

An Interview with
ROBERT N.
“BOBBY”
REVERT

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
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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 incoherency. 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.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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 when I have known and admired since I was a teenager; these experiences were especially gratifying. I thank the residents throughout Nye County and southern Nevada--too numerous to mention by name--who provided assistance, information, and photographs. They helped make the successful completion of this project possible.

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. "Bobby" Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project. Mr. Garcia and Mr. Revert, in particular, showed deep interest and unyielding support for the project from its inception. Thanks also go to current commissioners Richard L. Carver and Barbara J. Raper, who have since joined Mr. Revert on the board and who have continued the project with enthusiastic support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the project within Nye County and before the State of Nevada Nuclear Waste Project Office and the United States Department of Energy; both entities provided funds for this project. Thanks are also extended to Mr. Bradhurst for his advice and input regarding the conduct of the research and for constantly serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. This project would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County Commissioners and Mr. Bradhurst.

Jean Charney served as administrative assistant, editor, indexer, and typist throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Louise Terrell provided considerable assistance in transcribing many of the oral histories; Barbara Douglass also transcribed a number of interviews. Transcribing, typing, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Alice Levine, Jodie Hanson, Mike Green, and Cynthia Tremblay. Jared Charney contributed essential word processing skills. Maire Hayes, Michelle Starika, Anita Coryell, Michelle Welsh, Lindsay Schumacher, and Jodie Hanson shouldered the herculean task of proofreading the oral histories. Gretchen Loeffler and Bambi McCracken assisted in numerous secretarial and clerical duties. Phillip Earl of the Nevada Historical Society contributed valuable support and criticism throughout the project, and Tam King at the Oral History Program of the University of Nevada at Reno served as a consulting oral historian. Much deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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--Robert D. McCracken
Tonopah, Nevada - June 1990

INTRODUCTION

Historians generally consider the year 1890 as the end 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 much 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 southcentral Nevada remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be for at least another twenty years.

The great mining booms at Tonopah (1900), Goldfield (1902), and Rhyolite (1904) represent the last major flowering of what might be called the Old West in the United States. Consequently, southcentral 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 southcentral 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, most of it essentially untouched by human hands.

A survey of written sources on southcentral Nevada's history reveals same 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. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper; Beatty's independent paper folded in 1912. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All six communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities after their own papers folded, although Beatty was served by the Beatty Bulletin, which was published as a supplement to the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 is stored 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). 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 James R. Dickinson Library at the University of Nevada, 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 interviews as well as existing written sources, histories have been prepared for the major communities in Nye County. These histories also have been archived.

The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impacts of a federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in southcentral 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 a repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided near the site. 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.

--R.D.M.

Interview with Bobby Revert and Robert McCracken conducted April 16, 19, 22, May 5, June 20, and August 24, at Mr. Revert's son's tire store in Beatty, Nevada.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Bobby, first of all, tell me your name as it reads on your birth certificate.

BR: Robert Norman Revert. I was named after my two uncles—my father had a brother named Norman and a brother named Robert.

RM: And when and where were you born?

BR: I was born January 30, 1944, in Reno. At that time, my family lived in Tonopah, basically, but there wasn't very good medical care there so when I was born, they took my mother to Reno. I was born there and came back from Tonopah and about three months later, back to Beatty.

RM: What was your father's name?

BR: My father's name was Art Revert. He was born in San Francisco in 1905.

RM: And who was his father?

BR: His father's name was Albert. Albert was an extraordinary man. He came over here as an indentured servant right after they found gold in California. His family was from France. They had some troubles over there and his father wanted to get Albert out of there because the father was in trouble with the church. So he put this little kid on a ship and shipped him over here. To pay his passage, he was kind of an indentured servant. He worked for this lumber company in Northern California when the gold boom was going on.

My grandfather was 10 years old or something like that, and he came over here and worked for a lumber company and did very well. There was another kid there—the same thing, they both came over and they were indentured, so to speak, to this lumber company. They built themselves a room up on top of a chicken coop and lived there for quite some

time. They bought a set of encyclopedias and both of them read them cover to cover. And they both became quite wealthy.

The other boy's name was Marley. Marley went on to chase the gold rush in Alaska, where he got frost-bit real bad and they cut off his arms. Marley was the one who perfected the artificial hook-type arm. He became very wealthy with this arm. He's buried in the cemetery in Reno right down from the university; has a big headstone there. My grandfather went on to buy the lumber company he worked for.

My grandfather worked for this lumber company. He was a little man; he was very short. When he first came to this country, they gave him the job of wheeling the sawdust out of the sawmill in a wheelbarrow. Well, he wasn't big enough to do that very well; he was too short. There were some Chinese people working in this sawmill also; there weren't very many jobs for Chinese in those days. (They worked on the railroad; they'd imported a bunch of them.) But the Chinese took care of my grandfather; they worked all the sawdust down for him because he wasn't big enough to do that. He always had really a kindness in his heart for the Chinese people.

Anyway, he worked with this company for a long time and finally wound up buying it. It was the Verdi Lumber Company and they had lumberyards in Rhyolite, Tonopah, all across the state. They had 600 horses; they had teams of horses to haul lumber with. Now 600 horses, that's a lot of horses.

RM: Who did your grandfather marry?

BR: He married Henrietta Bucking. She was from San Francisco. San Francisco was a huge city in those days. The stock exchanges and all these things were there. All the wonderful things that came to the gold strikes came out of San Francisco. With his lumber business, he would have to go to a company in San Francisco to buy lumber or saws or

whatever he needed. And he married my grandmother. Her family was from Germany; she spoke German a lot.

She stayed in San Francisco; she was there during the San Francisco fire and my father was in Beatty. She moved to Petaluma after the city burned down.

She was a wonderful woman, just a wonderful woman. When I was a kid, she would swear underneath her breath, in German. She never swore anything bad; she would say, like, “shit,” but she’d say it in German. Pretty soon, we kids learned how to speak German because she spoke it all the time. She always thought she hid the cussing from us, but she didn’t. I could see her in the kitchen cutting a potato or something. She’d cut herself and she’d say “shit,” in German.

RM: What brought Albert to Beatty?

BR: During the First World War, they had some terrible fires. He had eight locomotives and these locomotives went up in the mountains—on their own tracks—to haul lumber. There was always some question if the fires were done by spies or what. The sawmill burned down and the roundhouse burned down, in different instances. The roundhouse burned down and most of his locomotives were in there. It was wintertime when they were cutting logs and for no reason at all it burned down and the locomotives burned up with it.

Then later on, the banks started failing. He still had a good lumber business all over the state, but the mines in Virginia City and so on were gone. But he still had the box factory where they made furniture and what have you. I have tables and chairs at my house that were made by the Verdi Lumber Company. And they had cabinet shops; they had all those things in Reno.

Then in 1929, the market was dead. He had a lot of money invested in the stock market, most everything he had, and it busted. To make a long story short, my father and he

got on the road and they said, “We’ve got to find something to do. We’ve got to go do something.” They start wandering down the highway, where they had lumber companies all over the state, and they landed in Beatty. There were some mines out at Chloride Cliff and in Pioneer still doing something. So they kind of landed here in Beatty.

RM: What made them pick Beatty as opposed to, say, Tonopah or Goldfield?

BR: They thought there was some potential in Chloride Cliff. Irwin Crowell had some claims up there and there was a guy that my grandfather really liked named McRae. McRae said, “You know, I really think you ought to go up here, to Chloride Cliff.” My grandfather liked McRae—he was a good judge of character—and the guy wasn’t lying to him; he actually thought the mine was good, but it just never panned out that it was really great.

Anyway, my grandfather said, “Let’s just settle here.” Rhyolite had folded up, there was nothing there anymore. “Property is cheap here. We don’t have any money, but nevertheless, it’s a good place to start.” So they wound up here, my father and my grandfather.

RM: Did any of his other children come with him to Beatty?

BR: Just my dad.

RM: What year was that, do you know?

BR: It was 1929, I think. They went out and invested in some claims at Chloride Cliff with what little money my grandfather had. The claims weren’t all that good and, of course, gold was \$20 an ounce. McRae himself wasn’t doing very well, but he had some stringer at Chloride Cliff he was following, a little tiny vein. After McRae died, his son followed it for a long time. When I was young, his son was still following that same vein. Anyway, they bought that property; they got involved in mining out there. They never did do any good out there at all; they never made money.

RM: Where were they milling the ore that they were getting at Chloride Cliff?

BR: It was up above where the clinic is now. And it was a touch-and-go thing at the time. It was a ball mill and they would bring ore in and assay their ore and say, “Yes, it’s good.” But then when they tried to mine it by the ton, it didn’t come out that way. Maybe nowadays, with the new processes, they would be able to. Old Louie McCrae—a grand old man, a grand guy—did ship a carload and he did it with a burro.

RM: Oh, my God. How far was he packing it?

BR: From Chloride Cliff down to the railroad.

RM: And when did your grandfather and father leave Chloride Cliff?

BR: I’m guessing ‘29 or early ‘30. Then they concentrated on the town.

RM: What was Beatty like then? About how many people do you think were living here and what was the enterprise here?

BR: There was no enterprise. I would imagine there were 200 people here and a few people still living in Rhyolite. There were still a few people living at Carrara and a few people at Pioneer. I would guess probably a couple hundred, tops. That’s exaggerated.

Of course, the only reason Beatty ever was here is because it was a rail stop. The water was here—here and Gold Center, which is two miles down the road. Beatty was a small town but Rhyolite folded up, Pioneer folded up.

By this time, my grandfather had moved my grandmother and her sister down here; they sold the place in Petaluma. They moved out to an old ranch out here—the Beatty Ranch. They were able to buy that because my grandmother, in her wisdom over the years, didn’t trust banks at all. She came from Germany; she didn’t trust banks. She had a few gold coins left in a drawer—just a few, not a bunch. My father went to Reno and the banks weren’t doing well at all. He walked down the street and went into a couple of banks and they turned

him down. He walked into this third bank and they said, “Yes, we’ll finance you; go buy that property.”

So they bought 300-and-some acres here with some springs on it, what have you. It was kind of like a trust is now. This guy owned all this property out north of town and he also owned some pieces in town. He had died, but they bought this thing and it included a mercantile store in town. My grandfather bought that and they came down there and went into business. My grandfather sold everything—when I was a kid, he sold dynamite, he sold rice, he sold picks and shovels, he sold meat . . . he was the Wal-Mart.

RM: Where was the store?

BR: Right across from the 76 station; I think where the Rebel station is now. It was a wonderful place. It was a two-story place with a big basement. Up above he had all kinds of grains and stuff for horses and what have you. The bottom floor was where he sold stuff to the public. A set of stairs came up and went into the store. Then you’d go into the store and down below, there was a basement. All the Indians and everybody would sit out in the front telling stories.

You’ve got to kind of think of it as a three-story building because one story was underneath the ground. And he had this little cart. It was on rails and it would come down and you could stop it on the ground level and take stuff off or go down to the bottom level and put stuff on it and pull it up with the rope. He could serve the whole store with this little cart. It was a neat thing.

RM: Was it there when he bought it or did he add it?

BR: I really don’t know. It was there when I was a little kid, I know. When I was a kid we’d get up on that second story. There was kind of a banister all the way around so that people wouldn’t fall off onto the floor. In those days they had bean shooters; I don’t know if

you remember bean shooters. They were glass. You'd shoot pinto beans. We'd get a customer down there, and "shoooo" [makes shooting noise]. It was a great time, a great store.

RM: Did he run it? Was he there all of the time?

BR: Absolutely. Don't ever think my grandfather wasn't the boss. Little tiny guy, smaller than my daughter is now, little Frenchman, but he was the boss. My grandfather had three sons, and he was always the boss. We all met at his house every morning. When I was a little kid, we got up at 4:00 in the morning. At 5:00, we'd be at Grandpa's house. Coffee would be made—my grandmother'd get up and make coffee. In Beatty, or maybe in Germany—I don't know where it started—they'd turn the plates upside down on the table (I assume so the bugs didn't get in them). She'd have the table set for my two uncles and my dad and me. You would turn your cup over and she'd be right there with a pot of coffee. She would set that all up the night before.

And we would go down there and have a meeting. We'd talk about what happened yesterday, what would happen today, what our plans were. I was a little kid and I wasn't really involved in this meeting; I just went down because I always woke up early with my dad. My dad and I both slept outside on the porch and when he got up, I got up.

RM: What would happen after you ate breakfast?

BR: They would all make decisions. And by that time, the business had grown. My grandfather had the store, which my grandmother came and helped him with. She had her sister with her—her name was Lynn Bucking—and they helped out. Not much, because my grandfather didn't want to work women, not that he had anything against women. He thought he should show them some respect and they shouldn't have to work—he figured that they did all the work around the house.

RM: How old were your dad and Bob and Norman then?

BR: My uncle Bob was very young; he served in World War II. My uncle Norm was the oldest of the bunch. I assume my dad was about 35 at that time.

When my grandfather bought this store, a piece of property came with that across the highway—where the Rebel station is now. They built a service station there and made a deal with Union Oil. Union Oil was a California-based company; they weren't a big company, but they were pretty good-sized. They were a major brand. They made this deal with Union Oil and bought some tanks and built the station and it. There were some ranches around, and a few mines were working. Pioneer still had some stuff going on and Crowell had mining going on.

RM: Chloride Cliff or the fluorspar?

BR: Both. They bought some big tanks so they could store and haul bulk fuel. So they bought a little fuel truck and started delivering fuel. It only held about 1,000 gallons, maybe less; probably 800. And of course, everybody in town in those days heated their homes with stove oil. They didn't have electric heat or propane heaters or what have you, everything was stove oil. Everybody had barrels out beside their house.

RM: Can you name a few of the mines they hauled fuel to?

BR: Crowell's mine, the Pioneer Mine, the Mayflower Mine, the Yellow Gold Mine, the Clarksdale Mine—that was owned by a couple of brothers out of Tonopah.

RM: Was there anything at Rhyolite at that time?

BR: There were some gyppos. A guy by the name of Red Mills was doing some work at the Senator Stewart and there was a guy by the name of Fraunhoffer, and Weeks. They were from Virginia; they were just working there, but they were leasers.

RM: You used the word "gyppo." I haven't heard that in years. Describe what a gyppo is. Is he a leaser, or is he the owner?

BR: No, he is basically a leaser, but he steals a lot.

RM: He is high-grading ore, you mean?

BR: Right. And the guy who owns it knows he's stealing, but nevertheless, the owner is still getting something out of it because the guy who owns it is probably in Delaware or somewhere. He knows he is getting beat a little bit, but he doesn't care because he is getting something.

RM: And a gyppo is kind of a poor-boy operation?

BR: Absolutely. This is a guy who walks all the way to Rhyolite every day and if he is going to put in a charge or something, he is going to do it with hand steel and he is going to pound that steel in the ground and he is going to put a stick of dynamite in there and try and break it loose and get something out of it. There were quite a few of these around here then. They were just a bunch of old men who were trying to get enough of a living to buy a few groceries and live. I knew people who'd walk 20 miles to their mine—one way. They'd stay there for about a week, week and a half. They'd pack all the groceries they could eat, then they'd come back a week, week and half later, with some gold and the Chinamen would come through and buy the gold.

RM: Do you remember any names of people who were doing that?

BR: A guy by the name of Callicut. Louie McRae did it. In his older days, my folks would go over the summit and pick Louie up. He'd say, "Okay, I am going to be back in eight days." He was getting old and they worried.

RM: How old was he then, do you think?

BR: Oh, 60.

RM: Were they using a burro or were they packing it on their backs?

BR: They were packing it on their back. There was a guy named Louie the Burro Man. He

had some claims and he had three or four burros and a little wagon too, which was kind of cool. There were just two guys that had burros that I can remember.

RM: Did they have cabins out on their diggings?

BR: Most of them did. And, of course, it was basic; it was like this room here. I mean, it didn't have a kitchen or anything like that. And they'd get somebody to haul water up there.

RM: So these old guys were walking out into the hills.

BR: Yes, but they all had their own claims and they'd had them for years.

RM: Were they all scattered all over or would they work in one particular place?

BR: They were all over. Louie McRae would go towards Death Valley and back and in towards Chloride Cliff. I never did know where his claim was and I still don't. I'd like to know because he always made money on it; he always made gold. And Callicut always made gold.

RM: Where were his claims?

BR: Down south of town.

RM: Were they just kind of little diggings or were they old mines?

BR: They were something that both of those guys started. Well, Louie McRae's dad started his and when his dad died, he just kept it up.

RM: Were they high-grading little picture rock-type things, or what?

BR: They were little stringers. Little short strings, let's say three or four inches wide, and they'd blow them up. If there was gold in there, they'd go after it.

RM: Did they then carry the rock into town or did they crush it and pan it or what?

BR: They'd work all day and then at night they'd sit there with a pestle and grind it up, pat it, and take the gold out.

RM: And sell it to a Chinaman, you said? Talk about him.

BR: Well, “Chinaman” is kind of a loose term. There were people who would come by and buy gold; and it was illegal because the government said it owned all the gold. I assume it all started with a Chinaman somewhere down the line, but the gold buyer was always “the Chinaman”—whether he was white or black or whatever color, he was still the Chinaman. He was the guy who bought the gold. When I was a kid you were not supposed to have gold but the Chinaman would give you a lot more money than the government would.

RM: He was paying above market price?

BR: He was paying market price, but you didn’t have any taxes or anything. He paid you in \$20 bills or \$50 dollar bills or whatever.

RM: So these old miners made a living, they survived this way?

BR: They made a living until they died. I remember when they all died. They never worked anywhere else and they didn’t have any Social Security, they didn’t have anything; they made it all off gold.

RM: Had they been in this area a long time—maybe they came with Rhyolite?

BR: Oh, they all came with the old mining camps. All of them came chasing. You know gold is an obsession; I really believe that it’s worse than alcohol or drugs or anything else. People become obsessed with it and you can’t get away from it. You always think, “If I just go another foot. If I could just. . . . One more step; it’s right there.” I am the same way. There’s something about gold—you have it in your hand, you feel it; there is just something about it.

RM: My dad was that way.

BR: And these old-timers were, too. They always thought they were right there. Of course, a lot of them would go to my grandfather, to the store, for a grubstake—for him to put up some groceries. I remember, I was a little kid and this guy comes in and says, “Oh, I just

want you to look at that rock.” My grandfather has a bunch of magnifying glasses on the table. He looks at them and says, “I don’t see anything there.”

I said, “Why did you turn him down?”

He said, “That wasn’t all that good. You’ve got to watch these guys.” I waited and pretty soon here comes another guy. If you get a rock and it’s dry, it’s just a dry rock and you really don’t see much in it. But if it’s wet, you see a little bit more.

This guy comes in he’s got this rock in his hand he says, “I just want you to look at this.”

And my grandfather said, “You’re another goddamned spitter. Get out of here!” I am sure my grandfather gave all those guys a lot of money over time, in the hopes that maybe they might do well and he’d get a piece of the action.

RM: Did any of them ever deliver?

BR: I don’t know; I doubt it. There were a lot of good claims around. Out there on the bombing range, I think there are still very viable and good gold mines. My father met my mother out there. As I told you, my father and his brothers had a fuel distributorship. They sold diesel fuel, gasoline, and oil and they had a truck; they’d make deliveries or get fuel.

So they delivered to this Yellow Gold Mine out there. It was owned by Curly Carr, who is buried in the Tonopah cemetery. It’s up here about 25 miles—you turn up a wash, go back up on to the gunnery range. Curly, of course, had this notion of great riches. They were doing pretty well; it was a good mine. It wasn’t a fantastic mine, but he was making pretty good money.

Curly Carr had called his brother in Arkansas—things weren’t too good in Arkansas. I don’t know what my grandfather was doing at that time, but anyway they weren’t too good. So the brother loads all of his three daughters up and they go to Beatty, Nevada. They take a

train so far and then get on a bus and they get to Beatty, Nevada, and they say, “Well, Yellow Gold is out there 25 miles.” They get on a bus here and go out 25 miles and the bus driver says, “Well, it’s up that wash about 10 miles.” They all get out and they start walking up this wash. That was my mother’s father and mother and her two sisters. They miss the road to Yellow Gold so they go all the way to Clarksdale and the Clark brothers give them a ride back to Yellow Gold.

And they lived out there for some time, in the huts. I was there many times; it was a terrible existence. I mean, the boards—you could see through the slack. It was terrible. Anyway, my father hauls some fuel up there one day and he meets these girls. So he comes back and tells my uncle Norm, “There’s some girls at Yellow Gold.”

So they go out and talk to these girls; they talk them into coming to a dance in Beatty. After that they got friendly and my uncle Norm married one and my father married another one. So the two brothers were married to two sisters.

RM: Where did your mother’s family come from?

BR: They came out of Warren, Arkansas. They had been some place in Tennessee. They hadn’t done well and in the Depression, things just got worse. My grandfather was bouncing around, looking for work. I really don’t know that much of the history of my mother’s family.

RM: So their uncle owned Yellow Gold and he said, “Come on out, I’ve got a gold mine.”

BR: Right. And of course, he was a gold nut like everybody else, but there is good ore there. In fact, we still have some claims there. My family would never sell out when they put the bombing range in there—they had it in a buffer zone. My grandfather Carr and his brother refused to sell. That’s one of the best gold prospects in this country. I used to go out there and high-grade gold when my kids were young and we always did very well there.

RM: What were the characteristics of the ore at the Yellow Gold? Was it in a vein?

BR: It was a huge vein, about six feet wide—and there was gold all through it.

RM: Good God! What did it run a ton, do you think?

BR: Oh, I don't remember. It ran a lot. It was free gold; you could see it in the rock.

RM: Why didn't somebody just come in and set up a big operation?

BR: They were trying to when World War II broke out.

RM: Did it run an ounce?

BR: Oh, yes, at least.

RM: That would be a bonanza now, wouldn't it?

BR: In Clarksdale over on the other side, the Clark brothers in Tonopah . . . there is a mountain—on one side is Yellow Gold, the other side is Clarksdale.

RM: Was it the same formation?

BR: I think it is; I think that thing goes all the way through that mountain.

RM: That Yellow Gold gold—it doesn't get any more beautiful. Did the Clarksdale gold look like that, too?

BR: I've never seen samples of the Clarksdale gold. Some time in the last 15 years, Dick Carver and Midge and I went up there and talked to the two brothers and they had several diggings there. I guess they did well with it; they lived there and the brothers always felt that it was still very good. But when the government came in with the bombing range and said, "Everybody get out," they sold theirs. My grandfather Carr and his brother refused to sell.

RM: Did they get a good price?

BR: I don't know. They acted like they didn't when I talked to them. They acted like they were just forced into it.

RM: Was there a town of Clarksdale or was it just some dwellings?

BR: There were just some people living there, I think.

RM: Did they have a mill there?

BR: Yes, across the canyon. Both mines used the same mill.

RM: And there was water there for the mill?

BR: There's a spring across the canyon; it's still a great place today. They had several Model A engines all hooked up in tandem. You can see where the old crusher was and what have you. There is a car there and I know it's still there; it's a bombing range, I don't think anybody took it out. The headlights are all brass and the glass in the headlights and the windows are all purple.

RM: You mean it's turned purple from the sun? Are there pretty good-sized tailings there or did they run them through the mill?

BR: The tailings went way down the wash there.

RM: What was at Yellow Gold?

BR: Yellow Gold did have a post office.

RM: What is the history of Yellow Gold? When was the original discovery made?

BR: I think 1910, something like that; '12. People did a lot of digging around; they didn't do too much until World War I. My uncle Curly went to war in World War I. When he came back, he talked to some people and he got a little financing and then he went after it in a big way and they found that vein. Of course, he was out there working by himself; there were just a few people. When it really opened up where they had some good gold, which was much later, he was starting to make some good money. Then they had a lot of promoters and some big money that wanted to go in there. That's when the government took it over. That was in the late '30s, but it was a buildup to World War II. That's when the United States got worried about the war in Europe.

RM: Would there be any placer?

BR: There is some placer down below the mine. It's not great placer, but you can pan.

There are some nice nuggets there. I can show you that on the computer.

RM: So when the government took it over, that was the end of working there?

BR: That was the end of it. My grandfather, to his dying day, always thought he would get that back, but it was just never going to happen. I even tried to get one of our assemblymen to work on getting that back, have the government take it off their register, but it never happened—the air force just keeps expanding.

RM: What happen to Curly Carr?

BR: He died, probably around 1950.

RM: Was he married?

BR: Well, Curly was quite a character. His last wife was named Eva; she said she was a nurse. I think she took more of her own drugs, I think she dispensed. But by that time, Curly was drinking pretty heavy. He was in a gunfight in Tonopah and one in Beatty. He was an ass, really. [Laughter] My grandfather and he were exact opposites. Curly got a little bored, he learned some bad habits. My grandfather, his brother, was a very religious man—he did his church thing every week, a Southern Baptist-type thing.

RM: Do you have any stories about your parent's courtship?

BR: They dated back and forth for about a year and half, I guess, but I really don't know a lot about their courtship.

RM: How long did your mother's family stay out there?

BR: Of course, my mother and dad moved into town right after they got married, which would be in the late '30s. My grandfather stayed there until '39 or so, when they kicked them out.

RM: Do you think from the geology and everything that Yellow Gold's almost another Goldfield or Round Mountain or something?

BR: I do. Like I say, I've taken some really nice gold out of there. When my children were young, I trapped in the wintertime, so we always ran a trap up there and we would always go take samples. I went up on top of the mountain and looked at the Revert mines, claimed by my father, and I found some really, really good high-grade on the surface.

RM: How deep is the shaft?

BR: There is a 100-foot level and a 200-foot level. There's a drift that goes out below that, but it's not 100 feet. Of course, you had a shaft, then you'd have a drift that'd go out this way or that way. All those drifts had rail in them because we had ore cars. During the war, iron was expensive and I assume locals and what have you would go and steal all the rail out of the mines and sell it to the junk people.

RM: And the ore is visible in the shaft? Did they sink on ore?

BR: Yes. When my children and I were trapping up there, we'd go down to those drifts and dig up where the rails were because there would be that much dirt on top. We found gold all the way through there. It would sprinkle out of the ore cars that were down that track. We'd make as much money on gold as we did on trapping. And we made \$15,000 on trapping one year, which was a lot of money in those days.

RM: Oh, my God. Can you get down the shaft through these old drifts?

BR: No. I haven't been down one of those shafts in 20 years. The ladders were all rotten then. Nowadays, they have harnesses and what have you and you could, of course, go down those ladders if you had somebody at the top with a boom and you were on some kind of rope or something. I wouldn't climb one of those shafts now—a 200-foot fall is a long ways.

RM: Oh, yes. And all those old timbers and everything can come down on top of you. Are

there many workings on the surface—cuts and diggings and everything—besides the shaft?

BR: There are a lot of exploratory holes. There's also a lot of exploratory stuff at Clarksdale. A lot of people pay a lot of money for ore cars; all those mines are full of ore cars. I'd like to go out there and get some of the ore cars out of there. That Yellow Gold mine's got to have 10 ore cars in it. A guy could go out there with a Jeep with a winch. Ore cars are going for big bucks nowadays.

RM: What's one worth?

BR: A thousand dollars. In fact, you can't find them. Nobody wants to sell them.

RM: Is there a shaft at Clarksdale, or a tunnel, or what?

BR: There's both. The original discovery went in on an incline and then they did sink a shaft.

RM: Talk about your trapping out there—what period would that have been?

BR: It's been 30 years ago, so probably beginning in the '70s. Bobcats were bringing good money, coyotes would bring good money, gray fox would bring money. You'd get a ringtail cat once in a while; I haven't seen a ringtail cat for years and years. They must have them on the Test Site but you don't see them down here anymore. My grandfather was a trapper so I learned that from him. When my children were young, it was a way to supplement your income. I was working at the Test Site then, so on weekends I'd go trapping and if you'd make a couple hundred bucks a day, that was a lot of money in those days.

RM: What kinds of traps were you using?

BR: Leg-hold traps, steel traps. You'd put them out, then go back every week. Nowadays, you've got to go back every four days. It worked out well; I worked at the Test Site, I had weekends off, so on weekends, we'd spend the whole weekend trapping.

RM: What was a hide worth then?

BR: There was one year they were very good. They were \$450 for a cat. When the cats were high, a fox was 75 bucks and coyotes, maybe \$40-50. Of course, you'd catch 10 coyotes for every cat, you know. You still had to skin them and stretch them; you can cure the hide.

RM: How long did you do that?

BR: I still do it.

RM: And there is still a market?

BR: Yes. I still trapped this year, as old as I am. It's the only thing I like. I can't play football; I can't play baseball. I'm too old for that, but I enjoy trapping so I still do it.

RM: Can you say where you trap now?

BR: I trap mostly within a 20-mile radius of Beatty.

RM: Who do you sell them to?

BR: There's an outfit in Canada that buys them. And there is Moscow Furs out of Idaho, which ships directly to Moscow. Furs don't sell in the United States but foreigners—Chinese, Russians, Canadians—buy them. I sold all of mine this year. They have a fur sale in Fallon—all these buyers from all over the world come and you take your furs up there and sell them. People bid on them.

RM: I had no idea that was going on. I thought it was a lost art.

BR: You ought to go to that fur sale some time. You'd enjoy it and you'd talk to a lot of old-timers. I am 65 years old; you think I'm an old-timer? There are guys up there 80 years old. I used to do this when I was a kid; I'm still doing it. I enjoy two things: I enjoy prospecting and I enjoy trapping.

RM: Is there anything that we should say about your mother?

BR: She was a grand woman. She was raised in Warren, Arkansas; that's what she

considered home. They moved around quite a bit just before they came out here because times were tough; they had the Dust Bowl and one thing or another. But she loved Beatty.

RM: How many siblings do you have?

BR: I have a sister—her name is Brenda. And I have five children of my own.

RM: Does Brenda still live in the area?

BR: No, she lives in northern California.

RM: Do you want to talk some about your mining ventures over the years and your prospecting?

BR: Well, that's my love of life, prospecting. Like most people, I have never been really successful, though I've found some very good gold. Of course, even at \$1,000 gold, if you figured my time and my effort, the cost of that, gold might as well be worth 10 cents an ounce. But I love it. I found some very fine specimens. Like I told you before, gold is an obsession; and I know I am not the only one. People from biblical times would go crazy over gold.

RM: There is something about gold. What is your technique for prospecting? What method do you use and how do you pick a place where you're going to look?

BR: As I say, I've been over 99 percent of this country. People will say, "Well, this has been picked over before." And it has, every inch of it. The old-timers would walk from, let's say, Virginia City to right here on foot, and maybe drag a burro behind them or a horse. They'd cover the whole country. And you say, "It's all been looked over." But it hasn't, because in 100 years there've been a lot of thunderstorms and flash floods so a lot of things get uncovered that they didn't get a chance to look at.

So when I go out, whether I am trapping or chukar hunting or whatever I'm doing, I take samples. I generally always have a gold pan or two with me in my pickup, and if I see a

spot that looks good, I'll go up into a wash. If I find a little waterfall, I rake all the top of that off; I dig down to the bottom. Today it's a little more exact because you can have a GPS. You can mark that spot and mark on your bag what the coordinates are. When I was younger, you didn't have a GPS so you'd have to try and remember where you found it.

Then I take it home and I pan it and crush it. If I find something that's good, I'll go back to that spot and try to figure out where it came from. I'll look at the mountain and I'll use my imagination a little bit and say, "How did this get here?" Say I found it in a wash—I'll work my way up the wash. And if I keep finding something, I just keep following it up. I usually hang a ribbon on a bush, then I'll go up a ways. When I don't find any gold anymore, I stop and hang a different colored ribbon on that bush—that's where it stopped.

Then I'll go back and look at the mountain and say, "Okay. Why is it here and it's not up there?" And I look at the rock formations, I look at the faults and I use my imagination. I say, "Okay, how did this get here?" Well, there are different ways. "Okay, so it had to come from the left here," then I'll start working up the hill.

RM: Do you have assays?

BR: All the time. I know a lot about them. I run my own fire assays. And if I have something that excites me, I'll either send it to Utah or to the Mackay School of Mines—I have a friend up there who helps me out. Free gold is free gold. That's where you have nuggets, little flakes, and what have you.

But there's a lot of gold you find that you don't fire assay. You might say, "I think this rock has some gold in it." So you crush that up and heat it up and do a fire assay on it and your assay comes back positive. Then you take the same type of rock and you've already got a fire assay that shows positive, and you try different things to get the gold out of that. If you can't figure that out for yourself, because you are ignorant, as I am about a lot of things,

you might send that to the Mackay School of Mines and they'll say, "Okay. Here is what you need to do to recover that gold." For instance, Round Mountain gold looked like black minerals and, like Barrick Mine, a lot of it is microscopic gold. You might get an assay back saying that it's microscopic gold. Well, Round Mountain used a whole different recovery process than Barrick did. The people at the Mackay School of Mines could advise you how you could get gold out of this rock.

RM: Did any of the mills around here use cyanide at all or were they all gravity?

BR: They all used cyanide because cyanide was easier. If they had fairly good ore, they could extract most of it with cyanide and "To hell with the tailings—we're not going to worry about that. We've got some down in the tailings, we know that, but it's minimal." Everybody went back later on and worked on the tailings because there was still gold in them. You look at those tailings up by Goldfield, Tonopah—they've all been worked two or three times. Somebody'd come up with another process—"Yes, we've got a whole bunch more gold out there."

RM: Could you talk a little bit about growing up in Beatty? What was it like?

BR: Beatty was a wonderful place. The old train station was still here. It was across the street over here, basically. There weren't many white kids here. There were three to one more Indian kids here than white kids. The Indians lived across the river. There were a lot of white people in Beatty, but they were old people. They were miners and what have you; they didn't have any kids. When I went to school there were more Indians than there were white kids. But it was a great time.

Things were simple. I think the first time I ever saw a television I was probably seven years old, maybe more. Mrs. Lisle took me to Las Vegas—we went in a store and it had a television and I was just amazed. We listened to radio programs at night. They had stories on,

like the Lone Ranger. We'd all sit in front of the radio and listen to the stories like Johnny Dollar and some of those.

RM: Do you remember Lucky Lager Dance Time?

BR: Oh, yes. It was such a wonderful time. Technology is a scary thing to me anymore. Life was simple when I was growing up; it wasn't nearly as difficult as it is now. It terrifies me to think of the world my grandchildren are getting into. It's going to be a very terrifying thing for young people.

RM: Have people changed, in your view, since when you were growing up?

BR: Well, the world is different.

RM: I interviewed Frank Brockman; he started this motel. He moved here from LA and he said when he got to Beatty, he found out that a handshake in Beatty was worth more than a contract in LA. Has that changed at all?

BR: Well, it has. Times have changed everything. You don't do anything on a handshake anymore because somebody's going to come back at you. People are different now. You used to deal with a man on character. Now that's not the case; character means nothing. If you don't have it in writing, you've lost. I remember when I was a kid, my schoolteachers hugged me a lot. Mrs. Lisle, Jim Lisle's mother, was my schoolteacher and she'd come up and give me a big hug and say, "Bobby, you did a good job." Now you've molested a child. What is with this world?

RM: Right. That was Chlo (Chloe) Lisle?

BR: That was Chlo Lisle. Wonderful woman. She'd come up and give you a hug—hell, you worked harder the next day; it made you feel good. This gal is somebody you looked up to, you respected, and she gave you a hug. It was a great thing. Not nowadays.

RM: Do you think the people you see are as friendly as they used to be?

BR: Middle-aged people are, not young people. Older people are very cautious. They're scared, they watch TV, they're having a hard time living on fixed incomes, they watch their money very closely. Older people are uncertain about their future, which is coming to an end. Middle-aged people are friendly and young people are clannish; they get into gangs, they do things that I don't understand.

Even in a small town like Beatty or Tonopah, children are very careful to choose their friends anymore and that's worrisome. When I was a kid you went to school and everybody was your friend. Nowadays they're split, you know? And it has nothing to do with race, color or creed or anything like that. I have a daughter who is 15 years old. She has a lot of Spanish friends, white friends, what have you, but there are always other groups out there. And young people are worried about the world, too, and they are taking up different lifestyles; they're looking at different directions.

RM: One of the things I am interested in is what I call the "can-do" attitude. Your grandfather was the epitome of a "can-do" guy. He comes over here at ten years old, and pretty soon he owns a sawmill. Then he comes down here and he has a store and everything. I didn't know your dad well, but I think he had the "can-do" attitude, and I think you have it; but do you see a change in the "can-do" attitude of people?

BR: Oh, I do. I see people who would rather be on welfare than work. You can't hire anybody to do yard work. There is nobody who wants to, even the young kids.

I still believe that in Nevada, you can do anything you want to. If you are young, you can conquer the whole world in this state. This is a young state and the possibilities are enormous—especially in Nye County; the tax level is down to nothing, and as far as permits, you can do anything you want to in this state. You can make whatever you want to out of yourself. As I look back, the opportunities are endless. All you've got to do is have a little

backbone and jump for it.

Of course, if you're going to do something it is going to take a lot of work. It takes a lot of concentration, a lot of backbone, but it can be done. Now, in New York City where you live with 10 million people, no. I don't know how those people survive, but here it is still possible.

RM: Yes. The prospector had a "can-do" attitude. Most prospectors must have realized that the odds were against them, but they believed, "By God, it can happen to me." And so they went out and did it. Whereas now it's, "Nah, you'll never find any gold," or something like that.

BR: It's not like the lottery where you know going in there is a 10 million chance to one, but it's only going to cost you a buck. The "can-do" attitude is, "I've got to go out and work for it. This is going to take some effort." A lottery ticket is no effort. "The odds are still bad, but I am the guy that's going to do this."

CHAPTER TWO

RM: Can you talk just a little bit about Indians? You told me about they would sit on the bench at your grandfather's store and tell stories. What was that like?

BR: Oh, that was a great time. For some reason, Indians lived really long; it seemed like they didn't die until they were in their 90s. I remember one guy told me he was 14 when he saw his first white man. Of course, the Indians all judged their age by the summers and maybe some of them were mixed up, but there were a lot of them who lived to be 90 years old or better.

My grandfather had that store we talked about earlier, and out in front there was a big loading dock where trucks could pull up and unload stuff, and a big porch. And they had some benches out there—my grandfather and some other old-timers and always four or five of the old Indian men would be there.

The Indians would come to town—and they had these wagons. They were on wooden wheels and the women would pull them. They were like a little kid's wagon, but they were handy. They'd have glass gallon jugs and they would sew straw around them or sometimes burlap and bring them up here and fill them out of the pipe and drag them back home and they'd put them in the creek to keep them cool.

There was no refrigeration here. My grandfather's house had a screened-in place—you'd go out on his porch, open this door, and there was this . . . we called it a cooler. You'd reach in and get your water, your milk or butter, whatever. He had burlap hanging down outside and all summer long, twice a day, my job was to go out there and spray that burlap so the breeze would blow through it and keep it cool.

The Indians would come to town and haul these little wagons with their water bottles

and get some groceries from my grandfather. The old men would sit on the porch telling stories. We kids would sit on the floor and the old men would sit up on the benches (they had canes and sticks to walk with). They were wonderful stories about the old days in Ash Meadows and the things they did when they were kids. It was a wonderful experience. You could sit there and listen to these old men talk and you could just picture their stories in your mind.

The Indians didn't write things the way white people did. All the things the young people learned, they learned from their elders—that was their book. And there were some great big hides down there. (The Indians schooled their children too—don't ever think that didn't happen.) These were large hides with drawings on them. The little kids would be sitting there and the Indians would be explaining all the stories painted on this hide. That was their school and that's how the Indians kept track of their history. That had gone down from generation to generation to generation—no telling how old those hides were. They didn't have books so it went from mouth to mouth to mouth.

RM: How large was the Indian community here in Beatty?

BR: When I was really young, kids and all, 120, 130.

RM: And how many whites do you think there were in town?

BR: About the same, maybe more. As I said, there were probably more whites, but the whites didn't have children. There weren't a whole lot of young people who had children. The Indians all had kids. A lot of the white people were old-timers; their kids had moved away or they were too old to have kids.

The Pahrump school was the same way; it was mostly Indians, too. I started school in Pahrump in 1951. They were starting the Test Site and my dad hauled fuel into Mercury so we went to Pahrump where it would be closer to the Test Site.

RM: You probably went to school with Button Ford.

BR: I did. Anyway, then I came up here and went to school the last part of that same year. They had two rooms; the same teacher taught them both. There was a hallway between them, but the first through the eighth grade were on one side and the high school was on the other side. There were two years we didn't have a graduating class; they didn't have anybody graduate for two years.

RM: And one teacher handled it all? What a tough job.

BR: His name was Mr. Dees and he was a cool guy; he lived right on the corner. He would come to school and chew tobacco so there were spittoons around the floor, but he missed most of the time. So he'd chew that tobacco and spit and he'd hit the floor "choooo" [spitting noise]. He got sick and then Mrs. Lisle took over.

BR: I saw a lot of strange things with the Indian religion that probably if people read about it will think are crackpot.

RM: I don't think so; I think they will be fascinated.

BR: Okay, I'll tell you about some of it. There was an old Indian named Ike Shaw; he was a holy man. And the oldest guy there was what most people would call a chief. His name was Johnny Shoshone. He was the one who told a lot of the stories to the children and to the other Indians. He was a storyteller; but because he was the oldest, he was the wisest of all of them.

Anyway, Ike Shaw was a very old man, very, very wrinkled. You don't see people like that anymore. He was the holy man, like a preacher is today. At funerals and what have you, he was always the boss. He did a lot of really cool things. I remember one time in August or early September, when it was very hot, we kids were playing down at the Indian camp and he called us kids.

You've got to keep in mind there was no ice machine in Beatty at that time, and sure

as hell there wasn't at that Indian camp. Most of our groceries came in with dry ice. There were some people who had refrigerators that made ice, but not many. Anyway, this was very hot in the summertime and we were little kids. He said, "I want to show you something," and reached around behind his back. We're all burning up, playing in this little creek down there. He reached behind his back and had something like a snowball. And he did it five times, tight in front of me. I'm a little kid; I can't believe this. It was like a slushy ice cone, like they have nowadays, a snow cone-type thing, but it was formed with his hands. I've wondered all my life where that ever came from—"How did he do that?" I'm a little kid; I'm not some grown kid who's smoking dope or anything.

I saw him do some other things, too. They weren't really spectacular. I'd say it was really spectacular to me at the time because I was young. I don't know if it was an illusion or what, but I know I ate the ice. There was another little kid called Jamie . . . it wasn't Jamie but something kind of like that, a kid named Chickie, another kid named J. R., Junior—there were five of us. We all got this ball of ice or snow or whatever it was and we ate it; it was the hottest part of summer. At that time, you could not come up town and get a snow cone. Ike Shaw was a real old man—he couldn't run down with that; he couldn't pull it down in one of those little wagons. Where that snow cone came from, I'll never know.

Another time . . . I'll progress a little bit to when Johnny Shoshone died. As I said, he was the oldest one in the tribe, what most people would call a chief. He was a wise man. Ike Shaw was what most people would call a He wasn't a medicine man. They had their own medicine men, too. Holy men and medicine men were different people. A medicine man might be a woman; generally, it was. They went out and got the herbs; they concocted the medicine, they did all that. There was one woman, that was her job; she took care of that part. When kids got sick she took care of them.

Anyway, Johnny Shoshone died and Indians came from everywhere—Lone Pine, Big Pine, Bishop, up in Railroad Valley (there were a lot of Indians there). They all came to his funeral, this gathering. And like I say, they lived down in these trees out here. They sang songs and beat drums and you could hear it all over town. For a funeral, they'd do songs for three or four days. The night of the fire, which was the last night that they sang, a bunch of us kids went down there. They had these old buildings made of tin and sticks and anything they could get to put the buildings together. But they had one that was bigger than all the rest. They all went in there and we kids were outside and, of course, kids didn't go to these things. Where I was there was a piece of tin and a hole about the size of a 50-cent piece, maybe a dollar. Everybody was sitting in a big circle and they had a little fire, only about as big as that ashtray, maybe.

RM: Ten inches across.

BR: These Indians were singing their songs and it was pretty dark except this for little flickering fire they had going. They just put little sticks in it. There was this red light, like a marble; it was round, like a spear. The Indians were all in there talking and saying their prayers and what have you. After the fire, they'd never speak this guy's name again—that was not good. So this was your last day to say goodbye. There was this red marble thing just like a light bulb and as everybody talked, this light went from person to person to person.

RM: It floated through the air?

BR: Floating through the air, absolutely. This light was probably smaller than my thumbnail; like a marble. Every time a guy would get done talking, the light would go to another one. Now, they didn't have lights or any of that stuff. Maybe Ike Shaw was a magician or an illusionist or something. But I saw this and I watched it happen. It went on for a couple hours. The light finally went all around and it went up and just kind of sat there,

about five feet off the ground.

RM: God, what a story, Bobby.

BR: Ike Shaw used to do a lot of things for us kids; we were sure he was magic. I still think it was magic. I don't know how he did all that. I never got over that snow cone. The red light—I'll never get over it. The red light is the only thing that I know that makes me think there might be life after death; otherwise, I wouldn't believe in God or anything. I would not believe in official religion; I wouldn't believe in any of that if I hadn't seen that red light. That has always left a question in my mind—where did that come from?

Ike Shaw always would do things that nobody else could do. He could call birds out of the tree.

RM: You mean, they would come and land in the tree?

BR: No, if there was a bird in the tree, he'd call it and it'd come down and land on his shoulder or his hand. I used to try and listen to what he'd say; I used to go out underneath the trees and do that. No birds ever flew in my hand. [Laughs]

RM: What else did he do?

BR: It was basically tricks for kids that I saw him do. The red ball thing, that was never meant to be seen.

RM: How old do you think he was?

BR: I think he was in his 90s.

RM: What do you know about his background? Had he always been here, or did he come from somewhere else?

BR: All the time I knew him he was from here. He used to tell the story of Wovoka. He talked about the Ghost Dance and how it started here, how his family had gone to these things.

RM: Did he believe in the Ghost Dance religion himself?

BR: Oh, yes. He said that people got to making their own ghost shirts. He said if they had gone with their religion the way they were supposed to, the ghost shirts would have protected them; but people would go get drunk. Of course, the Ghost Dance spread clear across the United States. This all started in Schurz. He felt that the Indians had reached a place between Christianity and the Indian religion. I've studied this, too. I've looked at it and I think Wovoka probably did the same thing. I think Wovoka got some Christian religion and he mixed the two together.

RM: I would probably agree with that. Did Ike Shaw have a wife?

BR: Yes, he did.

RM: And kids?

BR: No kids that I know of.

RM: Did his wife have special powers or anything?

BR: No. We called her Nootsie, which means Grandma. All the kids called her Nootsie. The women were behind the scenes. Women weren't very important in those days. They were good for pulling the wagon up town and getting water in it, but that's about all. And they'd take water and pour it in chipmunk holes and catch chipmunks—women were good for that. Women took care of kids, women did the cooking, women caught the chipmunks and the rabbits, women carried the water, women did that.

RM: Did they live pretty much as Indians down there, or did they have jobs?

BR: Some of them did. Charlie Shoshone, of course. He wasn't nearly as old as the old men were. Bobby Shoshone and Tony Shoshone each had a car. Dave Shoshone, who was Bombo Cottonwood's stepfather . . . they all had jobs. In the old days, when the railroad was here, some of the Indians worked around the railroads and what have you. And, of course,

they liked whiskey and they had to have money to buy stuff; they got tired of eating jackrabbits and gophers.

RM: You said the other day there were about 150 Indians living in the canyon. Did that community just kind of gradually peter out?

BR: It did. Some of them moved off to, like, Lone Pine, Big Pine, up around Bishop, where things were a lot better than they were in Beatty. You've got to keep in mind these guys were living in Death Valley in wickiups; not the best life. They'd walk down there and they'd walk back. They would migrate up here in the summertime because it was deathly hot down there. And of course the Indians were getting involved with politics and the BIA. The BIA built some housing in Death Valley where they didn't have to come up here anymore and they built a whole lot of housing in Lone Pine and Big Pine, and they basically moved away.

RM: When did the Indian camp come to an end, basically, in Beatty?

BR: In the late '50s.

RM: Were any of the Indians involved in Rhyolite? Did they work there, or anything?

BR: Not that I know of. Of course, that was pretty much before my time.

RM: Could you talk about some of the other people in the Indian community? What were some of the family names?

BR: A lot of them had a lot of different names. I don't know how they got their names. Some people named their kids after trees, for Christ's sake.

RM: Like cottonwood tree? Is that how Bombo got his name?

BR: I'm guessing that's how he got it. I don't know any person called Cottonwood except Indians. There were a lot of Willows.

RM: How large was the typical Indian family?

BR: Some families had two kids, some had five.

RM: And how many families would there have been, just as a wild guess, do you think?

BR: I don't know, but most of them were old. The young Indians went off to war, they drank whiskey, they had car wrecks. Most Indians in those days died early. The old Indians were really tough; they lived to be a ripe old age. I think alcohol's what killed most the Indians I remember.

RM: That was a real problem here?

BR: Oh, absolutely. I think the Indians' real downfall was alcohol. A lot of the Indians I remember, the kids my age, alcohol killed them all. I saw an old girlfriend the other day; she was my girlfriend for many years. She doesn't drink. Her brother drank a lot, spent most of his life in prison. Her other brother spent time in jail; he's dead from alcohol. All the older brothers are dead from alcohol, all except one, and he's in prison because of alcohol. They have Indian tribes that are immune to syphilis but they're not immune to alcohol. Alcohol treats them a lot differently than it does us. Now, some white people do become alcoholics but Indians are alcoholics before they ever start out. I mean, it's just born into their genes.

Bombo and his brother, they're both teetotalers, and they both drink a beer once in a while. But they watch themselves. I've never seen Bombo drunk in my life, ever. I don't know if I ever saw his brother Spike drunk in my life, either. They drink beer and what have you and have a good time, but I don't know if I ever saw them drunk. The ones who got drunk always died. They'd usually get in a car wreck or fall down or kill each other or whatever.

RM: How many people from that Indian community when you were growing up are in Beatty now, would you say?

BR: Two.

RM: And the rest are either dead or gone to those other locations?

BR: Yes. As I told you, there are only two Indians left in this town. Joe Strozzi died here about a month ago. Joe and his sister both died in the last year; his sister about a year and half ago. Enis is still alive, she's here—her name is Strozzi. And Bombo Cottonwood. That's the only two left.

RM: Were any of the Indians in the community here married to whites?

BR: Oh, occasionally. Bombo was married to a white woman. She came here in the '50s.

RM: How about the older generation?

BR: No, they pretty much kept to themselves.

RM: When Johnny Shoshone died, did they bury him here? Did they have a graveyard?

BR: Nobody will ever know where Johnny Shoshone's buried.

RM: So they probably took him out to their own place out in the desert?

BR: Yes. What they would do is dig about six feet. Then they'd go over and go down another six feet, over and down another 6 feet. This guy's now 18 feet deep.

RM: Wow. It was a hell of a lot of work to bury a person.

BR: It took three days with a bunch of people working.

RM: Good Lord. Did everybody get buried that way, or was it just special ones?

BR: I don't know; I think just special ones. One of the Strozzi boys was killed in World War II. So they brought him back here to be buried with the white cross that the military has. Up until that time, white people wouldn't let any Indian be buried in the cemetery. Before my time, people would look down their nose at Indians. The governor said, "He can be buried in that cemetery, whether you assholes like it or not." Now there are quite a few Indian graves up there. And they've got their own place—the Indians are all buried in one place. Of course, I'm sure they like it that way. They'd rather be together than scattered out through a bunch of

white people anyway. White people don't show much respect for their own cemetery and Indians keep it in high regard.

RM: Did you ever see them when they were out catching rabbits or squirrels?

BR: I'd even go with them when I was a kid.

RM: How did they do it?

BR: Chipmunks were really easy. There'd be a wash in the bank with a whole bunch of little chipmunk holes. What most white people don't understand is that there's one chamber and that chipmunk hole is going to go up to the top. All you've got to do is put water in that. Get some jugs of water and pour it in there and that chipmunk's going come out the bottom one. [Laughs] You hit him with a stick when he comes out.

RM: Could they get enough chipmunks to make a meal for some people?

BR: They also had snares, they caught rabbits. When the young guys were home, they had .22s. Of course, in those days everybody poached a little bit, so they had antelope.

RM: There were enough antelope here?

BR: There were quite a few out just north of town. Ever eat antelope? I can't—that's nasty tasting stuff.

RM: I had it when I was a kid, and that's the only time.

BR: I've shot several antelope, and I always took it to the Indian side. It's really gamey; it's tough.

RM: Are there as many antelope now as there were back then?

BR: No. During the Depression, when they had these WPA camps, the government came through here. Of course, there was a lot of open range here and people ran cattle, so the WPA drilled some wells for the cattlemen and put up this bunch of windmills. From here to Tonopah there's about 15 windmills, at least. I used to work for a guy named Jim Daniels. He

ran cows all through that country and every year we'd build a sucker rod and put leathers on it so the windmill would keep pumping year-round. Now the BLM has stopped all that—there's not much left of the windmills. You can see them if you drive between here and Tonopah—a few off the sides of the road.

When you go up Oasis Valley—you know Tolicha Peak? You look over there and there's one of those windmills, right there. You go up a little further and off to your left there's one. Then you go up, cut over Stonewall, and if you look back along that section line, there's another one over there. Then there was another one of them over on the other side right across from that, about two miles over, there's another windmill. There were a bunch of them but none of them are operable anymore.

The BLM's doing the same thing with our water holes now. What we used to have as springs, they fence off; then they dry up so there are no animals like antelope in this country anymore. Chukars don't have a place to water; the deer—it used to be you could shoot deer close around town, but not anymore, because the BLM has stopped the water.

RM: Is part of the reason that the feed isn't what it was? Or do you buy that theory?

BR: I understand that theory, but it's a bullshit theory. Jim Daniels was an old cowboy here, and he ran cows from here up to Goldfield, through Lida; he had a ranch at Lida. The Bergs had another place, but it was over towards Lone Mountain, over past Tonopah up into Smoky Valley.

Everybody ran cows on open range. Of course, Jim also had range over here on the bomber range. Well, they kicked him out of there. When they kicked him out of the bomber range, that shortened up his AUMs.

But the real killer of the whole thing was the Wild Horse Annie Act. Now, the cattle people, Jim Daniels and all the rest of them, took good care of the range. They would put

cows down here in the winter and they'd feed off this range. I don't know if you know this, but there's really more protein in sagebrush than there is in alfalfa. And of course, there's acres of it out there. So anyway, the Wild Horse Annie Act, which was intended for horses, finally graduated into the burro population. Now the burros became protected.

So the BLM says, "Yes, it's over-grazed," because of burros. Now there's no deer, there's no antelope, because we're keeping it for the burros. And they won't do anything about the burros; they don't thin them out nearly as much as they should. You've got a lot of new people here and they come from California. The burros are wandering around town eating my wife's trees and what have you. I would like to shoot the burros, but I don't do that because they're protected—it would cost you \$5,000 and your gun and everything else. There's a certain element of people, like I say, who moved in here from California and they say, "Oh, aren't they cute?" and "We want to leave them; don't disturb these burros." Well, there are places out there where the sagebrush is eaten right down to the ground. Now the burros are starving, there's no cows anymore, there's no deer anymore, and the Wild Horse Annie Act killed it all. All the old cowboys are gone; there's no range there for cows anymore.

RM: Is Jim Daniels gone?

BR: Jim Daniels is dead. He was an old man when I was a kid. He was quite a character. I used to work for him in the summertime. We'd push cows from here up to Lida and up to Goldfield, where it's snowy in the wintertime but it's not in the summertime; then in the wintertime, we'd push them back down this way. He was really an old cowboy. He died on a horse pushing cows. He had a heart attack and was put in the hospital in Tonopah for a week or so. They told him to go home and relax; he had this little shack at Goldfield that wasn't much bigger than this. He used to have line shacks—I don't know if you know what a line

shack is—along the way that were much nicer than the house he lived in.

Anyway, he had cows to push so he didn't take his two weeks. He came back down here to push cows north and one of his friends rode along with him. You always split the bulls out and mix them up with the cows; bulls will run together if you let them. So Dave rode up alongside Jim, telling him there were some bulls off in one canyon and he was going to go up and push them out. Old Jim was riding along there dead as a hammer, still on the horse. Dave said Jim's horse was just walking along and Jim was still in the saddle and dead.

RM: That's a good way for a cowboy to go. When you used to push cattle with him, how many were you pushing, do you think?

BR: About 200 head.

RM: How long would it take you to get to Lida?

BR: It took several stages. We'd start down here and go up about 20 miles, where we had some corrals. Then you'd cut all the new calves out and that took two or three days, because you branded and nudded them—castrated them. By that time, your cattle were rested up and you'd push them the rest of the way the next two days. You never want to push cows until they're dying, you know. You'd let the herd rest up and water up and eat and then you'd go again.

RM: How many riders were on a drive like that?

BR: Usually five, and one guy in a truck. All he did was haul extra horses; and, of course, you had line shacks along the way.

RM: So you guys stayed in the line shacks at night?

BR: We didn't stay in them but that's where they cooked and we camped around them.

You always had a camp cook; the camp cook would cook for everybody. Nobody ever locked a line shack; there was always food in there. You left it open and if somebody came

along and needed some groceries or something, they took those. They usually left a couple of bucks or else they'd replace it next time up. Nowadays if you had a line shack they'd just steal everything and burn the line shack; a line shack wouldn't last for two weeks.

RM: So none of those shacks are there now?

BR: I saw one a couple of years ago up on Gold Mountain; it's still there.

RM: Where's Gold Mountain?

BR: You go up to Sarcobatus Flats past Scotty's Junction. Go left up over the mountain and there's some springs up there. You're going towards Lida—go over that mountain and it comes out into Gold Point and across the valley.

RM: You must have been a pretty good rider.

BR: You didn't have to be a good rider because you didn't run much. It's not like cowboy movies where everybody's out galloping around. You walked the horse. The only time you'd ever run your horse is when one of those old cows wanted to run off by themselves and you'd have to push them back in.

RM: A question that I've wondered about is, when I drive up Oasis Valley, as you go up there, it seems like it's drier than it used to be. Is that just my imagination?

BR: I think it is. Of course, there's been a hell of a drought for about four or five years.

RM: Did anybody run cattle up on the slopes of Stonewall? It's kind of a fascinating mountain.

BR: Jim Daniels did; he was all over the Tolicha Peak country.

RM: And then he would have to go up in that country and round them up?

BR: Push them back out. The air force are doing more and more up there all the time.

They told Jim to get his cows out of there. Jim was quite an old character. This is a true story.

They told Jim he had to keep the cows; he said, "No, I've got all this range; I don't know

where my cows are all the time.”

They said, “You need to keep them out of there.”

He said, “Well, how am I going to do that?”

And they said, “I don’t know. We’ve put up signs now that say the cattle can’t go in there.”

And Jim said, “Okay, when you teach them cows to read, you come back and talk to me and I’ll make sure they don’t go in there.”

RM: [Laughs] That’s a good story. So what happened?

BR: They finally beat him. They started shooting them with airplanes and what have you. Jim was a great old guy. People used to tell that story every time they’d come to town.

Everybody thought he was a hero for telling the air force that.

RM: Did he have a base property—a ranch?

BR: It was in Goldfield.

RM: Did he have pastures and things like that?

BR: He did. He and another guy had some alfalfa fields in Sarcobatus Flat. Do you know where the cathouse Crystal is? Well, that was his. Just before he died, he went to Crystal. He had some really good alfalfa there, too. There was a guy by the name of Dave Rau. Dave Rau’s still down there in Amargosa. Dave got out of the service out of Oklahoma or something; I forget where he came from. Anyway, he showed up here and went to work for Jim. Dave was really good at being a farmer; he loved it. He could raise alfalfa out on that concrete. Anyway, Jim loved this kid. (He’s not a kid, he’s as old as I am.) Dave’s a hard-working guy, worked for a biscuit once in a while, that was fine.

But when Jim died he left half of everything to his sister and half of it to Dave. He had it all written up. He wrote it up while he was in the hospital with his heart attack. Of

course, he didn't figure he was going to die. So he had this will and he mailed a copy of it to Dave, a copy of it to the court, but it wasn't notarized. Dave didn't get a thing. If Jim Daniels had his way, Dave would have got half of everything he had.

RM: Returning to the Indians, can you describe in a little more detail what their homes looked like? You said they were made of tin. How big were they and so on?

BR: It would depend on who lived in them. Some of them were as big as this room, one of them as big as this whole building, and anywhere in between.

RM: How many structures would you say were down there when you were a kid?

BR: Around 35 or 40. Some of them were made out of sticks, some of them made out of old wood and rhyolite—not houses. Wood piled up. Holly Charlie had a house that had a roof on it. (I don't know what his name was; that was what he went by—like desert holly.) He had a roof. Ike Shaw had a roof. Charlie Shoshone had a roof; the cook shack had a roof. They only had one stove, I think. I really don't remember. Of course, a lot of times they cooked over open fires. They had one cook shack and most of them didn't have a roof.

RM: What did they do when it rained or snowed?

BR: Tarps were really popular in those days. [Laughs]. Everybody's bed . . . do you know what a bedroll is?

RM: Sort of, but describe it.

BR: Well, a bedroll is a canvas tarp outside all the way around, like a sleeping bag, except you tied it together with ropes and strings. Inside was a bunch of blankets, top and bottom. That was the mattress, that was the blanket. In the coldest part of the winter, you never got cold. When you got in it was cold, but your body heat would warm it up and you'd stay warm all night. You didn't need a whole bunch of blankets on top, you just stayed warm. The tarp kept the heat in.

RM: It would keep the rain and snow out, too, wouldn't it? So everybody had a bedroll.

BR: Yes, everybody had their own bed. Some of them had springs. You know the coil springs? They would set them up on old five-gallon oil cans or something so they were off the ground and there were no snakes. So your bed would be about two feet high. You'd put your bedroll on that and there you go. They never got sick; never got colds. The Indians took rocks and they would heat them and cover them with cloth and burlap and stuff. If the kids got sniffles or something, they'd put that in their bed and kind of warm their feet and it would go away the next day. The damndest thing I ever saw.

RM: Did any of the whites try it here when they saw the Indians doing that?

BR: Our family did. My grandmother did it. She had some bricks. And of course, hers were pretty because she had pretty cloth to put on them and what have you. And she had cotton in there so they were soft. You never got a cold. Indians treat a lot of sickness through the feet.

RM: What else would they treat, and how?

BR: They'd rub paste and things on the bottom of your feet.

RM: What was the paste made out of?

BR: That's something nobody ever knew. The women knew all those things; nobody else knew them.

RM: Did she treat whites? Did you ever learn any of her techniques or any of her knowledge?

BR: You weren't supposed to ask. That was her secret and she would groom someone else and pass that down. When she started getting old, she would have her person and talk to her, and that person, when she would die, would groom somebody else to take her place.

RM: Do you remember her name?

BR: Her name was Bessie.

RM: Did she train somebody then?

BR: The only one I could think of is Dula. Dula used to spend a lot of time with her. Dula died of cancer at a very young age and right after Bessie did.

RM: She must have used plant cures and things like that—going out and gathering plants.

BR: That's what they did, yes. They didn't buy medicine.

RM: And that stuff all worked?

BR: I'll tell you what, I saw a guy who got bit by a gila monster. He worked for a mining outfit; was a powder man. He and a couple of other guys went to Arizona and they brought back this gila monster. As I remember, he was up at the Beatty Club and he had this gila monster on his arm and the arm was all swelled up, and I mean really puffed up. She treated that—in two days, it was like normal. Rattlesnake bites weren't even a problem. She could treat rattlesnake bites faster than anybody I ever saw. People never even went to a doctor. Sidewinders were just like getting a bee sting.

RM: I wonder what she was doing. Did you have to get to her quickly with a snakebite?

BR: I don't remember. I know a lot of people got bit by rattlesnakes—sidewinders.

Generally, people who are reaching down to get a piece of wood or reaching down somewhere where they're close to the ground get bit. For weeks afterward, you could always tell who got bit, because there'd be two little black spots about that far apart and it would just rot. As soon as that would skin over, that'd be it.

RM: When she didn't treat it, what would happen?

BR: I don't know of anybody that she didn't treat. I know people that had been bitten by big rattlesnakes. She'd treat them, too, and they all lived.

RM: So she was kind of the community doctor, wasn't she?

BR: Yes. You've got to keep in mind it wasn't like it is today where you have a lot of little children. There were a few families with children—immigrant families such as my father and my uncles—but the biggest part of the population didn't have any children. The Weeks had children, Jim Weeks and his sister. There was a guy up here named Hines; he had a couple of boys; Louisa's father had a boy and a girl; there was my sister, myself, my cousin with my Uncle Norm . . . there weren't a whole lot of white kids here. There was a guy up here named Tom Welsh and he had this daughter. He was separated or divorced, and the daughter would come back one year and then be gone for a couple of years and come back. There weren't a whole lot of kids here.

RM: One other thing I wanted to ask you about the Indians: Did you ever see them do any of their arts and crafts, or making things?

BR: A lot of pottery and a lot of baskets, that was all. I wish I had a lot of that stuff now. I had some really nice baskets and I gave them to my cousin, thank God, because she preserved them and she has them in her home. They look very nice. These are baskets my grandmother collected. They were given to her because everybody liked her and she would give the Indians free groceries so they gave her some pottery once in a while, or some baskets. They didn't have any money, you know. It wasn't like it is nowadays, where everybody gets a government grant.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: You talked last time about some of the old guys here in town who had claims out in the hills and would pack up and go out there for a week. Talk some more about that; that is so fascinating.

BR: Well, there was Louie McRae and quite a few of them. Some of them would have an old pickup, but a lot of them just walked. And they didn't worry about walking 20 miles in a day; that didn't bother them.

RM: How old were these guys?

BR: My age. Probably 65, in their 60s.

RM: Did any of them ride horses out to their place?

BR: One, that I can remember. Most of them just walked.

RM: If you had to take a guess, how many guys like that would there have been here?

BR: I would guess between 7 and 10.

RM: And do you know any of their mines? Were they just little prospect holes or were some of them pretty extensive?

BR: Some of them did run some long drifts. They did it all by hand, by hand steel and, of course, dynamite; they'd buy that from my grandfather, and fuse. They might put eight or nine sticks of dynamite in their pack and some fuse and a few caps and they'd go up there and hand drill it, put a little powder in there and shoot it, and then spend the rest of the week breaking up rocks and looking.

RM: They would clean it up out there and carry the concentrates or whatever, the gold?

BR: Yes, carry the gold in town and sell it to the Chinaman. I know one guy here that every year, he'd go to Vegas; but he walked all the way. And he walked all the way back.

RM: Did he carry a pack or did he have a burro or anything?

BR: No, he just walked. I imagine he had a bottle of water, but. . . .

RM: How long do you think it would take one of those guys to walk to Vegas?

BR: Two or three days.

RM: What kind of houses, dwellings, did they have here in town?

BR: All the houses were shacks in those days. There weren't any mobile homes like they have nowadays. They were basically shacks.

RM: Did they come out of Rhyolite, do you think?

BR: Some of them came out of Rhyolite, some of them came out of Pioneer, some of them came out of Transvaal. Most of them were moved in here or else they tore down a building in Rhyolite and brought the lumber here to build something for themselves. Most of that's been burned down now; most of the houses burned down years ago. People tore them down and put mobile homes on the lots, or whatever

RM: And then probably when they passed on, they were just buried in the local cemetery, a lot of them? Do you remember any good stories about any of them?

BR: I told you about the guy who walked to Vegas every year. And there used to be a preacher woman up there—her name was Miss Morgan. She'd walk to Vegas.

RM: So she would just pick up and walk to Vegas?

BR: Yes, she was a crazy old gal.

RM: Do you know what route they took?

BR: They walked down the highway. Indians always walked to Death Valley and back.

Very few of them had a ride. There wasn't any traffic here, you know. When I was a kid, that road to Death Valley was a dirt road and it didn't go the same way it does now.

RM: Did it go over Daylight Pass?

BR: It went there, but when you leave town here you'd go over a little hump—two humps, really. Right between those two humps a railroad grade takes off to the right and that was the road. You went up and into Rhyolite and then down by Betsy Moffat's house; there was a dirt road that went clear out across that flat. There wasn't any paved road where it is now. So you had to go up into Rhyolite to get to Death Valley. You can still see the road—it's kind of covered up with sagebrush, but you can see it; it sticks out like a sore thumb when you're coming down from the depot.

RM: Was there much activity in Death Valley at this time?

BR: No, people there were wealthy. People who stayed at the Inn were mostly movie stars and that sort of thing. It was very expensive. A room was \$60 where in Beatty it was \$10. Of course, Death Valley Scotty had a legend all his own. People went out and looked at Scotty's Castle. That was pretty much all dirt road, too. The road into it from Highway 95 was all dirt.

RM: Do you have any Scotty stories?

BR: I remember Scotty when I was a little kid. He was a lot of talk. My dad never liked him. He'd come to town and stiff everybody. My dad had a little service station up there—gasoline was 25 cents a gallon or less. Scotty would come in and fill up his car with this \$100 bill on him. Well, nobody had change for a \$100 bill and so Scotty never paid. But when Johnson would come to town, Johnson would pick up all his bar tabs and pay everybody off. But a lot of times you had to wait for three or four months before Johnson got here. My dad never did like Scotty and consequently I didn't, either. I didn't know that much about him but I know that he always stiffed everybody; everybody always talked about it. He'd put on a big show like he was really somebody and everybody knew that he was a phony. Scotty would have been nobody if it wasn't for Johnson.

Johnson felt that the hot springs in the Death Valley helped his back. Johnson had a

really bad back; he was a cripple. Johnson was very, very wealthy. Scotty didn't build any castles—Johnson sponsored that. And Scotty was just a carnie, that's who he was basically. A lot of con.

Then, when Scotty died, of course, Johnson was gone, too—there was a church outfit out at the castle. I think Johnson probably left it to them. There was a woman by the name of Winnicott and she and this guy were the head of this church, this religious organization. They took the place over; they were very, very nice people. I can't remember his name.

I remember one year a bunch of little kids lived in this town who, in the summertime, had never been out of here. The man came up here one time and gathered us all up—he had a bus. He had Indian kids, white kids, everybody. He took us to Los Angeles, put us all on a boat, and we spent a week and a half on Catalina Island, which was a wonderful, wonderful experience for a bunch of little kids who lived in the desert. It was a great place. I caught a shark, which was a great thing to me; it wasn't a very big shark—about three feet long. But fishing off the beach . . . it was quite a thrill to me.

RM: You said some of the kids in town had never been out of town?

BR: There was nowhere to go. My family'd go to Vegas once a year, generally right before school started. For shoes, my mother would put your foot on a piece of paper and draw a line all the way around it and send that to Sears and Roebuck and they'd send you a pair of shoes. We only got one pair of shoes a year, so she'd order them a little big. We wore the shoes to school all year long and in the summertime went barefoot.

But once a year we'd go to Vegas just before school started. Everybody'd load up in the car and get a couple of water bags, throw them in front of the radiator, and away we'd go. We'd stop at Lathrop Wells and he'd have some cool water there and pour the water in the radiator and away we'd go again. We'd get to Indian Springs and do the same thing again

and finally get into Vegas; the car would be steaming.

They didn't have Costco and all that stuff in those days. All the main stores were on Fremont Street. We'd go down Fremont Street and they had a movie theatre there called The Palace. My mom and dad would take us to the Palace Theatre and we'd get to watch a picture show and they'd go shopping. We'd maybe watch it twice, depending on how much they had to do. Picture shows were great then—they had cartoons, they had Bugs Bunny. We didn't have TV here or anything. Before we had our TV, I always listened to the radio.

They'd come get us and away we'd go again just the same—go 30 miles, pour water in the car, fill up the water bags again, and away we'd go again. You'd get burlap and slam that in the door and pour water on the burlap; when you drove down the road it blew cool air. It only lasted a few minutes, but it worked. It was like having an air conditioner.

RM: Did you ever get up to Tonopah?

BR: We went to Tonopah probably more than we did Vegas. We used to go up there a couple or three times a year. Of course, Tonopah was much like Beatty; it was depressed. I had a lot of family there; I'm related to the Perchettis. And if you're related to one person in Tonopah, you're related to everybody. In those days they were all old families, you know. And the Boscovichs and the . . . you could just go on and on—the families were all intermarried. So if Perchetti was a cousin, it was very likely that Bottom would be a cousin. We were all friends and all family. Tonopah, of course, was the county seat and my father would go up there to get papers notarized and what have you.

RM: Was it just a day trip or did you stay all night?

BR: We generally stayed all night, usually with one of the relatives. I would stay with probably the Perchettis and my dad would probably stay at the Mizpah or somewhere; he would go in and have a few drinks. I'd usually spend a week with the Perchettis and Buddy

would come down and spend a week here once in a while. Buddy and I were really close; we were both the same age.

RM: Could you talk about your mother's uncle at Yellow Gold. What kind of a character was he and how did he get into this country and everything?

BR: My grandfather's brother came here after World War I. I guess he went to Tonopah. He got to prospecting and he wound up out there at the Yellow Gold Mine. Some years later, in the '20s, he talked my grandfather into coming out here. My dad met my mother in 1929, I think; maybe 1930.

RM: Was the Yellow Gold an existing mine, or did he find it?

BR: I don't know. A lot of maps show it as the Yellow Gold Mine and a lot of maps show it as Carr's Camp. That was his name—Curly Carr. If you look at a book of ghost towns in Nye County, it's listed in there as Carr's Camp. Other books show it as the Yellow Gold Mine.

RM: Did you know Curly?

BR: Oh, yes.

RM: What kind of a guy was he? What did he look like?

BR: He was a great big guy, always wore a tall hat—it wasn't really a cowboy hat, but kind of. It was kind of shaped like that. A big man; he drank a lot of whiskey. He got in a gun fight in Tonopah and they ran him out of there.

RM: What was the fight over?

BR: A woman, I think.

RM: Was anybody hurt?

BR: I don't think so. I think they just shot a few rounds down Main Street. They sent him back to Yellow Gold. Then he shot at another guy here in Beatty one time; they sent him

back to Yellow Gold that time, too. Nowadays, you'd get attempted murder or something and they'd have you in jail, but they didn't. Everybody was scared of him. He was tough.

RM: Did he have a temper?

BR: Yes.

RM: Was he kind of wild?

BR: Well, he was when he was drunk, but everybody is when they're drunk. I hardly ever saw him when he wasn't about three-quarters of the way drunk. When he came to town he'd head right for the saloon. Of course, all the miners did that. When they'd come to town they came to drink whiskey and they'd go to the cathouse. That's what they did.

RM: How long was he out there at Yellow Gold?

BR: I can't tell you when he left there; you can read it on a headstone in Tonopah. I don't know what year it was. He was out there until he died.

RM: Did he die in the '50s or '60s?

BR: I'd say the '50s.

RM: Can you talk some more about the miners in town?

BR: There were a lot of them. The old miners, some of them were tramps, some of them were leasers, but some of the tramps stayed, some of them didn't. A tramp is a guy who follows mining districts and was called a tramp miner, so everybody called him a tramp. He was proud to be called a tramp; it didn't bother him at all.

Then there were some leasers like Homer Weeks, who had a pretty nice house here; he had a family here—a daughter and a son, Jim Weeks. I assume Homer tramped in here, too. Like I say, some tramps came in and they'd stay. At that time, he was a leaser. He finally died of the con [silicosis, or miner's consumption]. It was a very painful thing for Jim Weeks, I'm sure, and his sister. They called it tuberculosis, but I'm pretty sure it was the con.

He worked underground all his life; the miner's con got most of them.

But there would be guys who'd tramp in and tramp out. Each one of them had their own little thing. It was like Johnny Fraunhoffer, who was also from the old mining towns—he could fabricate things; he could make equipment. Between him and Fred Davies—I don't know if you met Claudia Davies. Have you met her?

RM: I have; and Grace. Was that her husband?

BR: That was her husband. He was a blacksmith. He had a whole yard full of iron up there. He could take a piece of iron that he found somewhere else and beat that into whatever you wanted it beat into and make it work. He had his forges and he was very good at it. Instead of ordering something from Caterpillar he'd just make it for you. "You bring me a broken piece and I'll make you one just like it."

Then there were people . . . Claw Hammer Slim was a timber man in a mine but he wound up being the town carpenter. He just did handy work around town. He worked on people's houses and he was a carpenter. He was like Home Depot. [Chuckles] If you had a problem and you had a job you had to go to every day, you'd hire Claw Hammer Slim to come fix your porch or put a porch on or whatever you needed.

And there was another guy up above town. He'd just got out of World War II and he was a diver on a ship; he would get down in one of these suits with the glass, the old-time thing. He'd weld on ships when they got blown up and what have you, so he was quite a welder. Welders in those days weren't near like they are now.

So everybody was part of the community. Everybody had their role in the community. You got all those people and you put them all together and you have a community.

Then we had a guy named Brownie Brown. I don't really know his name—Brownie

Brown was his name as far as I ever knew. He took over my grandfather's store when my grandfather got old. Several different people took it over; there were the Azbills and Brownie Brown. But finally, when they closed up the old store, Brownie Brown moved down by the post office and had a store there.

But his real trade was a telegrapher on the railroad. He'd been here a long time; he came here when he was a kid. He was the telegraph guy. He taught all us kids Morse code and he had all these little code things and would send messages back to you. It was an experience all its own. I couldn't do it today, but when I was a kid I could. We could send messages back and forth in his store; he had these wires for us. And all the keys came off the Tonopah & Tidewater Railroad. He probably wound up running the store. He had some relatives—the Hineses. The store was actually owned by Joe Andre.

RM: He got it from your grandfather?

BR: I don't remember exactly what happened there. I know that Joe had a place just up from where the bank is now. My grandfather wanted to close this down. My grandfather was old, and of course his sons were hauling fuel and running the service station and what have you. Everything was being shipped in by truck and it got to be expensive and the mines were pretty much going down. Like I told you before, he sold dynamite, he sold rice, he sold potatoes, and all that stuff had to be shipped in. I think he just got tired and got old—he was in his 80s when he died—but he just wanted to get out of it.

RM: When did he get out of it?

BR: I'm guessing probably '55.

RM: And then when did it close down for good?

BR: About then.

RM: It didn't last long after he quit it?

BR: No. My grandfather finally sold most of his stuff to Joe Andre, and my cousin had died at the store. He was Mark Revert, my Uncle Bob's boy. That always left a sour taste in everybody's mouth.

But there was still a small store there; the Azbills ran that. They opened a store down by the post office.

RM: The store was where the post office is now?

BR: No, the post office wasn't where it is now. You've got the Exchange Club and they had this little, tiny restaurant in there—a real little, narrow restaurant. On the other side of that was the post office. A gal by the name of Renee Gibson ran that; she was the postmaster. She lived out at Windmill Ranch out here about 10 miles out of town.

RM: I interviewed her son out there—Burt.

BR: Yes, old Burt. He wasn't really her son, but he wanted to be.

RM: Where exactly was this store? Was it where your old gas station was?

BR: A little bit to the right.

RM: Toward Tonopah? Why did they tear it down? It was a pretty good-sized building, wasn't it?

BR: It was a big building. It was actually three stories tall, if you counted the basement. I really don't know why they tore it down. The Azbills had it and my cousin died on that dock. That was kind of the beginning of the end of the store.

RM: Was it an accident?

BR: My father and his brothers were in this fuel business. And on the dock of that store out in the back, they had these big square tanks—some were 250- and some were 500-gallon tanks—that they'd put on these flatbed trucks. They'd hook them up and then run through a pump and haul fuel in these tanks. But when they weren't using them, they'd put the tanks on

the dock and they would have gasoline fuel them. It got to be quite a kick for us older kids; and by this time I'm probably 12 years old. These tanks had a great big lid on them, about that big around, about eight to 12 inches; eight inches, I'm guessing. Screw these lids off and smell the fuels and it would make you dizzy.

And this boy, his name was Mark Anthony, I think he saw us kids doing that and got up on one of the tanks and smelled the fumes, thinking it was going to be funny. Nobody was around and his head dropped down in the tank, and that was the end of Mark—which completely destroyed my Uncle Bob's family, it destroyed everything; my grandmother. . . . This was a beautiful child. This little boy was the most beautiful thing that ever happened to his family.

RM: How old was he?

BR: Five years and one day.

RM: Oh, how awful.

BR: That was the beginning of the end of the store. And my grandfather was sick. Of course, us kids throwing Johnny Azbill out the window from the second story didn't help much, either.

RM: Did he get hurt bad?

BR: Broke both his legs. He had three brothers. The Azbills ran the store at the time for my folks. As I explained to you earlier, up in that loft they had all this grain for horses and chickens; all this feed. A lot of people would come in and buy chicken feed by the scoop so there were a lot of old burlap bags and grain sacks lying around. We made a parachute. We were going to jump out the top window of the store in the back and float to the ground, me and Jackie Azbill. I think Billy was there, too. Anyway, Johnny's jumping all of us. So we decided that Johnny would be better to put on the parachute than any of the rest of us because

he wasn't quite so heavy. Johnny put up quite a fight while we were strapping this parachute on him and he was fighting all the way. We couldn't get him to jump out of the window so his brother threw him out. He didn't come down very slow and he broke both legs. I think that was. . . .

RM: That was another nail.

BR: And then they caught us kids down there playing with dynamite; there was dynamite stored down below. There was a series of circumstances and I think the folks just said, "We'll sell everything we've got."

CHAPTER FOUR

BR: I've got a picture of the town here. It started on First Street over here, which is the edge of town. There is nothing on the other side of First Street, nothing. It went up to 76, across the street, up one block; from there on it was all desert. It went up one block and there were some houses on the far side of the street, but nothing behind there. It was all desert. All that stuff up above town was never there. There were no houses up there at all. And it came down by the park and that was the end of town. The town was real compact then. The town was the miners and the businesspeople. And then you had the "rez," which never was a reservation—that belonged to my grandfather, too.

RM: Oh, that was his land? They just kind of squatted there?

BR: Yes, but he liked all the Indians. He got along fine with them. Then you had H&H—that was out of town.

RM: What was H&H?

BR: H&H stood for Hobo Heaven. They lived in the trees next to the river. They had their own camp. The new ones would come, and some would come and some would go, but they drank lots of Mogen David wine.

RM: How many would be there?

BR: Usually around 20. They weren't really welcome in town because they ate the dogs. And everybody was worried about their children around the hobos. I don't know if they were hobos or wilds, whatever you want to call them. It was out of town because there wasn't any town up that way. It was up behind where Rebels is now. Over there across the river there were some great big trees. When they had the flood in the '70s, that mucked a lot of trees out. There were always people there—some parts of the year, there'd be more than others. And

every time some dogs started disappearing they always said, “Dogs went to H&H.” Hobo Heaven.

Anyway, they had their camp out there and, like I said, the Indians were over here. But the town was a small, compact thing compared to what it is now. None of this stuff up on the hill was there. Up where I live there was nothing. You were out in the desert quite a ways before you got there.

Down here all there was was a railroad station and some tar pits where they’d dip ties and what have you. It was always full of dead dogs, too. It was a great, big round tank and full of tar and, I assume, creosote. We always called it tar, but there was always a dog or two in there that fell in and died. It was out in the desert so people didn’t go down there every day and look in there to get a dog out.

RM: So where the old motel would be, The Desert Inn, that was about where that tar thing was?

BR: Where the railroad station was, yes. It was a pretty good-sized building. It was off the ground, had a big water tank . . . it was big enough where we kids could play in it and crawl around. It was probably the size of this desk, off the ground.

RM: Talk about how the town changed and what caused it to change.

BR: Of course, the town changed because of time. Testing nuclear weapons at the Nevada Test Site was the first change. They had a place out there close to the highway they called Desert Rock and it was a town all its own.

It was an army camp right below Mercury. When you go up the hill and down to Mercury, if you look out there’s an airport—it’s this side of that airport. There were tents and Quonset huts—they had thousands of young kids out there. They would shoot a bomb and these guys would rush the bomb and what have you. But on weekends, these kids would all

want to go to town so in a period of two or three months, we had like eight cathouses here.

There were different cathouses everywhere. They had one down here at the airport turnoff. H. B. Fordhams's house—they bought that and put a cathouse there; that was the Blue Goose. And they had four here in town and of course, they had a couple of local girls working too so they had one up by the hotel. They had one at Hot Springs where Fran's is now. There was a bunch of cathouses. And the bars were just doing a wonderful business. At that time there were a lot more bars than there are now. There was also a restaurant, called Silver Diner.

Anyway, the Test Site made the first change in Beatty. And not just because of GIs and cathouses and bars—because people came to work there. The Test Site was a booming thing. Carl Brown—his family lived here for many years. (He died years ago and then his wife got remarried. People had some problems so they just took her to Reno. They still have a house here.) He came all the way from Oklahoma to work at the Test Site. There were a lot of people who came and Beatty, of course, was the closest place and they settled here. They raised families here; pretty soon you've got a lot of white kids in school and everybody's working at the Test Site. I think they started testing out there in '51. I would guess '53 is when the real influx came.

RM: And that's when they had all of these cathouses—but just for a while?

BR: Yes, until they closed up Desert Rock. It only lasted maybe four years. I don't remember how long it lasted but the town was just full of young GIs. It was packed and the cathouses were packed.

RM: How many girls were working in each of the joints?

BR: I don't know. Like I said, the Willow Tree had about ten. The oldest one, the one that was always here, was the Red Rooster and they had quite a few gals. A guy named Tex ran

that.

RM: Where was that located?

BR: Just on the side of the park, right behind the Berlin.

RM: And it had been here since the early days?

BR: It was here as long as I can remember.

RM: Was there another one beside it?

BR: That was called the Willow Tree, but it came with the GIs. They built it at that time.

It was a block building.

RM: The old Red Rooster served the old miners and so on?

BR: Yes. It served me for the first time.

RM: Yes. One time, I think it was in about '55 or '56, we were out at Reveille and a guy there said, "Well, I'm going to go into the Buckeye, do you want to come?"

I was 18, 17 or something. I said, "Yes." So we went to the Buckeye, no girls.

So he said, "Well let's go over to Mina." Got over to Mina, no girls. He said, "Shit, let's go to Beatty." This is all in one night. We went down there to the Red Rooster. I've always wondered where it was in town.

BR: Right behind the motel. I wasn't much older than that. My dad found me spending a little more time in the bathroom than I should be and so he got me by the hand and we go down there, I'm about 13 years old, I think. We had the little talk—we didn't talk about birds and bees, we talked about sex—and he told Tex, who ran the Red Rooster, "You find somebody in here to take care of him and not scare him to death." So I went back there and I thought, this is really neat now. My dad said, "Don't be playing with yourself. If you need to come down here, you just come down here." And he told Tex, "Now, if he wants to come in here, you let him come down here."

RM: What a dad.

BR: Yes. It lasted about two weeks. Pretty soon the Old Man said, “You’ve got about a \$25 tab down there. [Laughter] I didn’t mean that.” My dad was really cool.

RM: A dad that would do that; that is cool. So you had to back off a little?

BR: Yes. I learned a lot.

RM: What do you know about Tex?

BR: A great big guy. He passed out a bunch of money. In those days, all the bar owners patronized the other bars; that was a routine thing. You always went to everybody else’s bar and bought a drink and hopefully people would come over to your place—but the other bartenders all did the same thing so it worked. When Tex walked down the street going to the bars he’d always give kids a quarter, fifty cents. He was a good guy. Fifty cents was like five bucks now.

RM: It was a fortune to a kid. How many girls would be working at the Red Rooster before Desert Rock?

BR: I don’t know because I never went in there before Desert Rock.

RM: Did most of the young boys here in town patronize the joints?

BR: All of them, yes. Like I say, they even had a couple of local girls who had their own little crib out on Main Street.

RM: You didn’t have to get a license in those days, did you? What did people think of that?

BR: I don’t know, Bob. I think the townspeople looked down on the two local girls who were up there. One of them is dead now, one of them lives in Vegas; I am not going to mention any names. As far as the cathouses, I don’t think they ever did. It was just part of the town. Cathouses were a thing in those days. They had always been there, every mining town

had them.

I don't remember any bad things until later on in life, when you got a big influx of people in Pahrump who wanted to shut them all down. I never did hear that before. They were accepted, let me say that. The women didn't expect their husbands to go there, but they accepted them.

RM: What was the price in the Desert Rock era?

BR: Five bucks.

RM: Could you get it for three? A quickie?

BR: Oh, you could get it for two-fifty.

RM: What about VD? Was there any VD in those days?

BR: Of course there was. Everybody worried about syphilis and everybody had the crabs all the time. I don't even hear that anymore. They used to have this stuff that came in a round jug; we called it blue ointment. And of course, penicillin kind of took care of the clap. All young kids got the clap sooner or later. If you went around to the cathouses, sooner or later you were going to get the clap.

RM: Yes. My brother and I got it at the Buckeye. We went in and we were talking to Bobbie about it and she said, "Well, now you are a man." Was the Red Rooster the last joint to go in town?

BR: No. It burned down. The GIs got drunk, got in a fight in there, and knocked the wood stove over and it burned down. I think it was the GIs. I know somebody got in a fight down there. That was in the mid-'50s. Old Tex had a huge potbellied stove in there. Of course, everybody fired their stoves with wood. They got in a fight and knocked it over and couldn't put it out and the cathouse burned down.

RM: Oh, what a shame. It was an institution.

BR: Everybody thought so.

RM: When did the last cathouse in town shut down? Not Fran's, but right here in town.

BR: It's been a long time, Bob—the '60s.

RM: Really? What happened?

BR: Well, they put regulations on them and venereal disease wasn't a big deal anymore; you can get a shot to take care of that. I imagine that opened the way to young girls being a little more lenient. I don't know why they shut it down, just not that much business. You look at this highway now—there are a lot of people up and down this highway. That wasn't there then.

It's a young person's world and young people are all married; they have a wife at home. In those days, they had a bunch of miners who didn't have anywhere else to go. There wasn't the family unity they have now—a third of the town were all bachelors and they had to go somewhere.

RM: And the women of the town supported it, didn't they?

BR: When I was a kid I never heard anybody complain about it. In fact, Tex would bring his girls into town. They would go to the bar; they kept by themselves and didn't hustle people. They might come in and have a party some night and nobody minded that.

Nowadays, they're not allowed to drink in local bars or anything. They did that when I was young but they didn't put the hustle on anybody's husband or anything. Of course, Tex got some advertisement out of it because, "Here's the girls I got," you know? I know that my mother never complained; I never heard any women complain.

RM: I remember in Tonopah a number of guys in town married girls, as they said, "off the line."

BR: You talked about Bobbie Duncan. I worked at the Tonopah Test Range for quite a

few years and we lived up by the school. I thought nothing, absolutely nothing, about taking my wife out to Bobbie's to have a drink at night. My wife and Bobbie got along really well. Bobbie's girls never came out, they never hustled us. We'd sit there and have a cup of coffee. There'd be snow out on the ground and it would be cold—Bobbie would go and fix some hot chocolate or coffee. And my wife liked her very much; they were friends. People might say, "Take your wife to a cathouse? Are you crazy?" Well, it wasn't like that.

RM: Exactly. Was that after she rebuilt the place up on the hill? Was it the old place or the new one?

BR: The new one.

RM: Did you know that my dad built that? In fact, I helped him part of one summer until I got a job out on the range.

BR: Bobbie Duncan was so good to everybody. Young people who were broke, she'd loan them money. Bobbie was really a good gal; we loved her.

RM: Absolutely. She was an institution. And people from other towns can't really understand that.

BR: No, you have to live in the atmosphere. You have to realize that this has gone on for a hundred years and we don't look down on it. If you go to Vegas and drive down Stewart Street, they've got more hustlers on one block than we've got in all of Nye County. And you don't know if they're going to stab you, if they're going to rob you. And all of them are doing it for drugs. That didn't happen here.

RM: It's like they say it's more dangerous to go to some of those medical clinics in Vegas than it is to go to a legalized cathouse.

BR: And of course, they're regulated; but in those days they weren't regulated very well. But Tex would take his girls to the doctor and have them checked out; he didn't want the bad

rep of having clap in his joint. Things might happen in between, but you knew once a week Tex would take his girls to have them checked. As soon as you'd get a bad thing going, you'd lose all of your customers. In a little town like this, they're gone. So they policed themselves.

Fran's place out here burned down. She had a big ranch house and some people named Steele owned it. They ran some cows; I used to go out there and stay with them. Anyway, it was this big house and they finally made a cathouse out of it. It went through two or three different owners and Fran finally bought it. Fran was kind of good to the town; she'd do things once in awhile. After it burned down this town held a fundraiser and built her a new one. The fundraiser generated a lot of money. They had everybody out there working. "We're going to put you back in business." That's how accepted it was.

RM: This is after the Red Rooster burned down?

BR: Oh yes, a long time after that. But they had a fundraiser at the community center, raised a bunch of money, bought a bunch of lumber, bought a couple of trailers, went out there, and set them up.

RM: I got a hellacious case of the clap at Fran's one time. My dad said, "There is this girl you've got to meet down at Fran's." So we went down there. Jesus, did I get a bad case of clap! [Laughs]

BR: Yes, you'd get up in the morning and you piss and you see all of this.

RM: Oh boy! You knew you were. . . .

BR: Oh no! Not again! I've got to go back to Doc Joy. Doc Joy just said, "Bend over!"

RM: That's who we went to, too, Doc Joy. Talk about your work at the Test Site.

CHAPTER FIVE

BR: I worked at the Test Site for a little over 20 years—between the Tonopah Test Site and the Nevada Test Site. I cussed it every day. But I look back now, I'm older, and I think, the Test Site raised my family, it bought my first home. If you were a young man in Beatty, Nevada, there was nowhere else to work. The Nevada Test Site was very good to me.

I think they made some mistakes; I think they made some terrible mistakes. The AEC, when I first went to work, should have gone into an education program from hell. They should have been on TV, they should have been explaining radiation to people so that you could understand roentgens and milliroentgens and the doses of the different kinds of fallout and the different kinds of radiation, what it does to you, what have you. They should have schooled these people. They should have schooled the whole United States.

RM: Yes, but particularly Nevadans.

BR: I think Yucca Mountain is absolutely safe. It's the people—I am not saying these are ignorant people—I am saying they're ignorant on the subject of radiation because they never studied it. If you want to get into a conversation on Yucca Mountain with the average person, I'd say at least eight out of ten people have no idea what they're talking about. And it's our own government's fault for not educating the Bob Reverts and everybody about what it is.

They said okay, we had Hiroshima and we had Nagasaki and that killed a bunch of people and the half-life goes on for 10,000 years; that's true. In the old days they had some really nasty bombs. Nowadays they could shoot an atomic bomb in Moscow, let's say. A big one; it has none of that shit like Nagasaki. They can go in there the next day because it's clean; they have clean bombs now that make a lot of dust and kill a lot of people. But they haven't educated people. And that's the downfall of Yucca Mountain, it's the downfall of the

Test Site.

RM: You're absolutely right, Bobby. Some years ago, I was talking to Senator Reid. He was pretty friendly; he really liked the books we were doing here. He was going to fund a project for me to interview old Test Site workers because I knew some of those guys—I worked out there in '58. And he was very interested in getting that funded and everything. When he found out that I was for Yucca Mountain he turned on me, stone cold.

BR: Now, I know some terrible mistakes were made out on the Test Site. But usually the mistake was made by the person. I had a friend out there who was an iron worker and we were moving this thing—it was a rocket engine to go into outer space; they were making nuclear reactors to fire rockets. This was in Area 400, which they called NRDS—Nuclear Rocket Development Station. They had tested this engine a couple of times; they had it in a bunker up there. I was the driver—they had this specially made truck. They spent thousands and thousands of dollars just on the trailer to hold this thing.

So they said, “Don't do this, don't do that, don't do this—when we buckle this up you have to follow step 1, 2, 3, 4 just right to do this.” I'd known this person for 10 years; he was a good friend. He didn't follow the rules and everybody said, “Hey get off there, you're in the back spot! Get off there.” He died the next morning, his brain exploded.

RM: You mean from radiation?

BR: Yes. Of course, he got sick within 30 minutes. They had these big vans. If you like beer it was a good place because they'd give you all the beer you wanted to try to flush you out. At this particular time radiation wasn't something even held, it was something that attacked you like a ray, like getting your arm x-rayed. He got sick right away, we took him in the van, and the next morning he was dead. His boss should have stopped that. We all knew not to go there. There was one bad place on this engine; it was really bad.

They made a lot of mistakes. I was on the re-entry one time. Re-entry is . . . let's say they're having a shot on the mountain. I was a teamster, a truck driver, and teamsters drive the buses. So we've got all these scientists and people visiting us and they're getting ready to shoot this bomb on that mountain over there. We'd pull up to this place, and there were big barricades there, so everybody would sit there and watch the bomb, wait for it to go off. Then you'd go in with the instruments—these scientists have all this stuff.

Well, it was a bad day and the whole side of the mountain blew up. So here I am, a bus driver, and we've got all these buses pointed toward the mountain. There's about 15 buses and each bus will carry 40 people so you can imagine how many people were there. The buses can't turn around and the people are down the highway, all scattered out through the sagebrush and all. By the time we got the buses turned around, we went down and picked up as many as we could load up and took off. So we beat that radioactivity because it went up and then drifted over towards Lincoln County, kind of.

The next day they went up there to bring more instruments in and take some out. There were a couple of guys that died that day. These were really nasty bombs. By the time I left out there, they would set off a bomb and it was clean the next day because they had efficient bombs that just burnt everything up. It made a hell of an explosion; it would tear a lot of stuff up.

Sedan Crater—I am sure you've seen the big picture. That was a huge bomb; you can see how much damage that did. That was in Area 15. We were all sitting there watching it. They've got this big portal. You know what a portal is? We're all sitting there looking at this portal; everybody's got a radio and you listen —10, 9, 8, 7, 6 . . . you feel the shakes and that portal—the doors are steel a foot thick. It blew up this whole mountain; it looked like Mount Saint Helens to me. So they made mistakes, but they learned. On every one of them, they

learned.

RM: Sure. What year did you go to work there and when did you finally leave?

BR: I was the youngest employee out there for a long time because I went to work for my dad when I was 16. You couldn't work for the Teamsters Union until you were 18, but my dad was hauling fuel out there, and I had a driver's license; in those days you didn't have to have a special license to drive a truck. I was driving a fuel truck out there when I was 16 years old. That was about '60, because I got married in '62. Then when I turned 18 I joined a union and I went back to work.

RM: The Teamsters Union?

BR: My dad had some trucks out there and like I said, the union wouldn't take anybody under 18 years old. The union came out and told my dad, "You've got a non-union guy here." My dad said, "Well, he's my son. You want to sign him up, sign him up; I'll pay for it." That's how I got in the Teamsters Union.

RM: Where were you delivering fuel at first?

BR: Frenchman Flat, Yucca Flat, Area 12 where all the deep tunnels were. I remember I was just a kid; had this big old flatbed Ford truck—it had four tanks on it and held 2000 gallons. This is on a Ford gas truck with a four speed with a split rear end—two-speed rear end. Do you know where B tunnel was?

RM: Up a hill, right?

BR: They had big compressors out there blowing air into this drift, the B tunnel. I went up to that B tunnel and you passed that and went on the curve and then up on top of the mesa. I got right in the middle of that curve—2000 gallons of diesel fuel, young kid, inexperienced on stuff like that. I make this curve and snap a drive line. So now I was on this truck coming down and it's several thousand feet to the bottom. I've got this old truck and I'm backing up

and gaining speed—a lot—because it's got 2000 gallons of fuel on it.

There's a guy standing by this compressor and he said, "Hey kid, turn it into the mountain." I thought, what a wonderful idea. I turned it and it ran into the mountain. If I'd have gone off that cliff it would have been a couple thousand feet to the bottom. This guy saved my life as sure He was standing there with the door open and I am scared to death—of course, I've got no control now. A lot of weight, no drive line, no engine, nothing. He said, "Hey kid, turn it into the mountain."

RM: He was thinking quick, wasn't he, to be able to say that?

BR: Yes. That guy saved my life. They called him Cowboy. I went back and looked him up a little later on and thanked him.

Anyway, we'd go up that mountain and REECo didn't have many drill rigs; in those days they had outside drillers. Kerr-McGee had two rigs up there. We had to haul fuel up to them.

RM: They were drilling into the mountain?

BR: No down into the tunnels.

RM: On recovery?

BR: No, before. Well, up on top they had this big trailer park with all the wires. All the cable went down the hole. So you worked out there, too?

RM: Yes; and my dad worked out there for damn near 20 years. We went to work there in the summer of '58 and he retired from there. I would have never made it through college without the Test Site.

BR: I worked over there 20 years and, like I say, I bought my house, raised my family. Then when I quit . . . it was Christmastime and my wallet had worn out. Maria bought presents for all the kids to give to me, and one of these presents was a wallet. So we had a

couple of days off for Christmas. It was almost New Year's, the 28th or something.

I was carpooling with George Manley; he had an old Dodge. We're going down the road and I'd taken this wallet to work with me. I'm putting my driver's license and Social Security card and stuff in this new wallet. I come across that union card and I looked at it, got to counting up. I had 20 years and 12 days on there. I told George, who was driving, "George, stop the car." I guess George thought I had to get out and pee, so he stopped. I got out and I had this thermos in one hand, a lunchbox in the other. And I didn't even have to look in the lunchbox, I knew what was in there—there was a bologna sandwich in there, a banana, probably. I threw that lunchbox out in the desert.

He said, "What in the hell are you doing?"

I said, "I am going home."

And he said, "It's cold out there. How are you going to get home?"

I said, "I'm going to hitchhike." I took out my card and said, "Turn that in at the gate; tell them I quit." By God, the first car that came by picked me up. I was going to throw the thermos out there, too, but I thought, no, I might be here a while; I'll keep the thermos for the coffee.

RM: So that was the end of your career at the Test Site. Were you driving most of the time? Were you mainly driving buses or just any kind of truck?

BR: No, I drove heavy construction. And then I became a foreman, then I became a general foreman. And that time, they were forcing blacks into government work and it was eating me up. They'd come out there and say, "You lay off five guys and we'll have five more guys here for you." And I know all five of these guys—pretty soon you become like a family. So you say, "Okay, this guy's got little kids and this guy this doesn't and this guy's a good driver. . . ." I am going to replace these guys because I have some black guys coming

and the black guys are going to say, “I don’t know how to drive the truck, you’ve got to train me.” So this went on for a while.

I finally got this guy—his name was Leroy. People would come to work with a hangover once in a while and we had a Quonset over there with a little cot in it, and you’d say, “Ah, go sleep it off, it’s fine.” You’d do it for everybody. So Leroy would come to work and say, “I don’t feel good,” and he’d go out in the Quonset.

This went on for about four days, five days. I said, “Leroy, the guys are getting pissed off, you know? If you’re sick tomorrow, don’t come to work.” He comes to work and was still sick. I said, “Leroy, you go home.” Well he didn’t go home, he went over to the superintendent’s office.

They brought him back over there and said, “Well, let him just sit around today.” Next day he did the same thing. I sent him back over to the office and they brought him back and said, “Let him sit in your office.” So I got overruled on that, too. So I sent him home. They sent him back over. I said, “No. They don’t want you over there, I don’t want you over here; go home.”

Next day he comes back with a guy named Joe Neal. Now, Joe Neal was a senator and also the head of the NAACP. My boss and Joe Neal come over and we have this little sit-down and talk. We’re having this talk and everybody says, “Okay, are we all done here? Is this conversation over?” Yes.

Leroy said, “Well I’ve got one more thing. I am going to be sick tomorrow, the next day and the next day, the next day and the next day.” It was about two days later that I quit.

RM: How was he getting away with this?

BR: Because he was black; and the government was promoting that. They didn’t want you to be prejudiced. I had some black guys who worked their ass off for you, but then some of

them. . . . For lunch, everybody had sandwiches, you know, or maybe leftovers from the night before; and a thermos of coffee. All of the black guys would have great big cans of peanut butter, cans of ham, big blocks of cheese—all from the welfare office. You're eating a bologna sandwich and they're eating like pigs out there. I was never raised around black people. I was never prejudiced until I left there. I think now everything is much better, but in those days they pushed it on you and you couldn't get away from it.

RM: Did you ever run into a guy named Mickey Fleetwood out there? He was head of the tunnels or something for a long time.

BR: No. The head of the tunnels when I was there . . . well, you had Flangas.

RM: Yes. My dad knew him in Ely. Flangas was a cool guy.

BR: Flangas always took care of me because I was from the middle of Nevada and I was an old-timer. If you were born in Nevada, you couldn't do anything wrong by Flangas. Right after I left, he became the head son of a bitch out there. He was general manager of the Test Site.

RM: I wanted to interview him on this project that Reid torpedoed.

BR: You're talking about Bill Flangas. Pete was his brother. Pete became a lawyer.

RM: Bill was a mining engineer and in summers. . . .

BR: He ran all the tubs.

RM: That's right. And Mickey Fleetwood was an old miner from Cripple Creek who got promoted pretty well and my dad had known him in Cripple Creek. Another guy was Frank Seelig.

BR: I was there when Seelig killed that guy who was his friend.

RM: Oh, my God. The summer that I worked out there in the tunnels, he was my walker. My dad used to tell that story. He ran over him, right?

BR: I was there that night. Yes, the guy was on a motorcycle. Of course, everybody drank. Seelig was always drunk. They used to have a little bar—I don't even know if it's over there anymore. You turn into Indian Springs to the west. There was a little bar over there and we were all going to meet there right about sundown. It was late; Bill went out there, everybody ducked their head and left. Seelig was always good to me, too. I always liked him. He just got drunk . . . that was a bad day. He was always nice to me. I was a kid; I was a lot younger than he was.

RM: He kind of gave me a few hints of how to survive.

BR: He was like Flangas—if you were a native Nevadan, he took care of you. Nobody else did. Otherwise, you'd be with a bunch of unionists in Clark County who didn't give a shit about you. I mean, the union in Las Vegas didn't give a shit about being a Nevadan. But if you knew the walking boss and you knew some people who were important . . . August Behr was the same way. That would have been a great guy to talk to about the Test Site, too. He came in with the whole McGee bunch. So did most of them. McGee was the first contractor; they were there before Reynolds.

RM: Oh really? Kerr-McGee?

BR: Just McGee. They came out of White Sands, New Mexico, with the first bombs and they stayed over. Edgerton was out there for a long time. Guys like Obie Spears and those guys—McGee hired the Bill Flangases and so on.

RM: Oh, really? Reynolds was in charge when I went to work out there.

BR: Reynolds took over after McGee. In fact, I think McGee became Reynolds. Then Barney got to be EG&G and the EG&G bought Reynolds off. EG&G were kind of a subcontractor out there for a long time and then pretty soon they just gathered up REECo (Reynolds) and they became a contractor.

RM: Getting back to Beatty, you said Desert Rock was the first big change there?

BR: After the mining days.

RM: Right. What was the next stage in the change in Beatty?

BR: Desert Rock was the big start and then the Nevada Test Site—which brought, like I say, Carl Brown all the way from Oklahoma. Then we got a population where young people had kids and then the school grew and the kids were growing up and just a lot of factors. I would say that the Test Site was the biggest movement; then it survived on tourism for a while and then Bond Gold came in here.

RM: And all of this brought in new people, didn't it, without deep roots?

BR: With every group of people, some of them stayed when everybody else left. These GIs married into families here. When the Test Site came here, the people who came from Oklahoma raised a family here and married other people, and some of them stayed, maybe some of their kids stayed. The next one was Bond Gold.

RM: How did that impact Beatty?

BR: The impact was very positive; it could have been much more positive, but we had a few people on boards here that fought them all the way. Bond, Barrick, LAQ . . . the mine changed hands several times. Bond was from Australia and was in the beer business; he had several breweries in Australia, a very wealthy man. He ran the World Cup—yacht. Plant first claimed it all up; then Bond came in and they opened it up, built a mill. Then it went to Barrick, which was, of course, the richest gold mining company in the world.

All of those had a positive impact because some of those people stayed. The town could have fostered much more except we had people on boards who fought with this.

Barrick would have had a full 18-hole golf course down here because Jack Bingham was very much into golfing, but the guy on the park and rec board at that time argued with them

all the time. And then they were going to build a rifle range, a shooting range, down here—beautiful, beautiful plans. The same guy got into a pissing match with them there and destroyed that. Now we don't have a golf course. We don't have a shooting range.

Barrick tried very hard to do something for this town and for some reason, people got in the way. But I know that they were earnest, because I was kind of committed at that time. I'd meet with them. They'd say, "Yes; let's do it, let's go." We'd get here and they'd get in a pissing match with somebody and whoever was the superintendent of that mine at the time would say, "Hell with them; I'm not going to put up with this bullshit."

RM: Did Bond Gold and Barrick and so on have a boom-bust effect on Beatty?

BR: Of course it did when they left. Beatty exploded and they leased lots and they didn't try to buy anything; they tried to share the wealth. They'd go around saying, "Okay, you've got two and a half acres; we'll put trailers up, we're going to pay you for it—all you've got to do is sit on your butt and collect money; we're going to ship money to you every day." It was very good and the town exploded. There were mobile homes and modular homes all over that upper part of town.

But the day was going to come when the mine would close. They'd say, "Now, about a year from now we are going to close." They had it right down to the nubs. So when they closed, you got a whole town on wheels. Here came a bunch of trucks and the whole town rolled out the next day—they just hooked onto a whole bunch of trailers and away they went. They even took the modular homes, or whatever you want to call them. You might have three trucks to pull one, but they just opened them up and pulled them out of here and were going to head to Winnemucca or to Round Mountain or wherever they wanted to go with them and set up housing for their people up there. In about a month that whole upper part of town just disappeared. That whole town was on wheels.

RM: About what year was that that they just pulled out?

BR: Well, my son's had this tire shop five years. It was a couple years before that; seven years.

RM: And how has Beatty changed now?

BR: Beatty's changed. You have to keep in mind is that that's Beatty's history—as with all mining towns such as Tonopah, Goldfield, Ely. It's a boom-and-bust situation with mines. Beatty changed because the railroad left; there was no possibility of having warehousing or anything like that. The railroad was a major artery here that could have been very good for our future. But when war came along they derailed; there wasn't any business here so they were done.

After Barrick, I would say the second biggest change to Beatty came with the arrival of Ed Ringle, who owned the Stagecoach. He went up there and built a casino. He would go to meetings, town board and what have you, and he would stand flat-footed and say, "Beatty is just full of trailer trash and what have you."

He'd actually say that—it's on the record. He'd go to town boards and say that. And he had another saying—I heard him one time—it was the three Ds: I think he said druggies, derelicts, and something else. Of course, he doesn't hate it so much that he'd close down his casino, but there were a lot of families still here. Some of them had some money to live on after the mines, some were on unemployment. And we had three casinos. We still had a pretty fair employment base with Napa and the other businesses around town.

The townspeople got tired of the three Ds and being called trailer trash and what have you so most of the people who had lived here for some time wouldn't eat in his casino, wouldn't drink in his casino; they would go to the other two casinos. If they wanted to go out for dinner they'd go to the Exchange or the Burro Inn, all of which, right and left, were

struggling to make it work. Ringle just came in, offered them a bunch of money, bought them out, and closed them down. He put, like, 127 people out of work in one day.

That hurt this little town. That was the second downfall to the town. He just bought them, closed them up, locked all the doors. Now he's got the only casino in town; he's got all of the rooms in town, or 99 percent of them. The only one that competes with him is that El Portal up there and I don't know what they've got—15 rooms, 10 rooms, something like that?

RM: He owns the Motel 6, too?

BR: Oh yes, he owns the Motel 6. So that was the second slam to the town. But it was kind of the key factor to killing it.

RM: So Beatty kind of became a company town, namely his company.

BR: It did, right. If you want to go out to dinner, you've pretty much got to go to his place or get a taco. After that, it was just downhill.

RM: Where do you see Beatty headed?

BR: Tourism is very good now; there are a lot of people on the highway. My son has his little tire shop and it's doing very well. Even with the economy the way it is, with gas prices the way they are, people are still driving. The average family's not, but the trucks are still rolling. And of course that's where his bread and butter are, is trucks—he does a good truck business. He really depends on the truck business to make a living.

He gets a lot of business out of Amargosa. Most of the townspeople all trade here with him. He shoots them a fair, straight deal and it works well. So he's still doing well, but most of it's off that highway. The townspeople will pay the bills; everything off the highway expands it a little bit. He just bought a new tire machine the other day that cost \$8,000.

You've got to change a lot of tires to make up that \$8,000; but nevertheless, if you're going

to stay in business, you have to have it. If you don't change with the world, you get left out. You've got to buy a \$7,000 computer. And if you don't have the computer, you're left out again. The world is changing; it's getting more high tech all the time.

I think tourism . . . I think there are a lot of opportunities here.

Water is a terrible thing here. We have an election coming up this year. Right now, water hookups and what have you make it prohibitive for people to put a business in. I was talking to a girl here just the other day, and she wanted to put a little beauty salon up there—an eight-foot trailer. She wants to cut hair. She is right on the main street where there is a water hookup right there. Now, the water department is charging her \$3,000 to hook up. How many haircuts is \$3,000? I mean, you're going to buy a trailer, you're going to buy a chair for people to sit in, you're going to buy combs and clippers and what have you—and then another \$3000 on top of that? How do you start a business in this town with a \$3,000 water hookup? It's terrible. I think that can all be changed.

RM: There is the water?

BR: The water's here. Barrick gave this water department some really wonderful wells out in Amargosa Valley where the water is good. This country makes a big dip here and there's fluoride everywhere. (Crowell's mine was a fluoride mine.) They put fluoride in toothpaste; it's great for your teeth. But if you get a whole lot of it, your teeth turn yellow and your bones get very brittle. So they won't let you sell water if it is high in fluoride because it damages your body. Barrick gave them really good wells and water up there in Amargosa Valley; no fluoride. So there is lots of water.

They have a \$1 million capital projects fund up there. Why would anybody need a million-dollar capital projects fund? It's owned by the town. It's not owned by the water company; it's not personally owned. It's like a special improvement district. It's an elected

board. You're a government entity; you're not private. They've got \$1 million excess up there and the water rates are so high you can't stand it. To charge \$3,000 for a haircutting place with one little one-half-inch pipe? It's pretty tough.

RM: So it's strangling the growth?

BR: It is strangling the growth. I don't know if this little girl is going to put her little hairdressing place in or not.

RM: How do you see Yucca Mountain fitting into the future of Beatty and this whole area right here?

BR: I'll tell you, Bob, I think that people have great expectations of Yucca Mountain and they think it will create a lot of jobs. I don't think it's going to do that. Let's say it's on fast forward—which it's not, it shut down; it's at a dead standstill. Let's just say it's going forward. They have a construction phase, are going to hire a bunch of people. They go in there and dig a bunch of holes. Most of those people are going to come out of Las Vegas. Most of those Las Vegas people are going to be young people and they're probably renting down there anyway so they might move to Pahrump. And in Pahrump, they'll have a bus that buses people to Yucca Mountain. So there are going to be some jobs there for a while and a little money will be made—there are going to be some pocket monies there, wages.

When Yucca Mountain is completed (assuming we're on the fast track), there might be 300 jobs out there. And half of those 300 people are going to be in Las Vegas in offices, paying taxes in Clark County. That's going to leave 150 people to run that place. Some of them will live in Pahrump, but most of them are going to live in Vegas because they are going get on a bus and go to Vegas.

What happens here in these communities is, you have a man, a professional man like a doctor, and he comes here and he says, "I really like Beatty. I can go up to Pine Creek, I

can go to Basin. If I need parts I can run into Pahrump and get a part. And I can go down there to this little driving range and shoot a couple of balls and that'd be all good. I like it here." So now, he is pretty excited—he says, "I might even buy a horse for my kid. This is cool, I like the West."

But he's got a wife in Tennessee. She come out here and she says, "Hey jerk, you aren't putting my kid in this school. You're not going to put my kid here where there's no doctor; you're not putting me in a place where I can't go grocery shopping, I can't go to the mall, I can't get the pharmaceuticals I need. You get your ass out of that house and you go to Vegas and you get me a place to live." That's exactly what she's going to say.

Men will adapt to anything but a professional man with a family is not coming to Beatty, Nevada. That's not ever going to happen. He's going to live in Las Vegas, where all of the conveniences are. So now you've eliminated a lot of people from Yucca Mountain already.

Yucca Mountain is not going to do a damn thing for Beatty, Nevada, except for the grants equal to taxes thing—or the payments equal to taxes; they change the wording all the time. That's a lot of money. Beatty could promote the hell out of itself; Tonopah could promote the hell out of itself—we could make these towns work. It's like the Alaskan oil fields. You know, they have income tax up there in Alaska—everybody gets a rebate. They've got money coming back because of oil. Grants equal to taxes or payments equal to taxes, whatever you want to call it, means that if Ford Motor Company went out there and they built a great big factory to build Ford cars with, you'd go out there and tax them. But you can't tax the government so you get payments equal to taxes. That's a landslide of money to these little towns. That's the only good thing that's ever going to come out of Yucca Mountain for Beatty, Nevada.

RM: Do you think Yucca Mountain will be a reality?

BR: I think it very well could be if they'd get rid of Harry Reid.

RM: Let me bounce an idea off of you—what do you think about putting several one-thousand-megawatt nuclear reactors in Nye County? I don't know if you've looked at the economic benefits, but they're huge.

BR: Yes, I think they are, too. Of course, we have a water problem; you have to cool them. But you're right, the profits are immense. And they're much safer now. People look at these old reactors that they had—they only had two problems in their whole history, two. One in Russia and one here.

RM: And the one in Russia was built wrong; it didn't even have a dome. And not one person died in Three Mile Island.

BR: They're not trying to shut down all of the submarines; they're not trying to shut down the aircraft carriers—they all run on nuclear reactors, for Christ's sake. Bob, I'll tell you what—the oil reserves are gone. People say, "No they're not. They got capped wells." The oil reserves, even in Saudi Arabia, are peaked and going into decline.

RM: We're that far from a big oil crisis.

BR: What do you mean "that far"? We're in an oil crisis now. Look at the price—\$115 a barrel?

RM: Absolutely. I know it's an uphill battle, but I've been pushing, "Hey, let's get some reactors in Nye County. Let's start with one."

BR: Again, it's education. Educating the people because they are scared—anything that says nuclear, they are terrified of. Because everybody gets on that TV and says, "All these people burned up in Nagasaki." Yes, we dropped a bomb on those people and it was a dirty bomb; a really dirty bomb. But it's a different world now. Reactors are everywhere.

RM: That's right. There is a rush of reactors coming and I am trying to get Nye County out in front to get on track because if we don't do it somebody else is going to be there.

BR: You've got a lot of people out there hugging those trees. Most of them come from California and they say, "We need solar power, we need wind generators." I went to a lot of schools—I was a director on Valley Electric's board for eight years. But green power is expensive. And it's unreliable; you don't know when the wind's going to blow. There is only one place around here that would even qualify and that's up here in that canyon somewhere. Then you've got to run power lines to that and then you hope it generates enough power to put into a system that is going to pay for itself.

And all these guys say, "Let's do this solar power thing." And they go to the government and the government just hands them a whole bunch of money because you got all these tree huggers out there saying, "Green power. Yes, yes, yes—give them some money." It's bullshit. It's very expensive. Green power is very expensive. Hoover Dam is getting to be a pain in the ass because they've got no water in the goddamned lake anymore.

RM: That's right. And with green power, you can't turn on the lights at night.

BR: Right. If you want to rely on something to last, nuclear power will last for 100 years. You won't have to change the oil on that son of a bitch every day. It's not like an old generator.

RM: One 1000-megawatt reactor would create 800 direct jobs at average pay of \$60,000 a year.

BR: The only problem with nuclear reactors is that they are very expensive to build.

RM: But they last a long time. They're not going to let them build coal plants much longer. You mentioned water; I am told that there is one outfit that has a water-free reactor. It's a closed loop. You could put it 50 feet in the ground with 50 feet of concrete around it, turn the

son of a bitch on, and away it goes. It works on turbines and the bearings are magnetic bearings; nothing touches.

BR: Those were invented at the Test Site. EG&G was the first ones that ever had that. And they worked and they worked and they worked, testing these bearings. They're bearings, but they don't touch and they last forever. There is no friction.

RM: So just as an aside, I think what we need to do is start getting a movement going. Forget Harry Reid and those guys. Let's start our own movement here—because times are changing.

BR: I agree. Have you ever talked to Ken Gray down at Lathrop Wells? He lives in Amargosa Valley. He worked on those bearings, but he is knowledgeable, too, about . . . guys like Glenn Henderson, who was a cop here. My uncle was a cop here. Yes, Ken Gray—you might want to talk to him sometime.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: Why don't we start off today's session with any personal experiences you had with Rhyolite and the people who were living there in your lifetime? You were talking about a guy and his watch. . . .

BR: The guy was a pimp and he had several cribs that went down this one street. Of course, that was before my time. As Rhyolite closed, he stayed on quite a long time. He was a Frenchman; I can't remember his name. He died in the '20s. He was always kind of a mysterious fellow and there were never any records of him doing any banking in town or shipping any money anywhere. So people always thought that he'd buried his money because he got a certain amount from each girl who worked in these cribs every day. And of course in those early days, everything was done with gold and silver.

Everybody thought that there was a treasure out there and a lot of people dug for it, including my family. Everybody thought they had an idea where it was. When I was a kid, of course I'd heard this story several times, and there were a couple of the cribs still there. I knew where his house was—it was kind of catty-corner across the street from the cribs. The house was falling down and people were taking the lumber out of it, but the outhouse was still there.

The story was that they found the Frenchman in the outhouse, dead. They didn't know if somebody had hit him or what, but they knew that the chain to the gold watch he always carried was broken and they figured somebody must have reached in and grabbed that and stolen that watch. This outhouse had 2-by-4 floorboards where your feet were where you're sitting on it, but there was space in between them. We tipped over that old outhouse, and I think what had happened was that when he fell forward, that chain went down between

those slats and when they picked him up, it broke the chain. I still have the watch.

RM: Was it an expensive watch?

BR: It was a beautiful solid gold watch. I still have it up there at my house. I have a bunch of pocket watches that I have collected over the years.

RM: What do you know about him?

BR: Nothing. He wasn't married and, like I said, he stayed on when Rhyolite was closing down. There were still some businesses open. The depot was open; they had a bar in there. He hung around until his death.

RM: What did people think when you guys found that watch?

BR: Well, they dug up the outhouse. But it was lying there in plain sight. Once you tipped the outhouse over it was just lying on the ground. I wound it up, it started running.

Everyone looked for his money, of course I did, too, in later years. When metal detectors first came out, they weren't real accurate. I went out and looked with one of those, but there were so many pipes and cans and pieces, nails, and that kind of thing. You can't move around a foot around there that you don't run into nails or pipes or something. The metal detector was useless. Every time you'd dig, you'd find something you didn't want to find. There were several people who still lived out there but I don't know if there's anybody out there anymore.

RM: Who were some of the people who lived there?

BR: Bessie Moffat lived out there. She was an Indian woman. She lived there forever—since early Rhyolite; she was there during the boom days. She had a little shack all to herself. She never did move out of there.

And there was Westmoreland—he had the depot; he was quite a character. There were a lot of stories about Westmoreland. He drank a lot—a lot. I remember one time we

were going from Rhyolite to Beatty. My uncle was a deputy here; of course, everybody was a deputy here. But Bob was the head deputy. If he left town, they'd just go find somebody and say, "You're the deputy." Mostly my dad would take it. Anyway, old Westmoreland ran off the road. He rode up off the highway, over this bank, wrecked his car. My dad went out and Westmoreland crawled up out of there. My dad said, "Wes, you been drinking?"

Wes said, "A lot." [Laughter] Today you'd go to jail for that.

He was quite a character. This guy could sell anything. He sold ants. He would take these jars and bury them so the whole jar was below ground and the top was at dirt level. He'd plant them next to an ant mound and the ants would crawl in there; they'd fall down the jar and they couldn't get out. He had quite a few of those jars around. He'd put the jar up on a rail out there and the ants would all die. He'd take them and pour them in a pan and he actually convinced a lot of people that he took them for arthritis and people would buy those ants and eat them.

RM: Really? How did he prepare them?

BR: Just in a pan. Once he'd get them ground, he'd take a bite. He was a storyteller. The best story I remember from him, I was a little kid. Where the hotel is now, right across the street there was another hotel just exactly like it. They were two two-story buildings. Out in front of that hotel there were some benches. Of course, there were benches all up and down Main Street.

Anyway, there were some tourists coming through there, going down the sidewalk Westmoreland is telling his story and these people want to hear these old-timey stories. They asked about, I think, Death Valley Scotty or something. So Westmoreland tells them this story about him and Death Valley, which I'm sure was a big lie. He said he was down to Death Valley, he and his burro. That's the main reason I know it was a lie was because

Westmoreland wouldn't know one end of a burro from another, I don't think. He was more of a bar manager, promoter.

Anyway he and this burro, they're down in Death Valley and they walk along this trail and the burro bolted and ran off and he was bit by this large rattlesnake. There he was, down in the bottom of Death Valley, and it's 125 degrees and it's summertime and there's no water, the water was on the burro. He crawls and spends the night underneath a cactus and crawls some more the next day. Finally he knows he is getting ready to expire. Time is coming, it's getting close. He says, "Well, I never was much of a religious man, but I decided it was time to pray." He said, "Lord, I know I haven't been to church very often, but I am in trouble here. I need some help. You know, my burro run off and it's 110 degrees and I've been bit by a snake and I'm out of water and I am really in trouble here. I really need some help." And he said, "Come down here yourself; don't send that kid. I need a man of experience." I almost fell down. Oh, I laughed at that. He was quite a storyteller. Of course, there were a lot of those in those days.

RM: What did he look like?

BR: He was a big man. He was out of Arkansas. He came here when Rhyolite was still going pretty good, I guess—the Shoshone-Montgomery or some of them. After the trains pulled out, he ran the train depot. He had a bar and everything in there and he would cook a meal every once in a while. He always had a couple of gals hanging around.

RM: Were they hookers?

BR: One of them was a schoolteacher. Once she got hanging out with Westmoreland, she got to drinking pretty good, I think, so she wasn't a schoolteacher anymore. Then he had a couple of Indian gals who hung out around out there and they would cook. If you got there and you wanted something to eat . . . of course, you paid for it with Westmoreland. He ran it

for quite a while and then he died.

RM: When did he die?

BR: The early '50s; I'm guessing 1955, '54. His sister came out there and she was married to this guy named Heisler, who was a holy-roller preacher. I mean, he could beller it out: "praise the lord" and all of that stuff. He had some followers here—the postmistress and some others. Most of his followers were a bunch of ex-drunks or whatever.

RM: Was there a church that he preached in?

BR: Oh, church could be anywhere for Heisler—it could be in the saloon or anywhere. His wife was the head of the family, but she was a worker; she was like Westmoreland. She ran the place out in Rhyolite. A good old gal. Great big woman, everybody loved her. But Heisler, he'd rather go down and preach at the Red Rooster or something.

RM: Preaching about their sin?

BR: Yes, he probably experienced some of the sin while he was there. That was his claim to fame; he was a preacher. That took him out of the bartending business—because that was a sin. It was all right for his wife to sin, tend bar, but probably not for him; he should be in town preaching at some other saloon. Then he died and his wife ran it for several years, then finally she died. She was a good woman, a really good woman.

RM: When did she finally pass on?

BR: I don't know—'59, maybe.

RM: Did anybody else come into the depot then?

BR: There were a couple, but it never did do anything after that. There was Rhyolite Ruthie, they called her. All the guys liked Ruthie. She drifted in here on a bus or something and bartended out there; I don't know how she got here. Where she came from, I don't know. We had some women around here who kind of took on names. But finally the depot closed

down. I don't know why.

RM: And they would get business out there?

BR: Yes. I think Mrs. Heisler's estate probably kept it open for a while and they got Ruthie. Like I said, women would take on names. Panamint Annie was quite a legend here, too. She was a little woman, but tough as a boot. Drank whiskey right along with a man. She still has some descendants that I see around from time to time. She was just tough. She lived in an old panel truck.

RM: Where were her headquarters?

BR: In front of a saloon. You'd see the truck in front of one saloon one night and another saloon the next morning, and pretty soon Panamint Annie would come stumbling out of there.

RM: How did she make money in order to afford her booze and everything?

BR: I never thought of that. Of course, she'd hustle some money—she'd talk people into buying her drinks, which you've seen all your life. You know those gals, pretty soon you've got to buy them a drink just to get them away from you.

RM: Was she an older woman?

BR: Not somebody you'd want to go to bed with, that's for sure. It would be pretty scary to wake up in the morning next to her. She rarely took a bath. But everybody liked her. Everybody got along with her and she was just part of the rest of the riff-raff.

RM: What were some other women and their names?

BR: There was Hooker Joyce. She lived up on Montgomery Street right off First Street.

RM: How old was she when you knew her?

BR: I am guessing she was 50, but all older people looked old to me because I was young. There were a bunch of them. Madeline Padget was another tough old broad. She lived by

herself and she was one of Heisler's followers; she got into religion. She could outswear a lumberjack; she was drunk all the time. She got into that religion, she and Renee Gibson.

Renee married a guy who owned a windmill ranch out here.

RM: And she was a postmistress or something.

BR: Yes. They kind of formed their own little church down there. It's still there, it's an underground church. It used to be a powder house. You go to First Street, turn on the first alley to your left, look out to your right and you'll see that old church down there. Some people say they were devil worshippers; other ones said, no, they're Heisler followers. They did have their own church and it was basically for old whores. Most people who attended it were whores.

RM: Did a number of women who went and worked as prostitutes then kind of get out of the business and take up residence here?

BR: The ones I knew who worked didn't. A lot of locals married whores from the whorehouses. That was not uncommon.

RM: It was the same in Tonopah.

BR: As far as quitting out there and just moving to town, those I told you about, that probably happened, but in my time, the ones that did stay married some local; the other ones drifted away.

RM: Did those marriages work out pretty well?

BR: Most all of them.

RM: And were they accepted by the community?

BR: Absolutely, yes.

RM: Was it ever mentioned?

BR: Not that I ever heard. Of course, you are friends with everybody and you don't talk

about some guy's wife. What happened in the past, happened in the past. If he liked her, it's his wife and you treat her as such. You show her the same respect you'd show someone else's wife.

RM: Did they tend to be older women that they married or were they young women in their prime?

BR: Some of them were young women in their prime.

RM: So the prostitutes became a source for wives for a lot of guys here.

BR: Right; they were. I told you earlier that we had two local girls who had a crib up there on Main Street when the GIs were here. One of them married a really nice Indian guy. He's one of the ones who didn't drink very much. She probably died, but they were married for a long time. He works for the Forest Service. He's done very well for himself and he has a new wife now. But yes, that marriage lasted until she died.

Then the other gal who worked with her married one of the GIs. They moved wherever he was from—Tennessee or somewhere—and they were only there maybe a year or two and then they moved back here, raised their family, and some of their kids are still around. They don't live here but they come through once in a while and visit, you know.

RM: Most of the old male refugees out of Rhyolite were single, weren't they? Womanless?

BR: There were a lot of men but they weren't married. There were a lot more men than there were women in Beatty then.

RM: And that was one reason why the brothels thrived? Do you have any more Rhyolite stories or characters? Did you used to go out there as kids?

BR: We did, but it was generally when my dad would go out and have a drink at the depot or something, visit with Westmoreland. There wasn't much there when I was a kid. There were still quite a few houses that hadn't been completely destroyed, but they were working

on that; it didn't take long for all of them to disappear, either. There weren't many people that lived there.

RM: Did you kids have any adventures or anything out there that are worth repeating?

BR: We all played in the mines and as I got older we'd go high-grade and get in some of the dumps. The Shoshone-Montgomery and the Senator Stewart both had some ore left in them. We'd go out there and high-grade that. It was pretty good ore. You could grind it up and pat it and sell it.

RM: Did you kids pick up some cash that way?

BR: If a guy worked hard for two days, a lot of times you'd come up with an ounce. That was 30 bucks—25, 30, depending on what the guy wanted to pay you.

RM: Were you working underground or was that mostly on the surface?

BR: Mostly underground, just chasing those little stringers. We had these little carbide lamps that you put carbide in the bottom and water in the top. Strike them, they had a little reflector like a flashlight, but it was a flame.

RM: How did you know where to look in those mines?

BR: Oh, you're raised here; you know where to look. If you'd been around those old-timers long enough you'd know exactly where to look all the time. Pretty soon you become kind of a self-appointed geologist. You'd just learn those things.

RM: So even as a kid you guys knew where the good stringers were and everything?

BR: Well, you found them if you looked for them. You went out through a drift and you'd see where there was a little change in color or something. You'd start studying that. We used a thing with a long arm. It had a spoon on one end and a point on the other. Powdermen had those. They were generally five feet long, maybe six. When they drilled a hole in a rock, they had to go in there with their spoon. They'd drag all the gravel out, and then they'd poke

dynamite in there. The last stick you put in, you took the other end of it, because it came to a point, and you stuck that down the dynamite and then you put a fuse in there. You pushed it all the way up to the rest of them, then behind, and you'd take some newspaper and tap that in behind it. Wad it up and tap it down in that hole till you got it good and tight. Then you lit your fuse and shot it. If you shot it without the newspaper, then it would blow back. What you wanted to do was fracture the rock.

Anyway, back to the original story. We would take those old spoons—there were a lot of them around—and we'd find a crack somewhere. A lot of those old leasers and gypos had been in there and they'd already got some of it, but they wouldn't go back far enough. We'd find a spoon and go back farther than they'd gone.

RM: You mean just spooning out this crack? What was it, kind of a little fault crack?

BR: Yes. It was where they'd found the gold. You'd spoon that out of there and take the other end, the sharp end, and chip it away and then reach in there with the other end of the spoon and back out. We made a little money all the time.

RM: With gold the price it is now, are people going out and looking at those little stringers and trying to work them?

BR: The Senator Stewart, which was the best, and the Shoshone-Montgomery, the two I mentioned already. When Bond Gold and then Barrick came in here and drilled them, they found a bunch of gold so they mined them both. The Stewart was their big mine.

RM: Oh, really? If you are coming into Rhyolite and you're looking into the horseshoe, was the Senator Stewart on the right, or where was it?

BR: The Stewart is on Ladd Mountain; that's the one that Barrick mined. There are still a bunch of drifts in there that they figured weren't any good, but they mined all the good stuff out.

RM: Do local people like you go out to some of those old-timers' places?

BR: They do; I go out, too. They are going out and getting gold today.

RM: No kidding. Just like the old-timers did, only they're not walking out there.

BR: Right. Nowadays you've got quads and what have you. Yes, I still go a lot. I trap in the wintertime, but in the summertime, before it gets too hot, I go out and I prospect; and I do all right.

RM: Oh my God—that's gold? And you recovered this?

BR: I recovered that.

RM: How much is there?

BR: It's almost seven ounces; I just pulled that a couple of days ago. I had it down here to cut it up because I got a lot of slag on it.

RM: That's a really neat specimen.

BR: I melt it in a frying pan.

RM: So you recovered that with your prospecting? When you're telling me you're prospecting you're not just following some little lead or something up there, you are actually in there digging on a seam, or something?

BR: It's getting awfully hard anymore because the big money companies have got it all gathered up. They've got most of these claims now. They'll come in and claim, like, 100 acres.

RM: But they're not out there, are they?

BR: No. They're not out there so basically you've got to go steal from them. And generally they don't know where it is or they'd be mining it. And it's fair game. You know, when it comes to gold, the first guy that gets it, he's the owner.

BR: That's right. If you can get out of there without getting caught, it's yours.

RM: That's the rule of the West, yes. All those old guys were always out high-grading and everything. So these old sites are in hills around here?

BR: Yes. This gold was pocket gold. They found some marvelous pockets here. It's not like Goldfield where they had a golden mile—everywhere they poked a hole there was gold. This was basically all pockets. A guy would make a discovery and he'd go in on it and maybe it'd peter out, maybe he'd hit a big pocket.

The Gold Ace was a very rich pocket. They've got another mine getting ready to start up down there now. They've been in there drilling and they're talking about going back in on that.

RM: And they'll probably open-pit the old Gold Ace? But it was a pockety ore?

BR: They made more money just 10 feet off the surface than they made in all the rest of the mine.

RM: Really? So it didn't go down?

BR: No, and I always thought it should have. They made a portal—they went in and branched out in this portal in a bunch of directions. They had all these drifts off to the side and they brought their ore and dirt out and dumped it off the bank where the ore dump is. Instead of having the ore dump there, they should have sunk a shaft where that ore dump is. I think—and I've known other people who think the same way—they'd have done very well if they'd done that. Everything I see at the Gold Ace points in that direction. I just think they missed a lot of gold right there—it's a big huge dump.

RM: How deep do you think they should've gone?

BR: I think they would have hit gold 20, 30 feet underneath the dump, from the bottom of the dump.

RM: Do you have any Gold Ace stories?

BR: No. It was a hell of a mine. I've got a ledger of the guy who found it; Marbel gave it to me.

RM: Were they taking out quite a bit there?

BR: They hit a pocket in there right off the surface, big as this room here, that they took \$20 million out of. That's at \$20 gold.

RM: That's for real?

BR: Yes. The pocket wasn't very big.

RM: I had no idea.

BR: It was just fantastic.

RM: It was just pure gold, almost.

BR: Yes. Well, it doesn't take a whole lot of gold to make a ton. Gold is heavy. But it was just magnificent. I've seen a lot of samples of it; there was gold everywhere.

RM: Were there any other good mines around the Gold Ace or was it kind of localized there?

BR: It was kind of localized right there. Callicut had a mine down below; he's one of the old men I told you about who always made a living here; he always sold gold. There were two or three of them. There was a guy we called Deefy: he was absolutely deaf. He blew himself up and broke his eardrum. I think he went in on a dead round and it went off right close to him and broke his eardrums. But he always made gold. That was down there in that same country, down about a mile or half a mile, maybe, from the Gold Ace—probably closer to a mile.

RM: I had no idea the Gold Ace was that rich.

BR: The original pocket they found was fabulously rich, but after that they pulled some stringers. Today they drill it. In those days you had to have an idea where you thought it was

to start running a drift, running tunnels. And when you run a couple hundred feet of drift, that takes a lot of money, a lot of time, a lot of work.

RM: Yes. When you're out working a little seam, do you use the spoon and all that?

BR: No, I don't. I look for different places and I check washes. As I explained the other day, I trap in the wintertime. When I'm out trapping I take samples all over my trap land. If I see a place that might look good I have a whole bunch of little canvas bags about that high and I have a GPS and so I'll dig down underneath the gravel, put some dirt in a bag, wrap some tire wire around it, and look at the GPS and write the coordinates on the bag. After trapping season, I'll start panning that. And if I find some color in one, if I find some free gold, I know exactly where it came from. Then I'll go back to that spot and look around and try to figure out where that came from.

RM: Do you find something in place, then, or do you find just a hot pocket of gravel?

BR: Yes, generally; I never have found any real good things. Did I ever show you that gold nugget piece I have up there?

RM: No, from Yellow Gold?

BR: No, it's from gold I found everywhere around here.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: So you've found a lot of gold?

BR: Yes, but it's taken me 65 years.

RM: Yes, but how many people can say that?

BR: How many people have ever looked? How many people were born in a mining town and looked? It's a hobby; it's something you like to do. And my day is getting short. I can hardly walk anymore; my legs are not what they used to be. In fact, my legs are pretty bad. But nowadays you have a quad so that's a lot easier than walking long distances. You can ride a quad out across the desert real easy.

RM: Have you found places where a guy could set up a placer outfit?

BR: Oh, I have, but they always already belong to somebody. This whole country is staked up.

RM: So you're just going out and when you find something, it's a keeper.

BR: Well, you come back and get on Google Earth; it's a wonderful thing. When you find something, you go to that spot on your coordinates and look the country over on the computer. It's all right there; it's a satellite image. You can look at bushes, you can look under bushes, you can look at the rock formations. There are things you can do with this program that nobody had in those days. The old-timers just came walking through here and if they stumbled on something they'd say, "Well, that looks like a good spot over there." Next morning they get up with a burro or a packsack and away they'd go to that spot over there.

RM: Well, let's say you're setting a trap. What is it that attracts you so that you would even take a sample?

BR: I just look at the rocks as I walk by.

RM: What are you looking for in the rocks?

BR: Oh, seams, where two different formations come together. In this country it is basically rhyolite.

RM: Where rhyolite is intruding into sedimentary or something?

BR: Or else if you see a little stringer of quartz, I generally always sample that. When you've got a little vein of quartz right on the seam there, right on the back side of it is where you look. You break that out and you look on the backside of the quartz unless it's buried. If it's real rich it will have gold inside the quartz, too.

RM: By the backside do you mean the downhill side?

BR: Either side, really. Because that is something that was very hot at one time and got pushed up through volcanic ash of some kind. Quartz is like a white rock; it's kind of like glass but it's not glass.

RM: Are you always looking for new sites or do you kind of go back to your old ones?

BR: I always look for something new.

RM: Do you go back to places?

BR: I do. If I do good on one, I'll go back.

RM: What do you call doing good?

BR: Any free gold is good, but you can't work a place where you just find a couple of flakes because a couple of flakes are not going to do you any good. You're going to have to have a little stringer in the bottom of your pan.

RM: How big a tail do you need in your pan to get your interest up?

BR: Oh, a tail that big, that long.

RM: An inch and a half.

BR: I consider that good. It surely gives me incentive to go look some more.

RM: It sounds to me like you're a better prospector than some of the old-timers. Would you say that?

BR: The opportunities are better now. You have quads; you don't have to walk; you know the ground; you've got programs on a computer that you can look at; you have topo maps; you can look where people did well before, where you see some diggings. A little cut in the rock, you don't pay much attention to that; it could be one that got filled. But if there is any kind of an ore dump where a miner spent a week or two, he had to do that for a reason. You look at all those things.

RM: Do you find things where somebody had a little diggings for a week or two or something?

BR: A lot of times you do. You can see what he was following. Generally when you go to these places, you can see why he was doing what he was doing. I found a drift a couple months ago that was 50, 60 feet deep. So he'd done a lot of work. I went back in there and broke this up and here's all this yellow ore, and I thought, "Wow, this guy just didn't go quite far enough. Look at this." I brought it home and assayed it—it was iron, it wasn't gold at all. But he'd followed a streak of iron for no reason and he'd put a lot of work in to it.

RM: He should have known better?

BR: Well, he should have brought a sample back and assayed it or something. When I brought it home I was so tickled with it I did an assay on it right away; it turned out to be nothing. It was pretty; kind of an iron pyrite-type thing.

RM: Pyrite would not be an indication that gold was in the area.

BR: No; in fact, I hardly ever found gold where there was pyrite. The old saying that gold is where you find it—that's true.

RM: It sounds like you're as much a miner/pro prospector as anything.

BR: Well, thanks; I am not much of a miner; I have never done well at it; I never did make a living at it. But it's something people did when I was young. It's like trapping. The only reason I trap is because my grandfather trapped and I like doing it. It was something I learned when I was a kid. It's one thing an old man can still do and enjoy himself and do by himself and take some time and go out.

RM: Do you ever find copper or anything like that?

BR: I have, and I've never really pursued it. Copper mines are usually so huge; they move so much dirt. I have found some stringers of copper. Just over the hill towards Death Valley there's a good copper property, but I don't know how big it is; I'm too old to try and pursue it.

RM: Do you recall any Gold Ace stories or tales or incidents?

BR: No. It was kind of before my time, really. Everybody went there and high-graded when I was a kid. Everybody made money out of the Gold Ace. There was a guy who lived in Lathrop Wells—he'd come up here and get four or five of us kids. We'd go out there and mine like hell for him.

RM: Were you working the rock itself?

BR: Yes, we were working the rock and working the dumps, too; and the ore bin. It was a pretty good-sized ore bin; it was still full of dirt and we figured it was all waste. We'd been working on that Gold Ace for months—he'd come in once every couple of weeks and get a bunch of us kids. Finally he decided that he was going to empty that ore bin. We were a bunch of kids; we thought, "Bullshit, that's too much work. He's not going to get anything out of the ore bin." He must have got 20 ounces out of it. It was all free gold.

RM: And how many tons do you think were there in the bin?

BR: Oh, 40. When that mine folded up, they never cleaned that ore bin out.

RM: Was that the best mine around here for gold?

BR: Oh, no, the Stewart and the Shoshone-Montgomery were much better. They were big mines.

RM: More than \$20 million?

BR: He sold it for \$5 million and the people he sold it to, they took \$20 million out so they made \$15 million.

RM: I had no idea. What do you know about the Senator Stewart Mine?

BR: I've been all through that. I worked it when I was a kid. I don't know how, but my Uncle Bob wound up owning it. He sold it to Barrick. It was the best mine in the country; when I was a kid, you could always make gold there.

RM: Could a guy make a living?

BR: At today's price?

RM: No, I mean when you were a kid. Could a guy go out there sniping and following seams?

BR: Yes, you could. Of course gold was a lot cheaper, but if I was a kid and that mine was still there today—gold is right at \$900 bucks today—you'd make a lot of money; a thousand dollars a day.

RM: Were there a lot of workings at the Senator Stewart?

BR: Yes, it was honeycombed.

RM: And it was pockety, right?

BR: Yes. But there was gold everywhere. You could find gold all through there. It wasn't all high grade, but you could find gold everywhere.

RM: How about the Montgomery-Shoshone—what do you know about it?

BR: It was very good, too. They made a lot of gold there. We never did. And the reason

we didn't was because when we first started on that . . . there was a kid by the name of Dick Steele and he had a half-brother named Don Terrell. They came out of Warren Springs somewhere; Dick Steele might be still alive; he lives in Fowler if he's still alive. And there was another kid by the name of Ward Manley—Wardy Manley. We decided to work the Shoshone, which had a huge A-frame. The buckets, the ore cars, everything was still there; the ore bin—the whole thing was intact. You had to climb these ladders to get out of there and they were all in pretty bad shape, but we were fairly safe. We'd tie ropes to the top so if the ladder did break, you could hold onto this rope. Actually you weren't using the ladder like this; you were going down with your feet on the ladder but your hands on the rope.

We were doing all right. We worked it a couple of weeks—and this would be, like, two days a week; we had to go to school. This one day we went out there—and we had these carbide lamps. And these carbide lamps, if you held them to a wall or something, you could write with them with the soot. We're down there—and people put their name on a rock. Well this dumb, damn Indian—his name was Tilford Landis; we called him Snipe. Anyway, Tilford Landis decides he is going to write his name on a timber. And he does. We're going on down the drift—pretty soon, here comes Tilford and he mentioned that he'd caught the board on fire and we just assumed the board would burn and that'd be the end of that.

Pretty soon we come down this shaft and a smaller drift and it went to kind of a glory hole over there; it came out the other side of the mountain. When we got to that spot we were a long ways down there with no ladder or anything. We noticed that there's this breeze coming down this drift and pretty soon the breeze is blowing harder and harder and harder, and pretty soon you could hear a roar—that whole mine was on fire. All the timbers. We started going back the way we came but we didn't get out. And it was just a roar. It turned into windstorm. When a fire is going it's like a chimney; it will start sucking air. So we ran

back the same way the wind was blowing, but then we saw this big roaring fire back there—and you could hear it because as the temperature burned up it was caving in back there.

One thing you've got to keep in mind—if you ever work underground you don't have little cave-ins. When it starts caving in, it loosens up something here and it loosens something there. So we ran all the way down this drift to the other side. Like I said, it was a drop-off there for quite a ways. The fire was just building; it was probably about as high as that ceiling in there—15, 20 feet. Dick Field jumped first; he dived. Nobody wanted to jump but there was nothing else you could do. We had to jump down in the hole and then climb out of the hole—straight down.

RM: Oh my God, and it was 20 feet?

BR: And not a one of us broke a bone. Of course, we were kids. We climbed up the other side, went and got in that old pickup. By this time there was smoke and fire . . . you could see the smoke and we knew we were in a lot of trouble. We're screwing around somebody else's mine where we're not supposed to be at all. In fact, my parents had absolutely forbidden me to go to a mine.

Of course, my parents knew that mines cave in and kids get in trouble and fall down shafts. A lot of times you'll be walking down a drift and there will be some boards there—underneath these boards are other shafts. Mines are very dangerous. My folks forbade me to go in one, but we did it anyway. Anyway, we all jumped out, we ran around, got to the other side of that mountain, got in that pickup, and got out of there before everybody showed up.

RM: So they never found out?

BR: Oh, they did after a while. But by that time, the heat was off. Maybe six months later, one of the kids leaked it or something.

RM: Did it pretty well clean the timber out of the Montgomery?

BR: There was nothing left—just a big glory hole. That shaft was maybe a thousand feet deep.

RM: And what level were you on?

BR: I think we were on the 400-foot level.

RM: And it probably just burned it on down too, didn't it?

BR: I imagine. There was no way of knowing because I never went back. There were no ladders there anymore, no way to go back. No telling how much of it caved in, you know.

RM: But they later open-pitted that, didn't they? So that is totally gone.

BR: Yes. When it was all over, you could drive a pickup down that hole and it would go a long ways down—that's how big that that hole was.

RM: So there were a lot of underground workings at the Montgomery-Shoshone.

BR: Yes, it was a big mine. They had a huge mill there. They had their own railroads go through there, a railroad spur, just for that mine.

RM: Where were they getting their water for the mill?

BR: That came from Beatty.

RM: Is Buck Springs much of a spring? That's where Rhyolite got its water.

BR: Not anymore. Back then, it was a good spring.

RM: Is that where they pumped it in from?

BR: Yes, Buck Springs. It was a good spring. BLM's just let it go to hell. It was always a wonderful spring and there were always chukars and some deer in there and what have you.

BLM just let all that go. I don't know why they do that; why not keep the spring open?

RM: What about some of the other mines in Rhyolite that you are familiar with?

BR: The Senator Stewart and the Shoshone-Montgomery are the only two really, really good ones.

RM: What about the Denver Group?

BR: The Denver was all right—they made money on it. Of course, they sold more stocks than they got out of it. But everybody would buy the gold stocks because some mines were doing really well. They made more money on the stocks than they ever did on the mine on the Denver.

RM: Did Rhyolite make more on stocks and promotion than on any ore they produced?

BR: Oh, I am sure. They only had three or four good mines. Bullfrog was excellent.

RM: Now, the Bullfrog was where Shorty Harris had originally found it—and that was on the other side of the hill, wasn't it?

BR: The original discovery, yes. It never was a good mine, but it was a hell of a pocket and the pocket outcropped. It was all around the surface.

RM: It came to surface? What do you think they took out of that pocket?

BR: I don't know if I ever heard. I've seen some of the ore; it was beautiful ore. It's kind of a green rock. Of course, Shorty Harris and Ed Cross didn't make anything off of it. I think they sold it for 100 bucks or something like that.

RM: And what was another good one?

BR: The Johnny was a good mine. They called it the Little Johnny.

RM: Where was it located?

BR: You go past Rhyolite, go past Bullfrog, turn right, and go up a canyon. Those guys were tough; I was always going to go up there and sample those mines, but it's too hard for me to climb up to the top. To pack equipment up there is tough. And then on the other side you have Pioneer and Mayflower. They were both good mines. They had a big one up there when I was a kid, too—Pioneer. There were some gyppos working up there. They had some compressors and what have you; I assume they were probably leasers.

RM: Were there any other good mines in the Rhyolite area that you spent time in?

BR: Those are the ones I had most of my experience in. We did a little work at the Bullfrog.

RM: How big were the workings there?

BR: It wasn't that much. They had a pocket and it was very rich ore.

RM: What do you think it ran?

BR: I am guessing it run six to eight ounces a ton.

RM: How big was the pocket?

BR: I don't know. The mine itself never was that big. You'd go underground. When we tried it we gave up on gold and started mining amethysts. We were making more money on amethysts than we were gold—the most beautiful amethyst I've ever seen.

RM: From the Bullfrog? Was it in any other mines, too?

BR: I don't know of any other. Down at the bottom of the Bullfrog they ran into clay—it's a red clay. When it rained, rainwater would run down that shaft and make it all the way to the bottom and soften that clay up. If you'd go down to the bottom and get some bars, you could pry big chunks of amethyst out, that big.

RM: Eighteen inches across?

BR: Yes. But they'd have crystals about that long.

RM: Six to eight inches?

BR: Absolutely beautiful purple crystals. The most beautiful amethyst I ever saw.

RM: That's down in the bottom of the shaft in the clay?

BR: At the bottom it drifts off in a couple of different places. We'd bring it up here and sell it. People usually put it on their doorsteps, but everybody would buy it from you. If I had it now it would be worth a fortune.

RM: What were you getting for it then?

BR: Oh, about that big, two feet, you'd get 20 bucks for it. Now I could get \$500 for that same rock. You'd see amethysts out there with crystals that long. They looked like something that should hang from a chandelier. They were just beautiful.

RM: Did you guys get it all?

BR: Oh hell, no.

RM: How deep is the shaft?

BR: Maybe 150, 200 feet. We just found it down there because that's where we were. We were looking for gold. We got in the mud and somebody probably kicked some mud off some of the amethysts.

RM: And that probably was unknown?

BR: Nobody cared about it. I am sure other people knew about it. You can see it on the side—you'd see where there would be a layer of clay and you could dig in there and see the amethyst.

RM: Do you have any of it today?

BR: No. Wish I did.

RM: Was it hard to get down the bottom of the shaft?

BR: No, it was a fairly good ladder. I think they've bulldozed that all in now; I don't think there is even a shaft there. They had a kid killed up here several years back. They had one of these cross-country races. There was a checkpoint up here and the guy working that checkpoint had a couple of daughters. They were out there playing and this kid dropped a toy down a shaft and it was kind of where it sloughed off. She tried to reach down and get that toy and fell down about 200 feet. And of course, the kid was dead. So Barrick went and covered all the claims that they had shafts on.

RM: So that amethyst is history.

BR: I would imagine so.

RM: Are those the only gemstones you know about in the area?

BR: Another good crystal that you see once in a while is a very, very rich borax—they call it colemanite. It comes out in crystals too; clear like glass. It's really pretty. It doesn't have that purple that amethyst has.

RM: What do you know about Chloride Cliff and Chloride City?

BR: My grandfather had some claims up there, Crowell had some, and Louie McRae had a couple. My grandfather always had a lot of bait there, but it never did pan out. Of course, he didn't go after it; he would grubstake guys to go work it. In fact, that was the first venture he had here, was getting into Chloride Cliff.

RM: That was gold, wasn't it? I noticed on a map, they've got Chloride Cliff and then they've got Chloride City. How big was the city, do you know?

BR: I don't think it was very big. There were a few houses there when I was a kid. There were several houses built in the banks, made out of rocks, I think they're probably all still there, but I think all the old wooden houses are gone; there were only about 10 of those.

RM: It wasn't that productive?

BR: I don't think it was. I never heard of anything really good coming out of there.

RM: In my mind there's a kind of a distinction—you've got guys like Shorty Harris who were prospectors and they basically didn't dig, they just went out and looked. And then there are people like you, who go out and look, but then they dig where they find. Not necessarily to develop a big mine or anything, but to recover the gold.

BR: Gold is an addiction. I think it's worse than alcohol, worse than drugs. People that get to looking for gold never stop. It's something you get in your head. There's something about

the feel of gold, too. It's heavy, it's beautiful. But it's an addiction. It's terrible. When I was a kid, guys would go and take some terrible jobs, go work on fishing boats or a drill rig or something, just to get enough money to come back here and look for gold. I've seen it break up families, just like drugs do, just like alcohol does. They spend every penny they've got, sell their car. Gold is a terrible thing. I imagine people do the same thing over diamonds or anything that is precious.

RM: Are there different types of prospectors? There is the Shorty Harris-type prospector and maybe guys like him, but there is another kind of prospector . . . you're a prospector, but you're not like Shorty Harris because you don't stake the claim and try to sell it or get drunk or whatever. You're looking, but then you actually recover something.

BR: Right. I want something out of it. Maybe this afternoon I'll take you to my house and show you some of the nuggets I've found. I've found some beautiful stuff.

RM: I'd love to see that. And you found it all yourself, just out looking?

BR: Everything I've got there, I found. There's not a lot, but I've got it in a frame.

RM: If somebody told you you could only go to one of the places where you've found gold, which one would you choose?

BR: Yellow Gold. I think it probably has more potential than any mine in the country. I think it has as much potential as any of these mines up north.

RM: Like Round Mountain? You think it's in that category?

BR: I do. I think with some development . . . of course, I've never drilled it or anything, but I've seen more gold there than I've seen anywhere else.

RM: And it's so damn pretty.

BR: I've got a nugget that I found in the washes with my uncle. It's flat, but it's that big around.

RM: It's three or four inches across?

BR: It's huge. Most of the nuggets came out of a wash up there. These mines are mining microscopic gold, Round Mountain included. Once in a while they get some high-grade, but basically their job is mining microscopic gold. So when you find nuggets, even as big as your thumb, you've really found something; and there are not that many of them around. I have people come in here and they say, "I am a miner. I do real well." And they've got this little bottle with some grains in it; maybe it's got a quarter of an ounce. Or else they want to bring a rock in here and say, "I've got a good spot."

I get a glass out of the cabinet and I say, "I don't see a thing." Well the first thing this guy wants to do is spit on it. Because if the rock is wet you see it a little easier. As soon as they start that spitting, get out of here. Leave me alone.

RM: Right. Yes, you said that was what grandfather did.

BR: Yes, my grandfather called them spitters. When a guy starts wanting to dip that rock in water to see gold in it, get rid of him.

RM: Did you ever do any prospecting up on Stonewall Mountain?

BR: Yes, I did.

RM: Is there anything up there?

BR: Really nice turquoise. There's some diggings around on the side, I don't really know what they were after. I never really prospected them that much; I was looking for the turquoise. I never did find a vein, but there's a big deposit up there somewhere because there is too much of it not to be.

RM: Is it real blue or green?

BR: Well, there's some varasite to it. I call it green varasite, but turquoise—the blue stuff—yes, there's a lot of it.

RM: Is it high up?

BR: It's small. It's all washed down this one great big wash.

RM: But you never found it in place?

BR: No, I never did. Years later, when I was working at the Test Site, we went up to Tolicha Peak and built some roads back behind Stonewall. In fact, the road now connects all the way to Tonopah Test Range and in fact, most of it's paved. Anyway, when we were working on those roads back there and I was on the backside of Stonewall, I could see these diggings up there and I always wondered if that was turquoise.

CHAPTER EIGHT

RM: Now, you were a county commissioner here for how many years?

BR: Fourteen years. The commission was quite an experience for me; I enjoyed it. I got into it when I was very young and I could see a lot of things I thought should be changed. I thought some of the guys in there had been there too long; and I still think that. I have theory on politics. I think generally, it should be two terms.

RM: You're for term limits.

BR: Yes. And then they should get out. I was in there three because in the first term, you really don't do whole lot. The second term, you've been there long enough, you've got some experience, you can implement your programs and do what you want to get done. The third time I ran, it was in the middle of the MX missile . . . there were a lot of things happening at that time. After my third term, I retired. Then I got forced into another two years to fill a vacancy and I really didn't want to. I filled the vacancy for Copeland, who died; he was from Amargosa and he died in the middle of his term.

People get stagnant; they do. If you have only so many years to finish what you think should be done, pretty soon, you start battling. Then you get young people in there who have some different ideas and try them. I believe that these people who stay in office too long are wasting the taxpayers' money.

RM: What are you most proud of from your commissioner years?

BR: We did a lot of good with this county. When I got in there it was broke, absolutely flat broke.

RM: What year did you go in?

BR: In '79. We put Nye County back in the twentieth century. They didn't have computer

systems; they didn't deal with the federal government at all. Now all that's changed. We did a lot of good when we were there. I worked with some wonderful people. Andy Eason was wonderful, Don Barnett was a great guy. Bob Ruud was another one of them. These are people who were self-sacrificing; they weren't in there for any personal gain. And that's wonderful. When you have a board like that, it's great. I didn't need anything out of it; I had a good business, I was doing well. Bob had a good business; he was doing well. Andy was retired, he was pretty well set. So it was people who weren't looking to be big shots in the county or anything; they did it as a service.

RM: What was your biggest frustration as a commissioner?

BR: The federal government, probably. The air force, the BLM—I spent most of my time fighting them. Dick Carver took on the Forest Service when I got out.

You never please everybody and if you want to run again, all you can do is hope you please . . . because it all changes. You'll have this crowd over here mad as hell at you today and this other crowd loves you. Next week, it's just the opposite. So you just hope on election day, you get 50 percent plus one vote because you've got half the crowd pissed off the whole time.

The cathouses were always a pain. There were people in Pahrump who wanted to close down the brothels. Andy Eason, Don Barnett, and myself were on the board; and this went on for about six months. Finally somebody decided we ought to just bring it to a vote to close them down or leave them open. "You guys make up your mind what you want to do; let us know what you want to do too. Vote on it. We want to hear what you have to say." I had some friends in the brothel business (Bill Martin, for one, who wound up getting murdered. He was involved in that brothel war thing). Joe Richards was always a friend of mine. And they didn't want to close their places down. Andy Eason had just about all the talk about

brothels he could stand. He said, “You know, I have been going through this for 20 years now, I can’t stand this. I think we ought to close them down.”

I said, “I think we ought to leave them open.” The people I lived around, people in Beatty, in Tonopah . . . and I knew Bobbie Duncan and everybody liked her. The only people we had who really wanted to close them down were from Pahrump. So the day comes for this vote and Pahrump sends two Greyhound buses up to Tonopah full of people. We’re in this courthouse up on the hill in a little room not any bigger than that tire shop in there, the old commissioners’ room. We’re trying to squeeze 300 people in there and it’s not going to work.

Bill Beko was a district judge at that time and he comes downstairs and he can’t even get to the door to get out because there are so many people in the hallway and everywhere else. Beko comes in and says, “I’ve got a suggestion—why don’t you use my courtroom up there?” His courtroom was much bigger than our little place. So we took a break and said, “Okay, after lunch we’re going to have this vote in the courtroom upstairs.” There’s two tables where the lawyers sit and behind that is the judge’s bench and off to the other side is the jury bench and right where these tables are there’s a wooden fence that goes clear across the room. And behind that is where the audience sat.

This place is absolutely packed—every seat is full. They’re standing around the walls, in the door, in the hall, in the aisle ways—there are just people everywhere. Andy Eason and I and Don Barnett are sitting up there. You’ve got to keep in mind that this building is built out of stones that are two feet thick. It’s solid stone. Andy Eason said, “I make a motion we close the brothel.” We sit there—long, long silence, maybe two minutes. Which is a long time. You could hear a pin drop in there. The motion died for lack of a second.

So I said, “Well, I’ll make a motion we keep them open.” Another long silence.

Finally Barnett says, “I’ll second it.” Put it for a vote: I voted yes, Don voted yes, Andy voted no.

This whole crowd just stood up, all of them, a couple hundred people, and they started moving towards us. I look over at Don Barnett and he came out of Oklahoma—he talked real slow—and he is going like this, turning around.

And I said, “Don, if you’re looking for a door back there, there’s not one.”

Don said, “Well, Bob, where do you reckon they’d like to have one?” I could just see him running right through that wall.

RM: Bobby, what stands out in your mind about growing up in Beatty? And I think you also told me you lived in Pahrump for a time.

BR: I was born in Tonopah; there was no doctor here, but my family lived here. There’s not a whole lot to tell about my childhood. There weren’t very many kids. We had a very simple childhood, no TV or anything like that. A kid’s life was very simple in those days. You made slingshots and shot at birds and climbed trees and mountains. We didn’t have video games or anything like that. You played marbles or you played baseball; it was very simple compared to what children have nowadays. We had very few toys. We would usually get one toy at Christmastime and then we would get clothes for Christmas presents. That’s what all the other kids got, too.

RM: What kind of a toy would you get at Christmas?

BR: The one I think of the most is an electric train. It was really cool. My dad had set it up on the table in the living room. When I got up the train was going round this track. All of the kids in town came and saw this train and it was a big deal. And you took very good care of your toys. Now I see toys all out in the yards; kids throw them in the street and what have you. We were grateful to get them because, like I say, you only got probably one toy at

Christmastime and you put it away. We had a little special place for the train and everything went in its place and it was all put away when you were done using it. Nowadays, children take much of this for granted, I think.

RM: Was a kid pretty much on his own without a lot of supervision?

BR: Yes, the kids were on their own, but you lived a town where everybody knew everybody and if you went down the street and Mrs. Weeks saw you doing something wrong, she'd like about whoop your ass and she would tell your mother. So kids didn't get in trouble too much because they were seen by all the other mothers in town.

And in school if you got out of line, they whooped your butt. Nowadays, they don't dare touch you. I saw in the paper—I guess I saw it on the computer, I read the news on the computer in the morning—in a preschool in Texas this little boy had done well on his assignment so the teacher went over and hugged him and told him he did a good job and they fired her for it because she touched this little kid. I think that's terrible. You should be able to hug a kid if he does a good job; you should be able to bust his butt if he doesn't—or get a swat. But those days are over. It's either child abuse or sexual abuse. In the cities, maybe that is necessary; in the little town of Beatty, I don't think it is. I don't understand the big city myself; I wouldn't live there. You need different rules.

RM: What was the life of a teenager like in Beatty?

BR: It was a wonderful time, but I wouldn't go back to being 19 or 20 again to save my life.

RM: Why?

BR: It was kind of a bad transition time. You're in between being a boy and an adult. I had gotten married young; got married when I was 18.

RM: Did you marry a local girl?

BR: She had been here for a couple of years. She came out of Alabama; her folks moved out here. We got married young and I had worked all my life, I started washing dishes when I was nine years old at a restaurant down here and I worked at my grandfather's store and I worked at the service station. I always had two or three jobs going and always had a pocketful of money. But when you get married, that all goes away; you have to rent houses and pay car bills and water bills; it was a difficult time for me. I went to work at the Test Site shortly after I got married.

Right after I went to work there, my wife got pregnant. And it was fine, we had an old '46 Ford coupe and we had a trailer we were making payments on, buying. Then they decided they were going to stop shooting above-ground shots and what have you and they basically closed the Test Site down for a period. Then I was out of work, so I went to work for the mines. I worked at Crowell's mine to start with, at the fluorspar up here.

RM: Did that mine have a lot of workings underground?

BR: It was all underground. It had drifts and shafts everywhere. It was just honeycombed under there. I went to work at the mine, which didn't pay enough to live on, really; below minimum wage. I don't know if there was a minimum wage in those days.

RM: What year did you start at the Test Site, do you remember?

BR: I went to work for my dad out there in '58 or '59.

RM: I'll be damned; that's when I worked at the Test Site. I started at the Test Site when they started the underground. E tunnel probably wasn't in more than 250 feet when I started.

BR: Is that right? Anyway, I went to work at the mine here and of course, you start out and they tell you, "We're only going to pay you a buck and half an hour, two bucks. If you want to work, fine; if you didn't, fine." They didn't care; they knew somebody else would come and take the job.

RM: What were you doing underground? Just a general miner?

BR: Yes. Trapping ore and. . . .

RM: Drilling and blasting. Was it hand mucking?

BR: Most of it was hand mucking, you'd shoot your shot and it came out on a slip-sheet.

RM: And you had to muck that up?

BR: Yes, with an ore car.

RM: That's hard work.

BR: In some places where they had real good ore, they'd use the slusher. That was very easy. Most of it was hand mucking, hand tramming.

RM: Was the ore in veins or big bodies or pockets or. . . ?

BR: There was a lot of real big stuff. When they had some real rich ore, they'd follow a vein for a while. We followed a vein probably 200 feet, and then it pinched out. So we abandoned that drift and went to work somewhere else and for some reason, somebody went down that drift; I don't know what the reason was. The drift had quit. It had caved in as long as nobody would be around and opened up a huge ore body. We had a stope that was as big as that shop up there, 250 by 100 feet.

I went back to work at the Test Site and the tunnels were opened up by then. They'd brought some drill rigs in to start shooting underground and later on, Kennedy shut it down again. He stopped all nuclear testing out there and that went on for a while. Then they opened it up again and went back to underground testing. I worked there a total, for REECo, of 20 years—20 years and 11 days.

RM: It was a real boon to the Beatty economy, wasn't it?

BR: Yes, there were a lot of people who came there just for the Test Site.

RM: Were you working days or were you working shifts?

BR: I worked days for most of the time, five days a week. They closed down there and I was working in one mine so the drilling department had some openings and I went to work for drilling, which was a pretty good job because we would report to Mercury. You had buses at Mercury and the Teamsters would drive the bus up onto the mesa where the drill rig was. So you got about three hours overtime every day. If you just worked an eight-hour shift, you still got an extra three hours—you were making overtime when nobody else was.

I worked there for a while, but it was shift work. You'd work two weeks days, two weeks nights, two weeks swing shift. It was tough. There is a lot of snow up on the mesa; it snowed all the time up there in the wintertime. And I never could get used to sleeping . . . when you worked the night shift, you never get used to it. I tried everything. I tried putting tinfoil on the windows and what have you. But the daytime it is entirely different than the night. You can have it coal dark in there, but in the daytime kids are running up and down the street hollering and there are cars running up and down the street; at night, that is down to a minimum. You didn't have all that noise. And, of course, we lived in a little old trailer that didn't have much insulation and that didn't help much. I didn't last too long at drilling.

RM: You were actually drilling or you were driving?

BR: I was driving the bus and of course, when you got the job, you drove the water truck or you went down to the warehouse and got parts—you were driving all day long.

RM: Did any of those roads get treacherous with the snow?

BR: We were way up on that mountain and it was very steep, and of course it got treacherous. It was bad all the time in the winter when it snowed.

RM: Who were some of the people you worked with?

BR: My boss was pretty much Flangas. And then the guy who was the truck drivers' boss, his name was Jackson. Of course, the real boss, your immediate boss, was whoever was the

driller on that rig.

RM: Did you rotate shifts with the drill crew so you always had the same drill crew?

BR: Pretty much all the time. And I was getting to think I was pretty important. I was a good truck driver. To show you how important I was, I went out there one day and this guy, a driller, told me, “Bob, take two days off and come in on morning tour.” Morning tour is like graveyard shift; drillers have different language. You have morning tour, evening tour, and day tour. “You come in on morning tour,” and that means it’s midnight. They didn’t have a stove there and it was cold. It was in the daytime and I could see just how cold it was going to be when I come back in two days with that snow—it snowed more at night than it did in the daytime and it was colder. This driller’s name was Mack. I thought I’d push my weight a little bit. I went over and pouted by my truck for about an hour. And I went in and I said, “Hey, Mack, how long do you figure it would take to replace me?” I thought I was going to put him in a bind.

He said, “Well, Bob, probably 15 minutes.” [Laughter] Sometimes you’re not as important as you think you are. My dad used to say when you think you’re a man of some importance, try bossing somebody else’s dog around. Anyway, I worked for drilling for a while and then I went to work for construction; Don McLassen was my teacher.

By that time I knew every aspect of the Test Site, knew everything about it, and I had a very secure job. I stayed longer than I wanted to, I started buying this little service station from my dad down; I’d been buying it for about two years. He’d been after me to take that over and I was getting tired of the Test Site. I was having some problems with the NAACP and I quit when I saw, on my union card, that I had my 20 years in, as I told you earlier. I came back and took over the station and I never did go back.

RM: Did you ever get out to Area 51?

BR: I worked there quite a bit.

RM: What do you think of those alien stories at Area 51?

BR: I don't think there's anything to them, really. It was a very secret place. You had to have a high clearance.

RM: Which you had?

BR: I had; there was some very secret stuff there. They tested the U2 there, which was the best-kept secret in the world for many years in '72 or '71. It was the fastest-flying plane ever; it was called the Blackbird.

RM: Did they fly them at night so that people couldn't see them?

BR: Most of the time, yes. And no matter how high a clearance you had . . . you could have a Q clearance, which is top clearance—if you didn't have a need to know, you weren't included. I worked at the Tonopah Test Site for quite some time, too—three or four years.

RM: How did you get out to Area 51? Did a bus take you out or did you drive the bus out?

BR: Well, we'd drive the bus too, but you could commute all the way out there. The main gate is about three miles from the Test Site. You'd go through the Lathrop Wells gate over the hill and then across Yucca Flats into Area 51.

RM: And then how did you get up to the Tonopah Test Range? Did you go up 95?

BR: Yes, and I'd stay up there. I'd go up on Monday and work Monday and Tuesday, come home Wednesday, go back Thursday morning, work Thursday and Friday, and come back to Beatty. Same with Area 51—I stayed out there a lot.

RM: How did you like staying up there?

BR: I never did like staying away from home; I had children and what have you. That's the reason I got away from both of those. Tonopah wasn't so bad; I stayed there about three or four years, but I moved my family to Tonopah, too.

RM: Were they working a lot of people at Area 51 when you were there?

BR: There were a lot of people, but most of them were flown in every day. They had great big planes they flew people in with. All the scientists and what have you would be flown in. A lot of them were out of California, from Lawrence Livermore Laboratory. They had one plane that would stop at Vegas and pick up a bunch of people; that plane would make two trips. It stopped there early in the morning to pick up some people, then it would come back to Vegas and pick up another load and fly them out.

RM: How did you feel after you quit the Test Site on basically an impulse?

BR: It was a government job and I never did like working out there. But as I look back, it bought my home, it raised my children, I drove a nice car the whole time. If I look back, it never was bad. I could carpool if I wanted to and a lot of times I'd quit carpools because I'd like to be by myself for a couple of months. I enjoyed the drive and having my own time in the morning and the evenings.

But the longer I stayed, the worse it got. There was just so much waste and if you didn't want to work you were a union man so it was hard to get rid of you. You could drag it out all day if you wanted to, and a lot of people did. So the rest of us were carrying all these guys that are sloughing. It really didn't make a difference how hard you worked, you were a number. You weren't a good employee or a bad employee, you were a number.

RM: And there was no chance for advancement or anything?

BR: After a few years, I got as high as I could go. I was a general foreman over the Teamsters and over my whole crew. To go any higher you'd have had to quit the union and go into supervision, which I had many chances to do, but I had all this time built up in the Teamsters and I pretty well couldn't quit that and lose my retirement. They didn't have 401ks in those days and that sort of thing. The only thing you had was your retirement in your old

age, and Social Security. After you get, like, 10 or 12 years in, it's pretty hard to throw all that away because when you've quit, you lost it.

RM: You lost the pension? My dad worked out there for 19 years or something as a miner and he got a pension out of the union and Social Security. He was in the Laborers' Union.

BR: The Laborers' Union was much different. You could quit the Laborers' Union, go to work at another union, and start drawing your pension after, I think, 10 years.

RM: Did you ever run into a guy named Sailor Ryan, who was head of the Laborers' Union?

BR: Oh, I knew Sailor Ryan. He was a very powerful man in Vegas. I met him many times. He was always very nice to me.

RM: One time my dad and I were working on a job up on the Tonopah Test Range. It was December and I was pouring cement and an out-of-state company had the contract, and they didn't know how to treat workers. We were working sunrise to sunset and this white-haired guy would come up and say, "You sons of bitches better get to work or there's going to be some new faces around here tomorrow," and things like that. One day I took the day off and called the union in Vegas and—seriously, Bobby—Sailor Ryan flew up there the next day, came out on the job, and went around and talked to some of the men, including me, asking, "Did you make that phone call?"

He went to the super and said, "I want that old white-haired son of a bitch off this job by noon or I am shutting this fucking project down." [Laughs] And they made my dad the shifter. The old white-haired guy was the shifter and they got rid of him, right on the spot.

I'd heard some bad things about Ryan—some graft or something—but you could never convince me that Ryan was a bad guy because of that one incident.

BR: He was always nice to me. And of course, I liked Jimmy Hoffa; I made more money

under Hoffa in the Teamsters Union than I ever did again. He'd fight for his people. I don't know if he was a gangster or not, but in the Teamsters Union, we were all making good money. As soon as they got rid of him everything went downhill.

RM: That's right. It was part of the breaking of the unions in America.

BR: People used to say what a bad guy he was, but as far as I am concerned, he raised my family; I have nothing bad to say about him.

RM: I never would have made it through college if it hadn't been for the Test Site. I had that one job there that summer and my dad worked there all those years and he'd send me money and things like that. He lived, for his whole career at the Test Site, in the camp out at Area 12; that was his home.

BR: I lived at Area 12 quite a while, too. It would get snowed in; it got a lot of snow in the wintertime. It was up pretty high, right below those tunnels.

RM: Did they keep the roads pretty clear?

BR: At Area 12, yes.

RM: And up on the mesa when they were drilling?

BR: Not up on the mesa, they didn't. They took care of the roads, kind of. But 12 was a pretty good-sized camp. It had a nice cafeteria and a movie theatre and a bowling alley. The rec hall wasn't all that great, but it had some pool tables and TV rooms and that sort of thing. Area 12 was a pretty good-sized camp.

RM: Then you came back here. . . .

BR: I came back here and took over that little station I'd been buying for the last couple of years—I'd made a down payment on it and I'd made monthly payments, but my dad would run it and he, at that time, was fairly well and he didn't like being around the house all day anyway. So he just went ahead and ran it and I never took any money out of it during that

time. Whatever he made, he made. On the other hand, he bought his own gas and it was just like it was still his until the time I wanted to take it over. And then when I quit at the Test Site, I took it over and he still came down every day. We played cribbage all day long and sold gas.

RM: I remember stopping there when you and your dad were there. Are there any stories you would like to tell about your dad or his brothers?

BR: My dad was a great man; he was a great father—the most wonderful man I ever knew in my whole life. He and I were very close. I was much closer to my dad than I ever was my mother. We both slept outside year round. Like I told you, we woke up 4:00 every morning and went to my grandmother's house and had coffee. She'd make these little cinnamon cakes once in a while; there was always a little breakfast there. He'd go to work at 4:00 and I'd go over to the old service station and if he didn't go out on a truck, we'd hang out together until it was time for me to go to school.

We were very, very close. When he got sick, I had a family and a home here but I went down and got an apartment in Vegas not very far from the hospital and I'd go over there every day for four months and I'd come home every couple of weeks.

RM: You told me once that he would tell stories. Do you remember any of the stories he told that would stand out in your mind?

BR: You already have most of them. Most of the stories were about when he was young and about his father and when he grew up in the lumber camps and mining towns. My grandfather had lumberyards in Goldfield and Tonopah. My father was a little baby, but he was in Goldfield when the Nelson-Ganz fight was held.

My grandmother and her mother and my dad's two brothers and his sister all lived in San Francisco. When the quake hit, my grandfather was in Nevada selling lumber to the

mining camps. And after the quake, my grandfather moved his family—first to Petaluma, but they were not there too long, and then to Oakland; I think that lasted about a year and half, two years—and then he moved them to Nevada.

RM: Your grandfather owned that mill, didn't he?

BR: He did. He had box factories; he had quite an operation. Like I told you before, he came over here as an indentured servant and when it was all over he'd bought the lumber company. He had six locomotives in the logging business.

RM: Where was his operation, exactly, from Reno?

BR: His main operation was at Verdi. They did a lot of logging. I've never been there but there's one place, Long Valley, that my dad liked very much; I think it's in California. They had three sawmills and they had a big roundhouse for their locomotives in the wintertime. They couldn't log in the winter.

RM: And the fires and then the Depression that took him out?

BR: The fires were the worst thing—that was in 1918. And the bank failed and of course the Depression was a vital thing. He lost a lot of money in the stock market, I think.

RM: You mean 1918 or 1929?

BR: Well, the first thing was during World War I.

RM: But he survived?

BR: He survived that; and there was a bank failure along about that time, too. He lost all the money then and then, of course, the Depression was the last of it.

RM: Do you have any recollections of Sheriff Bill Thomas?

BR: Not that much. He is a good friend of my Uncle Bob's; he talks about him a lot.

RM: I once told Ed Slavin that I'd like to write a book on Bill Thomas. To me, he's one of the last of the frontier sheriffs. And Ed said, "I think you're a little too late." I was sorry

about that.

How about Bill Beko—did you know him very well?

BR: Bill Beko was very good to me. My wife and I had three children of our own, but we adopted two and Bill Beko took care of both of those adoptions, made sure they happened. He was very good to me that way. He never charged me a penny. He knew the people to see, the welfare people who did the investigation and what have you. Beko took care of all of that for me, spent a lot of time on it, and never charged me a penny. You know, adoptions are expensive and they can be drawn out for years and years and years. Both of my adoptions took less than a year. Bill Beko opened a lot of doors for me. I've got a lot of respect for him.

RM: Do you remember any interesting stories that might show what kind of guy he was, or the times?

BR: No, I don't. Again, my Uncle Bob and he were very close. I didn't really do any business with Beko until I became county commissioner. Then I depended on him a lot, of course—he did know the law. You could ask him for advice and 99.9 percent of the time, he was right. We'd have district attorneys who would give some advice and Beko would say that's bullshit and 99 percent of the time, he was right. And if it wasn't right he could make it right—he knew the people around the state who would make it right.

RM: He basically ran the county for a long time, didn't he?

BR: He was the godfather of the county.

RM: I remember a story I think my dad heard—Beko was talking to this guy one time about a third person who was basically an S.O.B. Beko told him, "If you ever kill that son of a bitch, make sure you do it in Nye County." [Laughter]

BR: Everybody was scared of Beko and rightly so because he was the godfather of Nye County. I don't care if you were President Bush—if you wanted to open a cathouse in this

county, Beko would say, “Yes, you can.” Or, “No, you can’t.” That’s who he was.

RM: And he would say no to some people?

BR: Yes. And the guy would say, “Well, I’m going to file all of these papers anyway.”

Well, go ahead; you’ll never get a license. He had that much authority. I never saw any of that come my way when I was in office, but I know most of the old county commissioners didn’t do a thing if Beko said not to. And at that time, he was the district attorney. In fact, they used to call this Beko County.

The only case I know that Beko lost was the burning down of the Chicken Ranch.

RM: Oh really? And who burned it down?

BR: Oh, it was quite involved. Bill Martin had it burned down and people spent hard time over it. Glen Henderson, who had been a cop here for many years, had pulled his deputies out—he had the Pahrump cops in Ash Meadows so they couldn’t get to the Chicken Ranch when it was burning down. This guy named Plankinton, who was really an ass, had enough guts to go up against Beko and he beat him.

RM: Was he an attorney?

BR: He was a pimp. He owned the Chicken Ranch. And he came in and said he wanted a license and Beko said no. Well, he opened up anyway. So then Plankinton was drawing all of this business out of Vegas that used to go to Bill Martin at Lathrop Wells and they did everything they could to shut it down.

They kept getting court orders and stays and one thing or another and finally decided to burn him out. And Martin burned him out. Kolojay, who was Bill Martin’s right-hand man, and a couple of other guys went and actually did the burning. They actually had Molotov cocktails—they just opened the doors and started throwing them. It was a place full of girls, you know. Girls were climbing out windows, getting cut by glass and doing anything

they could to get out of there; the whole thing was an inferno.

And Glen Henderson, who was a top deputy, went to prison; Kolojay went to prison. All of them went to federal prisons. It was like going to a Howard Johnson's—pretty nice. Glen Henderson would have spent a lot of time there, but he got cancer and they let him out about a month before he died. And Plankinton had Bill Martin assassinated. It was as simple as that.

They burned it down because this guy had fought Beko all the way and because he was stealing business from Bill Martin. Bill Martin had a cathouse at Lathrop Wells; he didn't have any cathouses at Pahrump. This guy built one in Pahrump, where the Las Vegas traffic come out over 150—a lot closer. And he called it the Chicken Ranch, which is a famous cathouse in Texas. It was the most famous cathouse in the whole world. He had a lot more girls working than Bill did and Bill didn't want the competition.

RM: Why did Beko say no?

BR: I don't have any idea.

RM: Maybe it was because Pahrump didn't want them—you told me that story.

BR: No, this is before that. You just have to use your imagination on that one.

CHAPTER NINE

RM: How long did you live in Pahrump as a kid?

BR: About a year. The Test Site was just opening up; it was 1951. I was in first grade, I think. There were just a few white kids—my sister and I and a couple of other kids.

RM: Was Button Ford one of them?

BR: Yes. And we had an old house, a pretty good-sized house. My dad built most of it out of ties off the railroad. He got the ties himself and hauled them all down there. There are still houses here built out of railroad ties. It had a wood stove but it didn't have a bathroom and it didn't have any wooden floors except we did have a plywood floor in the kitchen.

RM: Why did your dad move to Pahrump? Was he was setting up his oil business down there?

BR: Yes; it's so much closer to Mercury. He put some big tanks in Mercury so he'd have his own bulk plant there, but he couldn't take his family there. So we moved to Pahrump, which was much closer.

RM: And then why did you leave Pahrump?

BR: At that time we had bulk plants, as I say, in Mercury, and he had these little small trucks. There were some farms in Pahrump and he would deliver fuel to them. There was a guy by the name of Bill something—I can't remember the last name. He talked my dad into letting him run that part of it for him, and at that time my dad decided to buy his own big fuel trucks, big tankers, and run them out of California, which he did. So he had two 10,000 gallon trucks and two drivers who hauled fuel out in California. He also used Calitanzona—they were another trucking outfit over there. They are long out of business now. Anyway, he would haul fuel out of California straight to the Test Site or straight to Beatty so all he had to

do was come down; he ran everything from here.

RM: So it just kind of became unnecessary to be located in Pahrump. Is that house still there?

BR: Yes.

RM: Where is it located from Pop Buol's store?

BR: It's on the right side of the street. There is a little middle school right there. Pop Buol was down the street from us. We had 40 acres there and a big eight-inch pipe well for water, and a uni pump. If you needed water, you'd just turn it on and it'd shoot from here to that wall. There was a lot of water.

RM: Which way from Pop Buol's store was it, west?

BR: Straight down the street. It's still there. It's got siding on it—it's a two-story house. A guy by the name of Bledsoe owns it now. He owns that big trailer park up there, too, and they move trailers, mobile homes. I'm sure if you ever stopped by he'd be glad to show it to you. I stop by and visit him once in a while, take a look at the old place.

RM: Did your dad and his brothers have the concession for the Test Site or were there other people supplying fuel to them?

BR: No, they had it all.

RM: How long did they have that?

BR: When I was 18 years old, I was out there. They had a lot of barracks and all these Quonset huts; most of the officers had Quonset huts. They heated all the housing out there with stove oil. So in the wintertime, on Saturday and Sunday I'd be out there filling all those barrels with stove oil; they had barrels on each one. Yes, he had it all; had all the equipment. He did all the fuel out there at that time.

The prime contractor out there was Reynolds Electric, REECo, and REECo decided

to do their own fueling so they put in their own bulk plants and their own fuel trucks.

RM: So when I was working there in '58, the fuel that we were using was being supplied by your dad? That's cool. Did you go through Mercury when you were delivering fuel?

BR: Yes. Do you know where Gate 200 is?

RM: I don't remember that—it's been so long. But I remember a gate.

BR: You went through a main gate down at the bottom and then up over a hill down into Frenchman Flats. Going up that hill, there's a gate and a guard shack. Right below that guard shack there's a fuel depot—that was my dad's.

RM: There were quite a few people living at Mercury at that time, weren't there?

BR: Oh, a lot of people. And there were a lot of people at Desert Rock; Desert Rock was a big place. It's gone now, but it was a regular city down there. Of course, it wasn't for civilians, it was GIs. They had tanks and Jeeps and all kinds of stuff down there. I think the tanks were just for show. They probably wound up out there on Frenchman Flats.

RM: How do you look back on that era—the whole Test Site and everything?

BR: I think it's the reason the United States is the major power that it is now. It gave them a place to test atomic bombs. They didn't understand too much about them and they made a lot of mistakes. Of course, they had them before the Russians did but the Russians were catching up awful fast at that time. If the United States hadn't been out there testing nuclear weapons above ground, Russia would probably be the big power right now. I believe that.

RM: I do, too. Was watching them go off a pretty big thing here in Beatty?

BR: Yes, it was great.

RM: Where did you go? I know they used to announce them ahead of time.

BR: If you really wanted to watch one, you'd go up on a hill; we always knew when the big ones were coming. Like I said, my father and I slept on the porch and they'd shoot some

of them off at, like, 3:00 in the morning. You've never seen anything that bright in your life—it was brighter than daylight on the brightest day of the year. Maybe it was just because your eyes were used to the dark and your pupils didn't react fast enough, but the houses around would just be a blur, it would be so bright.

I watched several of them during the daytime from CP Hill, which was the command center at Mercury. Of course those were daytime shots. They were really neat even in the daytime, because they had bleachers up there and they would stop traffic. If you had to work out in the forward area, they'd stop you until they shot the shot and you'd go on in later in the day or whatever. Maybe the shot would be scheduled for 4:00 in the morning—you didn't get there till 8:00 but it had been postponed several hours and they would go ahead and shoot it as soon as the weather cleared up or whatever the problem was. You would see this tower and then you'd see, like, a ball, like a baseball—it would be solid red. As soon as you saw that, all hell would break loose. You could just see the dust start blowing up and then this huge bright flash. And all that happened maybe in a second and a half. It happened really quick when they pushed the button, but the first thing I saw was that red ball.

RM: I was never that close to them. We used to watch them from Reveille Valley and we could see them pretty well.

BR: You'd be within three or four miles over there. If the wind was blowing the wrong direction, they'd send you home. But I guess they figured they could sacrifice a few Mormons, because if the wind was blowing towards Utah they'd go ahead and shoot it. And they did some bad things. That Fallini bunch up there, I don't know how much radiation they took. Joe Fallini is a little bit older than I am, but the hair fell out of all his cows. One time I went to his house and Joe's kids were small then. They had this real pretty girl, but one whole side of her face had this huge birthmark on it. I don't know if it had anything to do

with radiation, but I always felt it did.

RM: I talked to Helen Fallini and she talked about the Bardoli boy, who died of leukemia, and she blamed the testing.

BR: That's right. He was up on there on the mountain.

RM: The problem with that theory is that OK Reed of the United Cattle and Packing Company back in the '20s and '30s—his little boy died of leukemia out there. So you can't blame that on the Test Site.

BR: I know the Bardolis always did blame the Test Site for that and we'll never know. But I've seen it many, many times. Even underground shots—they'd wait until the wind would be blowing that way, northeast. I was there when that Area 15 shaft blew out. Same thing—it went right straight up. I had some friends over there in Utah that had a bunch of sheep, and a whole bunch of them died a couple days after one of those shots. I mean a whole bunch, not just four or three.

RM: There was definitely a lot of radiation going out of there.

BR: Of course, some of it, they measured as far away as England. It'd go up and get one of those air currents. . . .

RM: In the summer of, I think it was '57, out in Reveille, the sagebrush was hot. These guys would come out there with their Geiger counters and scintillators and say, "My God, this is a uranium area," and they thought they'd found the big bonanza. But the sagebrush was hot just from fallout.

BR: Yes; they had some really nasty bombs. There's ground out there at the Test Site that nobody's going to step on for another 10,000 years. They just went out through there and dug trenches and dumped it all in there. It's still out there; it's really hot. We used to wear these little dosimeters—we'd be way out on the edge of this where they'd fuel these generators and

they had all these air samplers out there. We'd suit up. . . .

RM: Oh, you'd have to suit up?

BR: Tape your hands and all that stuff. Your dosimeter would be inside your shirt pocket and when you'd come out of there it would be pegged. That happened every time. Not once, not twice—every time you went out there. Then pretty soon they'd say, "Okay, you guys are all done. You can't go out there anymore." They'd put another crew out there.

RM: Did you worry about it?

BR: I really didn't at the time. I certainly wouldn't want my children doing what I did. And I am a firm believer that different people have different tolerances, too.

RM: Absolutely. They asked us to wear the dosimeter badges out at Reville for two or three years but we kind of thought it was a big joke. I slept outdoors and I just left mine pinned to my bed.

BR: The dosimeters I'm talking about were a little pin—you looked down through them and you could see a chart in there.

RM: Ours was a film badge.

BR: Everybody had a film badge, too. You always had a little pocket in your badge package and you'd turn that in every month. A dosimeter is different. It's round, about the size of a .30-06 shell, a little longer—five inches long. It had a little clip on it to clip on your shirt. You'd pick it up and look into it and it would have a chart in there that would go from zero to 500. When you got it each time, they'd set it and it would say zero. On normal stuff at the Test Site, maybe it'd go up to 50. If you went out to Area 1, it would be 500; and you were only there about 30 minutes.

RM: Oh, my God. We didn't have that. We just had the film badges. I was talking to a guy at the DOE or the AEC or something years ago and I told him that and he said, "Well, that

probably wasn't a bad place to keep it. It was probably a pretty good measure of what you were getting." We didn't take it too seriously; they didn't understand it as well back then.

BR: I didn't worry about it too much when I was working there, either; it was just part of the job. But I think they learned a lot. I think the biggest problem with the Test Site was that they should have educated people a lot more than they did. They'd have these drills for kids going to school and say, "Okay, hide under your desk and run this drill"—that sort of thing. When you finally did get TV, or when you'd listen to the radio, they'd have this alert once in a while saying, "This is a practice thing and if there ever is a nuclear attack, here is the station you want to come to," and all of this. But they should have educated people. As they learned, they should have been upgrading and educating the public.

RM: Absolutely. Then they wouldn't be having the problems, like you said the other day, that they're having now. When you saw the flashes here in Beatty or up on the hill, did you get a lot of shaking of the ground?

BR: For some reason, it wasn't that bad in Beatty. A lot of people would hang something from their ceiling or somewhere in the house and watch it. It'd be hanging on a string and it'd be like a pendulum. It wasn't like an earthquake here but you would always feel them.

RM: And could you hear them?

BR: No. The only time you really heard one . . . there's an old site up here about 15 miles away up on the mountain. There was a NASA site where they had a big radar station. They had a couple of big ones and we drove up this hill and watched and you could hear them there. Those weren't even 20 miles away; they were up at Area 18.

RM: Where exactly did the townspeople go to watch them?

BR: Anywhere that was high ground. The mushrooms would come right up over these mountains.

RM: What was the preferred place for the people in Beatty to go?

BR: North of town about ten miles, up toward Pioneer.

RM: But you couldn't see actually Frenchman's Flat?

BR: No, you couldn't see it.

RM: Do you remember any Indian stories from the time when your grandfather had the store and the Indians would sit out front and tell stories?

BR: They would talk about when they saw their first white people and about the different places they went. And most of the time, they walked. They'd go to Strozzis' at a certain time of the year to pick pine nuts and then to Death Valley in the winter and up here in the summer.

There were several bands and some of them had friends up by Lone Pine, some up by Bishop. Paiutes, of which there are a few here, had relatives in Schurz and they would go up there. And every time they'd go, they'd bring back the news. The ones who went to Lone Pine or Bishop would tell all the news from up there.

They told old stories and they'd all sit around and chuckle. They'd talk about the mining and talk about Rhyolite and talk about the other gold camps, just like you and I do. Things that relate to each other, you know.

RM: Speaking of gold camps, do you have any more gold stories? I was fascinated by your discussion of gold.

BR: No, not really. Of course, it's almost impossible for a little man to do any mining anymore—just getting permitted is almost impossible. If you don't have a string of lawyers and a lot of good bookkeepers, you're not going to make it. And a lot of money—you're going to have to have bonds and restoration fees and what have you; a little man doesn't have a chance anymore.

RM: Yes. I know where there's a streak of silver ore a foot wide, 100 feet this way and 100 feet that way, all proved out, runs 100 ounces to the ton. But don't even think about opening it. I talked to Bobby Bottom about what you would have to do to open it, and you'd better have about a million to a million and a half in your hand before you sink a pick in the ground.

BR: Bottom will give you good advice; he knows more about mining than anybody I know—I mean, from the ground up. I'm sure there are geologists who know a lot more about it, gold mining, than he does. But from a miner's point of view, he is probably one of the best in the country. That guy can walk along and find gold on Fremont Street. I've never seen anybody like him. He knows more about mining than anybody I know.

RM: Well, it sounds like you're pretty damn good.

BR: I am not near the hand that Bottom is. You know out there at Maggie Blue's—that turnoff that goes to Belmont—Bottom always said there was gold there. Bottom has known it for 30 years but he didn't know exactly where it was. He told me many times, "There's float out there; I don't know where it comes from." They found a big ore body there that'd just knock your socks off. It is just a thin layer on top of a rock outcropping that is all covered with dirt. He was the only one I ever talked to in my life who thought there was gold there.

RM: There are probably other places like that, aren't there? You were saying you think there's a big ore body under the Gold Ace?

BR: I always thought there was. I really think they should have sunk a shaft right where that big ore dump is. I think they got in on top and didn't go down. They should have gone down. I'll always think that; I don't know if I'm ever going to find out for sure. There are people out there who have that all claimed out. Another mining company just bought the first one, a Canadian outfit. Those Canadians can afford to mine here a lot cheaper than we can

because they get certain tax breaks that we don't get. There are a lot of privileges to outside miners that people in the United States don't get.

But yes, I always thought the Gold Ace was very good. All they really did at the Gold Ace was hit one very, very rich pocket. They've run drifts in and out and around and through; I think if they'd sunk a shaft about 100 feet from where the main discovery was, they'd have done some real good. Everything points in that direction to me, anyway. You look at the fault, you look at the way the ground is pushed up—that's the way it looks to me. That old stope they have in there, the main stope, the main ore body was maybe a third of what that is. But if you look up, you can see this whole thing where that pocket was, it comes down at an angle like this. If they'd come out here, sunk a shaft. . . .

RM: And picked it up on the deeper angle?

BR: On the other side, yes.

RM: Because the ore was in that thing coming down?

BR: Yes. I mean it's very good, but you can see what they could have done.

RM: How do you see the future of mining?

BR: Mining is very good right now and I think gold is going to go up quite a bit more. I think it is going to cross the thousand-dollar mark. Let me tell you what gold is. There's nothing in this world like computers. I don't know how I ever lived without one. I was very intimidated when they first came out, but I do more prospecting on a computer . . . there's just the whole world on a computer. I can look at mines, I can look at them from so many different directions than I can by standing there.

RM: So you get a better view on your computer than you do by going there?

BR: You do. I'll see what gold is today. Gold is \$872. Silver is up 29 cents to \$16.70. I think silver will go up over \$20; I think silver will go up to \$22 within a year.

RM: What's your prediction on gold?

BR: Oh, I think in two years it will be up to \$1,200.

Have you ever seen this Google Earth? You can turn the whole mountain around if you want to. And you can look at the faults . . . a lot of times you'll be standing on top of something and you can't see the fault come through. But you get on this and look down on it from all those different angles, it's right there on your screen.

RM: When you're prospecting, do you basically look for faults?

BR: Oh, yes.

RM: What else do you look for?

BR: In this hard-rock country I look for different layers of different types of rock. A lot of people might chase quartz. I don't do that because I find very little gold in quartz. Basically here, it's rhyolite. But I'll tell you, the saying is gold is where you find it. The strata at the Gold Ace is entirely different than the town of Rhyolite. Out there by Yellow Gold, there's a lot of quartz and I am not very much into quartz. I do have a piece of yellow gold rock out here that is in quartz. I've got a nice sample in there that came out of Yellow Gold that's in quartz.

RM: Do you have any thoughts on today's county commissioners? It's a different commission now, isn't it, because of the dominance of Pahrump?

BR: It is. And the bad part is that most commissioners from Pahrump are Pahrump commissioners, not county commissioners. They could care less about Beatty. They've probably never come to Beatty ever, and they're looking at Pahrump Valley, which is a small city, and they don't care about these small towns—Beatty, Manhattan, Tonopah. They're all dying on the vine because those county commissioners are letting them die on the vine. Joni Eastley is probably one of the best commissioners this county has ever seen. She goes to

everything, she's very concerned about problems, she's a hard worker.

RM: Yes, I agree.

BR: She is a very good girl.

CHAPTER TEN

RM: Bobby, you were telling me that you'd done some looking and quite a bit of reading about the Breyfogle legend. What's your take on the whole thing?

BR: Of course, there are many stories and many different avenues to take there, but the one that always made the most sense to me . . . Breyfogle came out of the north. It's documented he went down through Sarcobatus Flats; we are quite sure of that. He was prospecting and he disappeared for some time. Some people think that he took the cutoff and went down Grapevine Canyon, which of course is Scotty's Castle. I never did believe that.

I believe he turned east. He told people he was headed towards Kawich, which would be east of Highway 95. I always figured he went towards Kawich to Tolicha Peak and that country, and dropped off into Forty Mile Canyon. Forty Mile Canyon goes a long way; it comes out in the Amargosa Valley; it's a long, long canyon.

Anyway, the story goes that he wound up in Ash Meadows; that's also well documented. When he became conscious, he was in an Indian camp, so some Indians found him and took him into camp.

RM: Why did he pass out?

BR: I'm sure the sun got to him. There's not a whole lot of water in Forty Mile Canyon unless you know exactly where to go. There are good springs in there, but you have to know where to go.

When he got back to Belmont—I think it was Belmont—he had some very, very rich ore samples. A lot of people bankrolled him and they had several expeditions to go look for this mine that he had found. He didn't know where it was because when he woke up, he didn't remember where he had been. Nobody ever found it; people have been looking for it

ever since. It was a lot richer gold than Goldfield was on the surface, it was richer than anything else they found in this whole country as far as surface ore is concerned. There used to be some samples of it around but I doubt if there are anymore.

RM: You told me you'd seen a sample up in Reno or somewhere.

BR: There was a sample in Carson City. It had gold all over it; it was very beautiful ore. It was in a gray rock and that's the reason I always thought it came out of that Forty Mile Canyon because a lot of the hills and what have you are the same color as that rock.

RM: Was it limestone?

BR: No, it was a granite, it was gray. And this is the bad part—this is the fact that doesn't make a whole lot of sense. There's a big rock and it's got letters a foot high and it says Beyfogle; no "r." Instead of "Breyfogle" it says "Beyfogle." I figured that must have been some expedition that came through looking for that mine because it's not spelled right. I took some pictures of that rock. But it's spelled wrong; the name doesn't have the "r."

RM: I've never been up Forty Mile Canyon. How far up does it go from Amargosa Valley?

BR: It goes clear up to Buckboard Mesa—it goes past Tolicha Peak. It's kind of at an angle. It's a lot longer than 40 miles if you count the distance from Highway 95 up; it's probably 50 miles if you take the whole wash. When you get up to where it gets to be a canyon, it's a long, long canyon. And it is very pretty in there; it's beautiful country.

There was a guy by the name of Churchward who lived over here in Beatty in an old shack. He was kind of a strange fellow. He was writing a book—he wrote a couple. The most famous one was *The Lost Continent of Mu*. He was trying to prove that the pyramid builders, the Incas, the Aztecs, Egyptians, were all connected somehow. He found tablets in Tibet that he claimed showed where the temples in South America were and he found a place up in Forty Mile Canyon that was really unique. I was there several times when I was kid. He

called these people the “crap-shooters.” There were petroglyphs on these rocks but all these rocks were in stacks of seven and eleven and they all formed pyramids on the ground.

RM: And you saw that?

BR: Yes, I’ve seen it. In fact, he went to a lot of work to make that a state park and he was going to call it Scrugham Park—Scrugham was the governor at that time. Anyway, Churchward really got into this thing. Like I said, he lived here and he wrote *The Lost Continent of Mu*. It’s very hard to understand. It has a lot of tablets and equations and what have you; it even goes into what I assume today you’d call extraterrestrials.

RM: How long did he live here in town?

BR: I think he lived here about six months.

RM: When was that?

BR: I was a kid. I read his books a couple of times later on; I listened to all his stories.

RM: When you were looking up there in Forty Mile Canyon, was it on the Test Site?

BR: Yes, but they didn’t really have anything in Forty Mile Canyon at that time so nobody paid much attention. At that time everything was over in Frenchman Flat, Yucca Flat—that camp over there. I was probably 18 years old before they put NRDS in there and went to Jackass Flats when they tested nuclear rocket engines.

RM: Do you think that Breyfogle might have gone up by Yellow Gold?

BR: No, it’s a different type of ore, a different rock formation. The gold he had was gray; it was granite. It was more leaning towards quartz than it was volcanic. It was gray rock, a glassy rock.

RM: And it’s never been found?

BR: I’ve never seen anything like it before. Of course, that doesn’t mean it hasn’t been found. There is a lot of ore in the state of Nevada that I haven’t seen. It’s pretty well

documented that he made it down into Sarcobatus Flats—that's where he got lost and he didn't remember much after that. I think he went east instead of west; I don't think he went into Death Valley.

RM: Because if he did he would have had to get out of there to get to Ash Meadows?

BR: He could have gone over the mountain at Ash Meadows, but I don't think he did, I think he went east and wound up in Forty Mile Canyon.

RM: So it's somewhere back in that country, Forty Mile Canyon, in your view.

BR: I think it is.

RM: Bobby, is there a lot of gold in these hills? It seems like there is gold all over the place.

BR: Yes, but Beatty is not like Carlin or some of those places. Most of the gold here is in pockets. You find some very, very good gold, but there is just not that much of it. Like that mine in Smoky Valley—they find some very rich gold there too, but basically they mine microscopic gold. They have this huge ore body of microscopic gold and it goes on and on and on for years and years and years. These mines, with the equipment they have nowadays, could mine the whole thing out in a year.

RM: In the early days of Round Mountain, they were working the pockety little veins and everything and then they got down to where 500 hundredths ore was high-grade on this open pit. Do you think there is microscopic pit under this country, say Yellow Gold or where Breyfogle found his or something?

BR: At Yellow Gold there's a very good chance. I really believe that Yellow Gold country will rival Round Mountain. It's different than that stuff down south. The mine at Barrick . . . they've got a lot of gold there and most of it was microscopic. Of course, they had some real good high-grade, too. They kept the high-grade off until the last. They mined microscopic

gold and it just got better.

RM: Is the gold still going down at Barrick?

BR: They've got water. The deeper the pit got the more water they got.

RM: But they were still in ore when they quit?

BR: Yes, they were still in ore. I think the mine would still be open now if the price had been what it is today. They quit at, like, \$320 gold; now gold is \$870.

RM: I've heard that Round Mountain couldn't make it if gold went to \$550.

BR: Well, that's possible. You know, they moved in there at \$200 gold; and at \$550? The breaking point used to be \$300; now it's \$550 and that is still pretty good. For these mines nowadays—Barrick basically is the leader of the whole pack—they don't deal on how much gold they have poured out in bricks; they sell their gold that's still in the ground. It's a futures thing.

RM: Oh, they sell it forward.

BR: They drill it, they know how much they've got in the ground, they know how much it's going to cost to drill it—they are selling gold today that they're not going to get to for a year. They sell it all in futures. But they know exactly what they've got. They look at the core sample and say, "Okay. Here is what it is going to cost to mine this ore body; here's how much we're going to get out; and we're going to sell this today at this price." They can't lose.

RM: Do you think there is a big ore body under the Gold Ace?

BR: Yes, I think there is a good gold body. Of course, that's my thinking only; I'm not a geologist. As I told you before, I think if they'd sunk a shaft where the big ore dump is, they'd have done much better than they did. They had a great ore body where they did sink, but it was a small pocket. It was very, very rich. I think if they'd moved out from that

probably 200 feet and sunk a shaft, or even if they'd run a shaft and let it drift over 150 feet where they'd found a pocket, they would have done very well.

RM: Is it a characteristic of gold in Nevada that it makes a lot of high-grade streaks and pockets and everything, but then as you go down deep it gets microscopic?

BR: Not necessarily. Most of these good mines, the Senator Stewart, where LAQ Mineral and party opened up their mine . . . people found that and they started out on a little stringer about a quarter of an inch wide and instead of pinching out, it opened up. As they dug in it, it opened up and became larger and larger. But it can do just the opposite—you can have a little ore body and it'll pinch off to nothing.

RM: When was LAQ Mineral in there?

BR: They were the original people who started that mine. Bond invested in that. They had LAQ Mineral go out and do the exploration for them, then Bond turned around and bought LAQ back out and Bond opened the mine. Bond is a very wealthy man from Australia; he owns some breweries and he won the World Cup yacht race and he invested over here. But of course, there are a lot of gold mines in Australia so he is experienced in mining.

RM: When you were growing up, was there a strong opinion in Beatty that there was still a lot of ore left in Rhyolite?

BR: A lot of the old-timers thought there was; there were a lot of people who hung on. And there were leasers; there were quite a few people who still went up and leased in these mines.

RM: Were they just hand-steeling it?

BR: Pretty much. They shot all their own powder. And it was a risky business. Most all of the miners, I can't tell you how many, you'd see them and you'd know what had happened to them. They'd have one eye that was just gray and they could hardly see out of the other one

where they had a misfire and it blew up in their face. A lot of people would have these pocks all over them. You knew what happened—they had a bad shot and it went off in their face.

A lot of them died of the con—Jim Weeks’s father for one. A lot of the old miners, they all coughed and hacked and they all had the con. They called it TB but it was still the con. They’d put in a shot and go right back in and breathe that dust and smoke and what have you; it wound up taking most of them. We called them old-timers, but it was unusual for them to live any longer than I am now; 65 was an old age. Most of them wound up coughing themselves to death long before they were my age.

RM: Were a lot of the miners here in your time, the hangers-on, of Cornish extraction?

BR: They were a little bit of everything. Beatty wasn’t quite like Tonopah. Tonopah was Italians and Bohunks and what have you—the whole family stayed there. Beatty came a little later than Tonopah and the people who hung out were usually leasers or gyppos who went in and tried to get what was left. When Rhyolite closed, gold was \$20 dollars an ounce. When it went up to \$32 everybody went back to work; they thought it pretty cool.

RM: They’d probably be digging over there now at these prices.

BR: All of the old-timers would. They’d be doing well, too, because they knew those mines inside out. There are stories—they’d say, “There’s a stope up there; we just got scared and got out of it, but we were doing real good in there.” At \$32 an ounce they didn’t figure it was worth dying for. Nowadays, those gyppos would go out there. There are some mines up here in Rhyolite. . . . There’s one that you’ve got to crawl on your belly for about 75, 80 feet to get to, but there is a good ore body in there. I’m not going in there after it.

RM: Would it be worth driving a drift underneath that?

BR: It would be expensive. You can’t just go and mine any time you want to anymore; there are regulations you have to live by. You have to timber it and have rock bolts and

screen and fencing; it's pretty complicated now.

RM: The only thing a guy could do is just go in there and snipe it.

BR: I don't know what you think about crawling through a hole that big for 80 feet.

RM: I think I would have a lot of claustrophobia. [Laughs] But you've been back in there?

BR: Oh, I have. There's an ore bin there. Crawl in the front of this ore bed and up over to the side—it's all caved in. You can't crawl, though; you can't be up on your hands and knees. You've got to be up on your belly to kind of work your way through. In fact, as heavy as I am now, I don't know if I could crawl through it anymore.

RM: I'd worry about getting lost in those places when the light runs out.

BR: You get a big roll of string and tie it to the ore bin and when you come back out, you just follow that string back; you can't see anything. You have never seen dark until you get inside of a mine. It's a different type of dark; it is not like being locked in a closet or closing your eyeballs or anything. It is not the same. A little bit of light goes a long ways, but when the light goes out it is a whole different dark you've never seen anywhere else.

RM: How do you account for your nose for gold?

BR: I don't have a nose for gold. I've been here 65 years, I listened to all the stories, I went back and looked. People told me to go look. I know where people were doing well at the time they died. These old-timers eventually all died off, but I knew where they mined and I knew they'd go out for a week at a time and they'd always come back with gold. And when they came back with gold they sold it; they make a living that way. So I knew where all of those places are. I don't necessarily have a nose for gold, it is just 65 years of experience.

RM: I was wondering if you wanted to say a few words about Carrara. In your lifetime, what was Carrara?

BR: There were some people that lived out there. The state came in and tore down some

of the buildings.

RM: Why?

BR: I have no idea why they did that. There were quite a few buildings. Carrara, of course, started out as a marble quarry. There was some beautiful, beautiful marble up on the mountain. The most amazing thing to me about Carrara was they had this little railroad track, a little narrow gauge track. It went all the way from down on the flats up this mountain to the marble quarry. It went up a big draw like a big wash. One side was beautiful white marble with blue streaks through it and they had some pink marble—on the other side of that, black marble. It was very beautiful. When I was a little kid here, everybody had marble sidewalks and what have you. They had a saw and they'd cut it. Anyway, they'd go up there and drill this and bring this marble out in huge blocks as big as that wall there, probably 8' by 8' or 10' by 8'.

Then they'd load this on a flat car and up at the top of the canyon and down at the bottom of the canyon, there was a car, a flat car, hooked to a cable. They'd load this block of marble on this car at the top and it would go down the hill. As it went down the hill, it would pull the other one up. Where they met in the middle, they had kind of a switch that was on springs. I wish I had some pictures of this. As the cars came up they would pass each other at the switch and the weight of one would pull the empty car all the way up the mountain. It was really a neat thing. That was the start of Carrara.

In the later years, a family from the Philippines came over here. They were quite wealthy and they owned banks in the Philippines. They were interested in this marble. Because they had white marble, black marble, all different kinds, they were going to make cement out of this marble. So they built a huge cement plant and they built buildings for mining offices, for their employees.

RM: When was this—before your time?

BR: It was in '42. The mine is ready to open, the cement plant is ready to open, they have generators, they've put in pipelines from Beatty, they have their own electrical generators, they have everything. Then the Japanese attack the Philippines; the banks are no more. The Filipinos were broke. There went Carrara.

RM: When I drive past there, I'm confused. There are several roads that go up the mountain and there is a white building a quarter of a mile off the road. Is that Carrara?

BR: That's Carrara; that's where the cement plant was. There were buildings all the way down that road when I was a kid with people living in them. There were buildings that came all the way down the highway. The state went in there and tore all of them down; I don't know why.

RM: Where were they getting their water?

BR: From here. The pipeline is still there. When you drive down that way, if you walk off the road a couple of hundred feet, you'll see the old pipeline. It's all rusted up, but you can still see it.

RM: And the quarry was up in the hills above the Gold Ace?

BR: Well back to the side, back towards the white building.

RM: Maybe I've got the Gold Ace wrong. It's a tunnel—you look up there and it's kind of long.

BR: The Gold Ace is where you think it is, right straight up behind Carrara. The marble quarry is down just a little ways the other side of the Gold Ace; that's where the railroad was. They would bring these blocks down there and ship marble all over. But when the cement plant went in, it went up above where the water and telegraph line and all that stuff was. They were going to bring this marble in—it's only about a mile—back up this way and

process it at Carrara, where the white buildings are. Drive up in there—you can see where all the trommels were, you can see where all the machinery was.

RM: And the Gold Ace is where they're going to open-pit it? Are they going to work that?

BR: Yes, they're getting ready to re-mine that.

RM: Is it going to be underground or open-pit?

BR: It will be starting out open pit. Everything is open pit starting out; when they get down a ways if they find good ore that goes in a one-way direction, they might follow it underground. In fact, the people who run it say they're going to be processing ore by the end of the year. I have a hard time believing that because the end of the year is only about seven months away. They're going to have to start moving pretty fast.

RM: There is no obvious activity up there when you drive by.

BR: There is a lot of activity up there. There are people there all the time. There are a lot of geologists.

RM: So they think they've got something there?

BR: They do. They've got it permitted. You know, just to get permits costs a lot of money.

RM: What's the name of the company, do you know?

BR: I can't remember the name.

RM: When was Carrara last occupied?

BR: The last people who lived there were a guy named Sparky Zaccari and his wife, Ruth. Guys went up there and robbed them, broke in on them at gunpoint. Those buildings all had a basement on them. They put old Spark and Ruth down in this basement and left them—stole everything they had, tied them up, and put them down there. Nobody saw them for a couple of days and finally a guy by the name of Tom Wilcox went down looking for them. Sparky was kind of an off-and-on deputy with my Uncle Bob at that time, and Tom Wilcox went

down to check on them and he found them in the basement. They were alive, but they moved out right after that and that was the end of that.

RM: When was that?

BR: The mid-'50s. There used to be an old foundation off to the side. Like I said my uncle Bob was the only cop in town.

RM: Right. I interviewed him years ago.

BR: If he'd go somewhere, he'd just appoint somebody to be the deputy. They had a judge here by the name of Judge Penny over there where the park is now. My uncle was out of town and my dad was filling in as deputy. Some people came to town and said they'd found a dead guy up by Carrara—kind in between Carrara and the marble pit turnoff; there's a little cement thing out there. My dad went and got Judge Penny and he and Judge Penny and I—I was a little kid—got in the old pickup and out we go.

We went out there and there was this piece of corrugated tin with a pair of bare feet sticking out from underneath it. Old Judge Penny was a great big man, tall man—had red hair and a great big red handlebar mustache. Old Judge Penny walked over there and flipped that tin over with his foot and here this guy is and he's got four or five bullet holes in his back. Judge Penny said, "It's a clear case of suicide." [Laughter] He said, "We'll call the coroner." We just got in the pickup and left. I don't know how they ever took care of that guy. I guess somebody from Tonopah finally came down there and picked him up.

RM: He wasn't a local guy?

BR: No, nobody had ever seen him.

RM: In your lifetime, what was happening at Gold Center—was it still there?

BR: No. There were a lot of foundations and a few buildings. Where the tracks made a curve they went around a mountain and there was a little spur there that came out—I assume

if a train had to turn around they would go out on that spur and turn around somehow. There were some buildings right there and a water tank to water the trains, but very little was there.

RM: And it was on the right side of the road as you leave the narrows?

BR: Yes, if you turn there where it says “Vanderbilt Mine” or “Vanderbilt Road” and then take the first left you’ll get on a railroad grade, where the old railroad grade came through town and went to Rhyolite; it goes around that mountain and up to Rhyolite. If you get down there you’ll see where that spur was. Right where that spur is was Gold Center. Up on the right you’ll see some big concrete tank-looking-like thing with pipes and that’s where they got the water for the locomotives, which were all steam. That’s about all you can see anymore.

RM: And when you were a kid there was no activity there, right?

BR: Nobody lived there. A guy named Fordham had a little ranch out there and raised some hogs. He tried to raise some alfalfa but alfalfa wouldn’t grow. He probably gave it up and left. I think the place sold for taxes.

RM: When you were a kid, what was happening at Springdale?

BR: Springdale still had a restaurant and my dad sold some gas out there; they had a couple of gas pumps. Of course, Highway 95 went right through Springdale then. It doesn’t now, but it did then.

RM: Which side of the highway would it have been on then?

BR: It went right through the middle of it.

RM: And there is basically nothing there now, right?

BR: There’s a ranch there. A guy by the name of Moog has it now. It’s got quite a bit of history to it—it used to belong to Peacock. But anyway, they served food in Springdale when I was a kid.

RM: And what kept Springdale going?

BR: It was a stop for the railroad also. Pioneer was its closest mining town; Pioneer wasn't very far away.

RM: Pioneer was up in the hills, right? To the west?

BR: Pioneer was northwest.

RM: Tell me about Pioneer in your days.

BR: The Mayflower Mine was still going when I was a kid. My dad hauled fuel to that, also. It still has good ore in it but it's full of water. The flywheels on these pumps were taller than this building. I mean, they were huge pumps; I've never seen anything like them before or since. They were run by great big one-cylinder engines—ka-choo, ka-choo, ka-choo.

RM: Are there a lot of workings in the Mayflower?

BR: Oh, yes. And it must be 900 feet.

RM: Were you ever down in it?

BR: Yes. If you go down so far you just hit water; you can't go any farther.

RM: Was it full of water when you first went down in it?

BR: Yes, I went down as far as you could go. Then on the other side of the mountain was the Pioneer Mine. Pioneer was very good, too. They had a big mill there when I was a kid.

RM: Was it working when you were a kid?

BR: No, it wasn't working. There were a lot of houses there and what have you.

RM: So there were people living at Springdale and Pioneer and at the Mayflower and they were probably shopping in Beatty?

BR: This was the only place there was to shop. My grandfather had the store here; they'd also come here for water. There was another mining district off to the north of that that had quite a few mines.

RM: And what was it called?

BR: I really don't know what they called it. We always figured it was part of Pioneer, but I don't think it is, now. I think it was another district all together.

RM: Did they have some good ore up there?

BR: I've sampled and I've never found anything really good up in there. A lot of diggings, though. Somebody had a lot of faith in it; I never did.

At Pioneer they had an old office building up at the mill, it was maybe twice as big as this room, 12' by 12', maybe. In the corner of this building there was a safe. And, of course, all the kids had stories about the safe [chuckles]. We looked at it for a long time and finally Dick Steele and Don Terrell and I and a couple of other guys, a guy by the name of Bill Griffith, decided we were going to blow the safe. We had heard that they'd lost the combination but there was still a bunch of stuff in there.

A guy named Paul Mix had a house over here. He always had a couple cases of dynamite and fuse and cap lying out underneath the porch. The first day we got two sticks, a couple pieces of fuse, and a couple of caps. We put the first stick behind the handle of the safe, put a fuse on it, and set that off. And it worked—it blew the handle off the safe. Now we weren't doing very well at all. So then we tried another stick on the hinge, and it didn't do much.

The next day we went out and got a whole bunch of that powder and about 10 feet of fuse and one cap. We put it underneath the safe and touched her off. Dick Steele had an old Studebaker pickup; we jumped in that old pickup and down the road we go down over this hill. Then we climbed back up on the hill to watch. That powder went off, the roof of this place went straight up in the air [laughs]. . . all the windows blew out and the walls just cracked. It was all over and the safe was still there. It took a second—the sides just kind of

stood there for a minute; it blew all the windows out and the doors off.

RM: And the safe was just lying on its side?

BR: Yes. Dick Steele—I hadn't thought of him in years. When I told you about the mine catching on fire the other day, he was in on that, too. It was strange because I hadn't talked to him in about 45 years. The very next day after I talked about that he called me up. What a coincidence. He's living in Idaho.

RM: That makes you wonder, doesn't it? You mentioned Don Terrell—was he any relation to Solan Terrell?

BR: Very well could be because they came here out of Willow Springs, which is northeast, I guess. Dick Steele and Don Terrell were half-brothers; their mother's name was Pauline. They could be related to the Terrells in Tonopah. The Terrells were in the mining business.

RM: We used to go see them when they had their tungsten mine out in Railroad Valley.

BR: Well, Railroad Valley, now you're talking the same direction, pretty much. Last time you were here, when Dick called, I could have found out—because that raises a question in my mind, too, now. I know Solan was a lot older than I am.

RM: That is not a common name.

BR: No. I never made that connection, but now I do. I can see why you asked the question.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

RM: We're going to pick up with some thoughts you've had since we've last talked.

BR: One thing we never did go through—when we were kids in Beatty in the '50s there were three full mills here. Actually there were more than that. Crowell's fluorspar mine had a great big mill right off First Street and it was all intact. They ran all through World War II. It was the war effort; they use that fluorspar to harden steel. And it was pretty much intact.

RM: What equipment did it have, do you recall?

BR: Oh, it had everything. It had augers, it had crushers, it had big ore beds, screws—a screw is an auger in a pipe that when you wet your material you can auger this material down. They have wet screws and dry screws. With a wet screw, they add water and it screws on like mud and that's what they would do with real high-grade ore. Lower-grade ore they'd have a screw that would drive material down so they could ship waste.

RM: It was coming from the ore bin down to crushers?

BR: They had several ore bins because they had a high-grade bin and a low-grade bin.

RM: And then were they tabling it or jigging it, or what?

BR: They were tabling it. They refined it right there, they had classifiers; they would do it all right there.

RM: What kind of capacity did it have per day, shipped?

BR: As I look back on it I would guess it would do 100 tons a day.

RM: That is a big mill—you know, for a little mill. How were they shipping the ore out?

BR: In the early days they shipped it by rail, but by the time of World War II, they shipped it by truck. Old Man Crowell was dead by then and his son ran the operation—he was an old man then, too. Irving went out and bought some GMC tractors and trailers; he had one little

dump truck he would use between the mine and town, but he had a couple of tractor-trailers, Not open bed, they had sides on them, but the tailgate just folded down. They'd take it to the railroad in Vegas and milk it off by hand.

RM: Oh, my God. That is hard work.

BR: A trailer would hold probably 16 to 18 tons but they'd shovel it off by hand into rail cars. Up until the mine closed. I don't really believe they ever had a dump truck that would go to Vegas and dump.

RM: How long were these trailers?

BR: They were about 38 to 40 feet.

RM: And they were concentrates, right?

BR: Yes. After World War II, they'd gone down to one truck. They had one driver, Ford Looney; Ford was a great guy. He would drive the truck and unload it, but at the same time, he'd take kids to the picture show in Vegas while he'd unload the truck. There was a Palace Theatre and a Fremont Theater on Fremont Street, and the rail yard was right up behind the Union Plaza so it wasn't much of a walk. He'd take two or three kids at a time down to the theatre and get them seated, get them popcorn, whatever they needed, and he'd go up and unload the truck and come back and get the kids and bring them back to Beatty.

RM: Did he ever do that with you?

BR: No, I was a little older then. But there were a lot of kids—he took my brother-in-law Bill Marchand. Ford was a great guy and he had a big family—six or seven girls. The Looney family was a pretty good-sized family here; there were several brothers and they all had children and they were all involved in the mining business somehow or another, either as laborers or whatever.

Ford was the last of them to leave here. He still has a daughter in Vegas and a

daughter in Idaho and one in Reno; I don't know where the rest of them are. His wife just died; they had a funeral for her a couple of months ago and the whole family showed up and it was a great thing to see all those kids. But anyway, Ford worked for Crowell as long as I knew him.

RM: Did he go back to Chloride Cliff days?

BR: He did, but of course, Crowell was speculating on gold at Chloride Cliff, as were my grandfather and a couple of other people. I don't know if you've ever been to Chloride Cliff, but everything is in place there for a gold mine. It has the fluorspar, it has the quicksilver—not quicksilver, I can't think of the name of it now—for a gold mine. They found gold there, but not a lot. It was all little stuff, but everybody had a lot of faith in those days. In fact, they had more faith in that than they did in Rhyolite or anywhere else. (This was later, after the Rhyolite boom.) It was a hot spot for gold; it just never materialized.

RM: Had it mineralized then eroded away and it's down in the valley somewhere, do they think?

BR: I don't know. Nobody ever found anything that great. There were pockets, a lot of stringers of gold there. But anything worth mining, they never found.

RM: But there was a mill and everything there?

BR: Well, down below at the Keane Wonder Mine, which was a great big mine.

RM: Is it on this side or the other side?

BR: The other side, but right at the bottom. That mine is still intact. When I was 18 or 19 years old . . . the last time I was in there you could only get to it with a mule; there was no way to drive to it. Down in the bottom there were cups and plates on the tables. There were gold scales—it took me a week to get the gold scales out. There are in my house now; they are great big German-made gold scales.

RM: How far from the Keane Wonder is it?

BR: About six to eight miles.

RM: It would be above the Keane Wonder?

BR: Way above it, yes. The Keane Wonder is down in Death Valley.

RM: Jack Crowell took me up to Chloride Cliff one time. And we had talked about somebody taking us to Chloride Cliff and then walking down to the Keane Wonder. I would still like to do that. Have you done it?

BR: It would be tough. I did it many times when I was young. People think that walking downhill is the easiest way to go, but it's not. Going downhill is very hard on your knees and your ankles.

RM: How good was this other mine? The one down below Chloride Cliff?

BR: I don't know. There was a lot of speculation on it; everybody thought it was going to be great but I don't know of it ever shipping a lot of ore. Of course, it was before my time.

RM: Are there big dumps?

BR: Yes, they put a big hole in the ground. I mean, they had a big, long drift in there. They spent a lot of money. When they did this mine—and I'll get you the name of the mine—they went to a lot of expense. They had a cable that came down that must be close to a mile long; I would say 5000 feet.

RM: An aerial tram?

BR: No, it was just a cable. I assume they had a hoist on top where they'd run it over the edge with heavy equipment, with stuff they could just skid off the mountain.

RM: I see.

BR: And there is a trail down. I wouldn't take a horse over it; a mule, maybe. I am sure they had mules in there or something, because there is steel down there. I mean, there's a lot

of stuff down there.

RM: And how far down from Chloride Cliff would it be?

BR: When you get to the cliff it's got to be close to a mile. You don't think it's very long when you're driving in a car, but it's a long way when you're going down a cliff. And if you ever get up there and look down into Death Valley, it's like looking into the Grand Canyon—it is a long way down. I mean, it's not anything you are going to jump off of. [Laughs]

RM: Were they working on the same formations as Chloride Cliff at that mine?

BR: Yes, the same thing. Chloride Cliff had a lot of color to it. That whole mountain did, just streaks. It's much like the Gold Ace. If you go down and look at the Gold Ace and you sit on the bottom and look up, you'll see a dark spot. Then up above it gets kind of gray and up above that it gets brown and then up above that it gets gray again; there are a lot of streaks that go through that mountain.

RM: Is that a sign of mineralization?

BR: I don't know if it's a sign of mineralization or just a sign of sedimentary stuff that pushed up a million years ago, layers that were part of the earth.

RM: And that was the way it was at Chloride Cliff?

BR: Yes. When you go down to the bottom of Chloride Cliff, it's beautiful. From the top, it looks like a desert.

RM: The mineralization never really was great at the Chloride Cliff, but it was at the Gold Ace, wasn't it?

BR: Yes, but there must be 12 or 15 miles difference.

RM: When the gold deposits, does it deposit in the sedimentary or is it depositing in the igneous?

BR: Generally in between. All my life, that's what I always looked at—where two layers,

the sediment and the igneous, come together.

RM: That's what my dad always said. So those are places that are indications?

BR: Well, to me it is; I'm not a geologist.

RM: Yes, but you find gold. Did it come together at the Gold Ace?

BR: It did. You can drive down the highway and look at it. There's a brown streak about the color of that grass out there, kind of a beige. And there is another streak up above it.

Right at that bottom one is where the main discovery was.

RM: And that is where they found that huge room?

BR: Yes, a pocket about the size of this room here. They branched out, they did everything except go down. They didn't move forward; I never understood that.

RM: Do you think there are other pockets like that there?

BR: Well, as much as I hate flying, I've flown over that twice. The first time I flew over it, I noticed it and the second time I talked a guy into giving me an airplane ride. I flew over it and if you fly over Bare Mountain and look at the Gold Ace and go across that mountain and look at Saga, they're pretty much like the same property, the same formation, on both sides. Saga looks just the same as the Gold Ace does.

RM: I don't know about Saga; is that a good one?

BR: Yes. And they're going back in and opening up . . . they say 300 employees are out there now.

But if you look at it from both sides it's the same formation exactly; and they are right straight across from each other through that mountain. I wonder if that gold went all the way through that mountain. Bare Mountain is a huge mountain. Of course, all of this was part of the Great Basin at one time. As the earth shrank and pushed the stuff up, I guess if you look at both sides. . . nowadays they have a computer program to do that—you look on both

sides and they're almost identical. Well, in your mind you have to tell yourself, this gold streak goes all the way through. Whether it does or not, I don't know.

RM: It makes sense. What was another mill in Beatty?

BR: Up where the clinic is there was a big gold mill.

RM: Who owned it?

BR: It was out of Rhyolite. There were several mining companies that built this mill and they built it when water was scarce in Rhyolite. Of course, water was a big item there. The Shoshone-Montgomery Mill was right at the Shoshone-Montgomery Mine, and they'd taken all the water from every little spring in Rhyolite.

So they built this mill up where the clinic is now. It was a good-sized mill—it had three big cyanide tanks. And they had a flotation thing . . . it was a good-sized mill. You can't tell it came later than the Shoshone because the ground work was all made out of concrete.

RM: And that foundation is probably still there?

BR: Some of it is. If you go to the clinic, you take the road off to the right and go around. You'll still see a bunch of parts of that mill on the side of the hill.

And then there was another mill down here at the (Beatty) Narrows, and it was a pretty good-sized mill. Of course, the rail out of Rhyolite ran by it. It was really the only active one when I was a kid. I don't remember when it shut down, but there were still people working at that mill when I was a kid.

RM: Where were they getting their ore?

BR: Out of Rhyolite.

RM: Where was the ore coming from at this stage in Rhyolite?

BR: You know where the red barn is? You go past that red barn a ways and look back to

your right and you'll see some big dumps over there. That's where that was.

RM: What was that mine called?

BR: I can't quite remember.

RM: You said you had some stories of some Indians?

BR: I am going to write that down for you because I want to word it right. In the previous talk we had I mentioned some Indians but there were some other pretty good stories; I'll write them for you.

RM: Okay. Write as much as you can because they're as good as gold as far as I'm concerned. Some of those stories you told are precious.

Talk about getting in and out of town. The bus used to come through here—was it Mikulich who owned that bus?

BR: I don't remember. Greyhound took it over later and of course they've had several since then. The bus came to town twice every day. It went to Reno and back.

RM: Did you ever ride it?

BR: Oh, yes, into Vegas or Tonopah. Did I tell you my mother rode the bus out to Yellow Gold? They got out and walked all the way to the Yellow Gold Mine.

RM: You did tell me about that; it must have been scary for somebody from Arkansas.

BR: It would have been scary for me. In a pickup it takes a couple of hours, an hour and a half, to cross that area and they walked it. They just got out in the middle of the desert. I mean, they weren't any buildings out at Sarcobatus; Springdale was it. They're out there in the middle of the desert—my mother, her sister, and her mother, who was an older woman. And the bus driver just stopped and said follow that course. That's when my father met my mother.

RM: It's a great story. So there was nothing in Sarcobatus Flats after Springdale?

BR: Nothing. Later, when they put telephone lines through there, the telephone company had this little building there and my grandfather's brother . . . the state came in and put in a rock building and they had an old tractor out there with a blade. My great uncle lived out there and did maintenance for the telephone company and for the state highway department. This was down below Clarksdale, just into Sarcobatus Flat.

Later on the telephone company built another building, but it was self-sufficient. That's that little red brick building you see when you go through the gap. But the first building they had out there, they had no way to carry the message because they had to have batteries to carry messages and a generator to charge the batteries, but that would only carry it so far. They'd have these little stations to give the signal a boost and the message would come on to Beatty or to Vegas or wherever. The first phone came in over the telegraph wires that ended right in the middle of Main Street.

RM: In your lifetime?

BR: In my lifetime. There was one telephone in town; one. It was right in the middle of Main Street, right where the intersection is, by the Exchange Club. And of course, the Exchange Club ran the telephone. It was one of those where you cranked, and you got an operator in Tonopah. The only wires here were wires that came way back behind this mountain through Rhyolite and back into Beatty; they were great big wires, not like the tiny ones used now.

But anyway, they had one phone and it was right in the middle of Main Street. If somebody got a phone call, it was pretty much for an emergency, but anybody could get a call. Whoever was at the Exchange would go over to whoever's house it was and get them and bring them down and they would call back.

When the telephone company came in, they put poles around. By that time, my father

had electricity and a power plant, and the telephone company came in and said, “We’ll help you put poles up so you can put out power to these people’s houses and we want to put a telephone on there.” They made an agreement between the two of them to jointly use these poles.

RM: How old were you when there was only the one phone?

BR: I went to school so I’m going to say it was like ‘48, ‘49; I was a little kid. I know I couldn’t reach the telephone, even with a chair. It had a crank and it had this thing on the side for the ear.

RM: How did you pay?

BR: I don’t have any idea how they paid. There were no numbers. They had Beatty No. 1, Beatty No. 2, Beatty No. 3, Beatty No. 4, Beatty No. 5, 6, 7, 8. Beatty No. 1 was on the pole and my grandfather had Beatty No. 2. My uncle Bob was a cop so he had Beatty No. 3; my father had Beatty No. 4; Crowell had Beatty No. 5; Mabalone had Beatty No. 6.

And there was a code. You would have like one long ring and two short rings and that’s how you knew who was being called. And the operator in Tonopah who had, like, two longs and a short.

And then as this thing opened up and more people got telephones, all the phones were on one line. You could hear people breathing or the radio playing on the other end. (The radios were all battery radios; nobody had televisions in those days.) As you were talking you’d say to the listeners, “Get off the damn phone, this is private!” But the whole town could listen in the whole time. My father or Justice Fitz or somebody would be on the line and he’d put out a bunch of rhetoric, “Get the hell off my phone!’ I am trying to make a call here,” or something. When it rang, everybody in town would listen. There were no private lines.

RM: And then when did that change?

BR: Sometime in the '50s they got their own phones. I can probably narrow that down a lot. I can figure that out because it changed when they put the first pay phones in.

RM: Whose phone company was it at the very first?

BR: Tonopah Bell, I think. Tonopah was the switchboard.

RM: And the operator was in Tonopah, but you could call anywhere they had a line?

BR: Yes; you had to call Tonopah first.

RM: Tell me about how your family started the power company in Beatty. Who was the mover behind that?

BR: My dad. They bought some old generators from somebody and, like I say, they made deals with the poles. They bought three old generators that didn't last very long. In two or three years they all blew up.

RM: What year was that when they started it?

BR: I don't know, but I'll find that for you, too.

RM: And did they use their own money or did they have investors?

BR: No, they used all their own. After that they bought four great big GMC generators. By that time I was about 12 years old, and it was my job to go down and change all the oil in the generators.

RM: Did they run 24/7 or just certain hours?

BR: The first ones only ran at night, from 5:00 to probably 10:00. They were old generators; they didn't do very well.

RM: How many customers did they start off with? Did he go around and say, "Would you like to put power in?" or how did that work?

BR: No, because everybody wanted it. Electricity was cheap and everybody wanted it

because there had been electricity in Rhyolite.

RM: And that was coming in from Bishop or somewhere, wasn't it?

BR: I don't know where it came from. Anyway, they went ahead and wired the whole town, and they stayed there until the co-op came; they sold out to the co-op, which could do it so much better than they could.

RM: Oh, they sold off to Valley Electric?

BR: It wasn't Valley Electric then; it was REA—Rural Electric Association. That was in the '60s. The Rural Electric Associations were government funded and they would bring power into rural areas, but it was still a co-op.

RM: So it was your family that was really getting a lot of things done here.

BR: They put water and power into this town.

RM: Tell me about the water.

BR: They bought that old ranch out there when they first got here.

RM: That was originally Old Man Beatty's place, wasn't it?

BR: It was. And there are springs that run down there; in fact, the springs there run down the river now. But they put in pipelines about where the state yard is. They ran out of money on that; and that went on for about six months. They had a service station out where the Rebel station is now—that was the first place to get hooked up with water. And they went across the highway to my grandmother's house. All three boys lived right behind my grandmother in three houses.

RM: And that was over there across from where your old station was?

BR: Yes. And they had a guy by the name of Dave Shoshone and a couple of other Indians—they had people who wanted to hook up and they started digging ditches and putting in pipes. As they put in pipes, they charged a little high the first year because they

had to spend money to buy the pipes to put into some of these houses. And after the first year, the price fell off.

RM: What was it?

BR: And when they sold it, it was still \$4 a month.

RM: And when did they sell it?

BR: In the '70s sometime.

RM: And when did they start it?

BR: Probably the late '40s.

RM: Was it a lot of work, maintaining it and everything? I imagine there were leaks and so on.

BR: Yes, but my dad was good at fixing them. He was a strong man. A pipe would start leaking and you'd see a wet spot and my dad would go out there and dig it up. I don't know if you remember this, but in the old days inner tubes were made out of this rubber—it was real rubber, red in color. He would cut strips about an inch and a half to two inches wide; you'd have a strip about four feet long but it'd stretch out to about seven because rubber in those days stretched a long way, like a rubber band does nowadays. Inner tubes don't stretch at all anymore; there is hardly any rubber in an inner tube; it's all synthetic.

But anyway, he's got this pipe that's got a hole in it that's squirting water everywhere. He'd put that piece of rubber underneath his thumb and wrap it around, and if you wrap it around pretty much it will hold itself. You keep wrapping and wrapping until the pressure of the inner tube, the rubber, seals the hole. He would do that and then get some baling wire and he would wrap that and hold the other end down. He used several pieces of baling wire, wrapped it real tight, and covered it up.

One time I went to a meeting in Reno and I introduced myself and an old man there

said, “You’re from Beatty aren’t you?” I said, “Yeah.” He said, “You’re related to Art Revert?” I said, “Yeah, he’s my dad.” He said, “He is the founder of the Revert Union”— a union is for pipes. He said, “We use that rubber thing on our system all the time. We always call it the Revert Union.” [Laughs] Instead of cutting the pipe and getting a clamp and all this other stuff, the old man would just wrap it.

RM: And it would last pretty well in the gravel?

BR: Oh, for years. Anyway, pretty soon the whole town had water and it was \$2 a month for a long time. Then there got to be more and more people and it got to be expensive to maintain. Over about a three- or four-year period it went up to \$4 a month with a guarantee of that price for four years.

The state came in and said, “There’s too much fluoride in this water and you can’t sell this water to people.” The old man said, “Well, people have been drinking it for a long time.” And the water did have a lot of fluoride in it; it would stain people’s teeth. It didn’t stain adult’s teeth, but as children grew up and were forming teeth, their teeth would come in stained and it would be yellow. So the state said, “You can’t sell it anymore.”

The old man said, “Well, I don’t know. You ought to go to the town hall meeting and tell all of these people that; that is the only water we’ve got.” So they did and the people said, “Okay we don’t want to drink that water anymore.” About two days of that and the state was back down here and said, “Hey turn the water back on; we don’t care if you sell it.”

My dad and my uncles, especially my Uncle Norm, worked real hard with the Public Service Commission to get some money together to drill some wells. Nobody wanted any money off of it, but they wanted to form a town water district that didn’t have fluoride in the water. So they put together a water system and gave it to the town. They just turned it over and said, “You guys have got all the pipes and what have you.” That water wasn’t bad but

there wasn't very much of it. They put in some wells up here behind these mountains here and pumped it down into the town. Some of them would only pump 10 gallons an hour or 10 gallons a minute. But it works now.

RM: And that's the system? And your dad just gave them. . . .

BR: All the pipes and everything. Otherwise, the town wouldn't have a drop of water.

RM: And he probably did the same thing with the poles that the power was on?

BR: Yes, they gave that all away, too. But the REA bought the generators.

RM: When did TV come in here?

BR: My uncle Norm owned that all by himself. In about 1952, '53, there was an opportunity in Lone Pine, California, with a Union Oil distributorship. My family had been in the oil business for quite a time and my uncle wanted to give that a try. Norm was my grandfather's second oldest son. My dad was the oldest, and then my uncle Bob (was the youngest).

Anyway, Norm spent a couple of years running this distributorship, which he finally sold. Well, he got hooked on TV. Most of us had never even seen TV. I was nine or 10 years old before I ever saw the first one, when Mr. and Mrs. Laude took me to Vegas and we went to a Sears and Roebuck. They had an escalator and up in the top they had a plant or something and behind it there was a TV going; I was just amazed.

My uncle Norm got hooked on television and he just couldn't get it out of his system; he loved television. At that time they still had that power plant and what have you and they had this guy we called Kilowatt. I don't know what his name was, but we called him Kilowatt. When Kilowatt wasn't doing anything else, he and my uncle had these car batteries; they'd have one charging all the time and another in the back of the truck and they had a 12-volt TV set and some antennas that they would carry around on poles up on

mountain tops.

RM: Which mountains?

BR: Well, he covered all of them, like the mountain over there.

RM: The mountain that has the “B” on it. Does it have a name?

BR: All I know it as is B Mountain. They finally found a place off to the right of B Mountain on Rocky Mountain. You can still see it up there. They found a place where they got a signal and he worked and worked and worked at that. With his own money, he saved up enough to buy a translator. He’d get that signal and shoot it back to town. With this translator and a couple of antennas he would bring a signal in on this antenna and send it out on another one through this translator.

Anyway, he’d say, “Okay we’ve got a signal.” Now, he had signal straight meters and what have you. We all had little TVs and he’d say, “Okay, how about now?” and we’d radio back and forth with walkie-talkies that the army used to have. He’d be up on that mountain so he’d turn the antenna a little bit and then turn and then it’d be all full of like, little snowballs. Pretty soon you’d say wait, and these lines would start rolling. And you’re thinking, wait, wait, wait we’re getting something, and pretty soon you’d see an image of a guy or something and then it would fade out. This went on for months.

Finally he found this place up behind B Mountain. If you drive up there it’s hard to believe he ever took those batteries and his little TV and the antennas and packed them up and down mountains. But anyway, he found this place where he could shoot through a gap in the mountains down toward Vegas and pick up a clear signal. Finally he got a good, clear signal. And then it would take him several months again to save up enough money to buy more translators to pick it up over here and translate to this translator and then from that translator back to town. This mountain overshoot the town and it was kind of a line of sight

thing.

RM: So it would go from here over to Rocky. . . .

BR: Rocky Mountain, and from Rocky Mountain, you could beam it back down into town.

And that's how TV started up in Beatty.

RM: And then what did he do from his translator here in town?

BR: He had one antenna that picked it up and another antenna that broadcast. Of course he pointed it to his house, which was all right with us because his house was next to ours; but the rest of the town couldn't get any TV. So people would come to his house to see his TV, then everybody wanted a TV. So a lot of people chipped in and they bought a bunch of antennas to where instead of having this channel on a signal, you could spread it out and it would cover the whole town.

RM: Was it one channel?

BR: Oh no, you got all three Vegas stations.

RM: And was it a pretty good picture?

BR: At times it would go down; sometimes you'd go a week or so without TV. It was all black and white. I don't know when I saw my first color TV. It was ancient, but it worked.

RM: And your uncle didn't even really make any money on it, did he?

BR: He didn't sell it. Maybe he got some of his money back; I doubt it. Nevertheless, the people came in and bought more antennas and more translators so you could spread out all over town. Finally they got to where they could shoot it clear up to the valley, to the ranches.

RM: From this one signal out here?

BR: That signal over there which goes over that mountain. The whole thing is still over there. They don't use it anymore, but it's still on the mountain.

RM: That is a really cool story. It illustrates something I've noticed over the years—a

“can-do” spirit. I don’t think it is as strong as it was, but there’s a “can-do” spirit in Nevada. Here’s is a guy who, because he is interested in it, brings TV to town.

BR: He had a mission and he went on it and he never gave up.

RM: That is a neat story. How did he earn a living?

BR: He was part of the Revert Brothers.

RM: And of course, Bob, or Robert, was a sheriff or deputy sheriff for a long time, wasn’t he?

BR: He was the deputy here and he was a partner in the business until his son died. I told you about that earlier.

RM: You did. And his dad was never the same, was he?

BR: My uncle’s wife, Florence, never got over it. Actually, it destroyed her. They had a nice home there but she would see ghosts in the house so he moved her to Vegas. He had been a cop in Beatty, so he got a job as a cop at Mercury, as the head cop. He sold his third of the business to my father and my uncle when they moved to Vegas.

RM: Bobby, have you thought of any more stories about gold? The pioneering kind of stories—the last of the frontier here.

BR: Nevada is the last of the frontier. There are opportunities here that are nowhere else in the world. A young man in Nye County can make anything out of himself that he wants to, if he works hard enough. A young man in New York City, in the Bronx, doesn’t have a chance in the world. But here, if you want to go out and scratch in the dirt and look for gold or if you want to start a business, the opportunities are here.

RM: What would you tell a young kid about those opportunities? What directions would you steer him in, in terms of starting business and doing things?

BR: To me it’s a simple thing—you find something you really like and come up with a

plan and just stay with it, go for it. If you like it, there's a million other people who like it, too. You can't start it and expect it to happen; you have to follow through with it. No matter how hard you have to work: "Here is my goal and I am going to accomplish this goal." You can't give up. Once you've given up, you've lost.

RM: How do you know when you've got an idea that will go versus one that doesn't and you persist on one that's not going to make it?

BR: You make it. Within the first couple of months . . . of course, you have to have some strategy, a long-range plan on this how it is going to work.. You have to study and say, "Okay, how am I going to make this work? And here is stage 1, stage 2, stage 3, stage 4. And I am going to accomplish all of those." Now, if stage 1 falls flat on its face, then you can regroup and say, "Okay, we're going to have to redo this."

For instance, there are some people up there who wanted a piece of property. They said, "We have this plan; we want to try to do this. We want to try and build a sandwich shop and have a little tiny bar with some beer with the sandwiches." I said, "Well, you don't have to pay me. I'll tell you what, you go ahead and go to work in that old building and make me a down payment in six months. In the meantime, make your money work." They have just accomplished so much that I am embarrassed I didn't do something like that. All you have to do is have the incentive and have a plan and say, "If I don't make it here, I am not going to make it." You've got to tell yourself—that is important. Don't make a commitment to your friends, make commitments to yourself and stay with them.

RM: That is really good advice.

BR: It's like finding gold. Bobby Bottom, as I said earlier, is the best I ever saw. But when you've been around this country and around mountains and faults and you read books, pretty soon all of these things are in your head. I've seen times, I go out and I just get tired and I'll

sit down maybe in the shade of a rock or something—you've got to make yourself part of it. You've got to say, "Why is this formation what it is?" You've just got to make yourself part of the earth or part of your surroundings and pretty soon you're going to look there, and sometimes you'll see gold or other minerals. You'll see a little spot and you'll say, "Why is that spot there?" You've got to make yourself part of it. I don't say I'm psychic; I am not insinuating that at all. Your brain will do all that for you. Curiosity in your brain is going to do that for you.

RM: I am very interested in success and how people are able to do things and seize an opportunity where somebody else can't. I am very fascinated by this "can-do" spirit that is a part of our heritage.

BR: And we're getting away from it. There is too much welfare, we're not forcing people to do things on their own. They would rather sit at home and watch television.

RM: And they don't think they can. They don't have that "can-do" spirit.

BR: Yes. Like I say, Nevada is one of the last frontiers. You can do things here you can't do anywhere else in the world—not in London, not in France, not in New York, not in San Francisco, where there are 10 million people competing against you. But here it's wide open.

RM: Your grandfather was an amazing "can-do" guy.

BR: He was. I mean, this guy came over here as an indentured servant. Here is a kid who says, "I'm broke and I'm tired of it." He and Marley made a room up on top of a chicken house. And somewhere down the line he said, "I'm not going to live in a chicken house all my life. I'm out of here."

RM: Yes, and the family has picked it up down the generations. Well, have you got any gold stories, or any "can-do" stories, I guess from the Nevada desert frontier? If you were a young man starting out prospecting, pretty green, where would be the best place to look?

BR: If I was a young man today, it'd be a lot tougher than it was when I was young. I would go talk to people who had been there—and that's basically what I did. When I was a kid, there were old men who would sit around and tell stories. Some of these guys made a little gold all week long and they would come to town every two weeks and sell it and have a party and go back to work. You listened to them. You listened to the Indians. You listened to people with stories and pretty soon you'd start forming opinions and getting some ideas of your own. If I was a young man looking for gold, I'd read books, I'd listen to people who had been there. I'd hang around Tonopah. Most of the old-timers are gone; there's hardly anybody to talk to.

RM: That is one of the reasons I want to record these stories. I'm just interested in them because I love stories, but maybe other people could benefit from them.

BR: All of those stories are what make me like to go prospecting. These guys weren't like I am. They didn't have a quad to go ride on. They left Belmont and walked from there to Rhyolite. They were tough in those days. You're talking 160 miles to Rhyolite—they'd stop a thousand times along the line and dig up rocks with their little hammer.

RM: You knew and observed a lot of these old-timers here in town when you were young—they would go out on the desert; they had a diggings somewhere out there and they'd come back with a little gold and that helped them survive.

BR: With the prices of gold today almost all of them could scratch out a living. You wouldn't make a great living, but still. . . . The gold's still there. The stringers those guys worked on are still there and they were making a living until they died. And they all died of the con [silicosis, or miner's consumption].

RM: Was that the big killer here?

BR: For most of them, yes. Of course, those guys all shot their own powder and they went

back in too soon and would breathe that dirt and dust. Most of them had at least one eye put out from being too close to the shot. A lot of miners had that one grey eye—you always knew what it was.

If I was going to do it, I'd have to be young. If I was 45 years old today and I was broke, I could make \$500 a week, easy. Of course, you'd have to have a buyer. The best price would come out of the right guy. And you want those \$100 bills; you don't want any checks. It doesn't take long for a check to become income, and then you're going to incur taxes on it and then you're going to lose a third of that. You've got to have the right person to sell to. You want one of those guys with one of those big envelopes full of \$100 bills. At today's prices, and if I was 40 years old, I could make \$500 or \$600 a week.

RM: From little stringers?

BR: Yes. I'd go in there and try and dig as much of it out as I could without shooting it, then I'd shoot it and break it. And then I'd clean up what rocks I could find that . . . now, this is down on your hands and rocks and beating on rocks and getting any visible gold.

Because you're not in the business for microscopic gold. You can't do it. You have to have chemists and what have you to show you how to do that and you have to do it in huge amounts.

If you can see it, it's worth going after. So you go up and clean up anything you can see. If you're in a drift that goes back 100 feet, now you've got all that stuff on the floor you've got to get out before you put another shot in. If you're lucky, you've got a gas drill, and those drills are heavy. Probably you don't have a compressor big enough you can haul up a mountain and run hoses and everything to run a jackleg so you do it with a gas drill. But you can do \$600, \$700 a week every week.

But you've got to work—you're not going to go up and drink soda pops and what

have you; you're going to put in the hardest eight hours a day you've put in for a long time. Some weeks, you might make \$5,000, too, if you hit one little stretch that's good.

RM: What about the ownership of these little properties? Are you working on the sly or do you stake it out?

BR: I just put down a claim on a place that's been overlooked by people for quite a while. And I never thought about it until I got talking about it with you. I looked it up—went to the BLM Web site—and nobody'd staked it. I think the main reason is it had caved in. But it's still got six or eight years in it; I was there not that long ago, and it's not caved in that much; it'd be easy to clean out. But it was a good claim.

RM: And they're little properties? I mean, they're not some big old mine like the Victor Shaft or something up in Tonopah.

BR: Oh, no. This one in particular, old Louie McRae ran it all by himself. It's got a dump out there about as big as that driveway; it goes out quite a ways. He dug that drift by hand; it's about 140 feet long.

RM: Are there a lot of those properties through these hills?

BR: There are not a lot. And you may not find anything. You spent a lot of time looking at spots you think might have something and you send an assay and it'll come back zero.

RM: It's probably like that in other areas, too.

BR: I think Gold Mountain has a lot of potential; I think Lida has a lot of potential.

Manhattan has more potential than anywhere; I think Manhattan's been way overlooked;

RM: Oh—both hard rock and placer?

BR: Mainly hard rock. They've got a lot of placer there. They pumped water clear across that valley. That gold came from somewhere, Bob. And I have seen some beautiful samples from up there; it came from somewhere.

I was with a guy one time at the Test Site and they had this area that had been closed down for a few years. There was a big warehouse there. We had a fuel truck to fuel a generator, and walked over and tried the door of the warehouse, and it was open.

So we go in there and this old warehouse had all kinds of stuff in it and there were no security guards. Pretty soon, here comes this cop. I saw him coming down the hill so I ran outside and got into the outhouse. And this guy's from Tonopah—he died just recently over in California in a swimming pool. Anyway, he pulled up. I came on out of the outhouse—
"Ah, just checking these buildings."

He checks the door. Of course, the door's unlocked. Well, he walks in; I'm going to walk in there with him; I'm going to try to deter him from finding my friend, Buzz, who's still in there. [Laughs] They've got all these lockers in there. He goes by and opens the doors to these lockers. There's Buzz in the locker. He said, "What are you doing in there?" Buzz said, "Well, everybody's got to be somewhere." [Laughter] Pretty good answer, huh?

BR: The cop's name was Lorigan, Dale Lorigan. He was out of Tonopah. He was a cop at Mercury, too.

RM: What did Lorigan do?

BR: He just started laughing. He knew we were somewhere we weren't supposed to be but he didn't really care.

RM: Do you have any stories about fencing the gold? There were high-graders and then there were guys just doing their digging. And of course, they had to sell it.

BR: I don't know much about the high-grading because Rhyolite wasn't really going when I was a kid. There were a lot of leasers and a lot of gypos, but they had an agreement with whoever owned the mine. Of course, they stole. They would say, "Okay, we're going to split with you," but the owner might get one-third and they'd take two-thirds, and the owner had

no way to check it. There was a lot of that.

In fact, almost all the old-timers in town were leasers or gypos. They hadn't left because they still could go out there and get some gold. And if they found something good, and they had a little larceny in them, they would hide it from the mine owner; they would high-grade that. That wasn't during my time, but you read books about Virginia City and Tonopah and Goldfield—they had a lot of ways of stealing gold out of these mines. They would stick it in orifices that were never designed for gold nuggets.

But all the gypos, my guess would be that they were too old to start again or they were an alcoholic or they had something hidden that they wanted to go back and get. And once they got in there, if they had found a pretty good stringer, well, if they're making a fair living. . . . A fair living in the '50s was \$50 a week. They could buy some groceries and some booze and Bull Durham and away they went. Of course, gold was \$32 an ounce then. So if they could make a living, hell, they'd just stop work.

Most of them are up there in that cemetery. Old Homer Weeks, he hung in there for a long time. Of course, he died of the con. They called it tuberculosis, but it was still the con. You work in those old mines and you're just out there breathing that dirt all day long and pretty soon it's going to eat your lungs up and you're going to die. They say cigarettes are bad—they've got no idea what that dirt'll do to you. Silicosis is a terrible thing. I don't know if you've ever been around people who have the con, but you'd see a guy you'd think had a little smoker's cough, but when he turned around, blood ran out of his mouth. The con was a bad thing.

RM: Oh, horrible. Norman Coombs told me there was a rule down in the mine—if you found gold, you would take it and throw it up to the back and anything that stuck, belonged to the mine. [Laughs] His rule was, the first one who finds it, gets it. He said you could have

the most honest guy in the world and everything, but boy, when it came to gold. . . .

BR: You can be addicted to drugs, you can be an alcoholic, you can be addicted to a lot of things; gold is probably one of the worst. When you feel gold, there's something about it that just amazes you. You never get over it. It's a fever, it's a passion; there's just something about gold that's a fever.

RM: My dad had it; it sort of ruined his life because he never found it.

BR: It ruined almost everybody's life. I know people who had families, and there were jobs available, but they would run off looking for gold.

RM: That's what my dad did.

BR: It's a fever; it's an obsession. It's terrible.

RM: My dad said, "I saw guys that made it big; I saw them. I knew it could be done." And so he figured he could, but he couldn't. Finally, when he was in his 50s, he just tossed in the towel and went to work at the Test Site and worked there till he was past 70; he had a steady income.

BR: Unless you have a wealthy company behind you, you're never going to get rich on gold. You'll do like I've done; I've saved certain pieces that I'm proud of and that I enjoy looking at. But if you consider my labor and my gas and my time, I have not broken even.

RM: That's interesting. But man, you've had fun, haven't you?

BR: I have; and I've found some beautiful gold. But a little man is never going to get rich on gold nowadays. They look for gold with satellites. And geologists have all these small instruments they can carry around and see what's on the ground 15 feet deep—all with radio signals and what have you. You and I can't compete with that.

RM: No. But you're sure good at finding it for a little guy. I only know one other guy who can do it like you and that's Bobby Bottom.

BR: He's the best I ever saw. Bottom can walk down Fremont Street and find gold.

RM: Norman Coombs was good, too.

BR: Of course, Norman Coombs trained Bobby Bottom, and so did those two brothers who got murdered up there—what were their names?

RM: Franks. Did you know Norman? What do you recall about him?

BR: Oh, just his stories. I love the stories. I'm a story-teller guy. When I was a kid, as I told you, I'd sit on the porch at the store and just listen to the stories.

RM: If a guy just would have had a tape recorder going; wouldn't that have been something?

BR: Now with TV, there are no stories anymore, no hand-me-downs. And they believe all the stuff they see on TV.

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