

An Interview with Claudia Reidhead

*An Oral History produced by
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Nye County Town History Project

Nye County, Nevada

Tonopah

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Claudia Reidhead
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PREFACE

The Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP) engages in interviewing people who can provide firsthand descriptions of the individuals, events, and places that give history its substance. The products of this research are the tapes of the interviews and their transcriptions.

In themselves, oral history interviews are *not* history. However, they often contain valuable primary source material, as useful in the process of historiography as the written sources to which historians have customarily turned. Verifying the accuracy of all of the statements made in the course of an interview would require more time and money than the NCTHP's operating budget permits. The program can vouch that the statements were made, but it cannot attest that they are free of error. Accordingly, oral histories should be read with the same prudence that the reader exercises when consulting government records, newspaper accounts, diaries, and other sources of historical information.

It is the policy of the NCTHP to produce transcripts that are as close to verbatim as possible, but some alteration of the text is generally both unavoidable and desirable. When human speech is captured in print the result can be a morass of tangled syntax, false starts, and incomplete sentences, sometimes verging on incoherence. The type font contains no symbols for the physical gestures and the diverse vocal modulations that are integral parts of communication through speech. Experience shows that totally verbatim transcripts are often largely unreadable and therefore a waste of the resources expended in their production. While keeping alterations to a minimum the NCTHP will, in preparing a text:

- a. generally delete false starts, redundancies and the *uhs*, *ahs* and other noises with which speech is often sprinkled;
- b. occasionally compress language that would be confusing to the reader in unaltered form;
- c. rarely shift a portion of a transcript to place it in its proper context;
- d. enclose in [brackets] explanatory information or words that were not uttered but have been added to render the text intelligible; and
- e. make every effort to correctly spell the names of all individuals and places, recognizing that an occasional word may be misspelled because no authoritative source on its correct spelling was found.

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As project director, I would like to express my deep appreciation to those who participated in the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP). It was an honor and a privilege to have the opportunity to obtain oral histories from so many wonderful individuals. I was welcomed into many homes—in many cases as a stranger—and was allowed to share in the recollection of local history. In a number of cases I had the opportunity to interview Nye County residents whom I have long known and admired; these experiences were especially gratifying. I thank the residents throughout Nye County and Nevada—too numerous to mention by name—who provided assistance, information, and photographs. They helped make the successful completion of this project possible.

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—Robert D. McCracken

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INTRODUCTION

Historians generally consider the year 1890 as the close of the American frontier. By then, most of the western United States had been settled, ranches and farms developed, communities established, and roads and railroads constructed. The mining boomtowns, based on the lure of overnight riches from newly developed lodes, were but a memory.

Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that while most of the state was mapped and its geographical features named, a vast region—stretching from Belmont south to the Las Vegas meadows, comprising most of Nye County—remained largely unsettled and unmapped. In 1890, most of south-central Nevada remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be so for at least another twenty years.

The spectacular mining booms at Tonopah (1900), Goldfield (1902), Rhyolite (1904), Manhattan (1905), and Round Mountain (1906) represent the last major flowering of what might be called the Old West in the United States. Consequently, south-central Nevada, notably Nye County, remains close to the American frontier; closer, perhaps, than any other region of the American West. In a real sense, a significant part of the frontier can still be found in south-central Nevada. It exists in the attitudes, values, lifestyles, and memories of area residents. The frontier-like character of the area also is visible in the relatively undisturbed quality of the natural environment, much of it essentially untouched by humans.

A survey of written sources on south-central Nevada's history reveals some material from the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915, but very little on the area after around 1920. The volume of available sources varies from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Tonopah's first two decades of existence, and the town has had a newspaper continuously since its first year. In contrast, relatively little is known about the early days of Gabbs, Round Mountain, Manhattan, Beatty, Amargosa Valley, and Pahrump. Gabbs's only newspaper was published intermittently between 1974 and 1976. Round Mountain's only newspaper, the *Round Mountain Nugget* was published between 1906 and 1910. Manhattan had newspaper coverage for most of the years between 1906 and 1922. The *Rhyolite Herald*, longest surviving of Rhyolite/Bullfrog's three newspapers, lasted from 1905 to 1912. The *Beatty Bullfrog Miner* was in business from 1905 to 1906. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All these communities received only spotty

coverage in the newspapers of other communities once their own newspapers folded, although Beatty was served by the *Beatty Bulletin*, published as part of the *Goldfield News* between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of south-central Nevada after 1920 resides in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Nye County's close ties to our nation's frontier past, and recognizing that few written sources on local history are available, especially after about 1920, the Nye County Commissioners initiated the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP) in 1987. The NCTHP represents an effort to systematically collect and preserve information on the history of Nye County. The centerpiece of the NCTHP is a large set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Nye County libraries, Special Collections in the Lied Library at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada. The interviews vary in length and detail, but together they form a never-before-available composite picture of each community's life and development. The collection of interviews for each community can be compared to a bouquet: Each flower in the bouquet is unique—some are large, others are small—yet each adds to the total image. In sum, the interviews provide a composite view of community and county history, revealing the flow of life and events for a part of Nevada that has heretofore been largely neglected by historians.

Collection of the oral histories has been accompanied by the assembling of a set of photographs depicting each community's history. These pictures have been obtained from participants in the oral history interviews and other present and past Nye County residents. In all, more than 700 photos have been collected and carefully identified. Complete sets of the photographs have been archived along with the oral histories.

On the basis of the oral histories as well as existing written sources, histories have been prepared for the major communities in Nye County. These histories have also been archived.

The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impact of a federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in south-central Nye County. The repository, which would be located inside a mountain (Yucca Mountain), would be the nation's first, and possibly only, permanent disposal site for high-level radioactive waste. The Nye County Board of County Commissioners initiated the NCTHP in

1987 in order to collect information on the origin, history, traditions and quality of life of Nye County communities that may be impacted by the repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for a long time and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided at the site. And in the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

Interview with Claudia Reidhead and Robert McCracken at the Beatty Museum April 21 and 23 and June 6, 2008.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Claudia, why don't you tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

CR: Claudia Dell Davies.

RM: And when and where were you born?

CR: I was born in Death Valley Junction on May 30, 1941.

RM: What was your mother's full name?

CR: Grace Lee Whitton Davies. She was born at home in Cincinnati in 1906.

RM: When did she come out West?

CR: She hitchhiked out here during the Depression and she married my father, Frederick Davies.

RM: And when and where was he born?

CR: He was born just outside of Ogden, Utah, in about 1898. He was a jack-of-all-trades and master of many.

RM: Did he grow up at his place of birth?

CR: In various small towns in northern Utah.

RM: And when did he come into this country?

CR: When he got out of the service in about 1918.

RM: And what brought him to this country?

CR: What brings anybody anywhere? Curiosity?

RM: Was he interested in mining?

CR: He never said. All he ever talked about was arriving in Ash Meadows. It seems that he and a Filipino friend of his started out in Boise, Idaho, and they drove right down the center of the state of Nevada and wound up in Ash Meadows.

RM: They drove down Highway 95?

CR: No. There was just a dirt road running the full length of the state of Nevada. They would've gone probably right down the center of what is now the Test Site. They landed in Ash Meadows and kind of had a very colorful career there; he ran a still. This was during Prohibition.

RM: What was Ash Meadows like when he landed there?

CR: It was mostly Indians; there were a few white people there.

RM: Do you know what tribe they were—Southern Paiute or Shoshone?

CR: Probably a mixture of both, just like it was in the '40s. I think the ones here now are all Shoshone.

RM: Was there a community in Ash Meadows or was it just kind of scattered occupants?

CR: It was kind of scattered occupants, ranchers and prospectors and so forth. They were mining the borax out of the clay pits there.

RM: So he was running a still. Was he doing anything else?

CR: Probably working out at the mill. His actual occupation was boilermaker.

RM: Really? Was he living in Clay Camp or was he in Ash Meadows itself?

CR: He was in Ash Meadows. You called it Clay Camp and that's pretty close to right. But he didn't actually stay in the barracks with the guys; he lived out where he could run his still. When the revenuers come out looking for him the Indians protected him, but there was a reason for that. It was because whenever they got hungry they'd come complain to him and he'd go out and rustle a steer, kill it, and give it to them. Ishmael hated my dad for the longest time. [Laughs]

RM: Because George Ishmael had cattle and your dad was poaching on them?

CR: Dad would poach; no way to argue that one.

RM: And he would share with the Indians?

CR: He'd skin it out, bury the hide, and give them the whole thing and take a couple of steaks out of it. The Indians never went hungry when Daddy was around.

RM: How long did he stay in the Clay Camp area?

CR: Probably until the early 1930s. He came up here to Beatty and opened a plumbing shop.

RM: What was happening in Beatty at that time?

CR: I have no idea. My father, like my mother, was just different.

RM: In what sense?

CR: What would cause a woman to hitchhike across the country during the Depression? What would cause a man to walk away from everything he ever knew and all of the family he'd ever known to truck across the desert? Curiosity.

RM: And they never looked back?

CR: No. Momma went home a couple of times to Ohio; Daddy never did.

RM: When did your mother and father meet?

CR: About 1934, '35. They got married in Ely in '35.

RM: And then they set up housekeeping in Beatty? Did they stay here the rest of their lives?

CR: Daddy did. He died here.

RM: Did your mother leave from time to time?

CR: She was gone for about 15 or 20 years and then she came back and she died here in 1991.

RM: Not too long after I interviewed her. Did your dad always have the plumbing shop here in Beatty?

CR: Yes, and he did odd jobs—anything that came to hand.

RM: Did he ever do any mining?

CR: You didn't live in this country without prospecting or working in the mines. There are photos of him here in the museum working in the Mayflower Mine. That was the big mine in Pioneer—the Mayflower and the Bimetallic.

RM: So he was a miner, too?

CR: He was, like I said, a jack-of-all-trades and master of many.

RM: And you say he prospected, too. Did he ever find. . . ?

CR: Not enough to do more than feed us for a winter or something.

RM: And then you were born in '41. What are your earliest memories of Beatty?

CR: My earliest memories of Beatty? Small—a very, very small town. Walking around the streets with my dog. Climbing the hills. Sunshine Fresh air. The smell after a rainstorm.

RM: Were there a lot of children here then?

CR: Not too many. It was the Lisle boys and myself and the Weeks—Jimmy and Patty and Virginia Weeks. And the Revert kids, so Bobby and Virginia and Brenda and Steve.

RM: There were quite a few Indian children here, weren't there?

CR: Yes, there were.

RM: Do you remember any off the top of your head?

CR: Clara Bowland. Ross Bowland. Bombo and Spike Cottonwood, and Kline Thompson.

RM: Did you go down into Indian camp much?

CR: Yes, I was in and out of there just like all the other kids here. They made the most wonderful mesquite bean tortillas that you ever tasted.

RM: Do you know the recipe?

CR: No. If I did, I'd be making them myself They would grind the mesquite beans up and make them into flour.

RM: What else do you recall about the Indians and their culture?

CR: Very little. They were still quite private about it when I was growing up, especially around female-type children. The white man was pretty much the same way, reticent around women.

RM: Do you have any thoughts on that?

CR: The only thing I have to say is women have always been every bit as strong as the men but we've often been treated as a second class-citizen.

RM: Actually, women are stronger, I think, than men.

CR: I think so too, but we won't tell anybody. [Laughter] Let 'em live in their dream world.

RM: Did you do all of your education here in Beatty or did you live in other communities?

CR: I did it all; I grew up right here.

RM: And where was the school when you started school?

CR: Right up where it is now. I did not go to the school in back of the Exchange. Bombo did.

RM: How many kids were in the school when you started?

CR: When I started school, the first, second, third, and fourth grades consisted of about 20 kids. By the time I went into the fifth and sixth grade there were probably double that many.

RM: Did all the Indian kids go to school?

CR: All of them did. The Indian women were really strong on making their kids get an education. They were even more demanding of an education for their children than the white people were.

RM: How often did you get out of town when you were a kid here?

CR: Every once in a while, Mom and I'd catch a bus and go to Vegas. Daddy and I went out prospecting a lot.

RM: Where did you prospect?

CR: All over the hills here and over into the Grapevines, up in the Bear Mountains, up in Bullfrog Hills, up by Pioneer.

RM: How did he prospect? What took him to look at a particular site?

CR: Outcroppings of rock, certain formations and colorings.

RM: And then would he pan up the gulch, or how did he do it?

CR: He would dry pan, yes.

RM: Can you describe dry panning, for those who don't know what it is?

CR: There is a special shaker, a screen-type thing, that will shake the rocks and dust away and the heavier stuff will filter through down into the bottom. He would bring the heavy stuff

into town and we would pan it out at the house in water.

RM: Did he ever find much?

CR: Like I said, sometimes enough to feed us though winter, but not enough to get rich on.

RM: Did he own any claims that you know of?

CR: Not that I am aware of.

RM: How many yards or wheelbarrows full would he actually process in a day of prospecting?

CR: In terms of modern wheelbarrows? Probably 20 or 30. The old wheelbarrows were a couple of feet deep. He would fill that up two to three times a day and wheel it down to the screen.

RM: He was working hard.

CR: He was a hard-working man. But mostly he worked his plumbing shop here,

RM: And he had enough business in town to be able to do that?

CR: Sometimes, yes.

RM: And who did he sell his gold to?

CR: I have no idea. I was a child and my biggest interest was running with my dogs or running out across the desert or playing with my friends.

RM: What kind of games did you play?

CR: Mostly hopscotch, cars, little toy cars. If it was a bunch of girls, we would play with dolls.

RM: How old were you when your father died?

CR: My daughter was three years old when he died. I grew up with my father. Like I said, he did things on his own. When I became a teenager, it was no longer proper for him to take me with him. In his estimation, by the time I reached ten or eleven years of age it was no longer proper for me to go with him.

RM: How did you feel about that?

CR: I felt abandoned at first.

RM: Did you have siblings?

CR: No, I was an only child.

RM: Did your mother ever work or was she a homemaker?

CR : No, my mother worked in the restaurants here. She worked in the old Gateway; she worked in the Oasis; she worked in the Golden Ace.

RM: And it was okay for your mother to work?

CR: It was all right for my mother to work in a woman's job: cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, doing laundry.

RM: Where did you live?

CR: Right here on Main Street, in the same house.

RM: So you grew up in that house? That's great. When did you end your education in the Beatty school?

CR: When I was 16 and I got married.

RM: Who did you marry?

CR: Boyd Reidhead. He was in construction and a truck driver. He came through here on a construction job.

RM: Was he older than you?

CR: About 21 years older than me. That was okay then. Today it's totally against the law.

RM: What's your take on that?

CR: I actually think that the modern day is much better I think a girl should not be a teenager and be married. I think she should be still going to school and still learning.

RM: And how many children did you have?

CR: I had one.

RM: Did you raise her here?

CR: No, she grew up in Vegas. I got married in '57, and we moved there in '64. We moved to Vegas when she was four years old. I lived on Jones Street; it's not there anymore. They tore the house down after I sold it.

RM: You had a pretty good lot there, didn't you?

CR: Yes, we got a comfortable settlement and I bought another piece of property and put my daughter on it.

RM: And how long did you stay there?

CR: Until my daughter finished school and then left. She went to Israel and came home with a full family. She left by herself and came back with a full family. All but one of her children was born in Israel.

RM: What took her to Israel?

CR: The guy she married wanted to go over there.

RM: Was he Jewish?

CR: No, but he was one of these very strange people that was going to go over there and

teach the Arabs how to fight desert warfare. My husband and I brought her and the kids home. The kids have all grown up here. She moved back when the oldest one was eight years old.

RM: What are your strongest recollections of Beatty? What stands out in your mind?

CR : What stands out in my mind? Community. It was a very active, busy community. Always busy. There was always somebody doing something somewhere. Fundraisers We had two girls who were severely burned in fires. Neither of the fires occurred here, but the girls were very severely burned. It took six years of fundraisers to get enough money to get plastic surgery to remove the scars. The town itself raised money to get the plastic surgery for these girls.

RM: How wonderful. Was it a close-knit community?

CR: Very, very close-knit. Everybody knew everybody else; they cared. Even if they got into arguments, they still cared. There were some really elongated differences of opinion, complete with Saturday-night brawls and things like that. But if anybody had a problem or if anybody got hurt, every member of the community was there to help.

RM: During these years, what would you say was the population of Beatty?

CR: Between 225 and 280. And then in the '50s and '60s, the population started coming up a lot because of the Test Site.

RM: What kind of a social difference did that make, if any?

CR: Quite a bit. We no longer got everybody together for a street dance on a Saturday night, for instance.

RM: Really? Why?

CR: Because suddenly, it was not a thing that was done. It just seemed hokey. And then when we tried to reinstate the street dances here a few years ago, the state stepped in and said that we couldn't do it because we would be blocking the main highway. We used to have it between the Exchange Club and what is now the 76 station. They would block the road off. The bars would all open out onto the streets; everybody'd be drinking. The Looney boys would be up on the back end of a flatbed playing all of their wonderful instruments.

RM: And who were the Looney boys?

CR: The Looney boys were a local family and they were all very musical. They played violin fiddle, mandolin, banjo, guitar. And on a Saturday night, everybody'd get together and they would have a street dance.

RM: And they would just divert the traffic?

CR: Yes. This would happen three, four, five times a year on a Saturday night. And we no longer had movies in the old town hall.

RM: Where was the old town hall?

CR: The old jail's sitting where the town hall used to be. It's one street back from Main Street and then, down at the bottom of the hill is where the town hall used to sit.

RM: Were the movies a big thing for you?

CR: Oh, yes—it was a big thing for everybody. I believe the projectionist was one of the Carpenter boys. And it cost 25 cents to get in.

RM: That's for a kid, or an adult?

CR: Everybody. That paid for the film and the electricity to run it and everything. That was every Friday night once a week. And if you wanted to see a different movie, everybody would jump in the back of somebody's vehicle and they'd go down to Death Valley to Furnace Creek Ranch, to the auditorium down there. They had movies there on Saturdays. We'd have a movie up here on Friday night; on Saturday night, they had a different one down there.

RM: What is your earliest recollection of going to a movie here? How old would you have been, do you think?

CR: Oh, probably five or six years old.

RM: And when did they finally end it here, would you say?

CR: About 1947, '48.

RM: Did they have popcorn or anything like that?

CR: No. If you ate at the town hall, it was when they had a dance or something like that where they actually had a feed there, a potluck.

RM: And they would have dances at the town hall?

CR: Oh, yes. We'd have dances, we'd have potluck dinners, we'd have box socials. This was a wonderful old building.

RM: Had they moved it in from Rhyolite?

CR: Yes, it was the old miner's union hall from Rhyolite.

RM: Whatever became of it?

CR: It was torn down in the '60s because it had become pretty much a fire hazard. One of the local people here purchased the wood and used it to construct their own home. So the wood is still here. Up over the door in front of the museum is the emblem from the front of it, which was the emblem of the miners' union.

RM: How many people would show up for a movie?

CR: Oh, the whole town.

RM: What kind of seats did they have?

CR: Folding metal seats.

RM: Cold and hard? Did people bring their own pillows?

CR: Cold and hard. Some of them did. We used to have an annual thing called a fiesta in there and the kids would all do something. There would either be hula dancers or tap dances, and it was just a fun thing.

RM: So there was a rich community life.

CR: A very, very rich community life. It's the kind of life I wish that we still had.

RM: When did it fade out here?

CR: It faded out as people became more closely associated with Las Vegas and the busier, more bustling times. The mining that came in it's an entirely different mindset than what we had here.

RM: By about what year did this close-knit feeling begin to fade?

CR: It was starting to disappear in the middle '60s to late '60s. But it's still a very close-knit community, it's just not the social activities that we used to have.

RM: What kind of a role did TV play in the demise... ?

CR: TV played a big role in that demise. But we didn't really get TV here until . . . in the 1960s I had a portable Philco that I had to repair myself every time it broke. I was able to receive one channel out of California part of the time. Halfway through the show, it would pick up a channel out of Las Vegas. Just depends on which way the wind blew. [Laughs] They put the repeater stations in the early '70s.

RM: Was there always electric power available in your lifetime here?

CR: Yes, there was. And the Revert family is the reason for it; Albert brought it in and the boys serviced it and ran the equipment. They had the generators that generated the power.

RM: And where were those generators located?

CR: Down where the Lost River is now. Right in back of that, there was a big tin building and that's where the generators were located. It was available pretty much 24 hours a day because they had started bringing in electric refrigerators.

RM: Do you know when the Reverts started their service?

CR: I'm not real sure; I remember it always being here until they brought in the REA.

RM: How expensive was the power?

CR: Not bad. You got a basic bill. I don't remember when they put the meters in.

RM: Could you hear the engines all over town?

CR: You'd better believe it. They were diesel engines—you know you're going to hear them.

[Laughs] It just got to the point, you blanked out the sound.

RM: Before you had a refrigerator, did you have Servel?

CR: Yes. When I was very small, we had what is known as a desert cooler—that was gunny sacks soaked in water. And in 1945 or '46, Daddy purchased a 1920s model gas refrigerator.

RM: Why didn't you get an electric refrigerator?

CR: I have no idea except that he trusted gas before power. Of course, if the generators ran out of fuel, the power went off.

RM: Did it go off much?

CR: Ever day, on a regular basis. [Laughs] But you never knew when it was going to go off.

RM: Did Beatty have power from outside when Rhyolite had it?

CR: Yes, there was power in Beatty when Rhyolite had it. But when Rhyolite folded, their financial resource disappeared so they just took out the power line.

RM: How did people get back and forth to Vegas or Tonopah?

CR: If you didn't have a car to drive or a pickup or whatever, you rode the bus.

RM: And was that the Mikuliches, or who owned the bus services?

CR: Yes, Mikuliches, or something like that.

RM: It was the Las Vegas–Reno Stage, wasn't it?

CR: Yes, the LVT&R and Greyhound combined.

RM: Did most people have cars or pickups when you were growing up?

CR: There were a lot of people that didn't. I couldn't even begin to give you an estimate on how many cars there were in town, but there were quite a few.

RM: So it was the connection with Vegas and the outside and the Test Site and everything that began to break down this close-knit community.

CR: To break down the close social aspect. The community, like I said, is still quite close-knit

RM: Who are some really interesting people who were here that we should remember, characters or otherwise?

CR: Oh, let's see—Claw Hammer Slim. What I remember about him is tall, tall, tall, and skinny. And he was missing two fingers on his left hand. He was a carpenter and he had lost his

fingers in a lumber mill

RM: And he was kind of the town carpenter?

CR: When he felt like it; he was also a prospector. Everybody here prospected at one time or another, especially the old timers.

RM: I am told that after Rhyolite folded, and even in your era, a lot of older men were here who were kind of refugees from Rhyolite—old miners—and they were single and what not. Is that your take?

CR: Yes. Actually, there were more men than women in this town. Where the Beatty Club is, there used to be a bench between there and in front of St. Peter's, and the old prospectors would all sit out there every day. They'd sit there and spit tobacco, drink their beer, swap yarns, bet on how fast I could shinny up a pole and over into the tree.

RM: What was that?

CR: There was a sign for St. Peter's Bar up between the tree and the building and there was a huge cottonwood tree and the sign went right out through the crotch of the tree. It was about 12, 14 feet up. They'd bet on how fast I could shinny up that pole hand-over-hand into the tree. I did it. All the boys in town did it, and most of the girls.

RM: Who were some of the other characters that stand out in your mind, personages?

CR: Clorox Bill. He had a strange beverage; that's why he was called Clorox. He would drink a mixture of Clorox and water every day.

RM: To decontaminate the water?

CR: To decontaminate himself, I think. He had a phobia about cleanliness. There were no bugs in his water.

RM: And it wasn't really necessary. The water here was good, wasn't it?

CR: It was good spring water. The only thing bad about it was it was high in fluoride.

RM: So probably everybody had good teeth. I wonder what his house was like—probably all tidy and spotless?

CR: I am sure it had to have been because that's the type of personality he was. His clothes were always very clean and very pressed.

RM: Was he an old miner?

CR: Yes, but I know nothing about his history.

RM: What other characters were there?

CR: We, of course, had the boxer who lived here; there's a picture of him in the other room.

He was featherweight champion of the world and he wound up here washing dishes at the Exchange Club until he died.

RM: I wonder how he ended up here.

CR: Who knows? This is one of those places where nobody really asked you why you were here. What was your business, was your business; what was their business, was theirs.

RM: That was the code of the West, wasn't it? You didn't delve too much into a person's background.

CR: That's pretty much a code of life, yes.

RM: Any other people that come to mind that should be mentioned?

CR: Johnny Konsas had a grocery and hardware store right on the curve down there. And he grew tobacco, right here in Beatty. He grew his own tobacco and rolled his own cigarettes.

RM: Did he ever sell it or give it to other people?

CR: He would share with locals, but it was never sold.

RM: Did most of the kids start smoking by a pretty young age?

CR: Some of us did; I was one that did. There was a watermelon farm out here; everybody'd go out and steal watermelons. Sweetest watermelons in the world.

RM: Where was the farm?

CR: Right over here about just below where the cemetery is. It was a pretty good-sized patch.

RM: Did he sell his watermelons anywhere besides Beatty?

CR: No, he could sell everything he grew here.

RM: And then you kids would go over there and pilfer?

CR: Yes, of course. Just like if there were peaches on a tree, we'd go grab a peach. There were peach trees, apricot trees, pear trees. Everybody had a fruit tree of some sort in their yard. Judge Gray had an apple tree that grew three different kinds of apples on it. I remember that nothing tastes sweeter than fruit right off the tree, especially when it's stolen fruit. Grapes— everybody had grape vines.

RM: Were there wine makers here?

CR: No, they just grew table grapes. Or if there were wine makers here I didn't know about it. Let me rephrase that—I mean, it's like my dad made his whiskey out of potato peels.

RM: Did your dad make pretty good whiskey?

CR: Yes, when he was out in Ash Meadows.

RM: Sure, so he knew his business. And he made it here—did he sell any?

CR: No.

RM: Do any other characters or personages come to mind?

CR: Well, obviously, Death Valley Scotty; but don't ask me my memories of him because mine are different from everybody else's. I was terrified of him because he was so big, and I was so little.

RM: He really wasn't that big of a man, was he?

CR: I don't know. But he just seemed that big to me. And of course being an obnoxious redhead, every time I was anywhere I was always into things. Daddy took me out to the Castle several times and I would start to walk somewhere and I was not allowed to go off the patio. I had to stay right where I could be watched every moment. Scotty didn't trust me.

CR: Other characters. Well, one of the more well-known characters of the state of Nevada used to go around the state with a white burro. He would come through here two or three times a year and stop and let tourists take pictures of him and his burro and pretend to be a prospector. The only thing he ever prospected was the silver out of somebody's pocket.

RM: [Laughs] Did you ever have parades, like on the Fourth of July?

CR: Yes, we always had parades on the Fourth of July, Labor Day, Veteran's Day, sometimes just for the hell of it.

RM: Who would participate in the parades?

CR: The whole town. Everybody under the age of 60 marched and the people over the age of 60 sat and watched. [Laughs]

RM: Did the school have a band or anything like that?

CR: Not really, no. We'd have dressed up dogs and bicycles and all kinds of things in the parade. There was no band, nothing like that. Sometimes there were floats and everybody would stand in the back of a pickup, yell and holler. It was a fun thing

RM: What were the big holidays that were important in your growing up?

CR: Christmas was family oriented: it was not really a public holiday like it is now. Pretty much it was celebrated by the families themselves. New Year's Eve was, of course, the big night when they'd shoot off the dynamite. The closest thing to fireworks we had was somebody'd go out in the hills at midnight and blow off a stick of dynamite. That was a big deal. It'd scare the hell out of the kids.

RM: And the dogs probably, too.

CR: And the dogs. Labor Day, Fourth of July, Veteran's Day. We would frequently have a

dance on Valentine's Day. Easter sunrise services were almost always celebrated down in Death Valley at the sand dunes, or up at Scotty's Castle, for the sunrise services. When I was a kid, Mrs. Johnson would transport her piano from the Castle—not the big organs, but a piano—down to the services. There would be piano music and people singing and it was just amazing. I can remember Momma and I getting dressed up in matching dresses and going down there with our white gloves and white hats. Oh, it was so awesome.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: What about church life here? There were several churches?

CR: As far as organized religion, there was the Episcopal Church and it was the only actual church building; and then there was Mrs. Morgan's church.

RM: What denomination was Mrs. Morgan's?

CR: I am really not too sure, but it was Christian, trust me. Very, very Christian. [Laughs]

RM: Would you describe people in Beatty as being pretty religious or not too religious or religious but not church going; how would you characterize them?

CR: You've got to understand that the Episcopal Church did not have a steady minister until in the 1950s, when Ken Priest came. It was catch as catch can. Everybody used the Episcopal Church—even the Catholics used it. I can remember going to summer Bible School with the Catholic nuns. Of course, the Episcopal nuns would come down and teach us. Sometimes we had Bible School four or five times during the summer for a week or something like that and each was a different religion. We had a very broad religious training in the summertime.

RM: In some mining towns in the West, I think there was kind of a dual division. On one side were those who were pretty religious and kind of moralistic and on the other side were people, probably including a lot of old miners, who were not very religious; if not disdainful towards religion, certainly not very strong believers. Did you see that here?

CR: Not really, because there was not a Sunday service every week. Everybody's religion was their own; it was personal. Like I said, the Episcopal Church was used by all religions and there was never a regular Sunday service at any time. Nobody ever put anybody down on that aspect of things.

RM: Your religion was your private business and they probably didn't proselytize, did they?

CR: No.

RM: Did you ever have any occasion to know anything about the Indians and their religion?

CR: No, but if you talked to Bobby Revert, he spent a lot of time with them. Being a boy, he was into everything all the time. Although I spent a lot of time with the Indian kids, I was never privy to their religious beliefs.

RM: There was a brothel in town when you were growing up, wasn't there?

CR: Let's see, there was The Willow Tree, The Red Rooster, and The Jolly Dolly.

RM: As a girl growing up in town, what was your understanding and perception of that as you

got older?

CR: My dad didn't allow me to put them down. I can remember getting ready for a school play and I went down to The Red Rooster and Chili fixed my hair; she was the madam there. The girls from The Willow Tree loaned me their shoes so I would have high heels . . . I can't remember where I got the dress-up dress, but it was a really strange gingham dress because I had outgrown my costume for the play. And we did have plays here. Clay Bates used to write plays all the time.

RM: So it was perfectly all right for a young girl to go down there and get her hair fixed and everything? Nobody would have said, "Eww, girls shouldn't go in a place like that."

CR: Well, most of the girls really didn't go down there and visit with the ladies, but no, they weren't put down. They were kept separate. They were not allowed to come up into the town itself, but if you went down into their neighborhood, that was a different story.

RM: Was Chili an older woman⁹

CR: She was an older lady, yes. She had dark, dark auburn hair, a cross between brown and red, and she wore it shoulder length in curls. She was very pretty, very petite.

RM: And she was the madam, she wasn't a working girl?

CR: She was the madam, and she was married; she had a husband. She lived in her own home and just went down and supervised the process.

RM: The Willow Tree—was that located. . . ?

CR: It was right next to The Red Rooster. The competition was here and here.

RM: In your view as a kid, what was the town's perception of prostitution, or were there different opinions?

CR: There were various and sundry different opinions around here. As a general rule, like I said, they stayed separate; they did not mix in the town. They were a large contributor to the community in that, of course, they brought tourists in. If there was anything that was needed by any person in this community, whether it be somebody to spend the night sitting by your bedside when you were sick, or if you needed a dollar, if you had any kind of a family disaster, they were right there to help, financially or otherwise.

RM: So the brothels were very supportive of the community and probably likewise. And the townspeople never cast moral aspersions on it?

CR: Well, if they did, it wasn't in my presence. My dad really liked all of the girls down there. He would work for them; he did the plumbing and any little odd jobs they needed done around

the brothels.

RM: Were the brothels pretty large structures?

CR: Not really. The Red Rooster. I think, had two stories. It had a bar about the size of this building, from that wall to the front wall.

RM: Probably about 25 feet or 30 feet. How many girls typically would be at The Red Rooster, would you say?

CR: Anywhere between three and eight it would depend on the season of the year.

RM: What was the good season?

CR: Usually winter, because it v. as warmer here than up north.

RM: And people would winter down here from places like Tonopah and Round Mountain?

CR: You know how nasty it gets in Tonopah. It's never that nasty here.

RM: No. So this was a place to winter for a lot of old miners and prospectors? What did they live in—shacks around the area?

CR: Yes. And there were a few of the old mine tunnels that some of them would live in.

RM: Bobby Revert told me that when he was a kid, there were as many as ten older men, probably refugees from Rhyolite or whatever, who would put a pack on their back and head to their claim and maybe be out there a week.

CR: Yes, or sometimes six weeks.

RM: And come back with gold just like your dad when he was prospecting—and then sell it to the Chinaman. Did you hear that expression? The buyer wasn't necessarily a Chinaman, but that's what they called him.

CR: That might've been what they called him, but I never heard the expression. It was never used in my hearing. My father was very, very careful to never denigrate any race, religion, or otherwise.

RM: Give me any recollections you have on these prospectors. Where did they go, and so on?

CR: I am never sure of where they went because these hills are pretty big and pretty sparse. There was a silver claim on the back side of Beatty Mountain. There were gold claims all over out here in the Bullfrog hills. And you go clear over to the Grapevines and down into the Funerals. If you're going to walk, you're going to carry enough water for a day, which is about a gallon of water. So that means that you've got to go from spring to spring in a day. If you have a pickup, you can drive out to your claim and you can carry enough water to last a week but not much else.

My dad had what he called his grub box. It was a box about maybe two and half, three feet long by about a foot wide by maybe a foot and half, two feet, deep. And in it he had his canned goods, can opener, knife, fork, and spoon, and a pot, and anything else . . . salt, pepper, anything he needed. And if he wanted to, he would take onions and bread and everything else right in on top of it.

RM: Did he take bacon and beans and the usual? And he had a pot and everything to cook them in?

CR: Everything was in his grub box and it was all compartmentalized.

RM: What canned goods did he carry?

CR: Things like green beans, potatoes, corned beef. He loved corned beef.

RM: Did they carry raw potatoes?

CR: Yes, they did. They carried a lot of beans because they're lightweight. And corn, the dry corn that you could soak up and cook, and oatmeal.

RM: And they would cook over a campfire. Did you and your dad go out into the hills when you were a kid? What was that like?

CR: Wonderful. There was never a sky so big and bright as the one out in the desert. It's awesome. And that was before there was light pollution. There's light pollution now, tremendous. Our desert skies are starting to suffer from it now.

RM: Oh, yes. Plus the air pollution.

So as a little girl you had your bed roll, camping out there with Dad. Did you sleep in a tent or out in the open?

CR: We slept out in the open; sometimes in the back of the truck, sometimes on the ground.

RM: Did you have a dog to bark if a coyote or something came around?

CR: I always had a dog. I've had a dog since I was two years old. Before that, I had a cat. Everybody out here in town, by the way, did have their resident cat—for rodent control.

RM: Rodents are a problem, aren't they?

CR: If you let it go, rodents are a problem. They like the water and they like the grasses and grains that grow around the water.

RM: When you went out with your dad, would you stay just a night or a few nights?

CR: Sometimes it would only be a night; sometimes it would only be a week.

RM: How great! And you were probably helping him along as a little kid would?

CR: When I wasn't busy falling into cacti. [Laughter]

RM: Do you have any other recollections about other miners? Did most of them walk or did they have burros?

CR: Most of them walked and some of them did have burros they used as pack burros. A burro is not the most comfortable thing to ride. Some people didn't mind riding on them, but as a general rule, most people didn't ride them because they were uncomfortable. They have a backbone that sits up about. . . .

RM: Yes, a couple inches.

CR: It's very uncomfortable to ride on that, unless you had a saddle. A lot of the prospectors didn't have enough money to afford saddles.

RM: These guys were poor, weren't they?

CR: There has never been such a thing as a rich prospector. Prospectors were the nuts-and-bolts people. They went out and they'd find the ores and the minerals. Then would come your mining people, your engineers and things like that.

RM: They didn't sell out what they'd found for good money in most cases, did they?

CR: As a general rule, they had no idea what it was—they just needed enough money to go out again. Very rarely did a prospector make good money. If he'd make money, he'd be wealthy for a week. As a general rule, I never saw a wealthy prospector. I actually never saw a wealthy miner. Miners worked hard for what they had and the only people that ever really got wealthy off of the mines were the promoters. Not the investors, not the man who did the work; it was the promoters.

RM: As they say, they mined the pockets. Did any of them, besides your dad, go out to their claims with pickup or motorized transportation?

CR: Well, Uncle Dick would con Daddy in taking him out to his mines. That was Dick Richards. He lived in a cabin on the back lot on my dad's property. He had a mine out in the Bare Mountains and every few weeks he'd con Daddy into taking him out there. He had a little shack built on it. He never got rich off of it, but he stayed comfortable.

RM: Did most of the guys that went out into the hills have a shack at their diggings?

CR: They would either have a shack or if they didn't, they would live in the tunnel. This wind out here gets pretty nasty so you needed some kind of protection.

RM: And you couldn't just put up a lean-to or anything like that?

CR: No, you had to build something a little substantial.

RM: What did a bedroll consist of?

CR: A bedroll would consist of a piece of canvas and one or two blankets and if you were real lucky, a pillow.

RM: If you weren't lucky, what did you use?

CR: You used your arm just like you do when you lie down on the floor. [Laughs]

RM: They would fold the blanket and sleep on one half and cover themselves with the other half, wouldn't they?

CR: That's right. If you had two blankets, you would lay your canvas out and fold your blankets in half and if you had two blankets and it wasn't too cold, there would be three layers of blanket under you, one layer of blanket and canvas over the top of you. The canvas would be to turn the wind and the rain, or the snakes.

RM: How did they deal with the snake problem? That's what would scare me.

CR: Snakes are an interesting animal. [Laughter] Very carefully. If you woke up in the morning with a snake on your belly, you didn't move until the snake left.

RM: They were attracted to the warmth, probably—the body heat. Was it common for a snake to join a sleeper, there?

CR: It was not a very common thing, but it was not unknown. But as a general rule, snakes, like coyotes, are smart enough to stay away. Because man is not the desert animals' best friend.

RM: Did you and your father ever have a problem with snakes while camping?

CR: I don't remember having a problem with them. I can remember Daddy grabbing a stick and throwing a snake for 20 feet. He'd get a stick like this and flip them, to get them away from me.

RM: How about scorpions and centipedes?

CR: I am going to tell you like I told the Girl Scouts the other day: You dealt with whatever you had come along, as needed. The desert scorpions here are not deadly. You can get pretty sick from them, but they're not deadly. A rattlesnake can or cannot be deadly, depending on which snake it is that bites you, but you're going to get darned good and sick.

RM: Which snakes are deadly around here?

CR: The worst of the snakebites now would be your desert coral, your Mojave green, and your Panamint red. The desert coral is only six to eight inches long and it's red and black. The venom from that animal is very, very deadly. The Mojave green and the Panamint red are crosses between the desert rattler and a cobra. Their bite is very, very bad. Nobody is sure how these crosses happened, but they did.

RM: How about the sidewinder?

CR: The sidewinder will make you sick: and if you are particularly prone to allergies, they will kill you. The desert rattler, the same way. I just saw a diamondback last week; he was about two feet long and he had two inches of rattles on his back end.

RM: And these old miners and went out and slept on the ground and took their chances.

CR: Sure. We still do.

RM: Do you take any precautions? They say if you put a rope around your bedroll, a snake won't. . . .

CR: That's one I never heard. There was never anything like that. If the snake came to call, he came to call. You tried to make sure you weren't anywhere around them.

RM: Bobby Revert told me about an Indian woman, kind of a medicine woman, who could treat those bites really well.

CR: I forget her name, but I heard about her.

RM: Do you believe it?

CR: Yes. But most generally, if you got bit by a snake you cut it below where the venom was and let it bleed out.

RM: Were centipedes a problem?

CR: I saw them, but I never got bit by them. The chickens liked them.

RM: Did people keep chickens here?

CR: Oh, yes Almost everybody had at least one or two hens, and there were really fresh eggs for breakfast.

RM: Did anybody keep goats?

CR: Only the Strozzis, that I'm aware of They had goats at the ranch up in the mountains and out at Rhyolite. But when I was a kid growing up here, I never saw goats. There were cows out at Springdale, and I think they were the only ones.

RM: Let's shift gears a little bit—what's your earliest recollection of Rhyolite?

CR: Being a little bitty girl going out there with my daddy and how the depot would smell like steam and oil because Westmoreland used kerosene lamps for light. It smelled like kerosene lamps and the steam was embedded in the walls from when the trains were running.

Westmoreland was a sweet old man; a little raspy around the edges, but he was sweet. But he always kept chocolates for the ladies and I was considered a lady so I got a chocolate. He had an unusual dining taste. Let me clarify that a little bit. Wes had sugar diabetes—they

called it sweet water in those days. He would pay the Beatty kids who would go out there anywhere from a nickel to a quarter a pint jar to go out and catch ants and he would fry the ants up in a frying pan and eat them. He said there was something in the ants that would eat the sugar, therefore combating the diabetes. He also had a beverage habit. He would drink two fifths of whiskey a day.

RM: Good lord, no wonder he had diabetes.

CR: He would wake up in the morning and there would be a fifth of whiskey open beside his bed, and the first thing he did was a shot of whiskey. Then he'd have his coffee and another shot of whiskey. And he would go through his day. He was a true alcoholic. His sister was a very devout Baptist lady. When she and Reverend Heisler took over out there, there was no liquor sold on site.

RM: From one extreme to the other.

CR: From one extreme to the other. Wes ran girls out there, too—he had two girls that were upstairs. I can remember wanting to go upstairs and explore and being told I couldn't go up there because I would disturb the ladies. I was never allowed upstairs, but I could go anywhere I wanted to in the town; and there were a lot of buildings to explore—there were still papers on the floor in the bank.

RM: Let's explore Westmoreland a bit. What was his background, do you know?

CR: I am not real sure; I know that in 1919, he bought the whole Townsite of Rhyolite. He put it up for sale in 1922, and it never did sell.

RM: Where did he come from?

CR: Georgia.

RM: Had he been a miner?

CR: No, but he prospected. He was an ex-military man, all kinds of things.

RM: Did he always have a couple of girls there or was it just an intermittent thing?

CR: It was just an intermittent thing.

RM: It seems like there were a lot of prostitutes in the various establishments in town. What were the economic dynamics? Were all the old miners basically supporting it?

CR: I don't really know what the economic dynamics were because, as I said, I was a little kid. As long there was food on the table at home and Daddy gave me my nickel a week or 25cents a week, I was happy.

RM: Yes. I don't know how the kids were here in town, but my brother and I were just

oblivious. We lived in Ely for a time and there was The Big Four down there and we didn't have a clue about what was going on there. [Laughs]

CR: Well, that was me. I was oblivious; I spent my time out in the desert.

RM: Talk about some of the structures that were still standing in Rhyolite when you were a kid.

CR: The walls were pretty much still there on the bank and more of the Overbury Building was still up. The Bottle House was there, of course; Murphy still lived in it. There was one wooden building that had been somebody's home up by the depot; it was torn down in the '80s.

RM: Was it a big home?

CR: Yes, it was quite large. It was up on what they called Nob Hill. Even falling down, it was still a beautiful place. It was torn down when a movie crew come in. It disturbed the view through the cameraman's lenses and so the director went out with a bulldozer and dozed it down.

RM: That's disgusting.

CR: There was a lot of that type of damage done out there.

RM: How many other buildings were out there?

CR: Not many; just 10, 15 buildings in one state of repair or another. You've got to understand that between 1913 and 1918, Carrara was a going prospect over here—in the *Carrara Obelisk* there was an ad that said, "There are 300 buildings left in Rhyolite; you better get your name in with Bongberg if you want it moved."

RM: And now there's nothing at Carrara.

CR: There's just one foundation there and you can see a road going right up into the hill. It's an arrow-straight road. That's the old chain-braked railroad grade up to the mine. You can still see the quarries; there are two quarries up there. And where the white buildings are is new Carrara. Old Carrara is another probably about a mile down the road toward Vegas.

RM: And there's a spot there where there is something like a cement foundation.

CR: That was the loading dock for the marble to be put on to the train.

RM: So they moved a lot of houses out of Rhyolite to Carrara—and then what happened to them?

CR: They were moved to various and sundry mining camps and burned down or blew away. There's one chimney left out there.

RM: I noticed on a map there is both Chloride Cliff and Chloride City. What's the difference?

CR: Chloride City is where the camp was for the mine.

RM: Jack Crowell's grandfather lived out there, but he lived at the mine area, not at Chloride City.

CR: That's right; his grandfather was mine manager.

RM: How many people were living in Chloride City at its peak, would you say?

CR: Probably 150. There were several mines.

RM: Were they good?

CR: Not really. They were mining chloride of silver.

RM: And where were they treating it?

CR: Right there.

RM: There was always at least one person living at Rhyolite for years and years, right? Who were some of the people who you remember? We talked about Westmoreland. CR: Well, Westmoreland's sister. To me she was always Mrs. Heisler, and her husband was always Reverend Heisler.

RM: They moved in there from Georgia?

CR: Yes, they did after Wes died. He owned it and he willed it to her because his son was not interested. She had a little museum in there. There was an Indian lady—Louise Morrison. She lived up in the old water master's house. And there was another married couple that lived there.

RM: The water master was in charge of the pump and had a house there?

CR: He was in charge of the pump, yes.

RM: And that's up from the depot? Is it still there?

CR: Yes. It belongs to Lou Shue now. He has lived out there for a lot of years; I don't know for how long.

RM: How long did the Heislars live there?

CR: They died in the 1970s: they were there from about 1945 or '46 until the 1970s.

RM: Did they have any enterprise going besides the little museum?

CR: They had the museum and they sold sandwiches and soda pop. Then there was Tommy and Mary Thompson; they stayed down at the Bottle House after Murphy died. They came in, in the early '50s. They raised their grandson Evan there and he moved the large wood building from Beatty to Rhyolite. He raised most of his kids there. That house has quite a history. It was actually a mercantile store in Rhyolite and it was moved to Pioneer. From Pioneer it was moved into Beatty, and eventually it went back out to Rhyolite, but not to the original site. It's a shame that it's now in trespass and when BLM gets around to it, they're going to force them to tear it

down or move it. That's why you see a "for sale" sign on it.

RM: Why is it in trespass? It was original there, wasn't it?

CR: But not on that site.

RM: Do they know what site it was first on so they could put it back on the site?

CR: No. I don't think the building will withstand another move because it's so badly deteriorated.

RM: Did anybody ever build anything out there in your lifetime that maybe got moved out or something?

CR: No, the only new construction out there would be the red barn, and that's down in the old town of Bullfrog.

RM: Is there anything left of Bullfrog?

CR: The walls of the icehouse and the old jail. There's a jail in Rhyolite and another jail down in Bullfrog. Bullfrog had the only jail out there until 1907, when they constructed the new jail in Rhyolite.

RM: I understand that Bullfrog never really got that big.

CR: No. It was just loud. Bullfrog blew its own horn and then, of course, Senator Stewart had his mine in Rhyolite but his residence and law office were in Bullfrog.

RM: Can you still see where all that was?

CR: Only if you know what you're looking at.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: Where exactly was Shorty Harris and Ed Cross's discovery?

CR: Further out in the Bullfrog Hills.

RM: Toward Daylight Pass?

CR: No. You go around the hills to the back going west-northwest around the hills. It was about probably two miles from Buck Springs. It's on the other side of the hill from Rhyolite. The modern way of getting there is to drive out the dirt road and then take the left-hand fork and go off on the railroad grade over the cattle guard, turn right immediately, go up to where the boulders block the road, and you're in the general vicinity of their original discovery.

RM: That was called the original Bullfrog Mine, wasn't it? Was there a good deposit there?

CR: There was money made there, yes. And there was still money made there in the 1980s. In the 1980s, Angst Incorporated was mining up near the old Homestake Mine and Gold Bar. The park allowed them to take a certain amount of ore out of the original Bullfrog Mine and work the dumps and they got quite a bit of gold out. The reason they couldn't mine so much out there because it was so hard to extract the ore. They had to go into the acid leaching process to get the gold out.

RM: Did they open pit it or were they doing underground?

CR: It was underground until Angst took over and did an open pit.

RM: So you can't actually see the actual site where they picked up the ore—that was part of the pit?

CR: Yes.

RM: Okay, Shorty and Cross found the ore and word spread. Then how did they get around the back side and into Rhyolite proper?

CR: You mean, how did the prospectors go that way?

RM: It seems like they made their discovery and somehow it got shifted over to there.

CR: Well, no, that's where they found the best ore. But with the onslaught of all of the prospectors, the most prolific area for ore was over in Rhyolite.

RM: How far would it be from the original Bullfrog Mine to the town of Bullfrog?

CR: Probably a quarter of a mile. That's to the original town of Bullfrog. Bullfrog was well named—it kept jumping. The town of Bullfrog jumped about a mile and a half on around the hill in late 1905. (By 1906, it was down where it is now.) It became Bonanza and went on down to

become Bullfrog again. The reason it was named Bullfrog is because Bullfrog had a post office and in order to keep the post office, they had to keep the name.

RM: The first town, a quarter of a mile away, was called Bullfrog and that's where the post office was? Then the next town, a mile and a quarter you say, was Bonanza. And then how far from Bonanza was the spot where Bullfrog stuck?

CR: Probably about a mile and half, two miles; closer to two miles.

RM: Why didn't a town develop at the original Bullfrog Mine?

CR: Because there was more activity over on the other side.

RM: Were there other mines around the original Bullfrog?

CR: There were other mines around there. The ones that come to mind first off are Amethyst and Gold Bar.

RM: Were they productive?

CR: Very.

RM: Up until when?

CR: All of the towns out there pretty much folded around the same time. When Rhyolite went away most of the other townsites went away too.

RM: If it was productive at the original Bullfrog area, I don't understand why people didn't put a community there.

CR: They did. But there was more money to be made over in the Rhyolite area for more people. Bullfrog became a very small, very clannish, tight-knit organization. There were probably maybe 25 or 50 miners and they were still there when the railroad came through and they changed the name then to Original.

RM: So this tightness didn't allow development? Why were they tight like that?

CR: Because that's the way they chose to be. You'll sometimes run into areas where people depend on each other so much that they don't trust anyone from the outside. It was a very cliquish, very tight-knit group there.

RM: Did this little group own all of the mines, basically, there?

CR: All of the mines in that one canyon.

RM: So the development went over to kind of the Horseshoe? Was that a better townsite, too?

CR: Actually, it was a better townsite; there was more area to allow for growth. Rhyolite came and it grew and it was going to be the biggest city in the West. That's why the depot, the Dearborn Station of the West, was built there.

RM: Why was it called the Dearborn? Where did they get that name?

CR: I have no idea except there is a town back East that's quite a metropolis and the station there was the Dearborn.

RM: Right after Shorty and Cross found the original Bullfrog Mine, did others make their discoveries over in the vicinity of the Horseshoe right away?

CR: Within weeks.

RM: So those guys were all over those hills looking?

CR: They were all over those hills_ When they went north to file their claim, Shorty Harris got drunk. He bragged about how great it ~as and all this good stuff and sold his claim. By the time they got down here after getting the claims all filed, there was already a town growing.

People were filing claims on top of each other.

RM: In Rhyolite?

CR: In Bullfrog, Rhyolite—all over the hills out there.

RM: Why did Bonanza then spring up when you had Bullfrog there?

CR: Because there was more room. That was Bonanza and then the name changed to Amargosa and then it jumped down to Bullfrog.

RM: Why did they make that change?

CR: I have no idea. I am going to be very foolish and say this, but I was not alive in those days. I don't remember! [Laughs] I have no idea what their mindset was.

RM: But meanwhile, Bullfrog had the post office.

CR: Bullfrog had the post office—and it was run out of a tent. They had no mailboxes or anything. The mail delivery would come in once a month and the postmaster would stand up on a five-gallon keg and call out names

RM: And then Bonanza/Amargosa didn't have a post office?

CR: No. When they moved it again, down to below, they took the post office with them.

RM: And meanwhile the original Bullfrog just died?

CR: Yes, it just sat there all by itself.

RM: And probably a few hangers-on there; probably some of this original clique.

CR: According to rumor—and I want to make very clear that this is a rumor—one of Wyatt Earp's group was killed there in Amargosa, when Bonanza became Amargosa. Like I said, this is rumor. Do not swear it as fact, please.

RM: Because Earp was up in Tonopah.. wasn't he?

CR: Yes. But don't forget, this is the rail line going to Tonopah.

RM: In the meantime, Rhyolite's developing and the new Bullfrog is developing. Then Rhyolite kind of upstages the new Bullfrog.

CR: Oh, yes. They were in very severe competition.

RM: And the person who laid out the original town of Rhyolite didn't withdraw it from federal ownership. He just went out there and platted lots.

CR: Right, he just went out there and platted the ground.

RM: Let's talk about some of the mines that developed around the Horseshoe in that area. The Montgomery was the most important, right?

CR: The Montgomery Shoshone, yes. That was one of your best production mines out there; they did a combination of what we call now open pit but they used to call glory-holing and tunnel.

RM: They would tunnel in and then pull it down and create a glory hole?

CR: Yes. it was in a rhyolite foundation . . . porphyry, rather. When it was in full production, it made well over a million dollars. And as long as Montgomery was in possession of it, the Montgomery Mine was not a Rhyolite mine, it was a Beatty mine. He would not allow his mine to be classified as a Rhyolite mine. Once he sold it, it was classified as a Rhyolite mine, but prior to that, it was a Beatty mine

RM: Why did he want to be classified in Beatty and not Rhyolite?

CR: Because he preferred Beatty. He liked the town of Beatty. He built his mill here. He built a hotel here. He actually liked the people here.

RM: Montgomery made his discovery early on, didn't he? When did the mine peak in the Rhyolite era?

CR: During the Rhyolite era, the mine actually peaked about 1909; then it started shutting down production.

RM: Did they run out of good ore?

CR: They ran out of money.

RM: So they were living on promotion money?

CR: Basically, all mines run on promotion money. Montgomery Shoshone pretty much ceased production in 1909. However, there was a watchman or person out there clear up until 1945; but he didn't live there.

RM: What was he watching, the machinery?

CR: Yes, he was pretty much making sure that the work got done and the taxes got paid on it.

RM: So they weren't patented claims?

CR: They were patented, but he still worked there.

RM: At its peak, how many men do you think Montgomery Shoshone was working?

CR: I believe the newspaper said 50.

RM: Somebody said that when Barrick or whoever reworked that, the old-timers had missed the big vein of gold by two feet. Is that true?

CR: Yes, but it wasn't in the Montgomery Shoshone Mine; it was over on Ladd Mountain.

RM: You have this vast knowledge, how did you get it? It just wasn't living here because other people lived here and they don't have this depth of knowledge.

CR: Well, I did a lot of studying—I read a lot. I went back into the old newspapers, like Suzy McCoy did. Also, my husband was very interested in mining so I spent a lot of time in Boulder City—they had a vast library there. It was part of the Mackay School of Mines, but it was the Nevada State Department of Mineralogy. I just spent a lot of time in there in the library and in the labs.

RM: Plus, you knew some of these older characters. Now, what was the No. 2 mine in the Horseshoe area?

CR: That would have been the National Bank. It was located over near Tramps 1 and 2.

RM: And where were they? Facing into the Horseshoe?

CR: Facing into Rhyolite; you used to be able to see those. As you were going in, it would be on your left. There used to be chutes built there.

RM: And they were pretty good producers?

CR: They were pretty good producers and the National Bank bought them out so it all became the National Bank Mine. The National Bank was on Bonanza Mountain. Ladd Mountain is the mountain across from it. They were tunnels.

RM: Did they go in a long ways? How far, would you say?

CR: I wouldn't even begin to venture a guess. I do know that in the 1960s, I was told there were 25 miles of hand-hewn tunnel in Bonanza Mountain. That would be encompassing all of the mines in Bonanza Mountain.

RM: No kidding. Now, that's on the left?

CR: That's the one on the left. When Barrick took over, they open pitted that.

RM: Was that the best mountain for ore as far as Rhyolite was concerned?

CR: The ore went all the way around it and under it. There was not a massive vein anywhere.

RM: What's the country rock that that ore went into?

CR: It's called rhyolite. It's a volcanic structure.

RM: And then there were fractures that the solutions came up in and deposited the gold? And you said the big vein, that they missed by two feet, was on Ladd Mountain?

CR: That was on Ladd Mountain. yes; that was not in the Montgomery Shoshone.

RM: How deep did Montgomery take the Montgomery Shoshone? It was a shaft, right?

CR: It was a shaft with adits around it.

RM: Were they long drifts out o

CR: Yes. I think it went down about 800 feet. Don't quote me on that but it was very, very deep; I know there were eight or nine little side levels. They went in several different directions, mostly on a north-south radius. If you ever are out there and you pay attention and pull out a compass, Golden Street, which is your paved street out there, runs due north.

RM: Do you know off the top of your head how much they would have taken out of the Montgomery Shoshone?

CR: Over a million dollars is all I can tell you. And in that day and age that was about like a billion is now.

RM: Can you still see the Ladd Mountain mines?

CR: No. They were pitted out. On the Rhyolite side you can see some of the tunnels still up in there.

RM: Were they extensive workings?

CR: Yes, they were. The old Senator Stewart Mine is actually right down out in the bottom and you can see a pile of white porphyry out there.

RM: In the bottom of the pit?

CR: No. In the town of Rhyolite.

RM: Was the Senator Stewart a good mine?

CR: It was a mine

RM: Did Senator Stewart own it?

CR: I don't know whether he actually owned it or whether it was named for him.

RM: That might have been a good promotion technique, to name it the Senator Stewart and help bring in the suckers.

CR: Senator Stewart was . . . have you ever read his book?

RM: No I haven't.

CR: You really need to read his bio. It's awesome. This man was amazing. You know that he was one of the ones that made up the 1876 mining laws. He's a huge figure in the West, an awesome person.

RM: He moved to Bullfrog thinking he was going to wind up his career there, didn't he?

CR: Yes he did and he wound up going back to Washington again. He had to go back there to make up the money he lost here.

RM: What mines were kind of second after the Montgomery Shoshone in terms of importance and productivity?

CR: That would have been the National Bank mines. I think it was in 1907 when the National Bank purchased Tramps 1 and 2 and made it all one mine. Yes, they were high production. We have some photos somewhere here in the museum of sacked gold ore waiting for the train to come by at the National Bank. Montgomery Shoshone was important in that it had its own spur from Rhyolite.

RM: You mentioned Beatty was the mill for the Montgomery Shoshone.

CR: They had a mill, yes. After they got it down to fines, they shipped it, sometimes to San Francisco, sometimes to Ogden, for refining.

RM: They didn't cyanide it or anything like that here?

CR: They did the cyanide process here, but they took it to either San Francisco or Ogden.

RM: How big were the workings of the Tramps?

CR: They were pretty good-sized. I can remember going into the tunnels. They were a good 500, 600 feet back in just going straight back.

RM: Were they just driving on ore? It sounds like they were promotional.

CR: I think it was mostly promotional. Suzy will tell you that there were 53 mines in Rhyolite. There were also 53 saloons. Every mine had its own drinking spot.

RM: So the workers at one mine tended to patronize a given saloon?

CR: Pretty much, yes. Otherwise, it was likely to end up a bloody mess.

RM: There was rivalry between the mines?

CR: Very much. It was very competitive about who had the best ore, who paid the best money, who had the hardest workers. You name it, they'd find something to get into a disagreement about.

RM: Who found the Tramps mines? Do you recall off the top of your head?

CR: I think it was probably one of the Busch Brothers, but I am not going to swear to it.

RM: It sounds to me like the Tramps mines were not that productive. Is that fair?

CR: They were productive, but not monstrously productive. They made some profit but they weren't a large producer; neither was the National.

RM: Where was the National in relation to the Tramps?

CR: You have the Tramps 1 and 2 here and the National was right over there, all on Bonanza Mountain.

RM: How far would the National have been from the Tramps mines?

CR: About 100 yards.

RM: Were they about all the same level?

CR: No, they were all on three separate levels. Tramps 1 and 2 are one above the other and the National was down a little lower.

RM: And the National was the most productive?

CR: Well, it was the one that made the most money.

RM: Were you in its workings as a kid?

CR: As a kid I was in a lot of those tunnels.

RM: Was there anything distinguishing about it?

CR: No, they were all deep, dark. black holes. They smelled like dirt. Hey, I was a kid—what do you expect? [Laughs] My memories of mines and such are always of the smell.

RM: And if they don't have good circulation, the miners are back there breathing all that dust.

CR: These were pretty well-vented mines.

RM: Coming down a list of important mines, what would be the next one, would you say?

CR: I don't know; probably some of the mines over on Ladd Mountain would come in there because they were not really high production mines. But like you said, they missed the veins by inches.

RM: How big was that vein that they missed?

CR: They missed it by about two feet and I believe the guys that told me about it said it was probably about six inches—gold-ridden quartz.

RM: Was it high grade?

CR: Visible wire gold, and a lot of it.

RM: How far did it go?

CR: They wouldn't tell me because it was still in operation then.

RM: They must've mined that very carefully.

CR: Very, very, very carefully. There were a lot of the mines up there that had what you'd call jewelry grade ore. That was usually found in quartz.

RM: Is any of that still around town?

CR: I don't know where, but there are places that you could find it.

RM: What were the best mines on Ladd Mountain?

CR: I don't even remember. I know the Senator Stewart's down in the flats, but it was considered a Ladd Mountain mine. You can see five or six holes up there but I don't remember their names.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Do you have some stories to tell, Claudia?

CR: These are some stories I read in the old newspapers. One of them is about Diamond Jim, who was sort of a local rounder and outlaw-type guy. He thought he was bigger than God. He was a very notorious drunk and when he was drunk, he was mean. It seems that Jim was wandering through the LV&T railroad yards and he saw a little Mexican laborer who worked on the railroad. The Mexican had a brand new hat; Jim told him he wanted his hat and he says he couldn't have it. He offered him \$5 for it; he said he wouldn't take it. He kept on, it got up to \$20, and the Mexican still wouldn't sell his hat. It was a special hat to him So Jim pulled out a gun and shot him, took his hat, and went staggering out through the rail yards talking about mean, selfish people who wouldn't even sell him their hat. Somebody that had seen the whole thing got the sheriff, the sheriff arrested him, and that was the only real crime that Diamond Jim got arrested for. He spent 15 years in the Nevada State Penitentiary.

RM: I'll be darned. What other crimes had he committed that he'd never been punished for?

CR: Minor robberies, Saturday night drunks; just everything that a rowdy, rough guy could get into. He was a bully. When he got drunk he was mean, and when he got mean, you never could tell what he was going to do.

RM: Do you have any other anecdotes or stories?

CR: A particular favorite of mine that I used to use on the bus tours that I did was . . . you've seen these dust devils spinning out into the desert—do you know what they are?

RM: Sure, they're little tornadoes.

CR: Oh, no, no, no, no. In about 1917, the *Death Valley Chukawalla* reported that a bunch of scientists, young college scientists, discovered a brand new fish and it was called the canteen fish. And as you know, the Amargosa River surfaces one place in the morning and another place in the afternoon and it sinks down underneath the ground in between. So what you're seeing as you see this swirling dust out through the air is the canteen fish that had swam around in the morning and got their little buckets for their tails, canteens full of water, and then went spinning out through the desert to find the next place the Amargosa would surface.

RM: That's cute. Is it true that the Amargosa surfaces in different places every day?

CR: No, it's not true. The Amargosa River is the longest charted underground river in the United States.

RM: It comes under Beatty, doesn't it, and comes through the Beatty Narrows. Is there a lot of water in the Amargosa?

CR: Not really. Most of the time it's a stop-and-start stream maybe an inch and a half deep by a foot wide.

RM: But is there a lot of water flowing underground?

CR: Underground, yes. Under the surface yes, there is plenty of water.

RM: Were you there when they had big floods in the river channel over here on the east side of Beatty? Were they pretty substantial?

CR: Very substantial. The water would come down from Pine Mountain just in torrents. The water would sometimes be three or four feet high and on a downhill slope, it would be running sometimes 25, 30 miles an hour. One time they spotted the water coming down the river and everybody ran down that way and by the time they got to the Narrows, the water had caught up with them. My dad said in the 1930s a man and his son were in an old car and they got caught in the dip—they now have a bridge there but at that time it was a dip in the road—by a flood, and they were killed.

RM: Was the Indian village in the river area?

CR: No, it was on the banks of the river on the north side. They never got taken out by the floods because they would move out. The Indians are smart. When it got to raining too hard up above, they would move out of the low areas.

RM: Where is Pine Mountain?

CR: It's a big mountain up on the Test Site.

RM: In your lifetime, have you known people who knew Shorty Harris? He was gone, I think, before your time.

CR: Yes. The only people that I would have known that knew him would have been, like I said, guys like Claw Hammer Slim Murphy; they are all gone now. Being a kid at the time, history didn't appeal to me.

RM: Tell me more about Death Valley Scotty.

CR: Like I told you the other day, he was a big man and I was a little girl; he had a big voice and he scared me. Now, Bobby Revert and Jimmy and Johnny Lisle and Bombo all have good memories of him—how wonderful he was and how generous and all this. But all I can remember is this big booming voice that scared me.

RM: What did your folks think of him?

CR: My dad thought he was a heck of a good pinochle partner and a good poker player. Daddy played both and enjoyed the game.

RM: Did Scotty come to Beatty a lot?

CR: Yes, he came here into town quite a bit.

RM: Are there any other Rhyolite characters or Beatty characters that. . . ?

CR: Yes, there were a lot of them_ Everybody who was here was a unique personality. The open desert out here has always bred its own type, drawn its own type of characters.

RM: Is that because people are freer to be themselves, or what?

CR: I believe it's the code. You don't ask. you don't know, you don't talk. People just can be as they choose to be. At any time in the *40s. '50s, '60s, you could come to Beatty and you would meet some famous personage here in town.

RM: Like who?

CR: Pick a movie star, any movie star.

RM: They had all cycled through here?

CR: They all cycled through here, just passing through. This is the only highway between Reno and Las Vegas, the only direct route between Reno and Las Vegas. Even back in the '40s and '50s, before they put in the Test Site, this was still the only direct route.

RM: What do you recall in your lifetime of filming movies in Rhyolite?

CR: There have been over 200 movies filmed out there. There was one back in the '60s; I can't remember who the main stars were, but they completely converted the town. The Cook Bank was not a bank; they converted into a Catholic church and put their own cemetery in back of it. They brought in their own grave markers and everything. It was just really awesome what they did to the buildings.

RM: I remember in the mid-'80s when they filmed the movie *Cherry 2000* with Melanie Griffith, and the whole crew stayed here in town. I used to watch them when they filmed out of Rhyolite and down at Big Dune.

CR: I wasn't here then; I was in northern Nevada. My husband and I were following road construction when *Cherry 2000* was filmed here.

RM: Any other movies come to mind'

CR: I was trying to think of the name of one that had Fernando Lamas as the star. We had just moved back here and I had a horse. I was riding horseback. He wanted to borrow my horse and, being star-struck, I let him. The horse didn't like him and it sat him on the ground.

RM: Was he riding a horse for the movie or just for recreation?

CR: No, it was just for the heck of it. Red was one of these horses that you had to handle a certain way or you didn't handle him. Lamas got a little bit rough and sawed on his mouth and you didn't do that to Big Red. Red would throw you from here to the moon and back for that.

RM: Where did you keep him?

CR: In my backyard. People did that then. We all had chickens, some of us had horses; almost everybody in town had a dog or cat or both. Nowadays, almost every family still has a dog or a cat or bunch of chickens, but you don't see horses in the backyard too much anymore.

RM: In the days when you were growing up, particularly before TV, people went to bed early, didn't they, and got up early?

CR: It depends on what was going on. We used to play games sometimes till 9:00, 10:00 at night—games like Hide and Seek and Run Sheep Run. And we had radio. My dad had the loudest radio in town. [Laughs] The 6:00 news would come on and once that news came on, it was turned up loud enough that he could sit out in the front yard and listen to it.

RM: What stations did you pick up, do you remember?

CR: WKNX in San Francisco. And the one out of Albuquerque, New Mexico. I remember the Lucky Lager Dance Time.

RM: Oh, talk about that. That was a big thing for us.

CR: That was a big thing for us, too—Lucky Lager Dance Time. That was in the early '50s and that was when the boys were building this building. This museum building that we're in right now was built by military boys.

RM: And what was it for?

CR: It was a Catholic church.

RM: Why did they do that—just out of good heartedness or . . . ?

CR: Well, Frank Grace contributed all of the lumber and materials and the base from Indian Springs contributed the labor. These boys were told they would volunteer because they got into trouble so they came up here . . . and they were the sweetest kids, they really were. In the alley back of my house, when Luck Lager Dance Time came on, there would be two or three cars and all the military boys and almost every kid in town dancing in the alley.

RM: That's very nice. When were they were building the church?

CR: They were building it between '55, '56.

RM: The program went on for several hours, didn't it?

CR: Yes, two hours.

RM: And what station were you picking it up on?

CR: The Albuquerque station.

RM: I once asked Bobbie Duncan up at the Buckeye in Tonopah, "What was your biggest selling beer?" And she said Lucky Lager. I said, "Did Lucky Lager Dance Time have anything to do with the sales of Lucky Lager?" and she said, "You'd better believe it." So Lucky Lager Dance Time was a big thing for the kids of Beatty?

CR: Oh, yes. Another good radio show was the Green Phantom, and Amos and Andy.

RM: Did you listen to the Lone Ranger and Sky King and all those?

CR: All of those, yes.

RM: Could you pick up your stations during the day here in Beatty?

CR: Not too well. In the late afternoon, we would start getting good radio. In the early morning and midday, it was pretty iffy.

RM: Were you picking up any of the LA stations?

CR: No, but every once in a while e' d get Salt Lake—KSL.

RM: What are your earliest memories of radio and particularly Lucky Lager Dance Time?

CR: Good lord, back into the '40s, 47, '48 for radio, and for the Lucky Lager Dance Time, about 1950, '51—somewhere in there. There was another one—Bob Wills and the Texas Playboys.

RM: So it was a music thing. Did everybody in town have a radio?

CR: I would say about 60 percent of the town had a radio.

RM: Did most of the families have a radio and some of the old guys, the old prospectors and so on, may not have had a radio?

CR: That would've been true. Like I said Daddy would sit and turn his radio clear up. We had an example of that last night—somebody way over there had their stereo turned up so loud I was sitting on my front porch listening to a concert.

RM: Did people have telephones?

CR: I think there were three or four phones in town in the '50s.

RM: Was it a party line?

CR: Oh, yes. We also had coin phones.

RM: Where were they located?

CR: There was one down by the Edwards Hotel, there was one in the Exchange, and then later

on there was one up here at the El Portal. You would put a nickel in and dial the operator.

RM: Not a dime?

CR: It was a nickel till the mid-'50s, and then it became a dime; and then in the '60s, it jumped up to a quarter.

RM: Did Rhyolite have phone service?

CR: Yes, Rhyolite had phone service clear back in 1906. They had power; it was a very modern city.

RM: Who were they calling?

CR: Well, they had the stock exchange going on. They would call Goldfield and then the calls would be distributed to wherever they were going in the country from Goldfield.

RM: Was there an operator in Beatty?

CR: I don't remember a telephone operator in Beatty; our operator was out of Tonopah.

RM: What about newspapers? When I was in Tonopah from the very late '50s on, you could find an amazing assortment of newspapers. You could buy the *New York Times* there, you could buy the *Sacramento Bee*, you could buy one of those papers out of San Jose, and, of course, the Reno and Vegas papers. Was that the case here, do you know?

CR: Mostly we had the Reno and Vegas papers. The delivery of the others was a little iffy on occasion. You'd go down to the store and buy a copy.

RM: Were many people big newspaper readers in Beatty then?

CR: Yes. Surprisingly enough, the small town is more inclined to want to know what's going on in the world, especially when you're isolated out here like this, than you are in the city because everybody thinks that they know everything anyway there.

RM: Yes, and being spoon-fed and misinformed by TV.

CR: That's right.

RM: So you could get more than just the Reno and Vegas papers in Beatty. Where would you buy it?

CR: You would buy your papers at the store; we had two general stores, the Andre store and the Revert store. Pappy Revert's store was in operation I think until the late '50s, but Andre's early '50s, I think. They were both running at the same time, but you could buy your newspaper at either store.

RM: And Revert's store was about across the street from. . . ?

CR: Where the Rebel Station is now.

RM: Where was Andre's store?

CR: Down there right next to the Exchange Club.

RM: Did people tend to patronize one or the other or did they kind of go to both?

CR: They kind of went to both because most of the time what one had, the other one didn't.

RM: Did they give credit?

CR: Yes, you could go in and charge groceries. But people had a tendency to pay cash up front just to keep out of debt.

RM: Right, but if a guy wanted to, he could charge?

CR: If he was local and had a check coming in every month.

RM: Did the newspapers come in on the bus?

CR: Yes, they did.

RM: When did the bus go through?

CR: Usually twice a day—northbound morning, southbound evening.

RM: I've done a little bit of interviewing in an old mining town in Colorado and what I've found there is that there was a dual division in the community. Essentially, there was the church-going people who were sort of blue nosed, and then there was the miners hanging out in the bars and people who weren't much believers and everything. Was that true of Beatty?

CR: That wasn't a concept here because if we were lucky we would have a minister once a month come into the Episcopal Church. There was no separation of caste because of religion or drinking.

RM: Or sex? "There's them that sleeps around and there's them that don't," or professed they didn't.

CR: That was a line here, too. Them that sleeps around and them that don't.

RM: Oh, really? But it didn't spill over into religion and other kinds of things?

CR: No, because, like I said, we were lucky if we had a minister here once a month.

Sometimes we were lucky if we had a minister twice a year.

RM: Was a person who slept around a little bit an object of gossip?

CR: Yes, very painful gossip. It would hurt whoever they were putting down in more ways than one. It would cause them problems getting a job; it would affect their ability to work in various and sundry places here. If you wanted to go to work in a restaurant, if you were one of the girls that slept around, you didn't get a job.

RM: How about if a guy wanted to go work in a mine?

CR: If a guy wanted to go work in a mine, he would go out and apply. Drinking and sleeping around had nothing to do with mining.

RM: How about if a guy wanted to work in a garage or something like that?

CR: Same difference there. With a man, it didn't matter. There was a double standard here.

RM: Even if a man was an adulterer? "Well, he's stepping out on his wife," you know.

CR: If he was caught he was in trouble because everybody would run and tell his wife right now.

RM: Why do you think that double standard was there?

CR: That's been a double standard throughout history.

RM: Do you have any thoughts on why?

CR: I think it's because men are afraid of us.

RM: What are they afraid of—you'll find somebody better? Do you think so?

CR: Yes. Somebody that will be truer, somebody that will be more honest, somebody that will take better care of you.

RM: Or a better lover.

CR: Or a better companion, too.

RM: And there is the whole issue of paternity. We're really talking pre-birth control here. In your view, did women suffer unjustly under this double standard?

CR: Well, I am going to ask you a question: How many men do you know, or have you heard about, who had children and took off and left them?

RM: Quite a few.

CR: How many women have you known?

RM: Not that many.

CR: Who had the tougher job—the woman who took care of the kid and raised it or the man who ran?

RM: Right. Was a man leaving his wife like that not unheard of?

CR: It was not unheard of but it was really frowned on. Divorce was pretty common but in my era, although divorce was pretty common they also had a rule that if the kid had your name, you paid child support. And people tended to do that because it was a point of pride.

RM: Did more men than women leave the community for work over the years?

CR: More men. And a lot of times they never came back and they left families here.

RM: What about the girls that grew up in the time period plus or minus five years of you—did

most of them tend to stay or did they tend to leave or was it 50-50, or what?

CR: About 50-50. They would either marry and leave or go to college.

RM: Did people who went to college tend to come back?

CR: Not often, but sometimes. The norms are, there's not that much for young people here so when they go away, they get their college degree and they go somewhere where they can make a living. Or they go away to work. There `s really not that much going on here. We're a small community; very active, but were a small community.

RM: Was there more opportunity when Bond Gold was operating?

CR: Bond Gold brought in a lot of people. but it wasn't that good for local people. Most of those people did not really hire a lot of local people; they brought in their own, in quotes, "trusted employees". Their miners were miners that they were laying off at another mine so they'd bring them down here. But other things were created for the local people and it was quite comfortable living here then; there was prosperity.

RM: In your growing up here, or maybe in speaking of Rhyolite, was there a phenomenon of the promoter?

CR: That was pretty much Rhyolite; the promoters here in Beatty were back in that era of time also. Beatty has always had its share of promoters but not the kind that would go away and leave. We've always had people that were promoting our town.

RM: But how about people that were promoting enterprises trying to get money from investors?

CR: Not so much after the 19-teens. It was pretty much a struggle from then on and the promoters went away with the big mining places. The mines that came into being after the early 1900s and the 19-teens didn't really need the big carpet-bagging promoters. They thrived and survived on their own.

RM: So there were not many people in Beatty promoting their own mine or something like that, in your era?

CR: Not in my era, no. In my era of time, I think the Crowell mine was the only mine in operation and they didn't need to promote that; that was already well established.

RM: Typically, how many people would be working at the Crowell mine?

CR: Anywhere between 15 and 20 were working either there or at their mill in town.

RM: Have we exhausted our discussion of characters and interesting people?

CR: I can think of one character that everybody knew—Fred Dees. Fred Dees was an

elementary school teacher. He was a very distinct personality. You never saw him when he wasn't in a complete suit—pants, vest, jacket. He always had a chaw of tobacco in his mouth, the stain running out of the corner of his mouth.

RM: Even in school?

CR: Even in school. He also had a strange thing—he decided his kids weren't ever going to get sick. So every spring when the flowers and everything would start to come in green, he would crank up the oil stove in the classrooms, and he would drop great big huge chunks of sulfur and burn the sulfur off in the room to get rid of all of the noxiousness. The room would smell like rotten eggs for a week.

RM: Really? And what was his theory?

CR: That he was getting rid of all of the bad bacteria and diseases in the room. This man had so much self-control. In those days, there was a big trick of sitting a thumbtack in a seat. They set about five of them in his seat one time and he walked in, glanced down, and saw those tacks there—he deliberately sat on them. And he never raised an eyebrow, never said anything. When it came time for recess, class continued on. Class continued on until lunch. He never flinched and he never got out of that chair. That's such self-control; I don't care who it is.

RM: And you kids were probably just amazed, weren't you?

CR: Oh yes. And when he finally did get up, everybody looked to see and there were the tacks sitting in his britches. Of course, he went to the restroom and when he came back those tacks weren't there anymore. [Laughter]

RM: Did you do other tricks on him or other teachers?

CR: Somebody was always into something with a teacher, none serious. You would stand there and throw paper airplanes at them when they weren't looking. Mrs. Christy used to get that all of the time. She was a very proper little lady. She came to class with her brown leather gloves and after class was called she would very carefully take her gloves off—her hands highly manicured. She was very proud of her hands. She always wore a hat, which was properly placed over the top of the gloves during class. So you'd catch her with her head turned and you'd throw a paper airplane and she'd turn around and she'd say, "Who threw that?" Nobody knew. Sometimes there'd be eight or nine paper airplanes lying on the floor. And whoever actually got caught doing something was the one who had to pick them up.

RM: How many teachers did you have in your school?

CR: We had one for the first, second, third, and fourth and one for the fifth, sixth, seventh, and

eighth. Eventually, we had a high school teacher here too.

RM: How did that work out?

CR: Pretty precariously. Actually, we had a one-room school for the high school, a little one-room building.

RM: Where was it located?

CR: Well, the old school is on the back street back there but the one-room school is not. They built the new high school over the top of that little one-room school.

RM: Did you go to the one-room school?

CR: No, I went to high school in the new old building.

RM: How many were in your class, do you recall?

CR: There were three in my class, but for the whole high school I think there were seven, eight kids altogether.

RM: Do you feel like you got a pretty good education?

CR: I got a very good education. One thing we learned back in those days was how to read and enjoy it. And that is a love I passed on to my daughter and my grandchildren.

RM: How many children do you have?

CR: My daughter is a librarian and one of her daughters is a librarian. Every one of the kids has graduated high school and some of them college.

RM: And they live in Vegas?

CR: Yes, in Vegas.

RM: Could you tell more about the Heislars? They were out there so long.

CR: Reverend and Mrs. Heisler were very unique. They were very religious. There was no alcohol sold in the saloon while they were there; they did sell soda pop and sandwiches and she created a museum in the depot building. Everybody in town contributed photos and different things to the Rhyolite museum. After she passed away, very few of the people got their stuff back. I know that for a fact.

RM: You told me last time that in your lifetime the old Cook Bank building out at Rhyolite had papers.

CR: Yes, still up in the vault. Well, a lot of the kids used to go out and play in the vaults and so in there. In 1916, the bank building and all of its property was sold. They got \$2,000 out of that \$100,000 building. The guy took all of the marble skins inside, the brass, all of the fine woods, and the roof down to Los Angeles and sold it. He made a million dollars off of it.

RM: But there were still old records in the building?

CR: No, not records, there were blank checks and a few bills of sale and things like that.

RM: Did anybody pick them up and save any of those old papers?

CR: A lot of people did. but I didn't. Like I said, I was a kid. That kind of stuff was good to play with but it wasn't worth keeping_ You didn't bring it home.

RM: Do you have any more recollections of the Heislers? He was quite a preacher, wasn't he?

CR: Yes, he was. He was a good fire and brimstone preacher. When he was preaching he was fire and brimstone; but when he wasn't preaching he was meek as a little lamb. He was a very gentle soul.

RM: Did he attract a pretty good crowd here in Beatty?

CR: He didn't hold services in Beatty, he held services out there. They were every Sunday morning out at Rhyolite, but he did not hold services here in town. If local people went to his services, they went out there.

RM: Did many locals go?

CR: Quite a few of them.

RM: Did she kind of run the show?

CR: They ran the show. It was they; it was not her, it was not him, it was they. I don't remember either one of them as being overly dominant over the other.

RM: Senator Stewart, of course, was an important figure in Rhyolite. Do you know any interesting stories about him?

CR: I personally never knew the man, of course, but he was such a promoter for the Bullfrog townsite that he stated that it was such a fair city that he was going to raise his grandson there and he could find no finer town for him to grow up in.

RM: And then he finally decided to give up on it, didn't he? Was it you who paced off where his house sat?

CR: Yes. I paced off where his house and his law office had been. He had a law office and he had his mansion. It was a nine-room mansion all on one story. It was the best house in Bullfrog. It was stone wall, it was built out of rocks, and it had a very deep veranda all the way around. There are pictures of it in the book *The Silver Colossus*.

RM: What was the finest home in Rhyolite?

CR: There were two that were exactly identical up on Nob Hill, but I can't remember the names of them. They were considered the finest homes in the state.

RM: What was so good about them?

CR: I don't really know other than that they were well made, well built. They aren't very large. One of them was moved into Beatty and it sits down here on First Street. It was boasted as that back in 1906.

RM: Is the house in Beatty the only one that survived?

CR: Yes. The other one was the one I was telling you about that was bulldozed down for the movie, a spaghetti western that was shot in 1987.

RM: You wouldn't think they'd let them destroy a building like that.

CR: Nobody knew that he was going to do it; he just went out and did it.

RM: When you were growing up, were there burros running wild in Beatty?

CR: Sure. We never considered them a problem but they're considered a problem now.

RM: Were they a traffic hazard on 95?

CR: Not as much then as they are now because they didn't have the fences; they went out in the hills. This way they've got the fences and they come down and drift along the fences and find a hole and get on the wrong side of the fence.

RM: Did you kids play with them and ride them and herd them?

CR: Sure. The wild burros were really not that bad; however, I would not recommend it to a modern kid to go out and play with wild burros because they have a tendency to kick and they have a tendency to raise that front foot up and slap you down. They also have a tendency to bite.

RM: I wanted to ask you what it's like to live in the same house. To me, it would be such a comfort.

CR: Well, I know I'm very familiar with every creak and groan.

RM: Does it give you a real sense of connectedness?

CR: Well, I belong. I belong there because I grew up there. I've changed it a lot.

RM: And that was the home your parents lived in, wasn't it? What is the history of the house?

CR: The front room and what I call my computer room came from Rhyolite. The dining room was a house from Rhyolite. The kitchen and bathroom was a house from Pioneer. The back bedroom was a miner's shack from out in Bear Mountains.

RM: What a history.

CR: What a conglomeration! But it works. I don't know how Daddy did it, but he put it all together. He married it all together, somehow. And my mother, bless her heart, is the one that put the roof on it.

RM: What year did he begin that house?

CR: He bought the property in 1938. It had the main building and right next door it had what they called a railroad dining room. It was one of the old shotgun houses.

RM: What does that mean, shotgun house?

CR: Means you open the front door and can shoot a shotgun straight through to the back door without hitting anything. Basically, it was one room with a lean-to on the back. The front part was where they would serve people food and the back part was where the kitchen was. When Daddy took it over, he converted the front part into living quarters. Where the lean-to started was made into a bedroom and he put another lean-to on the back of that for a kitchen, and one on the side for a bathroom.

RM: How many structures were there in Beatty when he started that in '38?

CR: There were at least 125. There were probably 200 families . . . by the time I was growing up they'd pulled out the railroad_ It was pulled up the year I was born.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Let's talk about the railroads. The LV&T came up from Vegas, right? And where did it come into town?

CR: It came in through the narrows, around the town, out around the hills to Rhyolite.

RM: It didn't circle to Rhyolite north of town?

CR: No, it came right through. It circled this way right over and out. You could see the railroad grade going out to Rhyolite. That was the LV&T. It went on around and up the back valley there past Bonnie Claire and up Oasis Valley and all the way up to Tonopah, or to Goldfield.

RM: And where was its main station down here?

CR: Its first station was Beatty and its second station was that beautiful depot building—that was going to be the main offices for it. That was for the Rhyolite area.

RM: Did it stop at Gold Center?

CR: There was only a mail drop at Gold Center.

RM: Where exactly is Gold Center?

CR: Just the other side of the narrows. Going from here to Vegas, it would be on the right, right where the pond sits now.

RM: Now, the other railroad was the T&T.

CR: The Tonopah & Tidewater.

RM: It came across the Amargosa Valley and then where did it go?

CR: It came through the narrows, but it did not circle out to Rhyolite; just before it got to Gold Center, it ran a spur off over and up to Rhyolite.

RM: And did it use the station in Rhyolite?

CR: It had its own depot.

RM: Where was that at in Rhyolite?

CR: That's pretty much for debate. Everybody's in agreement within 100 feet, but not just exactly where it was located. It was east of the depot and north of the Bottle House.

RM: And was it a fancy affair? It probably wasn't.

CR: No, the Tonopah & Tidewater was not a fancy affair. It had a depot here. The T&T didn't go for elaborate, but it went for efficient. The B&G, which came down from Goldfield, was the third railroad. The Bullfrog and Goldfield came down from Goldfield to Beatty, tied in with the

Tonopah & Tidewater. and went out to Rhyolite on the Tonopah & Tidewater spur.

RM: Which was the first to fold?

CR: The LV&T. It was the first in and the first out. The B&G was the last in and second out. The Tonopah & Tidewater took over the management of the B&G and also eventually took over the LV&T.

RM: So they kept that going?

CR: For a while, yes. They pulled the tracks for the Las Vegas & Tonopah in 1918 and for the Tonopah & Tidewater in 1941.

RM: Is it true that much of Highway 95 to Vegas, and actually up to Tonopah, follows the old grade of the LV&T?

CR: It follows and crosses it frequently, yes.

RM: Where was the LV&T depot in Beatty? Was it down there by the old Desert Inn motel across from Bobby Revert's tire shop?

CR: No. There was a depot down there, but that might have been the Tonopah & Tidewater. There was also a depot on the banks of the Amargosa in back of where the Rebel station is now. They did not use a roundhouse here; they had the switchback. They had tracks laid.

RM: And which one used the one down below?

CR: That would have probably been the Tonopah & Tidewater.

RM: Okay. And then the LV&T was over here behind the Rebel station?

CR: Yes.

RM: Do you know anything about their right of ways? Have they reverted back to the BLM?

CR: Yes, they reverted back to BLM.

RM: It was before your time, but it must have been sad in the area when they pulled out.

CR: Yes, it was. It was definitely the end of an era. All we had left for public transportation after the train pulled out was the bus.

RM: That's a good summary of the railroads.

CR: They came, they glowed, and they died. They transported a lot of ore, they transported a lot of people, and they changed the face of the desert forever.

RM: Where were they shipping the ore?

CR: They would ship it to either San Francisco or Ogden, Utah, for smelting.

RM: The bus probably came after the train because it couldn't compete.

CR: Yes, it couldn't compete with the train, but there was not that much travel, either. You've

got to understand, the tracks were pulled here at the beginning of World War II. You've already gone through the Depression and all of that.

RM: And they had gas rationing, tire rationing, and people stayed put.

CR: They had to.

RM: Plus, they didn't move around as much in those days anyway.

CR: No, it was too much of a big deal to go somewhere.

RM: Yes. What were the main roads out in your lifetime? Was going over Daylight Pass a popular option to head down into California country?

CR: In those days, they chose to stay as flat as possible. You went over Daylight Pass to go into Death Valley. The Indians would go over Daylight Pass and up over Town's Pass into Lone Pine because they had a reservation at Lone Pine as well as the one down at Cow Creek and the one down here.

RM: The Indians had land at Cow Creek?

CR: Yes, down by Furnace Creek. Now the Indian village is right out in back of Furnace Creek.

RM: So they would go down to that country and even over to Bishop from here?

CR: All over, yes.

RM: These are Beatty Shoshone. The Southern Paiute weren't too numerous here, were they?

CR: They weren't too numerous here; they were mostly down around Las Vegas.

RM: Do you have any other thoughts or things you'd like to get down here?

CR: All I can say it was a wonderful place to grow up. Climbing the hills, feeling the sun, smelling the wind . . . all the things I still enjoy doing right now.

RM: It's a clean, decent place.

CR: Yes. The people were a little quirky, but then, what can I say? They're still quirky. People are still quirky.

RM: They're kind of free to be quirky. I think they're quirky in the city; they just keep it under wraps.

CR: That's probably it. We had one guy here when I was a kid, I can't remember his name right now. He always wore a raccoon coat during the summer and a pressed khaki shirt and pants, and he wore short sleeves during the winter. He said the raccoon coat kept him cool in the summer and that having his skin exposed kept him warm in the winter. This man was really weird; I'd be sitting there freezing to death looking at him.

RM: How did people do their laundry then? You say, "pressed khakis"—did he send them out?

CR: There was always a laundry or a laundress. When I was growing up, my mother took in laundry. She would charge a dollar a basket to wash and iron the clothing. You didn't charge by the shirt or the pants like they do nowadays. She did it on the washboard for a while but she had a washing machine; she had an electric square tub Maytag with a wringer.

RM: And then she would iron those clothes?

CR: Yes, I got to iron the handkerchiefs and she ironed everything else.

RM: She was using a regular electric iron?

CR: Yes; not a sad iron, but an electric iron.

RM: That's a good name; they'd make you sad?

CR: Well, they were heavy and hot. That's why they were called sad irons.

RM: What was the typical breakfast for you growing up?

CR: Eggs, fried. Eggs, boiled. Daddy made sourdough pancakes and sourdough biscuits. Sourdough pancakes for breakfast and biscuits for lunch and dinner.

RM: What was the fat they used, lard?

CR: Lard. And we had that magical stuff called oleo; it came in a great big, white greasy glob and you mixed it to get the color. Lord have mercy. And fresh milk was very rare, at least in my household, because it would go sour so quickly. My favorite drink was Segó Milk. I would drink it straight out of the can because it was sweet.

RM: So fresh milk was not that common?

CR: No, but after we finally got a gas refrigerator, Daddy would go out and buy fresh milk from the people out at Springdale. They had a couple of cows out there, so we had fresh milk after Daddy got a gas refrigerator. Prior to that, we used what they call a desert cooler, which is a square box with open sides that they put wet gunny sacks on—and you kept them wet. If they ever got dry, your butter got melted.

RM: And what was lunch?

CR: Lunch could be anything. Usually, during the war years it was eggs. We had chickens and they produced for a long time.

RM: What did you feed the chickens?

CR: Scratch, mostly. We'd go down and buy scratch from the Reverts. It was corn and milo, just exactly like chicken scratch is nowadays.

RM: Well, eggs for lunch and what else?

CR: Peanut butter if we were lucky. Honey—biscuits and honey. There was a family here that produced honey. They had fruit trees and John Way had hives. It cost \$8.00 for a five-gallon bucket of honey. Daddy got two five-gallon buckets of honey per year. That was *the* sweetener. I never heard of sugar until I was probably eight years old and we went to a restaurant.

RM: Oh, my gosh. And then, what was dinner?

CR: Dinner would be soup or stew made out of chicken or corned beef, canned meat of some sort. The meat was very rarely fresh because we couldn't keep it until we got the fridge. Once we got the fridge, we'd have fresh meat maybe twice a week.

RM: Did you use ham and bacon?

CR: Yes.

RM: Where did Rhyolite get its dairy products and milk and so on?

CR: From the Oasis Valley here. It was very fertile. They had truck farms and dairy farms all the way up over to where the Fleur de Lis is now.

RM: Have you been up Oasis Valley in the last few years? Does it seem drier to you than it used to be?

CR: Oh, it's really dry right now. We've had, what? Five years of drought? You go out and look at the flowers, even the cactus are only about maybe about five or six inches tall. They aren't big like they should be.

RM: Christmas was an important holiday, wasn't it?

CR: Christmas was always an important holiday. Each family celebrated; and we had a big town thing, which was Santa Claus, O. H. Brown. Every kid in town got something from Santa. This was a party Christmas Eve at the town hall. Every kid in town got something. As a general rule, the parents bought the gift for the kids and gave it to Santa to give to the children. There were a few who had nothing and there was always somebody gave them. You could always bet on at least one package of handkerchiefs. Mrs. Lisle always gave everybody handkerchiefs. And when you were in her class in school, you got handkerchiefs for Christmas and you got handkerchiefs for your birthday.

RM: [Laughs] She was big on handkerchiefs, then? Did most families have a tree?

CR: Yes, they would go up near Lida or out into the Grapevines and cut a tree and bring it home.

RM: Did you have a family box of decorations?

CR: Yes, and they have been passed on to my daughter and she passed them on to my granddaughter.

RM: Did you also use strings of popcorn and things like that?

CR: Not so much popcorn because it always tasted too good, but we did do construction paper chains.

RM: And then was there a big Christmas dinner?

CR: Not at my house. It was just a regular dinner, no big thing.

RM: And the kids didn't get as many things then, did they?

CR: No, if I got more than two gifts at home it was a rare, rare, thing

RM: What would a gift consist of?

CR: Usually it would have been dresses for my dolls that my mother had made or maybe a brand new doll. New shirt, new pair of pants, new pair of shoes, new skirt—things I needed. Socks, underwear. All of the great treasures of life.

RM: No toys?

CR: Very rarely. I would get a new doll once in a while.

RM: Did Santa bring those to your house?

CR: No, Santa just gave the one present.

RM: He just gave the one present; he didn't come to your house later that night?

CR: I was told that Santa brought them and left them under the tree. What happened was Momma would take me over to the hall and Daddy would put the Christmas presents out. Santa came first and then went to the hall and gave me something over there. But you were not allowed to open Christmas gifts until Christmas morning.

RM: Did the tooth fairy come here to Beatty?

CR: Yes, the tooth fairy managed to find us here, and it was a penny.

RM: Was Thanksgiving a special day?

CR: You've got to understand my mom and dad were very strange in that we didn't have big meals to celebrate anything. Food was food and it was a celebration every day. [Laughs] We didn't have a big table but we always had good food. Thanksgiving wasn't a big deal to me until after I got married and my husband made it a big deal.

RM: Halloween—was that a big day in Beatty?

CR: Yes. That was the day we got candy. I had a sweet tooth.

RM: Ordinarily, you didn't get candy?

CR: I had more candy than most of the kids because when I was six and seven years old, Daddy gave me a nickel a week for candy.

RM: Where would you buy the candy—either Andre's or Revert's?

CR: Yes. Before it was Andre's, it was Brownie's.

RM: Who was Brownie?

CR: O. H. Brown.

RM: What was his background, do you know?

CR: I don't know. He was a big, loveable bear.

RM: And who was Andre?

CR: They came here in the mid to late '40s, the Andres and Hines; they moved in here at the same time, they were related. They bought the store after Brownie died.

RM: On Halloween, did you kids dress up and go trick or treating?

CR: Yes, we had all kinds of ghosts because everybody had a pillowcase or a sheet that they could turn into a ghost. We would trick or treat. The brothels were the best place to stop because they always gave you quarters.

RM: How many were there down there?

CR: There were two.

RM: So each kid would come out of there with 50 cents?

CR: Man, we were rich. And the bars all had candy for the kids. Everybody in town had candy. I used to love to go to the Crowells' because Dorothy Crowell would have hot apple cider and caramel apples. And the apple cider was always a glass cup. And you got warm drinking it because it was always cold on Halloween.

RM: Was there devilment at Halloween?

CR: Not from the younger kids. The older kids could get into mischief. I didn't get into mischief too much until I was probably 10, 12 years old. Then it was simple little things like tipping over Mrs. Morgan's outhouse or taking one of Floyd Bates's ore wagons from in front of the hotel and dragging it down the middle of Main Street or turning the lights off at the brothels. You'd throw the switch and run like heck.

RM: Was New Year's Eve a big deal in Beatty?

CR: The grown-ups all got drunk and dynamite went off at midnight. There was usually a street dance or some kind of a dance in every one of the saloons.

RM: Even in the winter?

CR: Yes. If it wasn't nasty, they would close down the streets; otherwise, there would be dancing in back of the Exchange. There was a nice big room in the back of the Exchange where you could dance, back of the bar.

RM: Was your birthday a big deal?

CR: Mine was. My birthday was always celebrated going out to the cemetery and putting flowers on the graves.

RM: I wanted to ask you about Memorial Day.

CR: My dad and I would go out and put flowers on every grave. We always had huge amounts of flowers. Daddy and Momma both cultivated flowers. I asked my daddy one time why we did that and he said it was to remember the people who had gone before. He said, "A lot of these people: nobody even knows who they were or who they are. So we remember them by laying a flower on their grave."

RM: How nice. Were birthday parties a big thing then?

CR: Oh yes, a lot of them had birthday parties here. There'd be birthday cake and a present or two. It really wasn't a wealthy town. Presents were very rare and they were really treasured.

RM: And they were practical. When my brother and I were growing up, if we got clothes at Christmas or something like that, we didn't get a present. We hated clothes. We wanted toys.

CR: Well, kids always want something to play with.

RM: Have I overlooked anything?

CR: I just got to thinking when we were talking about turning the lights off at the brothel, about the old mill that used to sit up here where our clinic is now. It was an old cyanide mill, the one that Bob Montgomery built. After he sold out, it was used as a custom mill. There were big old cyanide vats in there. By the time I was growing up, we would get in there and have rock fights inside of that tin building and try to make sure that we didn't fall into the cyanide vats. We walked like tightrope walkers across the tops of them.

RM: So it was still a functioning mill then?

CR: It could have been a functioning mill. At any time you could have gone in and started the equipment.

RM: And then gradually the equipment got pilfered or sold?

CR: I think that the owners sold it off. Metal got pretty precious there for awhile. I don't remember any equipment there after the Korean War.

RM: Any other thoughts?

CR: I've mentioned Mrs. Lisle, Chloe Lisle, several times and I also think I referred you to talk to her sons, both of them. Mrs. Lisle was a very diminutive lady, very tiny. She ruled her household of husband and two sons very firmly, with a gentle hand.

RM: I interviewed Ralph and Chloe.

CR: There is one thing you must always remember about Chloe—she was always a lady. Always. Very elegant, even up into the days when you no longer wore a hat and gloves when you went anywhere. She still spoke very properly and she maintained a very strict posture. You remember that about her? She always maintained a very elegant presence.

RM: Yes. And she was a schoolteacher.

CR: She was a schoolteacher. She was also a hairdresser; while she was studying to get her teacher's certificate she also. . . .

RM: Was there a beauty shop in Beatty?

CR: When Chloe was here it was part of the barber shop.

RM: So she did that on the side in addition to teaching?

CR: Yes. When she finally got her teacher's certificate, she was only a substitute teacher for several years and she had to have a means of making a living along with Ralph. They had two boys to raise and as she phrased it, she was always a very frugal lady.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: I wonder if you could talk a little bit about your recollections of Carrara?

CR: Carrara was a working mine in the early to mid-'40s. There were two bunkhouses down by the highway; there was the main office, sample shed, and the place where they cooked off the marble to turn it into limestone or cement. Monolith Cement Company owned it. My memories of that are of the guys working out there. I don't remember names; it was just watching them work, seeing how it was done. There was a Puerto Rican boss and his wife and they lived right there in the office; it was a two-and-a-half-story building. The basement had a huge vault where they kept the different samples and the upstairs was living quarters and the main office.

RM: Where was this building located?

CR: It's still standing, sort of.

RM: Oh, it's that white building?

CR: Yes, that big white building. And you could always smell the smells of her cooking and the smells of her cleaning. The office always smelled of leather and lemon oil. The first time I'd ever seen bottled water was in that office. It absolutely fascinated me to watch the bubbles going up because most of the water I ever saw came out of the end of the hose or out of a faucet.

RM: About how many men or women were working out there?

CR: It was men and there were probably 10. They would go up to the quarry, quarry out the marble, bring it down, break it up, put it up in the cooker, and cook it off to where it turned into limestone. Then it was hauled down to the Monolith Cement Company in Los Angeles.

RM: What were they using for fuel in the cooker?

CR: I'm not sure, but it was probably propane. This is in the modern age; this is not going back to. . . .

RM: Not wood or sagebrush. [Laughs]

CR: No. I'm afraid that the miners logged off our heavily forested hills.

RM: Yes. [Laughs] Did you go out there often as a kid?

CR: Probably about once a month, maybe twice a month, my dad would go out. He was a pipe fitter and plumber and he would help them with their plumbing or just sit and visit.

RM: What other recollections do you have about Carrara?

CR: Like I said, mostly the smells. Sometimes the sounds were very loud out there—up by the quarries it was really loud.

RM: What do you think when you go back to Carrara?

CR: The state didn't do it many favors. They decided that the bunkhouses were in their right of way, so they tore them down.

RM: They were where the road is, where Highway 95 is now?

CR: They were probably 50 feet off of the highway. They tore them down and ran a fence right through the middle of them.

RM: There's a kind of a cleared area right off of the highway before you start up that road. . . .

CR: That is where the bunkhouses were.

RM: Oh, that's interesting. How many bunkhouses were there?

CR: There were two.

RM: Who were the workers—were they Caucasians or Hispanics?

CR: It was a mix; there were Indians and white men and I think there was even a Mexican or two.

RM: Were they locals?

CR: The Indians and the white men were, the Mexicans would have been brought in from Los Angeles.

RM: Were you ever up to the Gold Ace Mine?

CR: Yes. I don't remember much about it.

RM: Was it working in your lifetime?

CR: No, not when I went up there. They closed the Gold Ace as an operating gold mine in 1935, I think.

RM: Have there been people fiddling around there?

CR: Oh yes, there's always somebody going out fiddling around in abandoned mines.

RM: Do you think there's any gold left there?

CR: I'm sure there is. They're finding gold all through that range.

RM: Good, rich deposits or low-grade ore?

CR: Low to medium grade; there is no real high-grade ore out there. It's not worth going in and plunging millions and millions of dollars into it before you get to even see an ounce of gold.

RM: Did you have any other thoughts on Carrara or the Gold Ace?

CR: Well, they were both very important to the early history of the area. New Carrara, which is where those buildings are, was built in the '20s during the Depression era and was operated in the '30s and '40s. Old Carrara, which is a mile or so down the road towards Vegas, was located in

1911; they started construction of the road and opening of the quarries in 1913.

RM: So, there are two different quarries up there? Is the quarry farther south, I guess you would call it, where that big block of limestone is?

CR: That is not limestone, it's mortar. They built a loading dock alongside the railroad grade.

RM: The grade was right along there? But the railroad was gone, or was it, with New Carrara? Because you said they trucked it out.

CR: Yes, they trucked it out. At Old Carrara, when they started construction of the mine, the railroad was right there. They had a chain brake railroad put in. That really straight road that goes right straight up into the canyon was a railroad grade and it was a chain brake railroad. The hill is so steep there they needed the chain to help hold the train.

RM: Which quarry is larger, and which one do you think they took the most out of?

CR: I think they took the most out of the new one—they weren't being careful with it or trying to find large useable pieces of marble. The marble was absolutely gorgeous. At Old Carrara, they were trying to preserve the marble; at New Carrara, they were just harvesting it for cement. At Old Carrara they went down what they call "by the floor" and they went down 18 floors.

Although they found the most beautiful marble, it had been fractured from volcanic activity and the up thrust from the geological eras—tectonic plate movement and stuff like that—and it was not useable in large quantities. They could get small pieces out for headstones and such but not enough to put skins on counters in banks and so forth. That's where the money was, was in the large, unfractured pieces.

RM: Do you have any other observations or thoughts on Carrara, any childhood memories of incidents or anything?

CR: Not a lot. For Old Carrara my information is from reading and for New Carrara it's from what I remember from a gazillion years ago—at least the 1940s. I was a young kid and you know how you are when you're that age. You're always into everything, always exploring; you're not paying a lot of attention to what is going on.

RM: Sure. Talk a little bit about Gold Center. Do you have any recollections on that?

CR: I remember the mill operating in Gold Center.

RM: Is that the mill right alongside the hill as you go into the narrows?

CR: Yes. That was an operating mill and it was operating clear up until the middle 1940s.

RM: Was it a custom mill?

CR: Definitely a custom mill. It was a small operation; they milled mostly gold for the local

people, prospectors. They used a leaching process. They would crush the ore and stir it up in a vat with a leaching agent, cyanide. Then they would run it through an amalgam plate. I can remember it working because I found it fascinating to think that that brown, leathery-looking stuff on the top of the pair of tanks was actually full of gold.

RM: Did it work all the time or just intermittently?

CR: Intermittently. Claw Hammer Slim ran it.

RM: Was it his mill?

CR: In the '40s it was. Prior to that it belonged to somebody else, and it belonged to somebody else before him.

RM: Do you know when it was built?

CR: That mill was built in about 1907.

RM: And of course they were getting their water out of the narrows?

CR: There is a spring underneath where the pond is. That was what fed the water for the mill and for the people who worked there. I think only two or three people worked that mill.

RM: When did they finally start tearing it down?

CR: As soon as it was abandoned people started helping themselves—it's called recycling.

RM: Right. We used to call it "the midnight development company." [Laughs] By what year was it pretty well gone?

CR: By about 1956, '57, it was pretty much gone.

RM: What was the mill called?

CR: Gold Center Mill.

RM: So that is right where Gold Center was?

CR: Yes. The town of Gold Center spread out along the area that is kind of a little crescent.

RM: Were there people living there when you were a kid?

CR: No, just the two people who worked the mill, Claw Hammer Slim and one other guy. They actually lived there right on site. I think Claw Hammer just took it over when it was abandoned.

RM: How were they grinding the ore?

CR: They had a small crusher up there—a jaw and a ball.

RM: Were they tabling any of the ore?

CR: Not that I can recall. It all went into the cyanide tanks and was eaten off and then run through the amalgam.

RM: Were you kids cautioned to stay away from those cyanide tanks? What did your folks say?

CR: Mostly that it would kill me. "Don't let your dog run out there and then lick his feet, it will kill him."

RM: So you were never tempted?

CR: No, because my dogs were too important to me, just like they are now. My boys are the most important things in the world right at the moment.

RM: Who are your dogs? Let's introduce them.

CR: I have Quester, who is 14 years old; and Loki, who is about 6.

RM: What kind of dogs are they?

CR: They are God knows. Quester is Akita and God knows and Loki is Lab and God knows.

RM: I was wondering if you could give more recollections about your dad's still and his life down in Ash Meadows.

CR: He never elaborated to me. Like I told you before, I was a girl-child; girls weren't supposed to be interested in things like that. He took me out prospecting and out in the hills with him, but he never elaborated about his nefarious means of making a living.

RM: And this was before he got married?

CR: Yes, it was.

RM: Did he have stills in Ash Meadows?

CR: He had two small stills, as I understand it—something he could break down in a hurry if the feds got too close. He was always given warning in advance and he got them out of there.

RM: Who would have warned him—the local sheriff?

CR: No, the local Indians. They knew when the feds were in the neighborhood. The Indians know everything.

RM: What kind of volume was he turning out? Was it intermittent or was it kind of steady?

CR: It was pretty steady. It was enough that he made a pretty fair living on it.

RM: What years would this have been?

CR: Let's see. He was discharged from the service in 1918. In 1921, he and his compadre decided to come south; I guess it must have been in the mid- to late '20s.

RM: I guess he was making whiskey, right?

CR: Right, he was making potato whiskey.

RM: And where was he selling it, do you have any idea?

CR: All I know is the governor of California came down to Death Valley Junction to get his whiskey a couple of times.

RM: Did your dad meet the governor?

CR: I'm sure he did, but he didn't brag about it too much.

RM: What do you recall about Death Valley Junction when you were a kid?

CR: Going there is about it. It was a long drive. Daddy's 1937 International didn't run real fast. It was a pickup; the next one was a flatbed. It would take us about two or three hours to get down there. Daddy never drove fast on dirt roads; he didn't believe in it.

RM: Was it dirt roads all the way? Was 95 paved when you were a kid?

CR: When I was a kid, Highway 95 was paved. But to get to Death Valley Junction, it wasn't paved.

RM: Where did you turn off of 95?

CR: Just a little bit south of where US Ecology is now—over by the T&T Ranch and down into the Junction.

RM: Did you ever go to the T&T Ranch? Was it operating when you were a kid?

CR: No. There were a few walls standing and salt cedar trees and a nice water tap.

RM: And were there any farmers in the Amargosa Valley at that time?

CR: No.

RM: Was anybody farming in Ash Meadows?

CR: Yes, they were ranching over there.

RM: Were they little operations?

CR: George Ishmael's wasn't really a little operation. It was a pretty large family. They were running cattle in Ash Meadows and they grew all of the groceries they needed there—vegetables and stuff like that.

RM: What do you recall about Ishmael?

CR: His laugh. He had a laugh that once you heard it you laughed, too. That's about all I really recall of him.

RM: What was happening then at Lathrop Wells, or was it even there?

CR: Yes, it was there. It was a bus stop.

RM: Which side of the highway was it on?

CR: On the Death Valley side. It was a pretty good-sized building and it had a very deep recessed porch in front of it. It was always cool there because of the deep porch. It was out of the

sun, it was always cool. And of course, they kept the windows and doors open and they had swamp coolers on the back of the building. And there was a big bar in there.

RM: And then they tore it down and built the one that's there now. What about on the other side of the road?

CR: Bongberg put in a motel and a small restaurant across the street.

RM: Was he a local person?

CR: The family was pretty prominent all through southern Nevada. There are still Bongbergs in Vegas. There's a large electrical company down there, or used to be, and that was part of the family.

RM: About when did they build that motel?

CR: In about '46 or '47.

RM: How many rooms would you say it had?

CR: Probably five, maybe six, and the little café would probably seat maybe seven or eight people. It wasn't very big.

RM: And then the other side, what was that called?

CR: I don't remember what the name of the motel was. On the other side of the street it was just Lathrops Wells.

RM: Lathrops Wells. And do you know where that name came from?

CR: It was named after John Lathrop. He was one of the railroad hands who found water there—dug a well and found water when they were building the LV&T.

RM: Was there anything else happening? Of course, Doris Jackson's place wasn't there, the State Line Saloon, or that motel across the road. That's all new.

CR: That's all this side of the '60s.

RM: Was there anything else in the Amargosa at that time?

CR: There was Death Valley Junction and the clay pits, which were not in operation. We used to go swimming out there.

RM: Were there any buildings or structures left from Clay Camp?

CR: No. Shorty Diaz had a little ranch out there right close to them. It wasn't on the water but just the other side of the hill from it. That's about all I really remember from out there. Going swimming, that water was so cool and cold and clean. You felt like a million dollars, you felt so clean when you got out of it.

RM: Are the pools still there?

CR: No, they don't exist. IMV used the water and filled in the hole.

RM: Is that where IMV is located, out there at Clay Camp? That's a pretty big operation even today, isn't it?

CR: Pretty much, yes. They are farther over into the Ash Meadows area, over towards Crystal.

RM: So the Amargosa Valley was a pretty unsettled place when you were a kid.

CR: Yes it was. It was a long ways between watering holes, as they say.

RM: And hot in the summer.

CR: And hot in the summertime, yes.

RM: What about Springdale—what do you recall about that?

CR: Green. They had cows. There were a lot of buildings out there. I think there were probably four or five families. And Renee Gibson was up and across the highway.

RM: Did you ever get over to Yellow Gold?

CR: No.

RM: How about Pioneer? Did you ever go up there with your dad?

CR: I went up there with him a lot, but there wasn't anything much going on. The mines were closed. Most of the buildings had been stripped down by the time I was a kid. The only thing left is just about what was out there before Dave Spicer started mining, which were the ore bins and the tunnels.

RM: And then the Mayflower—is that on the other side of the hill?

CR: No, that's right there. Bimetallic, Mayflower, they are all right there in that cut.

RM: Was that a pretty productive area?

CR: Yes, it was for about 10 years. It was way before my time.

RM: How about the road over to Death Valley—is that Daylight Pass? Was that always there when you were a kid?

CR: Yes, and it was paved from Beatty to Furnace Creek and Stovepipe Wells. That road was paved by the CCC boys.

RM: Did you and your family go down to Death Valley much?

CR: Everybody in Beatty went down to Death Valley at least once or twice a month. There were movies down there on Saturday night and they had swimming pools.

RM: Did you ever stay all night down there?

CR: No.

RM: This would have been at Furnace Creek?

CR: Yes, Furnace Creek was where they had the movies; they had a swimming pool there, too.

RM: Where was the theatre?

CR: Where the store is now, that big store. That was an auditorium.

RM: And the Furnace Creek Inn was there at that time, wasn't it?

CR: Yes. It was functioning in the winter. Furnace Creek Ranch kept a skeleton crew during the summer.

RM: Was that a big deal for you, to go to Death Valley?

CR: Sure. We were going somewhere—going was the big deal. Movies were very rare. You couldn't just turn on a TV set. We had a movie here on Friday night and they had a movie in Death Valley on Saturday.

RM: Did you usually go to both of them?

CR: Every once in a while I got to go to both of them. We always went on Friday night here in town. The whole town would turn out for it; it was something different.

RM: And it was benches, right?

CR: There were wooden benches in there, yes, and wooden folding seats, and they were very uncomfortable.

RM: Did they sell popcorn?

CR: No. You didn't eat anything during the movie. They would serve when they were changing the reels—there was a little L there and you could go in and get Kool-Aid or water, but there were very seldom any foodstuffs sold.

RM: How did they get the films?

CR: They were mailed in; they would come in on the bus.

RM: And the bus was Mikulich, wasn't it?

CR: Yes, the LVT&R Stage—Las Vegas, Tonopah & Reno.

RM: What about going to Vegas? Did you do that very often?

CR: Mom and I would ride the bus in maybe twice a year to go shopping.

RM: What were some of the stores you went to?

CR: There was a Sears and there was the El Portal Theatre; they were on Fremont Street.

RM: Would you go to a movie with your mom?

CR: Yes. That was really something. And there was Woolworth's Five-and-Dime and a drugstore—I think it was a Walgreen's. That's all I can remember of the businesses that were

there. I'm sure there were casinos at the time.

RM: Did your mom do any grocery shopping?

CR: No, we couldn't carry groceries on the bus. We would go down in the morning and catch the evening bus back.

RM: And was that kind of a thrill for you?

CR: Of course. Especially when the bus driver would let me sit on the step up front. I could sit there and look right straight out the windshield.

RM: Was the bus usually pretty full?

CR: There were never less than 10 people on it and it was only about a 30-passenger bus. They weren't very big. It took two hours. They would stop at Lathrops Wells and Indian Springs and drop the mail.

RM: What was happening in Indian Springs?

CR: Indian Springs was a military base, the Indian Springs Air Force Base. Now the name is Creech Air Force Base. Indian Springs was an Army Air Force base before it became Air Force. And when they built the Catholic church up here they imported volunteer labor from Indian Springs and it happened to be a crew of Marines I think there were six young men who came up here from Indian Springs.

RM: Did you ever go up to Tonopah or Goldfield?

CR: Sure, we had ball games—basketball and baseball. We didn't have football here until the new school came in.

RM: Did you and your mom or your dad ever go up to Tonopah for a shopping trip or a visit?

CR: Not really, because we just didn't go that far together as a family very much. My dad would go up if he needed something. His stuff was mostly shipped in on the bus, pieces and parts for his pipefitting, or he would take the truck and drive down to Las Vegas to Standard Wholesale and pick things up.

RM: Did you see Tonopah as kind of a rival?

CR: No. But then, it would get pretty enthusiastic. During the games, the competition was really strong.

RM: Can you think of any other things that you would want to say?

CR: Not right at the moment.

RM: Okay. Thanks a lot, Claudia. It's been fun. You have a great memory.

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