to have Dana Point *temperature* put in the Utah, but would I turn it off and change the temperature to something else? It's because I want to fall and, I want winter too. You can't, you can't have everything in life. And so, like uh, I wasn't saying that about you, I meant- I'm saying literally. I would like to have Dana infrastructure put in- I-I-I'm saying uh, it's one that you happen to know that I know that people know is pretty.

But. So you, there's a price for everything, right? To get the good, you have to pay the price of the bad. I think the price for the bad price- the price of the bad in Utah's a worthy the price. Home prices are high, and if-if you can afford it's a worthy price so home prices are high.

There's a, **whole lot of** Mormons but-but less than less, you know, percentage wise. And-and even the Mormon culture there is more and more *chill*- more hypocritical, or whichever way you want to spin that. And then, um or less devout, I should say.

Look at- look ahead of us! To the right, where it meets that whole area, and goes way over there, that, everything in front of us. That's *ridiculous*. I-I-I don't- I've never seen *prettier*! And-and we got light to like back it all up, too, and weirdly. Utah is amazing. Dude.

Anyway, so- then, seeing things- I-it's weird to be old enough that I'm like, "ahh I remember when, ahh I remember when." And where-everywhere I'm at, all over, **all over** the Wasatch front. It's like, that didn't exist, that didn't exist. I mean, a-a 20-year-old neighborhood is now a pretty mature neighborhood like it's. The neighborhood where you guys used to live in the rich houses across the way from where you at now. Like, that's probably a 20-year-old neighborhood. And they're still **way** nice, and they're way clean, but that's-that's a long time ago. If you imagine a smaller, cheaper neighborhood, that's that old, things are looking run down by now, a little bit, you know? So, I'm just saying it's **weird** that there's full areas, full sections, full swaths of town, right and left and stores and everything. It's just all transformed. That's all. And so, but overall, I-I-I have, quite a bit of love and appreciation for Utah. *I love Utah.*