

An Interview with
CATHERINE
BANOVICH-LYDON

An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
1987

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Catherine Banovich-Lydon
1987

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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,

- 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 whom 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 Tan 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.

All material for the NCTHP was prepared with the support of the U.S. Department of Energy, Grant No. DE-FG08-89NV10820. However, any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed herein are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of DOE.

--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 some material from the boomtown period from 1900 to about 1915, but very little on the area after around 1920. The volume of available sources varies from town to town: A fair amount of literature, for instance, can be found covering Tonopah's first two decades of existence, and the town has had a newspaper continuously since its first year. In contrast, relatively little is known about the early days of Gabbs, Round Mountain, Manhattan, Beatty, Amargosa Valley, and Pahrump. Gabbs's only newspaper was published intermittently between 1974 and 1976. Round Mountain's only newspaper, the Round Mountain Nugget, was published between 1906 and 1910. Manhattan had newspaper coverage for most of the years between 1906 and 1922. 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 maybe 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.

Robert McCracken interviewing Catherine "Kayo" Banovich-Lydon at her home in Tonopah, Nevada - October 17 and 24 and December 7, 1987

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Kayo, could you state your full name?

CB: Catherine Banovich Lydon Steele. I was married twice.

RM: When and where were you born?

CE: On March 6, 1916, in Tonopah. I had an older brother and 2 older sisters, and I have one younger brother, David, who's the only other one living in our family.

RM: Who were your folks?

CB: My dad was Mike Banovich. He came to Tonopah in 1902 and my mother [Miruna Banovich] waited for him in Montenegro - which is part of Yugoslavia - from 1900 until 1909. He sent for her from Tonopah. She came here, and they were married and had 5 children.

RM: When did he leave Yugoslavia?

CB: He left Montenegro, Yugoslavia, in 1900 and came to West Virginia. Then he heard about all the money and gold and silver out in the west, so he came to Tonopah.

RM: Did he make any other stops along the way, or did he come straight to Tonopah?

CB: He came straight to Tonopah; he heard about the big boom here. And then he sent for my mother, as I said, in 1909.

RM: So he was here 7 years before he sent for her.

CB: Yes. She waited for him 11 years altogether. They left Yugoslavia because they said they didn't want anyone to give them orders, or dictate to them how they should live their lives and not let them believe in what they believed in.

RM: Was there a dictator there then?

CB: No, but it was compulsory military training, and . . . Well, there was a king, to whom they were faithful till they died. Montenegro was the smallest kingdom in the world before World War I. They had King Nicholas I. And my mother died in 1959, and right up till the day she died, he was very important in her life. In fact, in Serbian my name is Zorka, which was the name of one of King Nicholas's daughters.

RM: So you had a Serbian name and an English name.

CB: That's right. In fact, most Slav children do. When they enrolled my brother in school, [they gave him the] name William. And in Serbian his name was Biseli, so it's quite different. And my sister May, and my sister Ann, and then myself - we all had Slav names. My mom couldn't speak English, so our neighbors would enroll us in school and they would choose a name for us.

RM: You had your Slavic name, and then somebody else would choose your English name.

CB: Yes. I don't know how . . . a neighbor lady took me to enroll me in school, and evidently she and my sister liked the name Catherine, and that's how I got it.

RM: And you grew up, before school age, with your Slavic name.

CB: Oh, sure.

My dad died in 1921. My youngest brother, David, was only 9 months old.

RM: What did he die of?

CB: Miner's consumption; silicosis. My mother was left with these 5 children, and she couldn't speak English. So she decided to have boarders; that was the only way to survive, and they helped each other, in those days.

RM: Was this the Slavic community, or the whole town?

CB: The whole town. They were good to us. I don't know how my mother ever raised 5 children alone without one dime of welfare. She had a great big garden, where she raised vegetables and sold them, and we had goats, cows, chickens. We lived right across from the Assembly of God Church. Our home took in almost the whole highway.

As the years went, they cut it down, because they would buy - or, take [our property] away from us.

Everybody in town wanted to come to the Banovich's to eat. We couldn't figure out - "What's the matter with these kids?" We probably ate better than anybody in town, but we didn't have anything.

RM But she was a wonderful cook.

CB: Oh, yes, and my mother was a very strong-minded person.

RM: How old was your father when he passed away?

CB: Forty-seven. And he had gotten silicosis in the Montana mine, up on the hill.

RM: And they got it because they were drilling dry.

CB: Right. He was going to make a lot of money, so that he could take us somewhere, where we could have a farm, or live differently. When my dad died my mother decided that she would take us back to Yugoslavia, and she did. He died in '21, and in 1924 we went back to Yugoslavia and lived there for 2 years.

When we went, my mother had no intention of coming back, because she had 5 children to raise. But when we got over there my brother William, who was about 14 then, said that he was going home, and my mother said, "This is home." We had a nice home - lots of relatives, grandparents, everything. The rest of us were very happy. But he said, "No," Tonopah was his home and he was coming back. He didn't want any part of that; he remembered Tonopah.

So she said, "No, we'll all go back."

RM: Why did she say that?

CB: Because Yugoslavia just wasn't what she wanted for us.

RM: What was wrong?

CB: She had been here, and lived our way, and it was what she had wanted to get away from that she was taking us back to.

RM: Was it basically the lack of freedom or something else?

CB: That was it. Your [right] to say what you think, you know.

RM: Yes. What community was it, in Yugoslavia?

CB: In Nickich. I was just there.

RM: Oh, you went over there?

CB: I've been over there twice. It was beautiful - I loved it.

RM: Is it a small town?

CB: It's a small town, but there's a huge steel mill there now That country is made up of small villages with this one town, Nickich, that people from the villages come to for market. And it's a beautiful little city.

RM: Is it near the coast?

CB: Yes. Not too far from the Adriatic Sea and not too far from Dubrovnik. She just decided that we would come home, so she packed us all up and we went to Cherbourg, France, and caught a ship there. The ship [took us] to New York City. She had no birth certificates; nothing to prove

we were American. And this is what I will remember my whole life, and it made a scar on me I will never ever get out of my heart - what they did to us. They put us in Ellis Island and kept us there for 2 weeks - just like animals. I would love to see Ellis Island disappear into the New York harbor - that's how much bitterness I feel.

RM: What was it like on Ellis Island?

CE: It was just like being in a prison, I'm sure. I'm sure I know how people in the concentration camps felt. Here we were - I was 7 years old, my brother David was 3, Annie was 10, May was 12, William was 14 . . . There was a board and we had to go before it. And they were going to deport us because we had nothing to prove we were Americans, and my mother definitely was not an American.

RM: She had never become a citizen?

CB: No. So the board decided that they would deport us. And there was one 'woman on the board who absolutely said, no. She said, "These are American children. Can't you tell by talking to them?"

RM: You all knew English.

CB: My sister had a report card from the 3rd grade. And so she wouldn't go along with it. As I say, they treated you just like prisoners - just like animals.

RM: What did you live in - cells, or what?

CB: They would have those sliding doors, and tall, high chain-link fences. They can tell people all they want about how great Ellis Island is - they should've been there, like I was. And a guard asked my mother if she happened to know the senator or congressman from Nevada. And she said, "Oh, yes." Key Pittman was the senator from Nevada. And he'd been to our house many times and ate and drank with us.

So he said, "Write a letter to him and I will take it out." My sister wrote the letter, and within 12 hours after he got the letter we were out of Ellis Island.

RM: Is that right! Well, if you hadn't've known Key Pittman . . .

CB: We would've gone back to the old country. I wouldn't've cared - I loved it. I had my grandmothers, and my cousins, and aunts, and uncles. I was so young it didn't matter, but I know that it wasn't the place, because this was my home. I was born in Tonopah. I loved Tonopah and wanted to come back.

RM: How did your dad feel about Tonopah? I mean, you know, the fact that he died young . . .

CB: He loved it - land of the free. You see, that's the basic thing of it - freedom. We'd always had it, and we'll always have it, and people without it just . . . I know this last trip to Yugoslavia, when my sister and I went to Belgrad to visit a cousin, I thought, "Oh, God! How can they live like this." You know, it's Iron Curtain country. Of course we weren't bothered, because we were with our relatives. But it's terrible.

But as I say, we came back to Tonopah, and I was little; it wouldn't've mattered to me. But I've always been very happy that I did come back.

RM: Did you go to school in Yugoslavia when you were there for the 2 years?

CB: Oh, yes. And when I came back to America I had forgotten, really, how to speak English very well. And David couldn't even say a word - he was too little. I went to school and there was one teacher who would try to make me say "white," and I couldn't. I'd say, "whit." One day she hit my hands with a ruler, and she said, "Now, say white."

And I said, "Whit."

So she started to cry. And she grabbed me, and she told me many, many years later that that was the most terrible thing that happened to her life. TO think that she thought I was being a smart kid when I just couldn't say it.

RM: Did you speak Slav?

CB: Yes. I still do.

RM: Did you speak it in the home?

CB: Always.

RM: Was that pretty typical of the Slavic homes in Tonopah?

CB: No, most of them spoke English. They didn't want to remember those old things. My children learned to speak it from my mother and my grandchildren understand a great deal of it.

RM: But when you married, you raised your children with English?

CB: Oh, sure; I married an Irishman - a very wonderful man - and we had 2 children, Tim and Phyllis. And then I have 5 grandchildren and 2 great-grandsons.

But when I was growing up, as I say, everybody in Tonopah helped everyone.

RM Now, it wasn't just the Slavic community; it was the whole town.

CB: No; everybody. A lot of Slav people felt that they were not ostracized. But people felt differently about them because we were from the old country. But that never bothered me, because I know that I loved to play ball, and I could play ball as well as anybody, so it never

bothered me that I was Slay. And they'd call you a "Bohunk" - that was the last of my worries. My mother always raised us to believe that nobody was any better than we were. Everybody was as good, but nobody was any better. Consequently, we grew up that way; that was our philosophy all through life. And Tonopah was a wonderful place to raise a family. I don't think my mother could've raised us anyplace else, because she had 5 children and no husband, and she couldn't speak English . .

RM: She never did learn English?

CB: Eventually she did; she had to. She became a citizen when she was 76 years old. The judge asked her why she wanted to be a citizen, and she said, well, she never had time before. She was raising the family and working; she worked harder than any man in the world. But she said that she wanted to know that when she died, she would die as a citizen of the best country in the world. But she didn't ever let us forget that we were Montenegrans.

RM: She was proud of that heritage.

CB: Very proud. And we are, too. And my children are.

RM: Did the Serbs live in one section of town, or were they all over?

CB: All over. Our family lived up . . . you know where the Assembly of God Church is?

RM: I'm not sure where it is.

CB: It's on Main Street and Magnolia Avenue - on the corner. We had a huge house and a huge garden. Then the Boscovich family lived up the street, but they were the only Slays. The Bekos lived down the street - on Main Street. We were all scattered around.

RM: Did they tend to associate with one another?

CB: Oh, yes. In fact, Serbian Christmas was on the 7th of January, and we always . . .

RM: Is that when the Serbs celebrate Christmas? Why is that?

CB: It's by the old calendar. My mother always celebrated it, and then after she died my sister and I did, and now that I'm not able to my son and daughter do. We still have a big dinner on the 7th of January, with all the Slav food and everything. We have friends who have been coming to it since 1929.

RM: Do you serve special Serbian food?

CB: Oh, yes. We serve a lot of American food now, with meat and stuff, but we still make a macaroni and chicken [dish] a certain way that they did in the old country. We still have that;

my daughter makes it. And I make strudel, and we make all kinds of cakes. And Kui makes roshtula and different things that my mother made and taught me to make, and I taught her to make, and she makes it now. We've never given up our tradition. We believe in it, and I believe that's the way it should be. I think everybody should know-where they came from; my children and grandchildren certainly do.

RM: Did most of the Slavs in Tonopah come from Montenegro?

CB: No, they came from all over.

RM: Was there a large Slavic community in Tonopah?

CB: Yes.

RM: How did most of the men earn their living?

CB: In the mines, and some of them had grocery stores, and they had different jobs, but they were mostly miners. In fact, that's one thing that I have an awful feeling about. When I was young and worked in the restaurants I'd see those men I'd known my whole life just literally die before my eyes from the miner's consumption.

RM: Is that right - from the dust.

CB: Yes; from the dust. It was terrible - young men. They would work so hard, and get nothing. They always had, in the back of their minds, that they were going back home with money, and all this. And of course they didn't; they all died from miner's consumption. Really, it was sad.

RM: Was it a fast death?

CB: Yes; a very, very painful death. They'd just literally cough their lungs out. There was the old mines hospital right down the street here, and they had a big screened porch where all those poor men with silicosis would sit so they could breathe same air. That's the kind of thing that hurt me that I think about. And then at the old county hospital they had a house, separate from the hospital, where the men with miner's con were. I'd go over there and visit some of those guys, and oh! some of those old men . . . not old men; they were young men, but they were old physically. I was too young to really realize what was going on, but here they were. They just came over here and just died for - nothing, really.

RM: Because they couldn't make enough to ever get out.

CB: Never. They worked, what - my husband's father raised 6 children. His wife died and he was left with 6 children, and he was some type of boss in the mines, and he raised all those children on - I think the highest wages were \$3.50 a day. He sent them all away to school, did all these

things, and you just wonder how in the world. He was an Irishman; came here from Leadville, Colorado, during the strike.

RM: Was that the strike in Goldfield?

CB: No, the strike in Colorado. They all came to Tonopah and Goldfield. That's how come the Lydon family came here.

RM: Tell me some more about the health problems of the miners.

CB: You would walk down the street, when you were just a kid, and they'd have benches here and there all along the street and these poor old guys would be sitting there, just coughing away. It would kind of repulse you, but yet you knew what it was. And there was nothing anybody could do about it; they just died like flies, that's all. It was terrible; terrible. That's the one terrible thing that is in my mind; watching so many men I knew as I grew up who died from the miner's consumption.

RR: Who took care of them when they were unable to work?

CB: The mining companies kept them in the hospital. As far as I could figure out, that's what happened. And the county had to take care of the ones who weren't kept there. The county hospital was where so many died.

RM: But they were taking millions out of the mines, and . .

CB: Out of the mines; and they got nothing.

RM: Was there a means of preventing silicosis at that time?

CB: Oh, I think so..

RM: They just could save money by not doing . . .

CB: They could save money by not doing it. They could care less. Those lives meant nothing to them.

RM: I know my dad, who started out mining in Cripple Creek when they were drilling dry, always wore a wet sponge.

CB: Yes. You see, Papa didn't. I don't remember my dad; I was only 4 when he died and my brother Dave was only 9 months old, so it's hard to say. But you have mixed feelings on it. Why didn't they do something to help themselves? But they didn't; all they could think of was to get some money, to support their families, and to go back home with money, and it was just an impossible dream.

RM: Did a lot of them lease?

CB: Yes. After the mines closed, they turned to leasing. That was after the crash in 1929 - '30. The mines all closed, and then they opened back up for leasing. And that's when they got the dust - trying to Rake all that money quick.

RM: Oh; the dust problem became worse when they re-opened?

CB: Sure, because they were trying to make big money to get out of there. They drilled dry, and they . . . I used to work in a restaurant when I was still in the 8th grade. And the poor old miners would have a tab - the restaurant keepers would give them credit. Then when they shipped their ore, they would come and pay off. And they would have nothing really left, because by the time they paid their debts there wasn't anything. Then they'd start again. Some of them made a lot of money, but not that many.

When I was very little I can remember that the whistles blew on the mines for noon and all that sort of thing. And then as the years went by, there was nothing. Tonopah was dead. I've seen Tonopah so bad that you wondered how people existed. But I really have never seen Tonopah as bad off as it is now.

RM: Is that right!

CB: Economically - everything. There's just something missing. I don't know - can't say. It's lucky that you have friends; it's a very close town. And everybody helps - they all help each other, or they couldn't exist right now, with this strike out here; it's terrible. My 2 grandsons are out on strike.

RM: You're referring to the strike out on the range. [The union strike at the government test facility east of Tonopah in the fall of 1987.]

CB: Out at the Test Site. So you see, it's always been helping each other. That's one thing about Tonopah: they've always done it, and they always will. But of course it isn't quite like it was.

RM: You don't get the credit you used to, do you?

CB: No. You used to go down to the grocery store, charge all your groceries, charge everything, and pay it. And if you didn't have enough to pay it, you paid something on it. The same with fuel. Well now, forget it. They cut you right off at the market. Of course, when Tonopah really boomed was during the war.

CHAPTER TWO

CB: The boom came when they knew there was going to be a war and they started building the Tonopah Army Air Base. My husband was the chief of police.

RM: What was his name?

CB: Freck Lydon. That was a nickname; his name was Robert E. Lydon. When he was young and his mother died, his father sent him to Berkeley, California to a St. Joseph's Academy - a Catholic school.

RM: Did his father die of silicosis?

CB: Yes. Tim Lydon. In fact, my son's named Tim and my great-grandson is named Tim. My husband went to Berkeley, and while attending school there, he became real friends with a Frank Flynn, who was from San Francisco. He used to always tell him, "Come to Tonopah, and I'll get you a wild horse." He was in the police station one day when the first batch of officers came out, after the air base was built.

And this colonel walked in and said, "Well, where's that horse? Here I am." After all those years. He was the second in command out at this base. Frank Flynn was a wonderful man.

But when that boom went on, you wouldn't believe those kids who came here during the war. They even lived in chicken coops. My mother lived alone in that big old rambling house. It had 4 bedrooms and 2 sleeping porches, but we were afraid for her to have people. But one day a young couple came, and she said, yes, they could live there; she would rent them a room. They had kitchen privileges and all. And she called us and told us what she had done - what could you do? And she had some of the most wonderful young people who lived with her. They kept up with her until she died.

I worked at the Tonopah Army Air Field as a hostess in the enlisted men's service club. And I met many, many young men. And it was a wonderful experience, but a sad one, especially when they'd be shipping the young kids out to go overseas. You knew you'd never see them again. But it was an experience I would never give up. It was wonderful.

But this town was a boom town. It made me bitter, because they would overcharge for rent, they would overcharge for food . . . then they put on price controls and that made it a little better, and there was rationing. I just don't know how some of those people existed. I had a lot of friends who were in the army, and through Colonel Flynn we met many more. But it was definitely a boom town.

RM: Could you describe some aspects of the boom?

CB: Oh, they had, for instance, the USO; huge dances for all these kids out there.

RM: Where would they have the dances?

CB: Where the civic center is now. It was called the auditorium at that time. The army was segregated then, and the gates out at the Tonopah Army Air Base were built by the colored squadron. Their commanding officer was a white captain - Captain Rio Dolores. He was from Saginaw, Michigan. They also built the beautiful fireplaces that they still haven't been able to knock down. Captain Dolores and his colored crew did a lot of that rock work and brick work. But to go downtown and go in the restaurants - they would be lined up to eat. It was the same in the grocery stores, and they had to have food stamps, and it would be terrible. Here were these poor little kids, fighting for their country. Of course, they could buy things out at the air base, but probably a lot of them just didn't do it. And the awful part was that a lot of people got rich during that, and it leaves a bad taste in your mouth. Because these kids are making a sacrifice . .

RM: How many grocery stores were there in town?

CB: We had a Safeway store then - a big one. Do you know where Dr. Dees has that office that was Coleman's Grocery Store?

RM: Yes, sure.

CB: That was a Safeway store. Before it was there it was down the street. And then they opened a bigger store up there, and it was very . .

RM: Where Coleman's was. And Bird's was across the street?

CB: During the war, Bird's was across the street from the Ace Club - in that area. It was a little, tiny store. And then they moved up there. And there was a Central Market, Mal Meat Market, a bakery . . . there were a lot more stores than now.

RM: And then there were probably a lot of restaurants.

CB: Oh, yes. In fact, I worked in one - the Quick Lunch, which was a small restaurant. And I worked in the Tonopah Club for many, many years.

RM: Where was the Quick Lunch?

CB: In where the Nevada Cafe is now - the Chinese restaurant. It was a little, tiny restaurant with 14 stools. And when I went to work at the Tonopah Army Air Base, you couldn't make money in the service club; you had to sell that stuff to the boys for . . . You'd give them a full meal of T-bone, potatoes, salad, everything that went with it, and you may be charged 50 cents. We used a lot of ham because they ate lots of ham and eggs, and you'd have those ham hocks left. So I would bring the ham hocks into Tonopah to the little Quick Lunch restaurant, because food was rationed, and they could make beans and ham, and cabbage and ham, and so forth. There would be big, huge boxes of ham hocks, because there were 5,000 men out there - at one time 6,000. I did that for so long, and then they stopped me. Instead of letting me bring

those in, and give them to the Quick Lunch to use, they gave them to Lambertucci to feed to his pigs.

RM: To his pigs?

CB: I'm not lying. I saw it - I was part of it. And that was something I had a lot of bitter feelings about.

RM: Yes. There must've been some kind of a shady deal.

CB: Yes. If I had been smart enough, I could have really caused a big stir. But, you know, you don't make the boat rock when you're a little gal working out there. I was just a kid, then.

RM: Were you married then?

CB: Oh, yes. I was married and had 2 children. My husband was the chief of police.

RM: Oh; but you worked anyway.

CB: I worked out there, and it was one of the biggest highlights of my life. But I saw things go on that were unbelievable. Like with the ham hocks, I never did get over that. They gave them to Lambertucci, who owned Lambertucci's ranch out here. And he had all these pigs. So that's where all that good stuff went, instead of to the people.

So I did a lot of dirty things, too. I had all these kids working for me, and you just could pay them half their base pay. So I'd say, "Well, let's play like they do in these big joints in town. You ring one up for the government, and you don't ring up 2 for you." So all the kids would get paid off the top because they were working for nothing. So we had the most faithful crew during the entire war - they never wanted to leave the service club. They could go on furloughs, they could go on trips. They had the money to do it, because they earned it in the service club. They knew we were doing that. But they didn't say anything about it.

RM: There must've been a lot of bars in town then, too.

CB: Oh, yes. And that the first time they ever put a padlock on the Tonopah Club - when they had that curfew from midnight to 8:00 in the morning. The army did that, and they had to lock it up. Never in the history of Tonopah was the Tonopah Club ever closed. But that whole side - street - was nothing but bars and restaurants. You just can't believe . . . Counting soldiers, there were lots of people. Of course the boom was when they were building the base. All these people moved in here and lived and . . .

RM: Most of the soldiers lived on the base, didn't they?

CB: On the base; right.

RM: They must've had just miles of barracks.

CB: Oh, yes. You just can't believe . . . the service clubs were beautiful. And their hangars were so huge, too.

RM: Like the ones that are still out there.

CB: That's also when the red-light district closed.

RM: Oh, it closed when the air base started?

CB: Yes. Do you know where the L&L Motel is?

RM: Yes.

CB: That was all the red-light district. There were 3 streets full. They had bars, and they had all the gals in their cribs. I grew up thinking that is a way of life, so it never bothered me any. But when the army came they had to close; they ran them all out. There was one bar open down there that was just supposedly a bar, but of course you know better than that. But nobody paid any attention to it. After that, the red-light district never did re-open as it had been before the war.

RM: When did it finally close down altogether?

CB: I can't really remember. There was a great big bar on the corner, and there was a little Chinese restaurant, and a barber shop. These were right in front of the red-light district. It was a great, big bar. The Silver State, I think it was called. That's when Nick Lauvridge owned it. He sold it to somebody, and then Leroy David bought all that ground and I just can't really remember how it all disappeared. I think there was an ordinance against it being there, or something. But then it was turned into a motel.

RM: When the army closed down the red-light district, did the girls just go somewhere else?

CB: Oh, yes, they just disappeared.

RM: But were they were still working in town?

CB: Oh, yes, I'm sure they were.

RM: There wasn't any particular spot in town where they drifted to?

CB: No, they were just around. And a lot of them went from here to Las Vegas, because it was a bigger town, and to Ely, and different places. But when they closed it, they closed it.

RM: Could we back up a little bit and could you tell me some more about the Slavic way of life, and how they thought, and what kind of people they were, and so on?

CB: Well, they were very strong-minded. Very proud people. As I say, some of us who were born here are still close friends, and our children are still friends, and our grandchildren. It's something that was bred in you, to be proud of what you were. And we've stayed that way - my family has, especially. You remain very true to each other, and there's a feeling there that I . . . I really can't tell you what it is, it's something that stems back from our roots.

RM: A feeling of unity with these other people?

CB: Yes. Of helping each other in a time of need - you can call on each other, and you're always there to help each other. It started with my parents, and then with me, and then my children. I have a friend - we've been friends from the time we were born - and now our daughters are just as close as we were.

RM: Well, that unity and helping each other was a characteristic in the villages in the old country, wasn't it?

CB: Yes. And we had here, for many, many years, what we called the Serbian Hall. It was a big, two-story building, that we sold to the Carpenters Union for nothing, because somebody set a fire in it. But they had a Serbian young men's society - it was like a lodge - and we all belonged to it. It was an insurance-type thing. But we'd have big parties up there on certain days - Saints' Days - through the year. My parent's family Saint Day was on the 6th of October; it was Saint John's Day. And then in June there was a big one that you celebrated. We'd have dances, and food, and drinks, and . . .

RM: Would they have Serbian music?

CB: Sometimes, yes. When I was little we would all recite a Serbian poem, or sing Serbian songs together as part of the program. They wanted us not to forget our heritage, so that's how they did it. They didn't say we had to do it; it was a lot of fun - we had a good time.

RM: Were they Catholic?

CB: No. That's a problem in my mother and dad's country: the Croatians and the Serbs. Croatians are Catholic and Serbs are Serbian Orthodox. And to this day - when I was over there this time, I couldn't believe it - it's still [going on].

RM: Was there a split here in Tonopah?

CB: Oh, definitely.

RM: So some of the Slavics were Croatian . .

CB: Catholic. And we had nothing to do with them. We were friends, but you knew how far to go. Your parents taught you.

RM: Now, who would the Croatians include?

CB: "An ertsebelutzen."

RM: What are they called?

CB: Ertsebelutz. Yugoslavia was composed of Tzernagura, Montenegro, Hertzgovina and Boznia. After World. War I they made them all Yugoslavia; they were all countries by themselves [before that]. And there is definitely a split. I was brought up . . . my mother had absolutely no time for the Croatians.

RM: Were there Croatians in Montenegro?

CB: Oh, no; they were Serbian Orthodox. It's a lot like the Catholic faith, but they have their own [pope, as do the] Russian Orthodox and Greek Orthodox.

RM: Did the Serbian Orthodox have their own church in town?

CB: No, but the Serbian Hall was blessed by the Serbian priest who would come here. When he would come, he would hold services there and all the kids would get baptized, and . . . For instance, my mom and dad got married. She already had my brother, but she felt that she was never married because a Serbian priest didn't marry them. So the Serbian priest came to Tonopah and he married my mother and dad and baptized their son. Religion was something that my mother was a firm believer in; religion played a big part in the early days. Afterwards, the kids and grandkids and all kind of let it go, although my son, not too long ago, said to me about somebody . . . My mother called the Croatians shkuterie. She [chuckles] would just call them that. She was very outspoken. She didn't care, and she didn't take orders from anybody. But she taught that to my children.

RM: And that meant Catholic?

CB: Oh, you bet. And my son was talking about somebody not too long ago, and turned around and he said, "What did you expect - it's a shkuter."

RM: But it didn't necessarily mean he was Catholic - it meant that he was inferior, or something. Is that right?

CB: He wasn't up to what you were; yes. We never really made a big issue of it after . . . She taught us what she thought, but she left it up to us. Because I married a Catholic.

RM: Was your mother disappointed or upset?

CB: Very. In fact, she wouldn't go to my daughter's wedding because she was married in the Catholic church. That's how firmly she believed it. RM: She wouldn't go in the Catholic church.

CB: No. I think she might've gone in for a funeral - some of the old ladies she knew or something. But . . . No, there was always that awful feeling that I, to this day, have never been able to figure out.

RM: What did the Serbian Orthodox do for services when the priest didn't come to the hall?

CB: We'd just get together at our house, all of us, and our mothers would tell us stories and things about our church; they kept it alive.

RM: Were there many Serbian Orthodox in Tonopah?

CB: They were mostly Serbian Orthodox. There weren't too many Croatians. They were kind of ostracized by . . . my mother, especially. I don't think anybody felt as strongly as she did. I never could really figure it out. Then she got so that she said, "There's only one God."

I'd say, "Then why did you teach us all this stuff?"

Well, she had no answer for it. It was inbred in her.

RM: What was it like when you first went to school?

CB: I had a great time going to school - I loved it. And we all did well in school. When my oldest brother and sister, who were not too far apart in age, went to school, they couldn't speak American - English, so it was hard. But as the rest of us came along, they taught us to talk, so we didn't go in there without being able to speak. Annie could speak pretty well. My favorite story about my sister Annie [happened when] she was in kindergarten and she was sent home with a note from the teacher. My mother said, "Why did she send you home?"

She said, "She said I stink."

And my-mother said, "Well, you couldn't stink. You have a bath, and you're clean, your clothes . . ."

She said, "She told me I stink."

She said, "Why?"

And she said, "I ate a pumpkin."

So she said, "What do you mean, you ate a pumpkin? Show me."

So she took my mother out in the garden, and showed her where she'd eaten garlic. [chuckles] My mother couldn't read the note, and Papa and her brother were at the mine, working. They could read English, but Mama couldn't. So she took Annie by the hand and walked clear to the kindergarten school - it was a building by itself. The teacher's name was Garben. She knocked on the door, and she pointed her finger at her and she said, "You teach my Annie - you no smell."

RM: [laughs]

CB: She said [laughs] the teacher never ever forgot that. She said it really made her feel terrible. And afterwards, my sister's daughter was in kindergarten and this woman had gone back to teach kindergarten just as kind of something to do. So when Annie took her daughter to enroll her, she knocked on the door, and she said - her name was then Curry - "Mrs. Curry, you teach my Tasha - you no smell." And she thought that was really something. We still tell that story to the kids.

RM: Do the Serbs like a lot of garlic? (I love garlic.)

CB: Oh, yes. I do. In fact, my house usually smells like garlic.

RM: Did you go to the old high school down here?

CB: Yes. I graduated in 1935 and I went to the University of Nevada for 2 years. My sister Annie went to the University of Nevada, and she was a teacher for 40 years, till she died.

RM: Here in town?

CB: Yes. In Goldfield, Silver Peak, Hawthorne and Tonopah.

RM: What was her name?

CB: Anne Tomany. Her husband, Don, came from Wisconsin to the University of Nevada to play football, and went out to Silver Peak for summer work, and just stayed there. Annie met him there when she was teaching.

RM: When your father came over here, did he come over alone?

CB: Yes. You know, it's very odd; so many people have so many relatives, but we don't. My dad was the only one who came. Therefore out of . . . we have a huge family, but my brother David, who was the sheriff of Fallon, has 4 sons. And from his 4 sons he has 13 grandchildren. And then I had my 2, and my 5 grandchildren, but we have no relatives.

RM: None of your mother's relatives ever came over?

CB: Not to stay.

RM: It seems remarkable today - maybe it wasn't that remarkable then - that your mother waited so long for your father.

CB: She did - for 11 years. She said that they fell in love (they were just very young) and they vowed they would never marry anybody but each other. My mother's family weren't really gung-ho on it, because my dad was kind of radical, I guess. He had a mind of his own.

RM: Was he politically radical?

CB: Oh, he just didn't believe in anybody giving orders - telling him how to live, and compulsory military training and that sort of thing. He didn't feel that anybody should tell him what to do. That's why he came to America. My mother told him she'd wait for him and she waited for him 9 years in Yugoslavia, and they were in love 2 years before he came. So altogether she really waited 11 years.

RM: Yes, that's remarkable.

CB: It's unbelievable.

RM: Yes, it is. How old was she when she finally got married?

CB: I think she was 29, with no kids. She was 17 when they said they would get married.

RM: Was your father about the same age?

CB: He was maybe a little older than my mother. But they pledged to each other and that was the way they lived. She came over here, had 5 kids, and never remarried after he died.

RM: That's a nice love story.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: I'd like a little more information on the boarding house that your mother ran. What was it like?

CB: Oh, the boarders didn't live at our house. They would come and eat supper, and then they'd take their lunch, and I think some of them had breakfast. My-mother had 5 kids, and she couldn't cook for too many.

RM: So no men actually lived there. Where did they sleep?

CB: In cabins. And I [wonder] how some of those poor men lived. I can remember the cabins on Florence Avenue. And since I've grown up I think my mother just felt sorry for them and fed them. Because she would raise cabbage and put it up in the [fall]. She'd make barrels of sauerkraut. She would smoke 2 or 3 goats and a lamb. And, oh! if you ever ate anything that was good, it's kastradina. That's smoked meat. She had her own smokehouse. And she even raised our pigs, then we'd take them to Lambertucci's and get them butchered, and she would smoke the hams and the bacons and make sausage - kudasitsa. And smoke that. You see, we always had plenty to eat. And I really and truly, afterwards, have thought that my mother just fed those poor old guys because they didn't have anything. Maybe if they got a little money they'd give it to her.

We had a cow and goats - I milked as many as 50 goats at a time.

RM: Where did she keep them?

CB: We'd herd them up in the hills during the day, and herd them home in the back yard. She'd make cheese, and sell that cheese . .

RM: Was there enough for them to eat here?

CB: Oh, they'd go out . . . of course the milk always tasted like sage brush - I hated it. She herded goats up until Dr. Joy made her get rid of them - he said her heart was so bad. She just loved it; she always had a little herd of goats.

RM: Did she herd them, or did you kids have to do that?

CB: We did as we got big. You'd go clear out in the hills, and stay there, and take a lunch with you, and read a book, or play. I had a good time doing it. My sister Annie would never do it, but I did. I loved it. I'd take David along with me and we'd sing and have a real good time. Then we'd herd them home and we would water them. They would eat the little grass, and sagebrush.

RM: Did you herd them in the winter?

CB: Oh, yes. And do you know, she turned them loose [laughs] and sometimes they'd go to people's yards and eat their trees [laughter] and rose bushes and such, and there would be a stir, and the cops would come up and just raise Cain, and my poor old mother [chuckles] - I don't know how she survived. Once somebody signed a complaint against her, and they forbade her to have them, but she went on. She didn't pay attention to them.

RM: Did other people raise animals like that?

CB: She was about the only one. And we had rabbits, chickens, goats, we had a cow . .

RM: What did you feed the rabbits and the cow?

CB: David and I walked down to the restaurants with a little wagon. At first it would be Annie and I. We'd go down the back street, behind the post office; all the way down there were 2 restaurants - the Belmont Cafe and the Montana Cafe. They'd save all the lettuce leaves and dry bread, and so forth for us, and we'd haul it home in our little wagon for the rabbits and the chicken.

RM: You were very resourceful.

CB: Yes. We had to be. And you never kept anything when you went to work. If you earned 50 cents, you took it home and gave it to your mother. And if there was a dime for the show on Sunday, you were lucky.

RM: What did the cow eat?

CB: The cows ate hay. We'd buy hay down here . . . At first, I remember, we had a wagon and a horse. My brother would go down and get several bales of hay, and she'd buy sacks of wheat to feed the chickens. Then, you see, she could sell the eggs and feed her kids.

RM: Where did she sell the eggs and cheese?

CB: People would come to the house. In fact, people would come from California to buy her goat cheese; that's how good it was.

RM: Did you help make it?

CB: Oh, sure. I could still make it if I had to. You used rennet tablets we'd get them at the drugstore. You'd warm the milk to just lukewarm, then mix the rennet tablet in with it. And then it would separate, and she'd pour the brine out into a crock or wooden barrel, and then she would form pound cans - the round, flat coffee cans that were one-pound tins. She would put the cheese in the gauze and then makes holes in the bottom of the coffee cans so that it would drain out. And then she would boil the salt and the brine in barrels and crocks, and then put the cheese in there, and it would keep forever.

RM: I'll bet it was delicious.

CB: Oh, God, it was good. It had a different taste.

RM: What did it taste like?

CB: Well . . . you buy goat's cheese now in these delicatessens, and as my kids always say, "That's not like Bubba's." And it isn't. She even used cow's milk. That was really good. It was white, on the order of Monterey Jack cheese, but with a different taste altogether. She would cover a lot of them with salt and she'd let a lot of them dry, and grate that cheese.

People who bought the cheese and eggs knew that she needed help, and they needed fresh things.

RM: Did she make only cheese from the goat's milk, or did she do other things with it?

CB: Oh, she made goat cottage cheese. It's called "skorup"; I don't know what you'd call it in English. It's when the milk settles and you skim it. That would keep for months, and you'd eat it on bread. It was from the old country. The closest thing to skorup is sour cream, but it had more taste. You could spread it on bread and on potatoes. People put sour cream on potatoes now, and think they really are doing something - I grew up eating that - I loved it.

RM: Is the house still there?

CB: Oh, no, the highway department took it. Do you know where 8a comes in?

RM: Yes.

CB: It was right there, on the left side of Main Street. In fact, I'll tell you a story about my mother. The State of Nevada - they'd screw you every which way you go - they're still at it. I remember that they wanted part of her land for this highway.

RM: She was still living then?

CB: All of us were; yes. And it was embarrassing, but now I think, "Oh, boys I wish I had that many guts." She had built walls out of rock. I don't know what they call them here - we called them meje in the old country. She knew how to build them, to make the fence. It was a rock wall with the fence up on it around the garden. Well, they decided they wanted part of that land for the highway. The first time, she gave it to them. They never paid her one dime.

RM: Is that right.

CB: No. They're terrible. They stink. And then the next time they decided they wanted some more. They were trying to claim it as county land that my mother was using [but didn't own].

Well, she'd gotten a little bit smarter by then, so she went out in the garden - (God, I was in school) and she had a little 410 shotgun. The surveyors were in our yard with all their equipment. My mother [chuckles] picked that survey equipment up and threw it right out on the highway. And she raised that little 410 shotgun and said to the surveyors, "Nom leave." And they were so scared they climbed the fence and took off. [laughter] They had a close friend of ours come up and talk to her. He knew they would take it regardless, so he talked her into making a settlement for a small amount - a piddling amount to give them what they wanted of that land.

RM: How did you originally acquire the land?

CB: My dad got it when he came here. It was a house on a big lot. MY mother kept it all those years. When we went to Yugoslavia when we were kids and then came back, we had a home. We got off that old train . .

RM: Did you come up from Vegas when you came in?

CB: No; Reno. This was in 1926.

RM: So you rode the train clear across the country.

CB: And back. It took us 29 days on the ship to get from New York Harbor to Dubrovnik. We stopped in every harbor - it was one of those steamers that delivered. When that ship would stop, my mother would take all 5 of us and go all through the town - show-us everything. We went clear up into Algiers, Africa; Lisbon, Portugal; Padras, Greece, close to Naples . . . [When we came back the ocean trip] took 11 days. We left from Cherbourg, France.

RM: How did you get to Cherbourg?

CB: On a train.

RM: That must've been expensive.

CB: My mother put some money away, and then when we came back to America we had nothing left but we were old enough to work.

RM: So you left Cherbourg and went to New York. Then you got way-laid at Ellis Island. Then you came across the country on the train?

CB: She had a first cousin in Gary, Indiana. He came to meet us on the ship and when they wouldn't let us off he just was beside himself. Because he had said that we would live in Gary and he'd help her raise us.

RM: Oh - you were going to live in Indiana

CB: I'll tell you - 6 months in Indiana was enough for anybody. We stayed there 6 months and then [chuckles] my brother said to my mother, "I'm going home." Again. It was a terrible experience; I don't know how she did it.

But we got back to Tonopah, and the train stopped, and the taxi was there - it was a big touring car - and we got off, and they said, "Wait, wait, we'll take you home in the taxi." My God, we were up that Main Street so fast you couldn't . . . My mother had to wait for the luggage, and we beat her home, too.

And all the kids along the way were hollering: "The Banovichs are home! The Banovichs!" [chuckles] Then all the neighbors came. The house was still there, and some old miners had lived in it and it was a mess. The neighbors brought soap and rags and brooms and mops and they all helped clean up everything, and brought in sheets and things for us to sleep.

RM: Isn't that something. Your furniture was still there?

CB: Everything was still there.

RM: Then your mother fell back into doing the same things she had done before.

CB: Yes. She never worked a day out of her house, and raised 5 kids with no welfare - there were no food stamps.

RM: What was her maiden name?

CB: Miruna Perovich. And my dad's name was Mike. His name was Radusav, but they called him Mike. And because he was Mike, there have been something like 15 Michaels through the years [in the family].

RM: Could you give me a rundown of a typical day of a boarding house?

CB: She must've gotten up at the crack of dawn. I know she did, because as I got a little bigger, I would go to work at 7:00 or 8:00, and she'd been up for hours by then. She'd build the fire - she did that until she died. She had to have a fire no matter what. Later she had a gas stove with an incinerator and she would not make her coffee on that gas stove -she had to build the incinerator and perk the coffee. We had a big, old black stove. She'd build her fire, put the coffee on, and they couldn't afford ham and bacon, but eggs were a big thing, and mush, as they called it.

RM: What kind of mush?

CB: Oatmeal and cornmeal. Cornmeal mush with milk and sugar on it. Milk from the cow and eggs from the chickens. And she'd make her own bread. She always made round loafs - she never made it in loaf size [except] to make the lunches for the miners.

RM: Oh, so it was a loaf for a sandwich?

CB: She called it "klogacha." It was round, like sheepherder bread. She made both white and whole wheat.

RM: And did she serve those for breakfast, too?

CB: Yes. They'd have skorup on them. That was that goat cottage cheese. And eggs, and coffee, and then she'd make them lurches.

RM: What would a miner's lunch consist of?

CB: A sandwich, an apple, and . . .

RM: What would the sandwich be made out of?

CB: Usually ham. Or she'd roast lamb. We ate lots of lamb - I love it.

RM: Where did she get the lamb?

CB: She'd buy sheep, and then have them butchered. She smoked a lot of lamb and a lot of goats. A miner's lunch was a sandwich, a piece of pie, and a piece of fruit.

RM: Would they take coffee, or anything, to the mine?

CB: I don't think so.

RM: Did she serve toast in the morning?

CB: No, just bread. She'd make toast for us kids in the oven, but she couldn't for all the boarders, because she could only handle a certain amount.

RM: Approximately how many people would she have?

CB: Oh, maybe 10 at a time. She couldn't handle anymore than that.

RM: What did they pay?

CB: I don't really know. I often wonder how they did that. But it was enough for us to live.

RM: Did she serve at a big table?

CB: Oh, yes.

RM: And then put big bowls on the table?

CB: That's right. And in the old country, when we went, and they served food, everybody ate out of the same bowl - you had a spoon. Well, we wouldn't do it. They said, "Why won't they eat?"

And my mother said, "Because they don't eat that way. They have to have their own dish."

"Oh!" they said, "Americans!"

We had big bowls on the table and they'd pass it around. In all those years that I can remember my mother, she always had a tablecloth on her table. She would make them out of dish towels - crochet them together.

RM: And what was a dish towel?

CB: A flour sack. I still have one that was hers. On one side is still the print from - Occidental, I think. And the other side is the most gorgeous embroidery you ever looked at.

RM: When did the miners go to work?

CB: 8:00 to 4:00.

RM: 8:00 to 4:00. Yes, that's what we always worked; yes.

CB: The Belmont was up there, and then the Mizpah here, the Montana, the North Star. Now, the Victor mine was something else. It was huge.

RM: Where was the Victor?

CB: Down off the right side [of Main Street]. The gallows spring's still there.

RM: OK - that big iron gallows frame.

CB: I can remember the Victor mine when all these people lived in that area. They had company houses, and a commissary, and the whole bit. And my mother used to bootleg. That was our mainstay. Oh, my God! hated it! No wonder I hate booze. She would make grappa. She would make the wine - crush the grapes . .

RM: She made wine, too?

CB: We made barrels of wine.

RM: Where did she get the grapes?

CB: She'd buy them from a vegetable warehouse. All the Slays in town would order so many, and she would have maybe 5 tons at a time. We ground them up in the grinder. And then when it got to a certain point, you siphoned off the wine into barrels in the cellar; our cellar went in like a tunnel. Maybe there'd be 10 barrels.

We'd have all these barrels of wine, and she would sell wine. The miners would come up and sit at the table and buy a pitcher of wine and they would all drink, and then they would all pay. It was against the law, I suppose, but it didn't matter.

But anyway, what got me was - this was the part: The wine wasn't bad, but then she'd take the grapes after you drained the wine, and put sugar in them till they fermented, and then . . . my brother still has the still. We had a room separate from the house and she would put [the fermented mixture] in the still and make a paste of flour and water and put a cloth on and put the paste around the top of the still. Then there was the copper coil that went from the still into a cyanide tank. Do you know those cyanide cans they used to have?

RM: Yes.

CB: There was a hole in there, and it would fit in there, and there would be water in the tank, and then after you banked this fire it would make grappa. And you could smell it. I'd be coming home from school - you know where Burger Master is?

RM: Yes.

CB: I could smell it when I'd get there. And I was terrified that the Pro-his would come and put my mother in jail. I detested it. To this day, I detest liquor. In fact, if it were up to me there wouldn't be any. And I think that's what it stems from - that terrible fear that they're going to lock my mother up and send us to the orphans' home. You could really smell it. And I would cry all the way home when I knew Bubba was making grappa. She had a milk bottle with a thing like a thermometer that you put in and it tells the amount of alcohol. It was 120 proof. It would take the varnish right off the . .

Say, "How much, Kayo?"

I'd say, "120."

"Good."

It was powerful. And she'd put it in little barrels and just let it sit. And she sold that to lots of . . . she was a bootlegger; that's the only way you can say it. At the time I didn't realize it, because it was a way to support us. And all the Slays, and a lot of the other people, came and bought gallons of wine and bottles of grappa. I don't even know how much she sold it for - probably a song. But she made enough to keep us.

RM: When did she make the miners' lunches?

CB: In the morning while we were eating so they'd be nice and fresh.

RM: So then they'd go off to work and she would have the rest of the day . . .

CB: Yes, to get dinner. One of the mainstays of our [diet was] ham and cabbage. I don't remember my father, because I was too young. I remember a lot of things because she made me remember them; she would tell me. But I do remember this vividly. The big strike here was in 1919, I think. I was so little that she wouldn't let me out of the yard, but I can remember the older kids chasing the scabs up our street - up Magnolia Avenue - throwing rocks and rotten eggs at them. Clear to the Belmont mine.

RM: Is that right.

CB: I know. That's how imprinted In my mind it was. I wouldn't cross a picket line if my life depended on it. I just couldn't, after remembering that.

CHAPTER FOUR

CB: My mother also would go out and pick up wood and sell it to people - a load of wood for so much. I don't know how much - I was too little to even think about it. But I can remember going with William, my brother, to the mines - the Belmont especially - and they knew that we'd be coming for wood. All the miners knew that my mother was a widow with 5 kids, so they would fill the ore car full of wedges and dump them down the dump and we'd fill our wagon full. Things like that helped. She'd go out and sell a load of wood to buy something we needed. I have a thing about shoes because we never had many shoes. You know, they had to last you forever. As I got older, I found myself buying shoes constantly. In fact, now since I don't feel well enough and all, I have given away so many, and I have so many more, that I'm ashamed to think of it; a fortune in shoes.

RM: Did you have to go barefoot?

CB: No, but I always wore boys' shoes because they would last forever. 'They'd take those little hooks off so they wouldn't look like boys'.

People would say, "Mrs. Banovich, what size shoes can you use?"

And she'd say, "Any size - 4 to 11."

And they would give us clothes, and . . . people were kind. In fact, I think a lot kinder than they are now.

RM: What did a supper consist of?

CB: Ham and cabbage and cornbread - lots of cornbread and lots of salad. And in the wintertime . . . she'd pickle. Oh, that's good. I still do it. Green chile peppers and green tomatoes and cauliflower pickled in wooden barrels. She'd make a plate of that and sliced onions and pour olive oil on it.

RM: Did she serve a lot of potatoes?

CB: Yes. We had a cellar, as I told you, that was a cave, really. And the Knezivichs owned . . . Gus Knezivich was from Winnemucca; he had the Humboldt Hotel there. In fact, we bought this house from one of them; I've been in here 51 years.

RM: That was about the time you left home?

CB: Yes, it sure was. God - what a stir! We bought this house for nothing, but we spent a fortune in it. We put thousands of dollars in it; you have to. This house has been here since 1906; but when we built the carport, my husband told me it was better than these new ones.

Anyway, my mother would go down and buy crates of cabbages from the Knezivich brothers. They gave them to us, too; they were very good.

RM: They were produce brokers in town?

CB: Yes. They were right down by the end of the depot. There's a big tin building. They had huge swamp coolers and sold block ice. It was unbelievable, when you think back. Mother would get sacks of onions, sacks of potatoes, and great big crates of cabbage heads. She'd make sauerkraut using the whole heads; that's delicious. And that's what we had all winter long - smoked meat and cabbage and potatoes and peppers. And she'd make bread, and cornbread . .

RM: How did she smoke her meat?

CB: We had a smokehouse in our backyard with a pit in it. In fact, that's where she'd hide the still.

[Returning] to my story of how terrified I would be of the Pro-his coming: She had a false floor in the barn. They would open a trap door and put the still and all that stuff down [into a pit] and then put the trap door over it and cover it over with hay. In all the years that she did that, the sheriff would call her and say, "The Pro-his will be here tomorrow." Or, "The Pro-his are on their way, Mrs. Banovich." They could never find her cellar, because it looked like a hay hill; the still and everything would be hidden. He always tipped her off. But oh, God! I saw some of them get . . . that's what terrified me.

RM: They wouldn't have done anything to her anyway, would they?

CB: No. Five kids . . .

RM: A little fine and, "Don't you do that anymore, now." [chuckles]

CB: "Don't do that, Mrs. Banovich."

"Oh, no." she probably would [have said].

But she had a smoke house. And she would only use [a] certain kind of wood. They would go out in the hills with the wagon and horse and get a load of it. She would smoke ham, bacon, goat's neat (kastradina), and lamb. And you'd slice it - have you ever eaten Italian ham - prosciutto?

RM: No.

CB: That's the closest thing there is to it. It's sliced paper thin. You get it in delicatessens - it's very expensive. But oh, I love it. We get it whenever we go to Vegas or Reno. My mother would slice this [certain cuts of] lamb or goat paper thin. We called it "proshut."

RM: After it was smoked?

CB: After it was all smoked and dry. God, it was delicious.

RM: How did she prepare it?

CB: She'd boil the smoked meat with the cabbage and potatoes. It's a taste I can't describe. I had a friend who was a professor at the University of Nevada - Sam Basta. He was with the State Department for Mary years. But when we were kids, that's all we ate - all of us. (He was from Ely.) The last time I saw him, a few years ago, he said, "You know, I'd give \$100 for a plate of kupus and meesa like we used to have when we were kids." My sister Annie was terrible. She'd say, "I'm sick of meesa - kupus y meesa - meesa y kupus - kupus ymeesa!" But [chuckles] I never did get tired of it. She'd say, "Cabbage and meat - meat and cabbage - cabbage and meat." We were poor, but we were eating better than anybody in town. I never did get tired of it. I always ate what there was, and was happy as a lark. But I don't know. I really and truly wonder how my mother did what she did.

RM: She sounds like a very remarkable woman.

CB: She was. Without a doubt.

RM: Yes; of unusual resourcefulness.

CB: In fact, it's hard to believe that she could do what she did.

RM: Yes. The goats are what amaze me.

CB: Oh, I'll tell you something. Annie always said she just couldn't learn to milk a goat. But I'd go out milk 30, 50 . . . whatever we had. It's no wonder my thumbs hurt. [laughter] You know how they show you milking them from the side? You don't - you milk a goat from behind. And I'd always smell like a goat. [laughter] The first thing I'd want to do was wash my hair I always wore my hair real short and I think that's why. It was awful, but it was wonderful, too. We'd milk twice a day - morning and night - and get at least a quart a day.

RM: How long did it take you to milk a goat?

CB: Not very long; I had it down pat. My mother and I would milk all these goats.

RM: How many goats did she usually have?

CB: Afterwards, maybe 10; she never had less than 5. She would go out and herd her little goats. Then Dr. Joy told us that our mother was a very sick woman, and we didn't realize it. He said, "You have to take those goats away from her."

And I said, "Oh, that would be like killing her."

She'd take her little staff and go up in the hills, and the goats would graze and she'd sit on the rocks. She knitted a lot. She'd knit all day long - take a lunch with her sometimes - and be very happy. Finally Dr. Joy told us we had to stop her, so my brother and my husband went up and said, "Bubba, we have to get rid of the goats. Dr. Joy doesn't want you to watch the goats anymore." He said he looked out of the hospital window one day and there she was, clear up on a high rock behind the Golden Hills, clear up on that wall. And he thought, "Now, she could

have a heart spell" - because her heart was so bad - "and fall off there. If she died, that would be one thing, but what if she crippled herself." He said, "How could she stand it?" He was very kind to my mother; she adored him. And finally she let us give the goats to somebody out at Rye Patch. She knew she couldn't do it. She had chickens until she died - we had to give them away after she died.

RM: Did she stay in the house to the end?

CB: She was in the hospital 27 days. That was because a cat scratched her leg and she got a terrible infection. And I had just tried to talk Dr. Joy into letting me take her home. My husband had just died 9 months before and Dr. Joy said, "Kay, haven't you had enough?"

I said, "What do you mean?"

He said, "Your mom's really a sick woman."

"Oh," I said, "my mother's coming down to live with me" - this was in November - "until spring, and I will move back and live with her so she can plant her garden and stuff, and I'll help her."

And he just shook his head, and he said, "Can I get through to you how sick your mother is?" This was on a Monday.

And I said, "Well, we'll talk about it."

He said, "OK."

Wednesday morning she died in her sleep - just went to sleep. This was in 1959, and she was 83 years old.

She'd never even been in a hospital before. She had a horror of the old folks' home up there. I don't know why people have that [attitude]. I had an old man who lived across the street from me; he was 96 when he died a year ago. They had to put him in there, and I visited every day. At first he complained because he thought he could come home, but I couldn't take care of him. He didn't really complain later.

But I would go up there, and I have never been in a place where they were so good and kind to old people. I have no horror of it. To me, it would be the place to go. I would be much happier up there - if I couldn't do for myself - than expecting my children and grandchildren to do. I told my kids I'd drive my car up, and go in, and say, "Here I am, girls. [chuckles] And they'd call you, and you can come get my car."

In the old days those old people would sit out in the sun, but in those days it was people who had no family. I wouldn't have thought of putting my mother in there then, but now I think to myself, "Maybe she would've been a lot better off had we put her in there." Because she lived alone.

Boy, she wouldn't live with any of us. And her furniture was polished and her floors were scrubbed, and she still cooked - she'd cook for me. I'd take her to the store shopping.

RM: Was she running a boarding house then when the base began?

CB: No; she'd given that up long before that. That was in the '40s. By then, we kids took care of her. That's one reason I went to work. My kids went up there and stayed, and we'd buy food to

take up there for the kids, and she'd cook for all of us, and we'd pay for her lights and water and fuel. That was the way we were raised.

RM: When did she finally give up the boarding house?

CB: Oh, before the mines closed in the late '20s. You see, after Roosevelt was elected president, after the big crash, she had some leasers who would still come, but she didn't really have to do that anymore because we kids were big enough. My brother went to work when he was 15. He quit school and went to work at the Mizpah Garage and worked there 'till he went to war. And Annie worked. My sister May died; she was 18. And I went to work when I was in the 8th grade. We took our money home, and our mother paid the lights and the water and whatever, and we just got along.

RM: How did the Serbian community evolve over the years?

CB: Mast of them left in the early '30s. Very few of us were left. As the mines started going, a lot of people moved from here to Roseville, California, and to Reno and Sacramento, Ely, and so forth. A few went to Las Vegas. The Knezivich brothers moved to Winnemucca and bought that Humboldt Hotel. There were just a few families here.

RM: Was it just the miners who left, or was it the other ones?

CB: The others, too. Because the economy started falling apart. We weren't aware of it, but now I look back and they knew they wouldn't survive so they had to leave.

RM: Was there any difference in the Serbian Orthodox versus the Croatians in leaving, or did they all kind of leave about the same time?

CB: I think they got to the point where that was not a problem anymore. They knew that that was from the old country and shouldn't be here. But there was still that feeling - I still have that feeling. It's a terrible thing to say, but it's just something that I was born and raised with. And [laughs] when I meet a Croatian I find that I'll kind of snicker - "uh huh." Because, to me, they haven't got it, that's all. It's a terrible way to feel, and I tried not to have my kids feel that way. My daughter doesn't, because she married a Catholic, but my son has it.

But this town was really something. I can remember when the mines were going: the whistles would blow and you'd know it was noon or quitting time. I can remember running up to the top of the hill to meet my daddy coming from the mine. That's one thing I can remember about him. He'd always save you something out of that funny little black lunch box they carried - just some little thing.

RM: Was there a lot of dust in the town with all the dumps and everything?

CB: Oh, yes - always.

RM: Did the women have a hard time keeping the houses clean?

CB: Yes. In fact, we washed our kitchen walls every Saturday. Now I think that my mother did that to keep us busy so we wouldn't be getting into things. We'd wash the kitchen walls every Saturday and wash the windows inside and out on the whole house. And our house was full of windows - I hated it. And she'd mop the kitchen floor every single day because she would spill things. And you didn't have to scrub that floor, because it was mopped and clean, so it was really better to do that. And my mother could build anything. She built cupboards, the barn, [the] chicken house.

RM: Could you feel them blasting underground?

CB: Oh, yes.

RM: Would the town shake? Did they blast a lot, or just occasionally?

CB: It would shake; they blasted an awful lot.

RM: Were the stamp mills still going then?

CB: Oh, yes. I loved to go up to the Belmont where the mill was and down to the - this side of town . . . what mill was that? I loved the mill; it was fascinating and it was so dangerous. But I did awful things - get on a burro at the crack of dawn and go out to the dumps with my girlfriend to pick the dumps.

RM: This is when they were dumping out here?

CB: No. Do you know where the housing is up there - those low-cost apartments across from the Station House? That's how close the dumps were in those days. There weren't any buildings beyond . . . well, you know where the hospital is?

RM: Yes.

CB: Maybe across from it there was a house.

RM: That was the end of town?

CB: That was the end of it.

RM: So your house was on the far end of . .

CB: Oh - far end of town. Sure. There were only 4 houses up above us. There were these cabins that these miners lived in. But that was all. People thought we lived 'way out of town. [laughs]

RM: Your mother must've had the biggest garden in town, didn't she?

CB: Oh, I'm sure she did.

RM: I've always heard that people don't have many gardens in Tonopah because of the water.

CB: I hated the water company. We went without shoes, and everything else, so she could pay the water bill. In the 7th or 8th grade one of the teachers in high school taught me to read a water meter, and the minute the water man would read the meter, I would run up and write it down. If it was different on the bill, I would call up . . . they hated me and I hated them. I would say, "We didn't use that much water. You're overcharging . . ." And they did; they were terrible. As I say, up until the town of Tonopah bought the water company, I detested those people.

RM: She must've had a pretty high water bill.

CB: Yes. Sometimes it would be \$40, \$50, \$60 dollars a month for this huge garden. But she had to do it; that's the way she had to make a living. They had no mercy, I'll tell you. It was privately owned.

RM: Was it [owned] locally?

CB: No - from Salt Lake City. The man's name was Greenwood. God, I hated him. And one guy who worked for him was named Foote. And then there was Earl Mayfield and Ben DeYoung. And do you know, that's the only 3 they had working for the water company. Mayfield would go out and work, and he and DeYoung would dig all the ditches, change all the pipes, do everything. So it was really a money-making enterprise. They must've made millions on it. I was never so happy in my life as when the town bought them out. They had a bond issue to do it and I stamped all over town [for it].

RM: I wanted to ask you why people in Tonopah, especially the old-timers, always orient toward Reno and never Vegas.

CB: Because there was nothing in Vegas. For instance, during the war they sent us to visit different service clubs in California so we would know how to open the ones out here. That was in 1941 or '42. There wasn't one place in Las Vegas where you could sit and wait for the bus. The Sal Saga Hotel was on one corner - that's the Golden Gate now - and the man there knew we were waiting for the bus to Tonopah, so he let us sit in this little, tiny lobby, which they didn't allow people to do. There wasn't another place, and nothing was open - you couldn't get a cup of coffee, or a sandwich or anything. But you're right - most of the people who moved from here moved to Reno. I don't know of anyone who went to Vegas until later years.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Kayo, we were talking about the hard life many people in America had, including your family. What are your thoughts on that, particularly in relation to why they immigrated here?

CB: As I said, they came over here to be free. But of all the places in the world to choose, I never have figured out why my father came to Tonopah, because all he did was dig his grave. And of course my mother was stuck then because she had 5 kids and had to stay.

Tonopah was good to us, but had we been anyplace else, I think that we would have had an easier life growing up. They pretended, even in high school, that the fact that you were a Slav didn't matter . . . just like they treat the Blacks now.

There was a time it bothered me terribly. Afterwards, I never did care. It would've been worse had I not been good in athletics and a very good student. Also, I was bull-headed, just like my mother, and nobody was going to tell me what to do. But I can look back and see that some people treated you as if you weren't really good enough. And yet there were some of the elite of our town who were wonderful to you.

I remember that my sister and I would wash dishes for friends of ours on Thanksgiving and Christmas. They always had beautiful china and silver and crystal and all that malarkey, and they put so much into that: "Be careful that you don't nick this, and count the silverware so we won't have thrown any away." These people were wonderful to us; they were doing that to help us. But there were people at those dinners . . . I was deeply hurt when [one woman] said that I should learn to cater to people. Because I said that I wouldn't go to her house and wash dishes after she had a big dinner, because she wasn't nice. That's one of the things in my life I remembered. And they were prominent people, and from that day until they left here, which was many, many years, I never even spoke to her. I thought to myself, "You're not good enough for me to even look at, let alone think about." I was so young that it took me a long time to figure out what she meant, and I thought, "I should cater to . . . I won't cater to anyone. I'm an independent spirit, really."

RM: She was basically saying that you should be an underclass?

CB: Yes. Because we were poor, and we were Slavic, and we didn't have a father. In my family's life there was one person who was really a friend, and I named my children for him and his wife - Lee and Phyllis Henderson. His attitude toward us was nothing but to help and do what he could to make our life better, because he knew what my mother was going through, and how hard it was. In fact, my brother worked for him from the time he was 15 until he went into the Seabees in World War II. When he came back he could've gone back to work for him (he probably [would've] owned the Mizpah Garage) but he went to Colorado instead. With those kind of people you remember the good. As I say, my son is Timothy Leland and my daughter is Phyllis May - named for Lee and Phyllis Henderson.

And I remember teachers who were just wonderful to me. Mrs. Curieux, for instance, was the 1st grade teacher for all the kids. Now, her father was a Slav, and she was a terrific lady. She stands out in my mind as such a wonderful teacher. I had a teacher in high school who had a lot to do with what I did, because I was very good in shorthand and typing and that sort

of thing, and she would encourage me to do all these things. I came in second in the state for shorthand, but I couldn't type fast enough to transcribe it fast enough.

Helen Norris, who is now Helen Whittaker and lives in Yerington, was one of the greatest people I ever knew. Her sister Miriam and I were roommates at college and went through school together. We're still friends - Mary and Helen and I.

Then you can think of some who looked down on you a little bit, and you felt it. It didn't bother me, but for a lot of my Slav friends, growing up, it made a difference in their . .

RM: What effect did it have?

CB: That they weren't good enough. That - why would you bother with those people to have as friends and to be around. They're not as good as you are. And it gave you a complex, because you were a Slay. That's why I know how colored people feel. My neighbor was a colored lady - a music teacher - and my children grew up never noticing that she was black and we were white. They spent all their time over there and her son would take them to the movies, and it was just wonderful. In fact, my son never thought about black and white until he went into the Marine Corps. That's where it's bad. I tried to [teach] my kids that nobody's any better than you are. Everybody is as good as you are, but nobody is any better. I still profess that.

RM: What were the dominant groups that made the Slavic kids feel they were inferior? Was it an ethnic group, or the rich, or what?

CB: I think it was rich people. The head of the mines and the [other] big shots. Yet there were some who were wonderful. One of the nicest men I ever knew in my life was Herman Budleman. He was head of the West End mine, I think. They lived in the house that Red Douglas lives in now. I guess they were what they call the elite. He was a kind, wonderful person - so was his wife. Yet I can think of people who had those top jobs and looked down on you.

RM: What about the other ethnic groups?

CB: [There were] Mexicans and Cousin Jacks . .

RM: Were the Mexicans looked down on, too?

CB: Oh, sure.

RM: Who didn't they look down on?

CB: What they called themselves - [chuckles] considered themselves - white people. Or - a different class. A mining camp is the worst place in the world for that.

RM: And it was basically coming from the white-collar type people.

CB: That's right; the people who made big money. They would send their kids away to school because they didn't want them to associate with the common herd in Tonopah. And none of them turned out any better than the rest of us.

As I say, there were 5 of us. My sister May graduated high school in June and died in September. And my mother sent all of us through school. My brother William quit when he was 16 to help support our family, but my sister Annie and I went to college. David could've gone if he had wanted to. I don't know how my mother did it, but she did it.

When I graduated from high school in 1935, I worked in this little restaurant. All these gals and their guys from the red-light district knew I wanted to go to school, so for graduation they all gave me money. They bought me a gift, and then put money in with it. That's what really paid for my tuition and my board and room for the first . .

RM: I was talking to Bruno Skanovsky, and the things he told me about the size of the district. I had no idea it was so large.

CB: Oh, it was huge. I don't know how many girls, but there were a lot. In fact, it was unbelievable. And there were some of the most beautiful girls you ever wanted to see in your life.

RM: Where did they come from?

CB: Anywhere. A lot of them were from Montana and Wyoming and . . . Mostly, it seemed like mining sections.

RM: Were they drifting from one mining town to another?

CB: They had a pimp, and he just took them wherever he wanted to. That's why, when I watch [chuckles] Magnum, P.I. [a popular television program in the 1980s] - that's what we used to call the pimps. [P.I. is a term used for pimp in the mining camps of Nevada.]

RM: [laughs]

CB: I laugh. I said to my kids, "Do they know what they're doing?" I said, "My God! That's awful." If I ever had a chance to write him, or tell him, I would say, "I'm not impressed with your title. Private investigator doesn't mean P.I. where I came from."

[To return to our topic of schools] Our teachers were so good. Anna Bradley and Helen Slavin were out of this world. They helped us all a lot. Some of them would like to have just pushed you in the corner because you were a little old Slav kid with no fancy mother and no dad at all. But these women were strong, and they didn't allow that in their classes. Everybody was fair and equal. I graduated from high school as salutatorian; I missed valedictorian by 1/16 of a point.

RM: How large was your class?

CB: I think there were 23. And out of those 23, I think 4 of the boys committed suicide.

RM: What do you attribute that to?

CB: I don't know. It seemed to be the era. Of course, one boy had been through the war. He came home and did it.

RM: Did they do it as young men?

CB: Yes; very young - terrible. It made you worry and wonder.

RM: I wonder if it had anything to do with the tough times growing up and the discrimination.

CB: Well, one boy was part Mexican. His mother was Mexican and his father was so-called American. His sister and I are still close friends, and to this day she will remind me how they used to say (their name was Mardy), "Not the white Mardys, the Mexican Mardys," because her mother was Mexican. And it still bothers her.

I'm very proud of being a Slav; I'm proud of my heritage. I don't think any of those so-called big shots would've survived what my mother and our family did.

RM: Why were they racist and discriminatory like that?

CB: I've wondered why all my life. Because after I married and had my children, some of the closest friends that my children had were kids whose parents were Mexican. And it just never . .

[tape recorder is turned off for awhile]

RM: You were telling about the Indian girls that you went to school with.

CB: Oh, I don't know if it's on there or not, but if it repeats it's all right. The only time it came out is when we would be partying.

RM: She was a good friend.

CB: Very good. And she went 'way up in the Indian service; I often wonder where she is. But she hated the white man. Oh, such hate.

RM: For discrimination.

CB: Yes. And she was beautiful. In fact, she didn't even look Indian. But she had a hatred for the white man, and that's when it came out. I used to worry about her going through life feeling like that. But I could see her point, in a way.

I never have understood the way they treat Indians. One of my closest friends in my whole life was a boy, Emmet Rossi, who lived at Lone. We grew up together here and we'd walk

to school every day. My mother used to say, "My daughter's going to marry that Indian. She'll grow up and marry an Indian. She doesn't care."

And I used to say, "Why? What difference does it make?"

And she'd say, "None."

Although I can look back now and . . . you had to be a Montenegrin to really be something.

RM: The last time we met, Kayo, you talked about remembering a strike here. Would you review your memories of union activity, and that kind of thing?

CB: Yes, sure. I don't remember my father, really. When my mother came to this country, her youngest brother, who was 17, came with her so she wouldn't be alone. He stayed here, but he went back during the Balkan War and was killed in that war. His name was John Perovich. The Balkan War was in 1914, and I was born in 1916. This big strike in Tonopah had to be around 1919. I was so young that it's hard to think that I can remember, but I can remember that part. Even then, we were oriented against different things - that the men who were working were scabs. All the kids in the neighborhood would follow them. That was a long time ago, but it's one of the vivid things in my mind. They would throw rocks and rotten eggs and anything they could get at the scabs.

RM: Who were the scabs? Were they local people, or outsiders?

CB: Some were local and some came in. And then - didn't they bring the militia in here?

RM: I know they brought it in to Goldfield.

CB: They did here, too. I know that my mother and dad fed many, many miners because she had the things she would grow, and the smoked meat and all. That's how they survived the strike. I guess it lasted for a long time, then finally they broke it and went back to work. To me, striking is terrible because it hurts the working people. Yet, what would they do if they didn't have a union? It's their only way to fight back. I don't know when they're going to agree on anything, but there's something wrong in our society to bring it to that, really. When you look around and see all the places that have closed down because they won't give in to the workers . . . the workers are what makes this world. Without them, where would they be? My mom used to call them "high mucky-mucks." [laughs] I think about it now, and I think, "God, she was right." They really thought they were somebody.

I would fight - that's how I got my name, Kayo. I was playing football with a bunch of big boys, I caught the football really well. I was just a little kid - maybe 7 years old. And young Adam Patterson, whose parents owned a big ranch in Fish Lake Valley, lived here and went to school. We were playing and he would walk up to me and jerk that football out of my hands after I'd catch it. Of course, I shouldn't have been there with all those boys, but I was. I'd catch the old football, and he'd take it away from me. Finally these high school boys took me aside, and they said, "The next time he does that, just blast him." So I did. I gave him 2 black eyes and he gave me one. From that day on, I was Kayo.

RM: Were you a tomboy?

CB: Yes; very much so. In fact, I was very happy to get on the donkey at daybreak, on Saturdays, and go for the entire day - until dark

RM: Where would you go?

CB: Out to the dumps, and to different mountains, and all around the Belmont mine. And then there was the Halifax mine. It was down below the old Belmont mill. They pumped the water out in a wooden trough, and it was warm and nice. We dug a swimming pool. It was huge, really, for kids. Pretty soon we got it down so pat that it would stay clear, and we'd lie in those troughs with that hot water coming down over us. It felt so good.

RM: Was it pretty clean water?

CB: Yes. We'd swim and have a good time, then the boys would decide that they wanted it and we wouldn't give it to them. We were out there in our petticoats swimming around and the next thing you knew - carbide. You know how it bunches?

RM: Sure.

CB: They'd throw that carbide in the water and we'd take off. Then they'd drain the pool and clean it and fill it again so they could use it. We did things kids don't think of doing things [now].

RM: Where was that pool in relation to . . .

CB: You know down where the horse corrals are over the hill from the Belmont mine? Horseshoe Heights and all?

RM: OK, yes.

CB: In that area, right across from Buckeye. The Buckeye that's Bobby Duncan's was Buckeye Number 1. And then there was Number 2 and Number 3 mine. I knew them like the palm of my hand.

RM: They were pretty deep shafts.

CB: You bet they were. In fact, I even ran the hoist on the California mine, across the street from my mother's. The hoist man was a friend - I played with his son; we grew up together. He'd let me bring that cage up and down - God, I couldn't have been very old. I thought to be a hoistman would be the - oh!

RM: Yes. [chuckles] Do you remember any kind of political radicalism?

CB: I told you about celebrating the 7th of January - our Serbian Christmas.

RM: Yes.

CB: Well, as a child I can remember that my mother always had Serbian Christmas, and she always had plenty of wine, and grappa, and food of all kinds. She'd roast a whole pig, and lamb, and all that. It would be more for the Slav people who believed in Serbian Christmas but there was a group of supposedly Americans who would come and just invade your house - take over. One of the things I can remember is a gal getting up on the table to dance at my mother's. That's when my mother came unglued and ran them all out. And the next year, she put a notice in the paper and said that nobody would come to her house for Serbian Christmas unless they were invited.

RM: People came uninvited?

CB: We were Slays, and who were we to say no to them. It always bothered me, because it appeared in a column in the San Francisco Examiner as one of those little quips that they used to put in. That's how much attention it drew - that she had enough guts to come out and tell them, "Don't come to my house unless you're asked." And from then on, we invited who we wanted. We had lots of friends who came up. Lee and Phyllis and the Foreman . . . Bill Foreman is a judge in Reno now. His dad was a judge before him, and Foremans came from Tonopah. Their brother, Sam, was a mining engineer, and he never missed Christmas at our house - he always gave beautiful toasts. You remember so many good things.

But you can remember the things that you went through. Imagine coming to your house without being invited. Dance on the table, chop up the pig, spill the wine - just like animals. There were a lot of Slays who did celebrate, so they'd go from house to house. My mother was the only one who had enough guts to put it in the paper that they weren't to come to her house unless they were invited, and she meant it. She didn't make any bones about it. As a little kid I'd go in my bedroom and bolt the door. My brother always made holes in the doors and said, "Lone Star 1, Lone Star 2" and he had peepholes so you could look out. After they'd go, I'd come out. But it was bad. I'd take my little brother and we'd stay in my room. They were just like animals.

RM: Do you remember any resentment against the mine owners, or anything like that?

CB: No. In fact, you know how we've talked about my mother taking us back to the old country?

RM: Yes.

CB: My dad was working a lease at the Montana mine when he became so ill but he had worked at the Belmont mine for many, many years. A man who was the superintendent of the mine - his name was Robbins - fought to get my mother insurance. Because my dad had worked up there, and he knew there were 5 children and we needed it. That was the money she really

used to take us to the old country. That's why it took so long. She would've gone right away when my papa died, but she didn't have any money.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: Could you say a little more about how the miners lived, Kayo?

CB: Oh, yes. On Florence Avenue there were about 4 big boarding houses where the miners ate and had rooms. Most of the Slav miners had little cabins here and there that weren't really fit for anything. It was always hard for me to understand why they lived like that, and even [why they were] here. It must've been like my dad - to be free. Because they really didn't have a life. They worked in the mine all day, half of them batched, and they had these little old cabins. A lot of the [] ate in the boarding houses. That's the way a lot of the Slays raised their families: the miners would eat the main meal and take their lunch. But a lot of them just batched on their own, and it's amazing how they survived. I don't think some of them ate anything decent in their life.

RM: How big were the little shacks?

CB: Oh, maybe 2 rooms - a bedroom and a kitchen and, of course, an outhouse. An [indoor] toilet was unheard of; that was unusual, when you got a bathroom. [chuckles] I loved nothing better than to sit up in the toilet on the hill and [chuckles] smoke and watch the world go by.

But when I think back . . . there were no luxuries; nothing made easy for them. I do think that they could take showers at the mine after work, but I don't think some of those old guys had one bath a year. It always made me wonder if it was really that bad in the old country, for them to come over here and go through the terrible way of living they did. But they did it, so it must have been bad. As hard as my mother worked, I don't think she ever regretted coming over. Because after we went back the one time she never wanted to go again.

The miners would butter up the boss - buy him a bottle of whiskey, a gallon of wine . . . I delivered many gallons of wine and quarts of grappa to the big-shots from the mine that one of the poor old miners bought.

RM: Was it to help hold his job, and to curry favor?

CB: Yes. They thought it was the thing to do. I was raised that you didn't toady to anybody. When you worked, you gave them 8 hours of your time and worked, and then you were through. If you met socially or anything, it was an entire different situation - it wasn't to keep your job or anything. But I can remember the miners doing that. They would buy gifts of candy and such for the families and I thought, "Geez - why are they doing this? They didn't give them anything." It bothered me to think that they felt they had to do that. Yet the [big shots] accepted it, so you know they expected them to do it.

When the mines were running full-blast, some of the people who were heads of the mines let you know they were important. They can say all they want about how it was free and equal and all - baloney! Their kids thought they were better than you, and if you had let them, they would've been. never did let anybody do that to me.

RM: What were the mine-owners' wives like?

CB: Oh, they'd have their bridge clubs and their luncheons, and they all belonged to the churches and to the guilds. It was a closed corporation; none of the miners' wives belonged. It was a thing that wasn't done. I can remember the women who played bridge - they were all the so-called higher glory of our town. As I grew older, I became active in Beta Sigma Phi and the Does, and all those things, but I never did think I was . .

RM: Did this structure kind of break down during the '30s?

CB: Definitely. After Roosevelt came in. The greatest human being who ever lived in the whole wide world was Franklin D. Roosevelt - to me.

RM: That's what my dad says. [chuckles]

CB: Absolutely. There's nobody that will ever be in the same class; the only one who ever came close to it was John F. Kennedy. Before Franklin D. Roosevelt it was terrible.

RM: But in the '30s the mines opened up under the leasing system, didn't they?

CB: Yes. It was dog-eat-dog, then. You got what you worked for, and that was it. There were no superintendents, or foremen, and all that malarkey that the poor old worker had to work up to. It was each person work for what they got.

RM: So the whole thing became more democratic.

CB: Oh, definitely.

RM: I was wondering, after talking to you, what the town would have been like if they'd have never gone to the day's pay system. If the big Philadelphia interests had never come in and if Jim Butler and the local guys had kept ownership.

CB: I often wonder about that myself, too. I don't think they had the money to survive. My dad worked for wages from the time he came to Tonopah until about 2 years before he died. Then he went leasing.

RM: Was his health starting to deteriorate by that time?

CB: Yes. As a kid, I can remember when we'd go to the restaurant to get feed and scraps for our chickens, [we'd see] the brown bags. I always laugh, because I can shut my eyes and see all these trays of brown bags lunches that the restaurants were making for the miners. They'd pick them up in the morning when they had their breakfast. That's the thing I could never understand: the only thing the miners got was a place to live and sleep and eat, because the restaurants and so forth took everything they made. They ate in the restaurants unless they went to homes like my mother's and the Slav people who let them come there to eat. They

didn't save any money. They couldn't; they didn't make enough. [I] had a friend who always called the brown bag "The badge of ignorance."

RM: So the miners were really day's-pay slaves.

CB: That's all.

RM: And a lot of them were on a kind of treadmill to silicosis.

CB: Yes. The graveyard is chock full of them. Some of those young men were 21 years old. They'd go to work in the mines when they were, say, 17, like my uncle did and they didn't last 4 or 5 years.

RM: Did they tend to waste a lot of their money down at the red-light district?

CB: You bet. That's where they spent anything they had left over - down at the honkey-tonk. Have you heard of the Big Casino?

RM: Yes.

CB: Do you know the vacant lot across from the Mizpah Garage?

RM: Yes?

CB: There was a wood fence at least 10 feet high. It ran from that corner down there where the motel starts, clear up past where L&L Motel - almost to the L. And behind it was the Big Casino. It was huge - in fact, it became the Tonopah Garage afterwards. They had dancing girls and all this fol-de-rol; they would have orchestras - musicians . . . You'd try to listen to it. We'd go by, and I'd say to my mother, "What's this?"

And she'd say, "That's a place that they have to have, and you just don't worry about it." That was her explanation. So I never worried about it, but I was smart enough to know what it was.

I guess some of the fancy gals really dolled up. Supposedly they just danced, but you know there was more to it than that. A lot of them will say, "I was never a prostitute. I was a dance-hall girl." What the hell's the difference? But it was huge - you can't believe it. And as I say, they had some beautiful orchestras. Those poor old buggers would work all day long for \$1.50 a day or whatever, then go down there and blow it all and never have a dime from payday to payday. It was a terrible way to live.

There were women here who had worked there who married local men and they put on airs, and I would say, "Oh God, I used to see her with her head stuck out of that window. Who does she think she is?"

RM: At the Big Casino, you mean?

CB: No, the little cribs along the side. My husband was 21 years older than I and the stories he had . . . he was a fighter then.

RM: Oh, he was a prize fighter?

CB: Yes. He and Jack Dempsey were close friends.

RM: That is Jack Dempsey, isn't it?

CB: Yes, sure it is.

RM: Let me note here that Kayo has a picture on the wall of Jack Dempsey and Freck Lydon, her husband.

CB: That was taken in 1950. He also autographed gloves for Tim; they're out in the back. And very close friends.

RM: How did he know Dempsey?

CB: Because Dempsey fought Johnny Sudenburg - to go back in history. It was one of his toughest fights.

RM: Yes - I read that in the Goldfield paper.

CB: My husband trained with Johnny Sudenburg. In fact, Jack Dempsey and my husband's brother, Ed, lived together in a cabin somewhere. They were good friends. But through the years . . . the awful part of life is that it's too late when you realize you should . . . Freck never saw Jack Dempsey again until 1950 and by then their lives were so different that there was nothing there anymore, although they did have a wonderful visit.

But I can remember how hard those poor miners worked - for nothing. So why begrudge them that they went down to the honkey-tonk and blew it?

RM: Yes. When you think about it, there wasn't that much opportunity for them.

CB: Nothing. They were all saving their money to make a big bundle to go back to the old country. That's the thing that always bothered me: why did they come here if they felt like that? To this day I have never understood it. My dad and mother had no reason to come over here. Right to the last time we were over there, my sister and I, my mother's home was the same as it was when she left. It was down beneath a great, big beautiful monastery with fruit trees, and . . . They were rebuilding the house, because they'd had a fire, but my dad's house was exactly the same as when he left. And my brother David's share of my father's land is still there; we still own land. Of course, now it's Iron Curtain, and it is bad, because I could never live that way. But I don't see how they eased their way of life any by coming.

I don't think my parents had to leave their country because they were persecuted, as some immigrants were. I think my dad was a free spirit, and wanted something new. Because he certainly did better than some. And going back twice to visit made my feelings stronger, because where they lived was beautiful. I've often thought, "Who would leave such a beautiful place" - like my mother's home - "to go to Tonopah?" But I've always been free - we could say and think and do what we want - and that's the part that you don't really realize.

But when they speak of the old story about how great it was . . . The Statue of Liberty is beautiful, and I love it. But oh! when they give you all that malarkey about Ellis Island . . . They ought to have investigated that as a disgrace to the United States. They could hang me tomorrow, and I'd still stick to my story.

RM: What was life in Tonopah like for a teenager?

CB: For me, great. We could always have parties at home. And if we wanted to serve wine and stuff it was OK, as long as we stayed in the house. We'd play records, and the radio was great. We would make our own fun. We would go to someone's house, say, twice a week and make a cake in one of those big oval roasters and have cake and milk and whatever, and play games, and dance, and sing popular music. Oh, my! we sang. All the time. And we had a piano. When we'd go to our house it was fun, because one of the gals would play the piano and everybody would sing.

We could stay as long as we wanted, but there was one unwritten rule: you didn't go anywhere else but home. It was something that you respected. There was very little drinking among the teenagers when I was growing up. They say there was a lot, but I can't remember it in my group. We also played under the lights - kick the can and hide-and-seek and all that - until the 9:00 whistle blew. Then, man, go home - that was it.

RM: There was a 9:00 curfew?

CB: Yes, and we observed it. There was no question in your mind of staying out after that; you were just raised that way. I don't think that we ever really gave our parents [a lot of worries] other than that's the age you start riding around in cars. That was an awful worry to my mother - that you'd get in a wreck and get killed. So many young people did, in those days. And that was really the only thing that she worried about - never worried about us getting in trouble or anything. And there were lots of school affairs, like dances after basketball games and for everything. And you'd have parties at each other's houses. It was always something to do. "Let's go have a party. Let's go have a weinie roast." We'd go right down in somebody's back yard and have a weinie roast and roast marshmallows and sing, and have the best time. It seemed we were satisfied with much less.

RM: And these were children that you'd grown up with, who were your dear friends.

CB: Yes. Some are still my life-long friends. Our family lived on the corner, and the Boscovichs lived up above the street, and we were very close. The Bekos lived down right below the courthouse there. And the Gabrilovichs, and the Susichs, and Roy Wolfe's family, Roy Gahn, and

the Douglasses . . . We'd all get together and play games and build a bonfire, tell stories, and sing, and have the best time. It seemed that it didn't take anything to have a good time. One of my favorite stories about that was at the California mine, right across the street from my mother's. It's now where all those trailers and everything are in front of Jensen's house. (That's where I ran the hoist.) There was an ore bin, and [chuckles] we got old box springs from beds and stuck them in there, and we'd go in there (God! just little kids) and walk the railing of that high ore bin. If my mother had seen us, she'd have died. And then we'd get down in that ore bin, and we'd all sit there and smoke cigarettes. We really thought we were doing something. Then we'd come out of there and we'd prowl around. It seems so strange . . . there seemed to be many more houses.

RM: Do you think there were?

CB: Yes, I really believe there were. Down here where the extension is -down where Ryan's trailer park is - that was all company houses. Down at the Victor Mine they were all big company houses. Up on Mizpah Hill, up here. They were all company houses. In fact, the house Dave Hamilton lives in, and the one next to it, were company houses.

RM: Was that for the executives?

CB: The big shots.

RM: Is there anything else you'd like to say about teenage life?

CB: We had to go to work as soon as we could. I was in about the 7th grade, about 13 or 14, when I started working in the restaurant. I'd work all day long for 50 cents and bring it home. Seven dollars a week, 7 days a week - that was good pay. [laughs]

RM: You'd give it to your mother, to help.

CB: Yes. And as I say, we grew up and we'd all get together and sing, and have a good time, and make our own good times. I thought I was missing out on some things because my mother couldn't afford it, but now I know I didn't. I couldn't have a new pair of shoes and a new dress and the things that are important in growing up. But we accepted it, because that's the way it was. My older sister, May, who died, was a beautiful seamstress. She'd make clothes for my sister and me out of hand-me-downs.

RM: What did May die of?

CB: They thought she had an inward goiter - a thyroid condition. In those days they didn't know enough about it until it was too late. It strangled her. It was a terrible way to die; she couldn't even breathe. They thought it was tuberculosis, but they found out it was thyroid, and it squeezed her windpipe, so she really suffocated to death. And she was beautiful. She could

hardly walk, she would be so sick, and my brother would pick her up at school in our little Model T.

RM: So she was frail for a time?

CB: Oh, always - from the time we came from the old country. She just seemed to go downhill from then on.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: Kayo, I wanted to ask you a few questions about the Chinese.

CB: Oh, the poor Chinese. They were worse off than the Bohunks. There was a great big Chinese laundry . . . do you know where the VFW is?

RM: Yes.

CB: Right on that corner.

RM: There was - where that building is now

CB: Right next to it; yes. That lot that belongs to the Midland Garage. It was a little old double wooden shack, and they had chicken wire all over the whole back yard - top and sides and everything. That was because the kids were terrible; people were terrible. I would come by there, and my friend, and we'd take a nail, and they'd be in there ironing. Oh, God! You know how that hot, summer steam smells. To this day, I have an aversion for Chinese restaurants and things - the smell nauseates me.

RM: Of the restaurant.

CB: Of anything connected with Chinese. And that's what it was, I think. We'd come by there, and there were these poor old Chinese, ironing all these clothes with steam coming out of those windows. I'd go by and take a nail and go across that screen and say, "Chicka-mucka hi-lo." To this day I don't know what it means, but it was Chinese. Afterwards you got older and you got over that. But down where the Shell Oil is . .

RM: Yes?

CB: On that corner, up from the Shell station, towards Water Street, kitty-corner across the street from Giggle Springs, there was a great big laundry. And the man and his little wife there were very kind.

RM: They were Chinese.

CB: Yes. He ran the laundry and did everybody's laundry; all of the high-falutin' [people went to him] because he did a beautiful job. My husband was very friendly with him from the time he was a kid, and this man never missed a Christmas that he didn't have gifts sent from China to give to our children. I should have saved them - they were beautiful gifts. He finally saved enough to go back to China. At least, he went back to China. Then where the L&L Motel is, there was a Chinese restaurant there.

RM: I thought that's where the line was.

CB: The line started from there. There was the Silver State - a great big dance hall - and then a little Black man had a barber shop, and then this little Chinese restaurant. And that Chinaman was real nice. He had a wife, and he'd go up every day and buy his groceries to cook. We used to go down there when we were teenagers, in high school and out of high school, and eat. The girls just loved Chinese, but I could never go for it. I'd go along for the ride.

But the one that I remember the most is Chung. And he lived . . . now, he knew my husband from the time he was a little boy. And his place was . . . did you ever hear about the Greystone - that burned during the war, and the soldiers saved the town?

RM: Not a thing - no. Tell me about it.

CB: Oh. Well, let's see. How will I explain where it is? You know where the - it was part of the line - beyond it.

RM: The Greystone was .

CB: Was a 2-story rooming house. Oh, I would've thought you'd heard this.

RM: No.

CB: Anyway, it was right where the - you know where Grace Wilson and Dick Trueba's houses are now?

RM: No.

CB: Well, it was right . .

RM: Is it on Main Street?

CB: No - on Oddie Avenue and the street down this way. You don't know where Leila and Butch Fuson live?

RM: No.

CB: Well, anyway, let's see. It was . . . the . . . the L&L Motel, that's 1, 2, 3 streets up.

RM: Going up the hill.

CB: And it was a 2-story building, and it was called the Greystone. It was a rooming house. And the . . . the line; you see, the . . . the line was 1, 2, 3, 4 streets.

RM: Coming back.

CB: From there down.

RM: Yes, OK; yes.

CB: And next to this Greystone was this Chinese shop. Well, he probably was peddling dope then; we didn't know.

RM: Opium? Were there opium dens?

CB: Oh, sure.

RM: Well, we've got to talk about that, then. OK.

CB: All right. And anyway, this Greystone . . . this . . . this Chinaman lived next to this Greystone building, and he was very kind - person. Very nice - I don't think he was into anything, really. And he would give my children beautiful gifts, plus firecrackers from China, and all - fireworks of all types. And he'd have this food that he had sent from San Francisco, like . .

RM: Now, this is the guy next to the Greystone.

CB: Greystone. And - Chung was his name. So I remember him; that part is the Chinese. And this Greystone . . . It was during the war. It got on fire - it was a terrible fire. And if it hadn't been for the air force and the army air corps out here - Tonopah would've been leveled.

RM: It would've burned the whole town?

CB: Oh, it would have.

RM: So this was during the war.

CB: Yes. And those boys came in from the air base and answered the alarm.

[tape is turned off for awhile]

CB: Anyway, this - my husband and another policeman - Gabby Coyle - the only way they knew they could contain this fire - it took the whole - from there down. Everything. Like . .

RM: How far down?

CB: There were houses . . . well, God - there were - those houses have all been moved in since then. It was an old mill . . . still standing there and that . . . took all those. But they finally decided to dynamite. So they dynamited it and it fell in - however they do.

RM: The mill, you mean.

CB: The . . . the Greystone rooming house. To save the town. And I was here . . .

RM: It was a large building, ?

CB: Oh, 2 story - huge. I had to . . . I stayed here and it water on my roof with . . . everybody in town did - [to] save their houses. And you had . . . it was . . . would've been a terrible fire, had they . .

RM: So they blasted the . . . the Greystone . .

CB: Blasted it down so it wouldn't spread anymore. As a last resort, after all these kids came in from the . . . there was just no way they could fight it. And it was going everywhere. So they blasted its container.

RM: So it was close to a major disaster.

CB: Yes, it could've been. It was a . . . I watched that. In fact, I hauled furniture from different houses down in that area. I had a . . . we owned a little pickup. And this friend of mine and I were - loaded these people's stuff in this pickup and moved it up to here, in front of my garage. Between my house . .

RM: While the fire was going on?

CB: To save their stuff. And then that's when they decided they had to blast it, which I had never ever even heard of until then. And I guess it's a common practice. So they saved the town that way.

But then Chinatown was right down here not far me, down by where this West End dump is. In fact, my son dug up an opium bottle and a silver napkin ring. He played down around there but I didn't want him there because of the mine. I think if you dug deep enough down there now, you could find some opium bottles.

RM: Was opium commonly used in town?

CB: Yes. I think [by people] from the line. I don't think the miners did it.

RM: What about cocaine - anything like that?

CB: All I can remember is, again, was all the pimps. I remember hearing a man say, "Boy, he's stepping high. That match stick looks like a telephone pole to that . . ." I didn't realize what he meant, but these people would be all hopped - coked up - and they'd step over a matchstick, and he'd say, "They're stepping high."

RM: [laughs] And they'd go up like that?

CB: Yes; they'd go all the way up. You wondered what was going on, but after you got older you realized what it was; they were on drugs. I don't know, but, I think it was mostly people from the red-light district who were involved in that sort of thing.

RM: Well, it wasn't illegal, was it, in the '20s, and . . . Coke used to have cocaine in it.

CB: I don't know when it became illegal. It was illegal for a long time because I can remember that my husband took a prescription out of the pocket of a hooker. She was so coked up she didn't even know. The prescription was made out by a very prominent doctor in Tonopah for the prostitute to get coke down at the drug store. My husband had the narcotics come in, and when the case was busted the narcotics agent was in with the dealers. That's when I lost my respect for narcotic agents and all. Freck was a policeman, and was doing his job, and he put his life on the line, really, by taking that prescription and going to court with it, and it was thrown out - never came to court - because the doctor was too prominent, and the narcotics agent who came to investigate was in with the narcotic ring. So I lost my respect for narcotic agents.

RM: Do you remember any opium dens?

CB: No, that was before my time. But my husband used to tell stories about that.

RM: Why don't we talk a little about your husband?

CB: My husband came to Tonopah from Leadville, Colorado, when they had the big labor strike there. This was in 1906, and he was about 10 years old. They all came to Goldfield and Tonopah from Leadville and Cripple Creek and all those places. There were 6 children in his family, and as I told you, his father raised them; their mother died. He sent them all to Catholic school and all kinds of good education. But Freck had a drinking problem. Eventually he got over it, and that was it. And he spent his whole life here. He went to school here and was very prominently known here. Of course, he was a good policeman - he was the chief of police. Earlier, he worked as a miner and he was in World War I. He went up to Butte, Montana, and got drunk and enlisted when he was 18 and spent the entire time overseas.

RM: Was he wounded?

CB: Well, he'd had mustard gas burns all over his back and shoulders. He thought it was nothing, but when he was older and before he died, they said that contributed a lot to his poor health.

He never carried a gun or a sap. But he carried a pair of kidskin gloves in his back pocket. And he'd put those on - better look out. He didn't believe in brutality, and he gave everybody a break. His theory was that there were no bad kids. You took a bad kid out in the police car up around Butler Mountain or somewhere and sat and talked and explained what that they were doing that was wrong and . . . In all the years that he was the policeman, he had very few juvenile problems.

RM: Did he work for Sheriff Thomas?

CB: No, he was an elected official. He was the constable and then he was appointed chief of police. When he retired the city police went in with the sheriff's department. He was a deputy sheriff, and went all over the county, and also was a deputy in Esmeralda and Mineral Counties. But actually, the sheriff's department just took care of the outside and it was his job to take care of the town. During the war, when there were 6,000 men here, he had only 2 night officers and 2 on the day with him.

RM: To police all that?

CB: It was unbelievable, but he didn't have any problems.

RM: Let's follow him chronologically. He went to school here . . .

CB: Yes, and then he went to St. Joseph's Academy in Berkeley, California, and to St. Mary's for 2 years. Then he came back to Tonopah, like they always do. He worked in the mines and fooled around and did his thing. And he was a very, very good fighter - a middleweight.

RM: How did he get into the fight game?

CB: It was here, when he was a kid.

RM: Prize-fighting was really popular in the mining camps.

CB: Yes. In fact, that's when he met Jack Dempsey and Johnny Sundenburg and some of those big names. He could've been on the top if it hadn't been for liquor, but he got drinking too much, and he was young, and he thought he was the Candy Kid, and it caught up with him. And then he went to the war, and he fought in the American Expeditionary Forces. They had boxing in France. He said, in his life, he never wanted anything so badly as to win that title. But he broke his hand in the next to the last fight so of course he didn't get the title. He never boxed again. He had 88 professional fights. My daughter should show you his scrapbook - it's beautiful.

RM: Were all his fights here, or in other places?

CB: Goldfield, and Tonopah - San Francisco.

RM: You said he trained with Johnny Sundenburg? I saw an item in the Goldfield newspaper that said Jack Dempsey had come to town and said the 2 toughest fights he ever had were with Johnny Sundenburg.

CB: Yes. And he said that in 1950, to Freck. He said, "How can I ever forget you, Freak? You trained my opponent, and it was the toughest fight I ever fought in my life."

I loved boxing at one time, but it's too brutal now. After that Korean kid . . . that just really turned me off.

RM: Yes; and the brain damage that they get; I can't watch it anymore.

CB: I'm sure my husband had brain damage. He would forget as he got older, and he was only 62 when he died. It was because he'd had so many blows on his head and kidneys and liver. He definitely was injured - you almost might say punchy - from it.

RM: How long did he fight?

CB: He started when he was about 18, and fought until after World War I. About 5 years, I think, and 88 fights.

RM: That's a lot of fights, especially in that short time.

CB: Yes. There were lots of fights here - weekly at the Big Casino. He was fighting before I was born, so it's a long time ago. But he was a very fair person. As I said, he believed there were no bad kids. We made them, and you could prevent it. He didn't believe in carrying a gun, and he didn't believe in a sap. My son says he wouldn't survive, now, for 5 minutes.

RM: It was different times, then, wasn't it?

CB: Yes. He said, where he could do it with talking and his fists, you couldn't do that now. They'd shoot you; chop your head right off.

RM: I read that Sam Gay, who was the sheriff down in Las Vegas for a long time when they had the Block 16, never carried a gun or anything. He would do it with his fists.

CB: Freck was a very gentle person. One time I came down the street with my son, and I thought, "What's going on in front of the Tonopah Club?" I saw them back a pickup into the Tonopah Club, and they threw a man in the back. He was huge - they couldn't get him in the police car. He had started trouble in the Tonopah Club, and they asked him to leave, and then they called Freck, and he - in a nice way - told the man to leave. (Of course, I feel that [if] they let those people get drunk [they should] put up with them. That was my theory. They would take their money just so long, and then want the cops to get rid of them.) Freck came in and tried nicely to get the man to leave, and he picked Freck up just like he was a cat, by the back of the neck. Freck thought, "Oh, boy, I'm in trouble."

The big guy said, "You're not going to tell me what to do."

And Freck said, "Well, I'm asking you to leave." He got loose and in the meantime he had his little gloves on. He said he never had to work so hard. He had to box this man - literally - all over the Tonopah Club until he knocked him out. He looked like a piece of hamburger when Freck got through with him. Then they just backed the pickup up and put him in jail, and the next day, when he was going to appear, he said all he wanted to do was leave town. He'd asked

for everything he got and he learned a lesson.

Freck had a very lethal punch and my son has it. He doesn't like to fight. But if he does fight, oh, brother.

RM: When did he get into police work?

CB: In 1931, and from then on until he died. First he was elected constable, and finally chief of police. And the salary - no wonder I had to work all my life. It wasn't enough to feed himself, let alone a family. And we had two children - Tim and Phyllis. We were married 23 years. On the 11th of January, 1959, it was 23 years and on the 18th of January the VA hospital, where he had been 6 months before, called and told me to bring him in - he was a very sick man; he could hardly walk.

RM: What did he have?

CB: I think silicosis, myself.

RM: He couldn't breathe?

CB: Yes. And his legs gave out, and he was a fairly young man to be in that shape. And his liver was bad. They said they thought that was from fighting - pounding on his liver. I took him to Reno to the hospital, and he died on the way. He fell, and I was all by myself.

RM: Oh!

CB: It was terrible. And the awful thing of it was that Tim was overseas in the Marine Corps, and Kui had just had her baby - Donnie was 12 days old - and I went through that ordeal alone. Of course, Tim came home and stayed about 2 weeks, then they sent him back. I went back with him and stayed at San Quentin. A man who had worked for my husband in the police force was the associate warden by then. I stayed there a couple of months, and visited, and then I came on home.

That's when I started in the post office. I worked in the Tonopah Club for many years, waiting on tables, but . .

RM: When did you start at the Tonopah Club?

CB: Oh, I had been there before the war and during the war, then I quit and went out to the Tonopah Air Base and worked 3 years. When I quit out there, the war wasn't over yet. I came in and didn't work for a few years and when I did go back to work, I went back to the Tonopah Club. (In the drugstore for a little while, and then the Tonopah Club.)

When Freck died, I knew that I had to find something with some security. I was 41 years old, I was a widow, my children were grown and gone, and I really had nothing. A policeman's [job is] the most underpaid work in the world. They expect so much, and [give] so little. So I went to work in the post office and was there until I retired in 1978. I worked 21 years and then

I said, "Well, when I get 20 years in I'm through." In the meantime, I'd been a widow for 14 years, and then I married a man for a little over a year and he died.

RM: What was his name?

CB: Fred Steele. He was an electrical engineer.

RM: He passed away?

CB: He killed himself. He worked for Sandia Corporation. In fact, he built the first computer out here.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CB: In fact, Fred committed suicide 13 years ago today. He had quit at Sandia He was a very frustrated man; not well, I don't think. Afterwards I've realized that. But he invested money out in Smoky Valley. I asked him not to do it, but he always said, "You think you know so much."

I said, 'Well, I know a cheater when I . . ." I've been around too long.

By the time he knew it, it was too late. And he was sick - he just couldn't hack it. I went to work and when I came home at 11:30, he had left a note on the table. And I read it, and by the time I got my son at the sheriff's office and he and the fellows got around to the mountain, he had already shot himself.

It was a part of my life that wasn't very pleasant. And I never did forgive him for it, because I didn't think he had the right to do that to me. I kind of put it out of my mind because I had to. He had 3 children and I'm still very close to the one daughter and to his son. One lives in Albuquerque and one - the girl - lives in Reno. The mother and father were divorced - one of those things - and it took them to grow up and their father to kill himself for them to realize, and it was too late, then. They grieve about it now, which they shouldn't. They should be like I am: put it out of your mind. It's over. But it was a terrible thing to go through. My son took it all right, but my daughter never did forgive him. We don't talk about it too much.

RM: When World War II started they closed the mines, didn't they?

CB: Yes. I think there was a little leasing going on, but I think the miners had to pay to run the hoist and things and it wasn't as lucrative as it had been.

But, you see, when they started building out here, everybody who could do anything went to work. It was a boom town. The war was in 1941, and they were in here by 1943.

RM: What was it like before the base?

CB: It was a quiet little old town. They were going to build this big army air base, and everybody thought, "What a lot of malarkey." Well, the next thing you know, it was built. And as I told you, the executive officer had gone to school with Freck, so we were in on everything. I never went without one thing - I hate to say this - during the war because Colonel Flynn provided it. And we went to all the shows out at the base -the Camel Caravans and all that - that they'd bring in to entertain the troops. We always sat in the front line, with Colonel Flynn. Always went to all the officers' parties, but I couldn't stand the officers because I worked in an enlisted men's club. I also resented the fact that they segregated the Blacks and the whites. That's why I think I'd lean toward Jesse Jackson. You don't know how heartbreaking it was to be right in it, when you didn't believe in it. All the boys who worked for me were black. There wasn't one in that squadron who wouldn't have given his life for me. And I just had a feeling for them. They told, me that I couldn't let them come in the service club and I told Colonel Flynn, "Well, then, you take this job and you-know-what. Because as long as they come, they're going to stay. And these kids don't care when they come."

BM: So you let them in?

CB: I sure did.

RM: Now, what was your job there?

CB: Junior hostess in the enlisted man's service club. It was a huge building with a restaurant, and you just sold food for the kids to have if they wanted to eat there. It was a snack-bar type place with a big room with all kinds of games and record players and . . . Do you know "Sentimental Journey"?

RM: Yes?

CB: I'll bet you I bought 100 of those records while I was out there -they'd wear them out. They'd dance together because there were no girls. Some of the kids I met were just wonderful.

RM: So you let in Blacks and whites.

CB: I let the blacks in and the white boys didn't care.

RM: You didn't get any static from some of the southerners?

CB: Not really, because the kids from New York and New Jersey predominated here. There was only one southern boy I had trouble with. He informed me that he didn't think it was right for me to mix with those black boys. And I said I didn't see anything wrong with black boys. They were nice kids and they worked hard - oh, my!

I don't care what the United States says about it, out here, what I saw with my own eyes - the way they treated the Blacks made me sick. The police station was right across from the MP office and they had a black boy

I knew handcuffed with his hands behind his back. Freck was on a call, and I was waiting in the police station for him - we were going to go have a sandwich. And oh, my God! I heard all this and I ran out on the sidewalk, and white MPs were beating this black boy with billy clubs and he was crying and begging. Whatever he had done, had been nothing. I couldn't bear it and I ran across - which was none of my business; I had no business doing it, and I knew it. I said, "What are you doing? You're killing that boy." To this day I believe they killed him. I never heard anything about him again. I tried to find out, but I couldn't.

RM: What did he do?

CB: He had done something down in the Black USO, down where the Giggle Springs are. He had done something they didn't like, so they brought him up to the MP office, which is across from the Senior Citizens' now, and literally beat that kid to death. When my husband came back, he said,

"What in the name of God . . ." He'd parked the car, and I was screaming and crying.

I said, "They're killing that -" whatever his name was. And so he went over there and they threw him in the back of this wagon thing that the MPs had. They took him to the base and that was the last time I ever saw him.

But, as I say, the black boys worked for me. They cooked and cleaned and did whatever I asked them to do. We'd have an inspection every time you turned around and there would be nothing that they could complain about. I was a woman - I knew. But just because the black boys did that work, the inspecting officer would find some little thing and make those kids scrub with toothbrushes and stuff.

RM: But they didn't do that to the white guys.

CB: No way. Just those poor black kids.

One time when I went out to work I opened up, but one of my kids was there but one boy. I said, "What's going on? What's happening?"

And he said (called me Miss Cathy), "I don't know how to tell you this, but we're in trouble."

I said, "How are we in trouble?"

He said, "Well . . ." that this one boy had gotten a package through the mail. "And," he said, "they're all drugged up."

That long ago. I thought, "Oh, my God! What's going to happen? Those kids - the MPs will kill them." And they would - because they were terrible.

So I went to the commanding officer - the top sergeant, who was a graduate of MIT. He was a wonderful young man; had a wife and a little boy. I called him and told him and he said, "Oh, my God." So he went to the barracks, and there they were - all out of it. So he confined them to the barracks and the kids didn't get in trouble. Then I found the boxes that the stuff had come in, in my garbage can so I gave them to the first sergeant, and I guess they found out where it was coming from, and which one was getting it, so they put a stop to that.

Not one of those kids resented the fact that I turned them in. Not one. They came and thanked me because they knew they would get killed, or were in trouble. In fact, they were closer to me after that. When I quit out there those kids almost died - they were just heartbroken. They always said: "Kayo and her black boys," but, oh, I had such a deep feeling for them. And imagine what it was like in big places - how terrible it must have been.

RM: Was the housing segregated out there?

CB: Everything was. They had their own day club. That's why they said they couldn't use the enlisted men's service club. They didn't have a hostess or anything, but they were told not to go to the service club. But they came anyway. You know how black kids are - they don't give a damn. They tried it, and they were welcome, so they stayed. They had a good time and they danced. We'd sell them a T-bone steak and all the fixings for about 40 cents. Cigarettes for 10 cents.

RM: Where was the whites' USO located?

CB: It was where that convention center is now.

RM: What kinds of activities did they have at the USOs there?

CB: I never did go very much. I was always working, and my children were small. But the local gals would go down - the unmarried ones - and hostesses would be sitting around and they would dance.

RM: There weren't that many girls, though, were there?

CB: No. Boy, they were popular. Even the old married gals were popular with the service boys. They wanted to dance, and they didn't care, you know. They were shipping out from here; it was the last point. Those big bombers went overseas.

RM: Yes. A lot of them never came back.

CB: Oh, no. I met one who made an impression on me. It was when they had the fighter planes out here. His name was Lieutenant Hopkins. He was the funniest kid. Went through the whole war, went overseas, served all of his time, came back to the states, and was out on a routine flight and something happened. He parachuted out of his plane and went into a tree and a limb went through his jugular vein and he bled to death before they could cut him down.

After going through all that training and the war. The reason I remember him so well: There was one hangar out there that had doors on both ends. Oh, God, this Hoppy was something. He came - on that street going up the courthouse hill where Rose Skanovsky lives - with those wires and everything. He flew under that in that P-39. Then after everybody in town almost went crazy he went out to the base and flew through that hangar - right through it. But after all the things he'd gone through; for a freak thing like that to kill him.

I met many crew members of the 24s, because the service club I was in was right down from what they called the line - the place where all the planes took off and came in. And those officers would rather come into the enlisted men's club for coffee and snacks, especially when they were shipping out. They were not supposed to, but their crew were all enlisted men - they could care less. I got to know an awful lot of the young men that way.

I saw the plane that hit the mountain towards Rye Patch; I saw it hit. It made a terrible impression - in fact, I almost lost my mind. It hit, and it was just like a ball of fire rolling over that hill. And every one of those kids were killed; and I knew them.

RM: On the north side of the highway?

CB: Yes. I think the Metscher kids have gotten lots of things out of there for their museum. Then I saw one other crash - it was the opposite.....

RM: You saw 2 crashes?

CB: Two crashes in the time I was out there; bad ones. It's an awful thing to remember. I met lots of nice young men. In fact, I used to bring one in to eat here. My children just loved him, and my husband thought so much of him. He was from New York. I call him once in a while still, after all these years.

RM: What's his name?

CB: Glen Flynn. He lives in Messina, New York. I love cologne - perfume - especially Emeraude by Coty - the green one. He told me, the last time I talked to him, that he never went into a drugstore or department store that he didn't think of me, after all these years. And I said, "How come?"

He said, "Every time I see that Emeraude cologne I think about you." When he'd come in and eat with us he'd buy a bottle of cologne or something out at the base and give it to me and buy the kids some candy or something. And he said, "Every time I see that Emeraude I think about you."

And I said, "Well, you know what? I still use it all the time and just as much." Because I used to use so much they'd smell me coming. I would like to have seen him again, but I'm just not well enough for that. Sometimes, now, like this last week - I just didn't move. I get days where I just can't do anything, so then I don't.

RM: Tell me more about what Tonopah was like during the construction phase out there.

CB: Oh, it was a crazy house! The restaurants were standing room [only]. You'd buy brown bags then, too, to take out. I don't know how many men they had working out here. Everybody could work if they wanted work. And it brought in lots of riff-raff. The construction workers didn't care - [they were] living high off the hog. So they gambled and drank and caroused . . .

RM: A hard-living bunch?

CB: Yes. And when it was over, of course, the soldiers came in. You didn't see too much difference, only the soldier boys didn't have that much money to spend. But they spent their money - they came in and played the clubs and gambled.

RM: So the clubs did well during this period.

CB: Oh, my. If you had a joint, as we'd call them, in those days, you couldn't come out of it without being a millionaire. I don't care who it was, or how big or little it was, they all made so much money they didn't know what to do with it. And watch those dealers steal! They wore these things underneath their belts, and they'd stick these silver dollars . . . A couple of them lived up here and I'd be coming down the street or something, and they'd be coming home on their break to unload that silver. They were stealing from the owners, [who] they still made a million dollars.

RM: Were they cheating the soldiers?

CB: No, I don't think so. I think the kids did OK. They got a fair shake. But the rent and everything like that was overpriced. It was sad -it was cruel, really, especially for some of them who brought their families with them.

Across the street there was a captain and my kids and that little boy were close friends. Right across the street here there was a pilot. They still - up until just a couple of years - came from Indiana to visit me. And then back in the back was a doctor - a Captain Emory. All these houses down the street were rented to military.

RM: Who lived in them before the war?

CB: A lot of them were Moved in during the war. The one across the street was. It's not there now, but it was moved in and it was a dump. They moved them in from Hawthorne, Goldfield . . . wherever. Down the street there were about 4 houses that were rented - for big rent - to officers. They were big old houses. As soon as the war was over they were all moved out and sold, because nobody was going to rent them - they were dumps. And then these other places were moved in. If you had a room to rent, I don't know how much you could get.

My mother didn't charge the kids anything when she rented them a room. And they had kitchen privileges, and she just loved and enjoyed the kids. They'd cook and she'd eat with them, or she'd cook for all of them. She had 2 bedrooms rented most of the time - it would be 2 couples.

RM: Did she still have her gardens and goats and everything?

CB: Oh, yes. And those kids thought she was great. Up until she died we heard from one kid in New York, especially. He and his wife never failed to keep in touch with her; we had to write and tell than she was gone.

During the war years you met some wonderful people but you met some awful jerks. My mother said to one colonel, "In my country, you couldn't command goats, let alone men." [laughter] He was real drunk and putting on a big show. I was so embarrassed, but it was true. That was her version of an officer and a gentleman.

All of the local people worked out there in the offices. So many of the women I think about now, who are still around, worked at the air base. And then they met soldier boys and married them, and many of them left here with them. A lot of them just had a fling, but it's surprising how many of them married army personnel and then left, and now come back every once in a while.

RM: A lot of the local girls married air men. How did those marriages work out? Did most of them last? And did the girls leave and never came back?

CB: Most of them lasted, and many of the girls never came back. And then of course we had 2 after that. A lot of the local girls married boys from the 866th Radar up here, but a lot of those boys stayed here. They went to work in this area for the telephone company, and the FAA and so forth. And then there was a squadron that was out by Warm Springs. What was it called -

some kind of a weather . . . Two or three of the local girls married those boys. The local boys resented all the air force, yet they wouldn't have taken those girls out themselves. I could never understand it, but there was a terrible feeling. My son, for one, was terrible. Nothing would have pleased him better than to knock the pants off of one of those air force kids, yet he didn't really care.

RM: He didn't like the girls anyway? [chuckles]

CB: He didn't want them anyway.

RM: Is the 866th the one out north?

CB: No. Up here.

RM: The one up on the hill; OK.

CB: Yes; Radar Hill. In fact, when they built that radar up there on Butler Mountain . . . This I must tell you. We lived there, and we always had a great big bench in front of our house. And with the trees it was always shady and nice. Kids would play in the front yard and loved it. My mother and I were [laughs] there one day when they were building that road to put the radar up there, and she said to me, . . . (she snipped snoose. She snipped a little snoose, and wiped her nose and sneezed a few times, and said), "You know, United States don't know what to do with their money. They're ruining Butler Mountain." [laughter] And she was so right, because they never used it.

When they went up there to build it, I said to the army engineer, "Say, when you get to the top of that Butler Mountain, you'll find a great, big black rock. And on it you'll find 'Kayo - 1935'."

He said to me, "What are you talking about?"

And I said, "I carved that in that solid rock with a . . ." - one of those little hammers and a chisel. And I said, "I went up there every Saturday - my girlfriend and I - and you'll find one 'Sissy - 1936'." I said, "We worked real hard on that." We were probably in grade school yet, but we were going to graduate in '35 and '36. So we put it on there.

And, you know, he came in to the Tonopah Club and he said, "You know, if there was any way in this world that I could preserve that rock, I would." He said, "I thought you were pulling my leg."

I said, "Did you find it?"

He said, "Oh, my God! That took . . ."

And I said, "Lots of hours."

Right on the top of that mountain.

But my mother said they didn't know what to do with their money, so they're ruining Butler Mountain. And then when they moved it over on the other one, you know, getting off . . .

RM: Oh, that's what they did. Then they moved it up north.

CB: My mother thought that was disgraceful. This government hasn't got enough money to keep their poor people, but they can waste it on . . . this sort of thing. I don't think the kids up there - the 866th - ever used the radar on the hill. If they did, it was very little.

RM: I remember when the grader fell off the side.

CB: Yes. Did you ever go up on that road?

RM: Oh, yes. I walk up there every now and then.

CB: Isn't that something? I love the top of Butler Mountain. When I die, I'd like them to throw my ashes on it.

RM: It's a beautiful view; yes.

CB: I said, "That's where I spent the happiest days of my life."

RM: Is that right? Up there with the goats, and . . .

CB: And - just hiking - having lunch - and fooling around. Never entered our minds there might be snakes or anything else.

RM: Did you find snakes up there?

CB: The only one place - on the foot of Butler Mountain. One of the biggest rattlesnakes I've ever seen in my life. I was on a horse. Oh, I was terrified. You know, you should never get off of a horse when that happens; the horse can take care of things. But I panicked and jumped off that horse, and I ran so fast that they could hardly run me down with a horse.

RM: I was walking up there 2 or 3 years ago, and about halfway up on the road, I found a rattlesnake. What do these things eat up there?

CB: There are a lot of them - it's amazing. I saw a thing on the TV that said that are an endangered species, and you should - all this stuff. I think they should get rid of every one.

RM: Well, Kayo, that's just about the end of this tape.

CB: Well, that's the end - we'll say adieu - you've had enough.

CHAPTER NINE

RM: Kayo, you were going to tell me a couple of stories.

CB: They were building Boulder Dam, and we were living right on that highway. We really didn't have anything - it was during the worst of the Depression - but as I say, my mother had her own goats and all. No matter how many went through walking to Boulder Dam looking for work, she never, ever turned one person down, even if it was just to give them a cup of coffee and piece of bread. That went on and on and it was just an accepted thing by the kids - Bubba was going to feed them no matter what.

RM: Why was she called Bubba?

CB: That's "grandmother" in Yugoslavian. My children, of course, started calling her Bubba, and so we all did.

RM: Are there any other stories or thoughts that you had since we talked last?

CB: We talked so much, I forgot what we talked about. I know she was so cute . . . my son was her first grandchild. My brother lived in Leadville, Colorado, and the night my grandson Donnie was born, it was Serbian Christmas Eve. Of course, Serbian Christmas was a big thing in our lives. She went to the telephone - we had the crank phones - and she rang the operator and said, "Get my Willie." The operator, of course, knew her, so they immediately got William in Leadville. He got on the phone and she said, "I thought that when you [came home from the war] (you see, he was on the invasion to Japan when the war was over, and they went into Okinawa and then he came home) that that was the happiest day of my life, but this is the happiest day of my life; I have a grand-grandson." She didn't say great-grandson, she said, "I have a grand-grandson."

And oh, bay, she loved him. She just couldn't get over it. I wish she could have lived a little while to enjoy him. She did for about 9 months. She'd come up with these really funny stories. If you didn't know her, you wouldn't really know what she was talking about. She had her own way of telling them. And she knew the score; don't you think she didn't.

She always hated to see waste. The waste in government and whatever was nothing then. Now, she couldn't survive.

She thought of Franklin Delano Roosevelt just as I did. He was the first President she ever voted for. But to her, he was absolutely . . . you know, we had radio then. You'd think she wouldn't know, but boy, she knew. When she got her citizenship papers . . . My sister had taught her all the questions they ask in the book, and a [native-born] American couldn't pass that test. She got up there and you held your breath. They said, "Who helps the President govern the United States?"

She sat back for a minute and we thought, "This is it."

She said, "The Cabinet," and my sister and I almost died.

She said to me afterwards, "You think I'm crazy; I listen to the radio." She picked up all the stuff that we hadn't even thought to teach her.

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