

An Interview with
THEODORE L. BLOSSER

An Oral History conducted and edited by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
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Tonopah
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Theodore L. Blosser
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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 minimum the NCTHP will, in preparing a text:

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

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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 Tam King at the Oral History Program of the University of Nevada at Reno served as a consulting oral historian. Much deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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--Robert D. McCracken
Tonopah, Nevada
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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 may be impacted by a repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for hundreds, possibly thousands, of years to come, and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided near the site. In the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

--R.D.M.

Robert McCracken interviewing Ted Blosser at his home in Pahrump, Nevada April 15 and 16, 1988

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Ted, could you start by telling me your name as it appears on your birth certificate?

TB: It's Theodore Lorenzo Blosser.

RM: And could you state your birthdate and place?

TB: My birthdate is November 2, 1916, at Santa Maria, California.

RM: And could you tell me your father's name and where he was from?

TB: My father's name was Elbert Elrich Blosser. He was from a pioneer family in the Santa Maria Valley in California, about 60 miles north of Santa Barbara. In fact my Aunt Nellie, my father's oldest sister, was the first Caucasian girl born in the Santa Maria Valley.

RM: And what was your mother's name, and where was she from?

TB: She was from an original pioneer family, also. Her name was Ora Phina Trott. The Trotts were engaged in the hardware business in Santa Maria, California.

RM: What was your father engaged in?

TB: My father started out as a young boy in the Santa Maria Valley, going to school and doing summer work for his father. His father was always a farmer. After he got through high school he decided that he wanted to become an engineer on a steam engine locomotive. His folks were opposed to that, so then he decided he wanted to become a dentist. And they opposed that, too. By this time, if you knew my father . . . He was very cool, calm and collected, but he just let them know without getting in a big hassle - that he was going to become a dentist whether they liked it or not. When they saw that he was so determined, they decided to go along with [him]. His father made him the proposition. (My dad's name was Elbert, but they called him Bert). He said, "Bert, I'll make you an offer. Whether you want to go for it or not, I don't know. But we have a farm here, and if you'll furnish all the labor, I'll furnish all the water, all the land and all the fertilizer, and we'll split it 50 - 50."

And my dad said, "OK, sounds all right to me."

And that's what they did. That year, everybody planted little white beans, which was one of the popular crops in the Santa Maria Valley. And when they got ready to harvest it, they were worth around 50, 60 cents a sack. And that was a disastrous price. So his father, knowing the farming business at that time (there was no agriculture support or government interference) said, "Well, Bert, if I don't miss my guess, next year nobody'll plant beans and the price will go higher, so why don't we just store this whole crop in the barn out here, and let's go it again."

And my dad said, "I've got nothing to lose; I spent a whole year now, I [might] just as

well spend another one, and it might turn out all right."

Well, to make a long story short, the next year the price went to \$10 a sack.

RM: Is that right! Did they sell the old beans, too, for that?

TB: Oh, yes; they had 2 years' crop - at \$10 a sack. There was a terrific shortage, because very few farmers planted beans. In other words, his father had it figured out right. There was no support - nothing - and nobody was going to plant beans because they had such a disastrous year the year before. His share of that crop was enough to marry my mother, put him through dental school, start a family and start in the dental business.

He was a very popular fellow - the whole family was - and my mother's family was, too. And we'd go back over there, and all the fellows he'd gone to school with were in pretty important positions, like bankers. At that time it wasn't the Bank of America, it was the Bank of Italy. One of the managers my dad had gone to school with, a good friend and everything, was now the manager of the branch over there. We'd stop in to see him every time we'd go over to visit. Every once in awhile the banker would say, "You know, Doc, when you walked in there with your share of that money, I thought you were a millionaire." It was thousands of dollars.

My dad was quite a traveler. My brother or I would walk up to him when he was 60 years old and say, "Let's go to Santa Maria," or, "let's go down south," or something . .

He'd say, "Let's go." He was raring to go. He just liked to travel, and he was a good traveling companion.

Anyway, he started practicing in Santa Barbara. He went in with a Dr. Cobelenz, who was not a dentist, but a physician and surgeon. They had offices together in Santa Barbara. And in those days, you didn't have all these companies that made the plates and things like that, and the doctors had to do a lot of the lab work themselves, so Dr. Cobelenz and my dad would always go to their offices early in the morning. The office would open up probably at 8:00, and they'd be down there at 5:00, 6:00 . . . Dad would make the plates and do what he had to do and Dr. Cobelenz would be doing his lab work.

Dr. Cobelenz had previously been a doctor in Santa Maria, California, and he was the one who brought me into the [world]. They were real close friends of the family. One morning my dad wasn't feeling well, so he called Dr. Cobelenz up and said that he was going to stay in bed a little bit, he didn't feel well, and he'd be down a little later on. If any of the patients came, why, tell them and make a different appointment for them Dr something; don't leave them high and dry. And if it was an emergency, why, he'd just get out of bed and go down there. This was the type of dentist he was. Well, that was the morning they had the big earthquake in Santa Barbara, and Dr. Cobelenz was killed in that earthquake. And it was just a miracle that my dad [wasn't] killed.

RM: What year was that earthquake?

TB: It was before 1921, because we left Santa Barbara in 1920. My brother had what they called "quick consumption," which I believe was a form of tuberculosis. We were advised that my brother had to go [to] a drier climate. My father had a brother-in-law named Wiltz Lierly. My dad always said, about Uncle Wiltz, that he could make \$25 while my dad was making \$5. But my dad would keep \$4 of it, and my uncle would spend it all.

RM: [laughs]

TB: He was a big promoter, who made it - easy come, easy go. Uncle Wiltz heard that there was some land for sale in Tulare County, at Exeter and Visalia, California. He was going across from Santa Maria over to Taft and he stopped at Taft overnight, and stayed at a hotel. He picked up the local paper and they had an article about how people were suing the big oil companies because they owned the oil land and they had the derricks and pumps and the pumps would leak, and the oil would run down the ravine and get on the neighbors' property and they were being sued. So he had an idea and he went to the oil companies and told them that if they'd give him the oil, he'd put dams in those ravines if he could keep the oil.

We had to move to a drier climate because of my brother's condition. I guess it must have been shortly after that earthquake, too, and he maybe felt it was a good time to move. So he went to work for my uncle. They had a Model-T Ford with a big tank on the back and a pump, and they'd back up to those dams . . . they had to keep them pumped down; it was a 24-hour job. If one of them got full at midnight, you had to go out there and pump it. If you knew my dad, that wouldn't phase him a bit; he'd do it. He would do what he had to do, and he had a lot of energy. My brother and I occasionally used to go with him. I'll never forget at night out there, riding up there in that old, open cab in that Model-T Ford truck.

RM: Did it have barrels on the back?

TB: No, one big tank; maybe a 1000-gallon tank. We would fill that up and take it over to a great big tank and dump it in there and then Uncle would sell the oil, you see. He made a fortune out of it and spent all of it.

In the meantime he was still interested in real estate, and he found a ranch for sale at Exeter, California. My uncle always invested in everything, and he had a bunch of little cabins, or little houses, and we lived in a couple of those in Taft, California as a temporary deal.

Anyway, he found this ranch at Exeter, California, and my dad said, "Well, I want to be on a farm." He was a farm boy - he knew what he was - and he said he wanted to be on a farm, but he didn't want to make a living off a farm. But he wanted a place where he could live on a farm in the country and practice in town.

This was a grape ranch at Exeter and it had a fairly nice home on it, a 3 or 4-bedroom bedroom; good for our family. So he decided, 'Well, now the only thing lacking is, how about being a dentist in Exeter, California?' He said that he thought to himself that the best way to find out about how they liked the dentist was go down and get a haircut and shave and ask the barber.

So he went in there and casually went to get a shave, and he kind of casually remarked "Well, how's the dentist here? Pretty good dentist?"

And they started cussing him out up one side and down the other, so as soon as my dad got through with his shave and haircut he went down and saw this dentist and wanted to know if he'd like to sell out and [that] he was interested in buying into . . . That way he wouldn't be going in there cold; he'd have a practice; there'd be some clients. And this guy said,

Boy, you bet.- He said, "I'll make you a deal you can't refuse," or something like that.

RM: What did he have to pay for a practice then?

TB: I just don't know that. You've got to remember this was in the '20s. can't say too much about

it, but in the '30s, after the Depression . . . You'd think my dad was a quack, but he was far from a quack. People would come from Bakersfield, California, 80 miles away; and from Fresno, 50 miles away, to see him. And he never turned any of the bad bills over to a collection agency. He always had the philosophy that if the people had the money and you treated them right, they'd always pay you back. It might take than a long time to do it . . . When he finally retired he had less than 1/10 of one percent bad debts. Everybody had paid up.

RM: That's remarkable.

TB: We grew up in that type of family.

RM: How many brothers and sisters?

TB: I had one brother, and he was 4 years older than I was.

RM: And you went to school in the Exeter area?

TB: Right. I started at Kaweah Grammar School, and then went on to Exeter Union High School. I graduated in 1934. From there I went to Menlo Junior College, which was, and maybe more or less is now, a prep school for Stanford University at Menlo Park, California, right near Palo Alto and Stanford. I don't recall how I [happened to go] to Menlo Junior College. But my folks [and I read a] pamphlet, and they said, "This sounds like a pretty good place to go." They tried to encourage me. They wanted me to go on and get a college education.

RM: What did you want to study?

TB: You know how kids are, going through high school, they play football, baseball, and all that stuff. [I] made my letters, and all that and really wasn't thinking too much about what I was going to do in the future. Some people . . . my nephew knew what he wanted to do before he ever got out of high school. But very few people are that way.

RM: Yes, that's true.

TB: Anyway, [my dad] said, "Ted, why don't you make an appointment at Menlo, and I'll take a day off from the office and we'll all 3 drive up there. The name of the president of Menlo Junior College was Mr. Lawrey, and he turned out to be a fine man - nice personality and everything. My mother and dad were impressed. They said, "If you want to go to college, why, we'll . . . we'll foot the bill. We'll put up the money for you."

Well, in those days it cost about \$300 tuition (a private school) and the room and board was the biggest thing. The whole thing turned out to be about \$1000 for 9 months.

I started to school there, and the first quarter I got 4 Fs and one D. And so something had to be done. Here my folks were spending \$1000 a year on me, and I wasn't about to throw that down the drain. I stayed in the dormitory, and they had a retired coach who liked boys and who took care of the gym and coached the boys on the side and so forth. He took a liking to me, and I liked him, and so I asked him: "Look, my folks are putting up all this money, and I've got to do something. I can't just flunk out of this place. And I'm not that dumb." "I mean, it's just - I

haven't learned how to study or something."

"Well," he said, "I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll talk to Dr. Nugent." He was in charge of the dormitory - over the boys - there. There must've been maybe 55 or 60 of us in that dormitory. And we'll see what we can do."

So I made an appointment with Dr. Nugent and he said, "Well, Ted, I'll tell you what. I'm going to set up a study schedule for you, and if you'll study [by] that schedule, I'll guarantee you'll get through this school. If you won't cheat on the schedule, and you'll put in as much time as [is] on this schedule on these different courses, I will guarantee you that you'll get through this school."

So I said, "Well, I've got to do something; I'll go for anything."

So he set up this schedule, and I not only stuck to that schedule, but I studied more than the schedule. And it wasn't long before those grades started to go up, and by the second quarter I had 2 As, 2Bs and a C. And I'll never forget . . . we had a fellow going to school there [on] a scholarship who was a very brilliant boy. He got straight As in every course he ever took. And he liked track, and he was one of these guys who would get up at 4:00 a.m. and go out and run around the track with nobody around.

You get to a point with this study schedule [where] you out-guess what the teacher's going to give on a test. Maybe, instead of trying to just bury yourself in the whole chapter, or 2 chapters, or whatever they give you, you pick out the most important things, and that's what you study. And you go into that class, and boy, if they ask you that, you've got it made, and if they don't, you flunk the test. The odd part about it is that most of the time, you hit it.

We went into this biology course one morning. Dr. Hart was good for . . . out of a clear sky, he'd walk in there, and the bell would ring, and everything would quiet down, and he'd say, "OK, boys, close up your books; we're going to have a 15-minute test." So this one Monday morning we went in there, and he said, "OK, let's close up our books. We're going to have a 15-minute test.

And he wrote on the board, "Describe the respiratory system of the 3 worms. And he named off these different worms with 3 different types of respiratory systems. I sat down - heck, I knew that. I wrote that down; turned it in.

That was on a Monday, and the following Wednesday he came back in, and the bell rang, and everybody quieted down and he said, "Well, I got some sad news for most of you guys, but there's 2 guys that passed this test 100 percent. Vard Hoyt and Ted Blosser. The only 2 that passed. Everybody else had flunked the test, you know. [chuckles] Here he's putting me in the same class with the brain. [chuckles]

And then another interesting thing happened to me. I was taking a course in business advertising, preparing to get on for a degree - probably - in business administration. And a Dr. Popinoe was the instructor. I don't know if you remember, but a Dr. Popinoe in Southern California used to write on marriages and so forth . . . he was a psychologist, and very popular. He wrote for the Los Angeles Times about 2 or 3 times a week.

Well, this was his brother, and he was just as smart as the one down there. And he was a good guy - just an all-around Joe. He also taught accounting. A good friend named Maurice Musy lived in Palo Alto and had a scholarship because he was a good athlete. He came busting into my room one morning about 7:00 a.m., and he said, "Hey, I've been out playing ball," (or doing something) "and, I don't have my accounting work done for today, and I wonder if I could use your paper?"

I'd stayed in all during the weekend and all day Saturday and did all the accounting and

had it all worked out, and I said, "Sure, Musy. Go ahead and take it." So he took it and copied it off, you know. We turned in the papers and he got an A, and I got a B+. And he copied it word for word. I didn't say anything, but after we got through the class I went up to him, and I said, (I didn't want to tell him that Musy had copied my paper.) "You know, Musy and I compared these things, and we both had exactly the same figures on the papers I had to prepare. And he got an A, and I got a B - how come?"

He said, "His was neater than your [laughter]

So he knew what had happened, you see. He knew Musy had copied the paper.

And in business advertising, what it would do . . . At that time The Saturday Evening Post and Collier's magazine were very popular. He'd say, "OK, I want you to pick out in one of the magazines, either The Saturday Evening Post or Collier's, a commercial ad, and analyze it, and tell us why you think it's good, or bad." Well, I always figured if you picked one that you thought was good, you might get a better grade than if you tried picking some of them apart. So Whitman Chocolate used to have this pretty girl . . . And this guy was kind of romancing the girl and they'd always have the Whitman chocolate there and so forth. So I wrote on this ad, telling what I thought - how good it was. They ran that ad for years and years and years. And my personal logic for the whole thing was, if the ad was no good, they wouldn't do it that way. After a few months, or a year or so, they'd quit it. Well, I got my test back, and he'd given me a D+ in it. After the class was over with, I went up to Dr. Popinoe and I said to him, I said, "Say, look." It just didn't make sense to me - how I could get a D+ in this thing when these people have been using this ad for years and years and years. If it wasn't any good, why would they keep on doing it?

And he said, "Well, I just don't think it's any good. You may be right, but I don't think it's any good. I don't think it's a good ad. That's all there is to it. I'm the one that gives the grades."

We had a textbook, and we got almost to the end of the textbook, and they had an article in there about this ad; how they had made millions off of that ad. Of course, it was in the assignment, so I didn't wait till the class was over this time. I just took that book up and went right up to his desk . . . He said, "I know what you're going to say." He said, "I already made up my mind. You're going to get an A in the course."

RM: [laughter]

TB: You couldn't make him mad. If you could show him that you were right and he was wrong, why, . . . So that's the way that went.

RM: How long did you go there?

TB: I went there 2 years, and Dr. Popinoe, . . . we became fast friends, Musy and I and "Pop" . . . My folks were great bridge players, but I never did like to play cards of any kind. But Musy was a rabid bridge player, and so was Dr. Popinoe and his wife so he used to go there and play cards with them. We were good friends, but if you didn't do the lesson, you still got [chuckles] got a lousy grade. He wasn't that good a friend.

Dr. Popinoe had gone to school with the director of admissions at Pomona College. He called me in one day and he said, "Ted, I think you're good enough to go to Pomona. And if you want to go to Pomona, I'll recommend you to . . ." (whatever his name was). He said, "I went to school with him. You may not get in, but they'll look twice at you because of my friendship with

him. He'll look twice at you, and decide whether you're good enough to get into Pomona. But," he said, "I think you will be accepted; your grades are good enough now. You've got over a B+ average and," he said, "you just don't get any better than that." He said, "You come from a good family." (By now my mother and father knew all the teachers.) So I put in for it and they accepted me. I went down there and graduated from Pomona 2 years later - in 1938 - with an A.B. degree in business administration.

RM: What did you do then?

TB: At Menlo, I learned that friendship counts a lot in this world. I became very good friends with Dick Farrar. His father was a vice president of Standard Oil of California. And Standard Oil of California owned a public utility in Santa Cruz, California. And while I was going to Menlo, my wife-to-be, Marie Wood, was still in high school. When she got out of high school, she went to San Jose State; she was 2 years behind me. She went on to Visalia Junior College and then her folks dug up enough money to put her through San Jose State, at San Jose, California, and she became a teacher there. She received a B.A. degree in teaching, and she qualified to teach anywhere in California.

RM: What was her name?

TB: Daisy Marie Wood. She was born right there at Exeter. We were long time friends - we went to the same grammar school (Kaweah). We really didn't become sweethearts until we got in high school.

RM: Did you go to work for Standard Oil, then?

TB: Well, because of the connection with Mr. Farrar, I got a job at this utility [owned by Standard Oil] called Coast Counties Gas and Electric, which was in Santa Cruz, Gilroy, Hollister, and 2 or 3 smaller communities around there. People won't believe this when I tell them this today, but I got a job delivering mail around the office for \$90 a month with a college education; a degree in business administration.

CHAPTER TWO

TB: I was working for Coast Counties Gas and Electric, and I worked there about 2 years. My wife and I were now married and living in Santa Cruz, and we loved it there. A beautiful place on Monterey Bay; a beautiful place. Always our dream was to go back there someday and retire, but we never made it back. Then World War II came along, and they wanted officers, and they took boys like me with a college education and put them through indoctrination.

I ended up at Dartmouth College for 6 weeks. I went into the navy and received a temporary commission as an Ensign - a line officer. Those are the ones who run the ship. I ended up at Dartmouth College in a 6-weeks' indoctrination course. We had dozens of courses, but as an example one course had a bluejackets' manual that's about like a Bible - about that big. A chief petty officer spends maybe 15 or 20 years learning what's in that book before he becomes chief petty officer. We had to learn it in 6 weeks. They threw this stuff at us fast, and they only gave one test pass or fail, and that was at the end of the 6 weeks.

RM: Did many guys fail?

TB: Well, let me tell you what happened to us. They have dormitories for the boys there and they generally have 2 people in 2 rooms, but because of the war there were 5 of us in the 2 rooms.

RM: It must've been crowded.

TB: Well, it wasn't that bad. You know, you're young; you get used to it. Everybody's congenial, and a bad deal's a bad deal, so let's make it a good one. And being an officer, and educated, you're not supposed to have too many problems. You're supposed to be able to adapt, and that's what really happened.

So we got down to the last day, and these tests were going to go on for 4 days - one test in the morning for 3 hours, one in the afternoon of 3 hours . . . 4 days would be 8 tests. But it covered all the subjects. We had a fellow with us by the name of Jacob Goldbath [who] had a photographic memory. One of the boys in there said, "Jake, what are we going to do? We don't know all this stuff; there's just too much of it. Even if we knew it we couldn't remember all the stuff there is to it." "Well," he said, "I'll tell you what let's do. Let's sit down, and let's all put down 300 questions that we think they're going to ask us. Then we'll go through them and weed them out, take out the doubles, and what's left, we'll study. We'll learn those over the weekend for the test, and we'll walk into those classes. If they ask those questions, we're in. If they don't, we're out. But we're going to be out anyway - don't forget that - if we don't do something."

Everybody said, "OK, let's go." There were about 1200 questions that weren't duplicates, so we learned those 1200 questions.

Jake's folks owned a chain of drycleaning and laundry places in Ithaca, New York, and he had a couple of those canvas bags the navy has, and he'd stuff all of his clothes in [the bags] to go down to Ithaca, New York every weekend and have them do them all, whether he'd worn them or not. He said, "I'm going down to Ithaca over the weekend, and I want you guys out of here. On the first day the first class is going to start at 01000 (10:00 a.m.) I want all you guys out of here at 0800. I want to spend 2 hours - 8:00 to 10:00 - studying these questions, and that's all I'm going to study. I don't want you guys around; I'll be here by myself."

Well, that's what we did, and we walked into those tests, and you just wouldn't believe it. They were almost word for word what we had studied.

RM: Is that right! You had than pinned, then?

TB: Oh, just word for word what they had on those tests. Those tests would last 3 hours, and you could write the test maybe in an hour or hour and 15 minutes. You wouldn't want to get up and leave, though, because they'd think something was really haywire, so you'd sit around, go back over them again a couple of times, and make sure you hadn't screwed up some way. Finally after about 2 hours you couldn't stand it any longer so you'd get up and leave and those guys would look at you and think, 'That guy's flunked this test.'

When they got done . . . They had a hallway there at Dartmouth College that must've been 1/8th of a mile long. They put these test scores up there; they started at the left-hand side like this and went down the hallway. It was an 8-foot ceiling, and it went from maybe 7 feet down to a foot from the floor - row after row after name after name. You started over here with the highest grade and the next guy who got the next highest grade went down . . . I don't recall now, but it seems to me there were about 2000 students. I knew I'd passed the test, and I'm down there, and I say, "Well, I'll start in about half-way down the hall."

Old Jake came by and said, "Ted, what're you doing way down here? You're Number 6 up there on that front chart."

RM: You were Number 6?

TB: Number 6 on that thing. All of us in that room were in the top 10, and Jake was about Number 2, I think, and he'd only studied for about 4 hours. And from then on, that's what I've always done. I go in a test, pick out the most important thing, and that's what I study.

After the indoctrination - after a deal like that - they always give you a couple of weeks' leave, so my wife and I went on a little vacation.

I had been assigned, from there, to the naval receiving station on Treasure Island at San Francisco. So we found an apartment in San Francisco and she lived there and [I] traveled back and forth every day. They wanted us all to brush up on our navigation. We'd learned it out of the books, but now we had to get the actual practice. There was an offshore patrol . . . They were ferrying bombers and so forth to the South Pacific, and they'd take off from San Francisco or Los Angeles, fly over to the Islands, and these guys would get off course and get lost out there and run out of fuel, and they'd lose the crew and the plane - the works. They confiscated Errol Flynn's Zacka sailing ship, and another one called the Juniata, which was built by the Krupp Ironworks for something over \$1.5 million before the war. A contractor had it, and he'd been at Wake Island before the war started, building things and living on this Juniata. It had diesel generators and all that kind of stuff. He turned it over to the navy, and we'd go out there halfway between San Francisco and the Hawaiian Islands . . . The officers were going to get their navigation experience. We had to shoot the sun 3 times a day and plot the course with a number of navigators. We had to clean the heads - the toilets - and everything else . . . We had to learn to do the ship. Some of the officers revolted, but I never did complain. Most everybody participated; there were only one or two [who didn't]. It took a week to go out there, and 2 weeks on station, and a week back, so we'd be gone a full month at one time. My wife Marie would get on the train, and she'd go down to Exeter and spend the month down there with her folks while I

was gone. We still kept the apartment.

RM: Why did the trainees go out more than once?

TB: They had a lot of officers and until they could be reassigned to different duties, it was just good training. I don't know how long I was there; it wasn't all that long. Then I got transferred down to Ebro Bay and then to Avila, California, just north of Santa Maria. There's an old fort there, you know. I also spent some time at Camp Pendleton in San Diego.

RM: Yes; it's beautiful.

TB: From there, I went overseas, to the South Pacific. When we left here, they were still fighting on Guadalcanal. We went over on a Dutch ship. The Dutch and the French owned a great part of New Caledonia, and it was a big allied naval base. We went over on the Dutch "Blumfontaine." It was so crowded, and hot . . . no air conditioning . . . We would take our mattress off the bunk and sleep right on the deck. We did a zig-zag course out there which took twice as long, because of submarines.

RM: Was that so the subs couldn't find you?

TB: Well, they could find you, but as far as torpedoes, the odds were, they'd miss. While we were going over there, we were actually headed for New Caledonia. By this time Guadalcanal had been secured, and we were going to end on a little place called Tulagi. We were going to land there and we were going to go up to Bougainville - the big landing at Bougainville. The Dutch ship didn't have turbine engines; they had big reciprocating steam engines. They burned oil, but they made steam, and it was a piston deal, and it developed a knock. So without telling anybody, we sailed into Caledonia and they just tore the engine down and never told the chief of staff or the South Pacific commander or anybody. And here we were with 3000 troops on that ship all slated to go to Bougainville, and we're tied up in New Caledonia.

Oh, Admiral "Bull" Halsey, Commander of the South Pacific, was furious over that. I always say that we were tied up there for about 6 weeks and we missed the Bougainville landing. When I was down in San Diego we trained with the marines with landing craft. When I went overseas I was in Standard Landing Craft Unit Number 18. Every landing craft had 2 officers and - depending on the size - how many men. We were trained to take the men off the transport ships and take them ashore. After they were all ashore, we had supply ships that came with us, and we were set up to make a compete camp on the shore. We ended up on Emeru Island, but . . . Here's how we ended up on Emeru Island. After the ship got fixed, we went to Tulagi just like we had been slated to do, but we were 6 weeks late.

The commanding officer of our landing craft, Unit Number 18, along with the other commanding officers of the various units that were going to participate in the landing, had a meeting with "Bull" Halsey. They went into this meeting, and Admiral Halsey wanted to know how many aircraft carriers they're going to have, how many airplanes on it, how many bombers, how many destroyers, how many landing craft, and how many troops we were going to have to make the landings - he wanted to know the whole ball of wax. They said, Admiral, we'll start off by saying we're going to put 75,000 men on Kaviang. We're going to put 75,000 men on in 3 days - 25,000 a day - and in that same 3 days, we plan to put 250,000 on Rabaul." Rabaul was

one of the Japanese biggest strongholds. And they said, ""Now, we'll give you the bad news. The bad news is, we only have 3 aircraft carriers. We only have 2 battleships, 4 destroyers, 6 tin cans (destroyers)," and they gave the number of landing craft and so forth - supply ships . . . And old - Bull" Halsey hit the ceiling.

You mean to tell me that we're going to put over 300,000 men on those 2 little islands over there, and this is all the support we're going to give them?"

This is all we've got."

"Where in the hell's the fleet? Where's the rest of it?" he said. And they said, "Well, McArthur just landed someplace up the line, and we're up there protecting him."

"ROAR! That's all right to protect him, but we can't put all these troops over here with that little protection."

So they kind of sparred around a little bit, he said, for about 15 minutes, and Halsey said, "Well we just can't do this. The movement's off; we're not going to do it. At this point, it's off."

Now, remember - we're down at Guadalcanal Halsey said, "I'll tell you what. Everybody adjourn the meeting now, and we'll come back here at 01000 tomorrow morning, and I'll work with my staff all night and we'll see if we can't come up with something a little bit different than what we've got."

And that's what they did. They got back that next morning and this is what they had: They said, "There's a little island up here called Emeru Island. It's 75 miles from Kaviang, it's 125 miles from Rabaul. And we'll go in there. There's only a handful of Japanese, and there's deep water. The destroyers will pull in there and we'll oblivate the few Japanese that are on the island in short order, and we'll land everybody there, and we'll set up a base. The Seabees will come in with us, and we'll build air strips. That island is over a mile across at the widest point and I'm informed by the engineers that they can set up a air strip there inside of 10 days or 2 weeks." (Because it's all coral; all you've got to do is level it, pack it with water . . .) 'We'll fly in the bombers and whatever we need, and we'll just shuttle those bombers back and forth. It's only 75 miles - we don't have to put very much fuel in the bombers - and we'll put incendiary bombs, and we'll just bypass Rabaul and Kaviang. We'll neutralize them without making a landing on them and go to the next one."

RM: Which was the next island?

TB: Rendova was the next one. And so that's what we did. The whole group that went in there was fairly close. We got to that island, and none of us was over 3/4 of a mile off it. Those destroyers sailed in there, about maybe 1/2 mile off shore, or 1/4 mile off shore: A-WHOOM, A-WHOOM, A WHOOM, like that. There were about 2 dozen Japanese on Emeru Island, and they just blew the camp and everything - killed them all. There wasn't one live Japanese on the whole island when we got there.

RM: Is that right.

TB: Yes. I used to tell everybody that the only live Japanese I saw was when I left Santa Cruz.

RM: Where did you go next?

TB: They put me in charge of the camp on a little, tiny island off the end of Emeru Island. The

commanding officer of our landing craft unit wanted us to go out there and be by ourselves on this little island, with just a water-way between us - maybe 100 yards or so. I went over there and we made a survey of the place, and believe it or not there was fresh water on that place, and it had kind of a lake in the center. There were quite a few mosquitoes around, but we went in there with DDT, and smoke, and killed all those off.

The commanding officer said, "If you'll make a good camp on this place, why, when we get orders to go back to the United States, you'll be the first one to go."

I was the first one to go.

We went to work and we had a bunch of boys . . . At Guadalcanal they put me in charge of unloading the ship. We had 2 ships full of equipment. We had a complete setup there for 200 or 300 men. We had everything but a Jeep; weapon carriers and things like that. When we got to Guadalcanal, it was on a commercial ship. I found out a long time ago that if you treat those young fellows right, they'll just work like the devil for you.

So I was in charge of unloading the cargo ship, and I went to the chief petty officer, and I said, "Look, as far as I know, we don't have a soul on here who can operate a crane. We've got the trucks and everything, and we've got 2 cranes that came in our equipment, but nobody knows how to run them."

He said, "I'll tell you, sir. You let me handle this thing and I'll get 3 or 4 or half a dozen fellows - maybe more, maybe a dozen of them - and get them to volunteer, and I'll teach them how to run those cranes."

And he picked . . . I don't know how many it was, but most of these young men had been on the farms - young fellows of 18, 19, 20 . . . he caught them to run those cranes, and I'm telling you, we unloaded those 2 ships in a little over a day. They'd get on there, and he'd show them how to run the crane, and boy, in 2 hours they'd just be swinging that boom across, picking that stuff up . . . We put lights up, ran them around the clock and had dump trucks, and they'd pick it up, then they'd go over to a fenced-in staging place, and they'd have the other crane over there picking them off the trucks and unloading them. It was a terrific job; I was never so proud of a bunch of young fellows in my life.

So anyway, we went to Emeru and set up this camp. Every officer and man lived in a tent 3 feet off the ground. We cut down coconut trees and made stilts and put shields up there so the rats couldn't come up the poles And get into the tents

RM: There were a lot of rats?

TB: Oh, yes. There was a lot of moisture and stuff. Of course, we put out bait and killed them - thousands of them, you know.

I'd been over there about 18 months and it was time to come home. doctors had to stay about 24 months because there was a shortage of them, But most of the other officers were only out for 18 months. So after about 17 months, Mr. Ames, the commanding officer, called me into the office one day and said, "Remember I told you if you built a good camp that you'd be one of the first to go?"

And I said, "Well, yes."

"Well," he said, " we got orders today to send 7 officers back to the states, and you built the finest camp in this area. Everybody comments about it and every time they did I kept thinking about what I'd promised you. So I'm going to keep my promise and you've got orders to go back to the states."

I said, "Well, OK. You're on."

RM: What year was that, Ted?

TB: Oh, it must've been about 1945. The war was winding down all over the place, but we hadn't taken Japan.

The Marines were on Kaviang by now, and they supposedly secured it. They had estimated there were about 25,000 Japanese on Kaviang at the time that we were going to go in there, and about 125 [thousand] on Rabaul. And 3 or 4 years later, they surrendered. When they surrendered, there were 275,000 who surrendered on Rabaul, and 125,000 on Kaviang. And thousands of them had been killed, or had died. They just flew those bombers around the clock and obliterated that place.

RM: So a lot of Americans would've been lost taking those islands, if they'd had to . .

TB: Oh, a disaster. Especially without any really good support. In the meantime, they had taken over and made quite a base at another place about 150 miles away - Espiritu Santos. And that's where we were going to get our transportation back to the states, so we flew over there in B-25s. Oh, I enjoyed that. Those pilots were good; well-trained. We got over there and we went out to [the] debarcation officer and there were 4 of us there at the same time. All of us had gone through indoctrination and all of us had gone overseas together, so we kind of hung around. The officer said, "Well, fellows, how you want it? You want air transportation or do you want to go back on a liberty ship or something like that that's returning empty?"

And there was an officer in our outfit by the name of Borchet. He was kind of a quiet fellow. Oh, you'd go up and talk to him and he'd carry on a good conversation, but he wouldn't volunteer anything much. I looked over [at] him [and] I could see him thinking. He popped up and he said, "Sir, I don't understand this. There's thousands of us that want to go back to the States. And why is there so much air transportation? It seems to me like you could hardly get on one of those airplanes, because it only takes something like 4 or 5 days - and if we go on a ship, it's going to take us 30 days or so and everybody will want to go."

"Well," he said, "I'll tell you. They just made the Hawaiian Islands the 13th Naval District. And you're allowed to stop there on a flight. They're liable to just grab you right off there and send you back here to the Pacific."

And Borchet said, "Sir, I'll take the slow boat to China." [laughter]

And that's what we did. So we went aboard a liberty ship. And, of course, being officers - although this was a merchant marine ship - we ate with the officers of the merchant ship. We were sitting there eating the evening meal and the captain was having a little bet with the chief engineer about what time they'd sail underneath the Golden Gate Bridge. Nobody said a word; we just listened to them. And they had it down to the minute; I mean right down to the minute. When they got through settling about the hour and the minute, I left the wardroom there where we ate and went back to my cabin and wrote an air mail letter to my wife: "I'll be in San Francisco on such-and-such a day. Meet me at the Palace Hotel at such-and-such a time."

Well, we got into a terrible storm off the coast of California, and [it] delayed us about 12 hours. Instead of sailing under that Golden Gate About 6:00 in the evening, which would've let us get into the harbor and tied up [so we] could've gotten off before midnight . . . (After midnight you couldn't get off 'till 8:00 the next morning.) We didn't cross the Golden Gate till about 1:00;

just about an hour after 12:00 midnight.

We got tied up, and the next morning we lined up, and they'd issued all the officers over there a carbine rifle, which is about halfway between a .22 automatic and a 30.06. It was a small. Bigger than a .22, but not near as bulky as a 30.06. They'd issued a carbine and a .45 automatic Colt revolver, and I had them in my locker. I opened up the locker, ready for inspection, going through customs. And of course the guns were contraband. You're not supposed to bring that back in, especially [since] it belongs to the navy; It's still navy issue. The inspector came up to me and said, "You got any contraband in there?"

"Yeah," I said, "I got 2 things. I got a Colt .45 and I got a carbine."

"I don't see anything in there. He walked on by.

CHAPTER THREE

TB: Anyway, we got through customs all right and I got to keep the guns. Then I went to the Palace Hotel. Of course, she hadn't heard anything, because we were on the high seas all the time from the time I mailed the letter. And she was there.

RM: She'd been waiting all night?

TB: Oh, yes. She got in the day before, you know. But she was . . . you'd have had to know her to understand it. It didn't bother her. If I hadn't shown up in 2 or 3 days, maybe she'd [have] started inquiring, but .

After we had a 30-day leave I was sent to the executive officer, which is like a vice-president - second in command - at the naval receiving station in Mobile, Alabama. I stayed there and later was discharged at New Orleans, Louisiana.

RM: What was your rank when you were discharged?

TB: I was discharged as lieutenant senior grade. I went in as an ensign. You go to lieutenant junior grade, and then the senior grade lieutenant, which is the same as a major in the army. We had to go from Mobile, Alabama over to New Orleans, and we stayed there at the Roosevelt Hotel - I've never forgotten - I think that was the finest bed I ever slept in. The mattress starts about 4 inches off the floor and goes up about this high. I never slept in a bed since then - before or afterwards - that was that good.

When I was going through the process of being discharged from the service the admiral was sitting there and going over my records and he said, "Say, you've got a pretty good record here. You know, we're getting short of officers. How would you like to stay in the navy? I could make you a lieutenant commander with a permanent rank."

And I said, "Sir, I wouldn't stay in the navy if you'd make me an admiral."

"OK," he said.

We came back to Exeter went into the farming business then, after I was discharged. I went to work for Ivanhoe Fruit Association, a big company that had 150-car cold storage. I was general manager of it. I worked in Ivanhoe, California, just out of Visalia, California, but we lived in Exeter. My father had bought a home for my wife to live in while I was in the service. I was discharged in 1946, and we went back to Exeter after that. I was in the farming business with my dad and my brother and I was working at Ivanhoe Fruit Association [from] 1946 [until we] came to Pahrump in 1952.

RM: How did you first hear about Pahrump?

TB: There was a fellow by the name of Penne-baker who lived in Exeter, California, whom all of us knew - [we went] to school with him and so forth. He and his brothers bought some property at Fish Lake Valley. And I was in the farming business with my dad and brother and we were growing cotton at Ivanhoe. I was managing the Ivanhoe Fruit Association, but also supervising the cotton deal. And I decided I wanted to get in the cotton business for myself. This was about 1951.

Pennebakers had bought over at Fish Lake Valley and they encouraged us to go over and take a look at it. And so my dad and a friend of mine, Howard Weakley, from Visalia, California, made a trip over here. My mother said, "Well, you fellows will get there about 11:00 in the morning, so I'll just make you a bag lunch and you'll have something to eat. Then from there you can go where you want; stay there, or go on into Tonopah."

We got to Fish Lake about 11:00 and we looked around a little bit, and at 12:00 we said, "Well, let's go over to Pennebakers'." He had a little mobile trailer parked there and if the wind was blowing, and uncomfortable, we'd go in there and eat; he'd given us the key. And so we said, "Let's go there."

Well, the wind wasn't blowing. The fact is, it felt nice and balmy - nice sunshine. [But] we went in there to eat and we were sitting there - the small trailers, you know, always have [the table] up front. We got through eating the bag lunch, and there was a bowl of oranges in a glass container sitting on the table. Howard, my friend, said, "I think I'll have one of those oranges for desert." He reached over and picked one up and it was frozen solid. That orange was absolutely like a baseball.

RM: Is that right. It was that cold there?

TB: Well, it had been that cold. And it hadn't warmed up enough to thaw out. Yet you didn't feel that temperature. The humidity was down and the sun was shining, and it made you feel warm. Howard said, "Let's get the hell out of here before this sun goes down." [laughter].

So we left for Tonopah and stayed overnight there at the old Mizpah Hotel. And that old, creaky elevator there . . . I told my dad, "I'm not going to ride in that thing. You can ride in it if you want, but I'm going to walk up the stairs "

The next morning we went down and we were sitting at the counter eating breakfast. Dad was sitting here, and Howard was sitting over there, and there was a fellow sitting there next to me reading the paper. He heard us talking, and he said to me, "I hear you fellows talking about wanting to grow cotton in Nevada. I understand that they're growing cotton down in Pahrump Valley. I'm a state's rights surveyor - I've done most of the work down there on the water wells. You ought to go down and take a look at it."

So we left Tonopah and headed down U.S. Highway 95 and came through this way here on this gravel road . . . you know where the highway is now it goes out to 95?

RM: Yes.

TB: That was just a plain old gravel road. All this was gravel. You can still see the old road out here.

RM: The highway isn't on the original old road?

TB: No. Sometimes it crosses it, and sometimes it runs on it a little ways, but it was mostly a brand new road.

And so we got here in the afternoon; it probably took us 4 or 5 hours. We got here and pulled up to the old trading post - Burketts were the owners there. The wind was blowing about 40 miles an hour, and there was a little fellow standing there. My dad opened up the door and stepped out of the car and the wind blew his hat off. The little fellow ran over and picked up the

hat - it went up against the bushes - and brought it back. My dad said to him, "Fellow, does the wind always blow this way?"

And he said, "No sir, sometimes it blows the other way." [laughter]

I'll never forget that. The little boy was the son of Leon Hughes and his first wife. That little boy is grown up now, and he's still got that same personality.

RM: So you and your father came down here based on what this guy next to you had said?

TB: Well, we were debating, the night before, whether to come on down to Las Vegas and then go on home from here. Go out to the dam, you know, and all that.

RM: Yes. But you would never have come here if this guy hadn't mentioned it?

TB: Probably not. We'd have gone to Las Vegas and gone out to the dam . .

RM: Your life would've been completely different, wouldn't it?

TB: Might've been. You just don't know.

So we decided to buy in here. They told us at the trading post there, "Go down and see Tim Hafen. He's been here about a year or so, and he's farming down there. Just go down and talk to him." So we went down and old Tim was out there on a tractor and that's when I first met Tim Hafen. We've been friends ever since.

RM: What did he tell you?

TB: Oh, I don't know. We just talked in general. He said it looked like it was good to him. They were from Mesquite, Nevada. And he said the Bowmans were here - they came in a little bit earlier than we did, and they seemed to be doing all right, so he didn't discourage it or anything.

RM: What land was available, Ted?

TB: There was plenty of land. A lot of speculators had come in here. I bought mine - this original part right here - from a fellow named Vermillion, from southern California. We bought 160 acres to start with and then we bought another 80 acres from Shurtliff brothers, who had signed up on a Desert Entry, I guess, earlier.

RM: When did they come in here?

TB: They must've been in here about 8 years before. I really don't know for sure, but they're [an] old-time family from over at Overton. Everybody knew them over here and over there.

RM: Did you and your father decide right away, or did you go home and think about it?

TB: Oh, we thought about it for awhile and then . . . I don't recall how we got hold of Vermillion, but we wrote him a letter and he said he'd sell it for so much - terms were so much and so forth . . . Actually, my dad set me up in business.

RM: I wonder who Vermillion bought it from; do you know?

TB: I don't know; you could trace all that back, it's all on file in Tonopah, at the recorder's office.

RM: Yes. This wasn't a part of one of the original ranches, was it?

TB: No. What Pahrump is . . . when the people fared the states, like California, a group of dedicated citizens would draw up a boundary where the states were and then they'd get their representatives and so forth in Congress and they'd have to prove it. In other words, the government owned all the land to begin with. Back in 1887, I think, they did this [area]. And somehow they got the boundary in the wrong place, and they had part of it in California. Rather than do a lot of re-doing of the border, surveying and everything, they just swapped some land in California for this land and Congress and California approved the deal. We ended up with this in the state of Nevada, but it wasn't really in the original boundaries of the state. Originally it was in California.

RM: What did you have to pay for an acre back then?

TB: By that time inflation had started to come on, but it wasn't all that bad. I paid \$50 an acre to Vermillion and \$75 an acre to Shurtliff. RM: And you bought that land with the intention of growing cotton?

TB: Yes; and living here. Vermillion had made application on this well out here. We'd had it drilled. The 160A is 1/4 mile and one mile long on B1 Road. This goes 1/4 of a mile for a mile, and jogs over - which is the Shurtliff part - for 1/4 of a mile, and it goes 1/2 mile. So we've got three 80-acre blocks - 240 acres. Then about 9 or 10 years ago we bought 320 more acres that adjoin us and that's what we're subdividing right now.

RM: Who did you get that from?

TB: Sanstead [owned it originally]. He came in here about the same time we did, from California. He had sold it off to some people, and they'd sold it to somebody - different ones . . . Two brothers from New York bought it. One of the brothers and his wife had a daughter who lived in Phoenix and every Christmas they'd come out to visit her and they'd spend a month out here. They'd spend a couple of weeks with her and come to Las Vegas and gamble a little bit, I guess. Somehow, with the promoters around and so forth, I guess they got acquainted with Pahrump, or read in the paper about land for sale, and they bought that from Sanstead.

RM: Did the Sansteads buy it, or did they get it on Desert Entry?

TB: I don't believe they got it on a Desert Entry. There were three partners . . . I don't remember who the other 2 partners were, but it is a matter of record at the Nye County Records Office in Tonopah. Sanstead ended up with the 320 acres - the legal description is the south 1/2 of Section 32, Township 19, Range 53 East.

RM: What did you think about leaving the lush California area and moving to a desert here?

TB: Well, I don't know. I wanted to get off on my own and you couldn't get anymore cotton land; I wanted to grow cotton. Over here they didn't have an allotment.

RM: Did you have to have an allotment in California?

TB: Right. If you didn't have an allotment, you had to lease the land. My dad didn't like that very well either. He figured you could buy for the price you could lease it.

RM: Was cotton profitable then?

TB: You bet. At that time it was around 35 to 45 cents a pound. Now it's only 61 or 62 cents per pound. It's terrible now - a disaster.

RM: What are the advantages of growing cotton, other than price? Are there any?

TB: The biggest thing about growing cotton was, it's a staple. It had a support price on by the government. You could grow the cotton so you'd get a price out of them. You'd know at least the minimum price you were going to get before you ever got into it. And the west could grow fine cotton. We had some of the finest cotton core out of this valley that's ever been grown.

RM: How do you judge cotton?

TB: It's what you call the micronaire. The fineness and the strength. The higher the micronaire, the better it spins and the finer it is. And with a dry climate you didn't have mold and all that kind of stuff.

RM: Why was the cotton good here? Is it the dry air?

TB: That was it. There's a variety in California [that] did fairly well here and we were experimenting all the time with new varieties. The one that really turned out on one of my fields on a 30-acre block . . . (The fields are divided up because of the water. You've got 80 acres divided up maybe into two 20-acre fields and one 30, and the rest is in roads and so forth.) This one 30-acre block made 93 bales. That's over 3 bales to the acre. The average in California is about 2 bales, and that's supposed to be the best place in the country [chuckles] r. grow it.

RM: Is it better than the south?

TB: Yes. Their production's real low. They're getting better all the time, but when we were growing it here their production down there was about 3/4 of a bale to the acre. Of course we spent a lot more money, too, doing it - pumping the water and all that.

We used California cotton, and it didn't quite mature fast enough because of the elevation here and the length of the growing season. If you didn't plant it on time, and didn't harvest it on time, you got a lot of down-graded cotton.

RM: What would happen to the cotton?

TB: You'd just get a poorer class. Instead of getting strict middling, you'd get low middling, or something like that, and it might be as much as 10 cents a pound difference in price. If it was frosted, it'd be weak and have spots in it. They use that kind of stuff for making wiping rags, mops and things like that, where you didn't need to have it on a nice shirt.

Anyway, at the experiment station at Las Cruces, New Mexico, they came up with this 1517 variety. They finally got to A, B and C. By the time they got to C they had it pretty well developed. The big cotton ranch, 12,000 acres at that time, was the Pahrump Ranch, which is now Cal-Vada, a residential subdivision. That's where most of the cotton was grown - the biggest single piece. C. B. Dickey owned it and he was the one who got this 1517-C in here. And man, that variety would really produce. But it was kind of a weak cotton, so the mills didn't like it too well. But it was a fine-looking cotton and it would produce. And then they got tougher and tougher on the . . . California's a one-state variety cotton.

RM: They just grow one variety in California? You mean, they have to approve your variety?

TB: At that time they had California Cotton 442, and that's the only one you could grow unless you had a little plot or something out there as [an] experiment. It had to be approved and so forth.

RM: But you couldn't grow any variety you wanted?

TB: No. You couldn't take 1517 seed and go over there and go over and be legal. And it's still that way today. Although the state doesn't control it; the growers association controls it now. They come up with new varieties and change it every once in a while; they're not dog-fast on some variety. If they find a better variety that meets what they're trying to do . . . What they were trying to do was get one variety so when everybody grew it, the cotton would be more or less all the same so they could sell it better. Instead of buying one batch here that wouldn't spin very well and the next batch would spin well, etc.

RM: Did you know much about cotton when you came in here?

TB: Like I said, I went with Ivanhoe Fruit Association and we rented land over there and my brother and my dad and T grew cotton. That got me interested. We had all the equipment and we moved it over here from California.

RM: Did your dad and brother come in with you here, or was it just you?

TB: No, it was just me. A few years after that my father and mother both passed away. In the estate, I got all this here, including equipment, and my brother got the ranch over there - that 30-acre ranch where they lived and household furniture was divided up. We didn't have any problem. I didn't want much of it anyway. If I had it today, it'd be worth a lot of money; antiques, you know.

RM: When you came over here, were there any buildings on this property?

TB: When we came over here, they were just going to start Nevada Highway 160 here in the valley. I think there were 17 miles; it went from the cattle guard at the north end of the valley down to the lower end of the valley and stopped at the Nye-Clark County line. That was going to be the first deal for the people [who] lived here, so they could go back and forth. Some of [the old gravel road is] still sitting out there. We knew, when we came over in 1952, that they were going to start this new road to Las Vegas.

Governor Grant Sawyer - Grant Sawyer - was probably one of the best governors we've ever had. I think he and the one we have now, Governor Richard Bryan, are on a par with each other.

RM: Do you like Bryan?

TB: I like Bryan. Oh, he's done a couple of things that I don't agree with. He signed that bill for Bullfrog County, and here he is an attorney general; he must've known that it was illegal. And it made him look silly when it came out that it is illegal. I just don't understand it.

And then the other thing is that he and Sawyer went on a big tour - along with other big-shots - over to Japan to encourage tourism. That's fine. Encourage the tourism - get them to come over here, gamble then out of their money and send them back home broke. [laughter] I'm in favor of that. But they're trying to get them to come over and invest their money here and I'm opposed to that. I didn't put my life on the line in the South Pacific to have them come over here and tell me how they're going to do this thing. I'm probably prejudiced, but I . . . I have nothing against the Japanese. I've got a lot of friends who are Japanese; I sell them hay cubes and talk to them and everything every year. They're all from Japan.

RM: A lot of people in the World War II generation feel that way. I understand it.

TB: If you don't believe it, don't listen to what I have to say; listen to Donald Trump. You ought to have heard him on television the other day about the Japanese.

RM: Yes; it's terrible the way we're selling our country.

TB: Yes. Here's this guy who's intelligent, he's a big-shot. He started with nothing and now he's a multi-millionaire And when guys like that are talking like that .

RM: Yes, the country's being bought by - not just by Japanese - other people, too.

TB: Governor Grant Sawyer liked the country and I give him full credit for getting the state to develop the communities out in the country. The state had to put up 15 percent and the [federal] government would put up 85 percent for the secondary road systems, I give Governor Grant Sawyer full credit for talking the legislature . . . Oh, he had some help, but unless you've got the governor behind you you're not going to get it done, really. It's just like Bryan - he gets all these things done, and he leads the deal, and he gets a lot of these things accomplished that he thinks ought to be done.

So the state appropriated the 15 percent and we had some pretty influential federal legislators. . Senator Pat McCarron was in on it at the time and Senator Bible - both top-flight

men. And they had some other ones in the congress - Bering and people like that. They appropriated the money for this deal in here first, and then they appropriated the money from the cattle guard out to Highway 95.

RM: So then you had a paved road to get in and out.

TB: Well, Mercury [had] started about 1950, so the people who lived here could go to Mercury to work on a nice highway.

[At that time] Cal-Vada North belonged to a fellow and his wife by the name of Dorothy Dorothy.

RM: [Was that] one up to the north of you?

TB: Well yes; about 3 1/2 miles north of here. She wrote a column in the Las Vegas Sun newspaper. Next to the Pahrump Ranch, they had the largest block of cotton in the valley.

CHAPTER FOUR

TB: We took old balers - I don't know if you recall them or not - it was all pitchfork [at first] in the haying operation. Then they got to a point where they used baled hay and they had to pitch it into the baler and they towed it along with a horse, and a guy had to ride on the back of the baler and put on the baling wire tie . . . The guy who was seeing that the hay got in there all right would take a block and drop in the chamber. The block had little creases in it so the guy sitting back here could take the wire and put it through there and tie the bale. That was the next step. Then finally they got to the pickup reel and the automatic tie and the whole works.

Well, we got some of these old balers and put different engines on them - I put a Model-A Ford engine on mine. Most of those old engines were putt-putt-putt deals - Fairbanks-Morse. We put a big hopper on top. Instead of the guy forking the hay in there like he used to, we'd have a big hopper up there, and the cotton picker [would] come and dump the cotton right into the big hopper that goes into the chamber where the bales were pressed. The guy would stand up there and pitchfork the cotton into the baler and when he had enough cotton he dropped the block in - similar to the hay deal. Those bales would weigh 190, 200 pounds. Of course, everybody who saw this said, "Oh, that'll just ruin that cotton. It'll press all those green leaves in there."

It pressed those leaves in there dry leaves and green leaves and all - and the cotton would go through a sweat. They were pressed so tight that the bales would actually heat up a little bit and dry all those green leaves off. And we would take and haul the baled cotton on a semi-trailer over to California and put it through a gin over there, and we would get the best grades of anybody.

And now, of course, in California when the gins get over-supplied and they can't harvest their cotton, they've got these big modulators they put in great big stacks alongside the road. [If] you go up Interstate 5, over there on the west side, you see those big modular deals that press them together. Then after the harvesting starts to slow down and the crop's more or less harvested they go back and pick up the cotton they've got in the compressed stacks.

RM: So you guys kind of invented that press . . .

TB: Well, all we did was show that compressing the cotton like that didn't hurt it any; it made it better. Once you get the leaves dry, the gin can blow the leaves out. But as long as they're green, they can't.

RM: But you pressed it because it made it easier to haul.

TB: Well, yes.

RM: Where did you have to haul it?

TB: Well, we were talking about the Dorothys. As soon as I got a truck and trailer load, I'd get hold of a trucker in California to pick up that truckload of baled cotton and get it out of here. Well, the Dorothys didn't like to do that. They'd wait till they'd get about 4 or 5 truck loads, then call up over there and they'd ca over here and spend maybe a day or a couple of days loading 4 or 5 trucks and then they'd go back to picking cotton. Maybe that was the most efficient way to do

it; I don't know. But instead of breaking in every 2 or 3 days and loading the truck, they would do it all at once. You'd come in from the field and look out the window and there would be 5 of Dorothy Dorothy's and her husband's trucks going by loaded up.

Well, it rained, like it has lately. And this highway was in here at that time, and it was paved here within 7 miles of the California state line. As I recall, it didn't go very far from where the bank is right now, out toward Shoshone. They started across that flat out there, and they got all 5 of those trucks stuck down to the axles. Down to the axles. Man. The Dorothys were absolutely furious over that. Dorothy Dorothy got in touch with the governor and . . . It was decided to go ahead and switch the money that they appropriated from the cattle guard out to 95 over to the road to Shoshone.

RM: How many acres were the Dorothys . . . ?

TB: I think they had about 320 acres of cotton.

RM: Was that an old ranch there, or was it a Desert Entry, or how did that land get started?

TB: I think it was all Desert Entry. I don't know . . . I think they were homesteads or Desert Entry. The only 2 big ranches in here were the Pahrump Ranch, which is now Cal-Vada - with 12,000 acres - and then there were about 3000 or 4000 acres on the Manse Ranch.

RM: And that's the one Bowman bought.

TB: Bowman bought the Manse Ranch from a doctor. The rest of the stuff was [relatively] small. Speculators came in here and bought up sections of Desert Entry land.

RM: Was there flowing water on most of these little ranches?

TB: I don't believe there was any artesian [water] on Dorothy's place - or very much. But starting up here approximately half a mile north and down close to this highway, within 1/2 mile of the highway, all the artesians go clear on down to the Pahrump Ranch. They had the big springs there at the Pahrump Ranch; still have them, I think. They've got them covered up now or something, but they're still there. And down at the Manse Ranch they had the spring . . . down on the Hafens' ranch, now, where they had the springs.

This well out here, when we drilled it, flowed 750 gallons a minute out of the ground with no pump or nothing. Well, a couple or three years . . . It's like . . . do you ever go through there like you're going to Paso Robles. From Bakersfield you go across the San Joaquin Valley.

RM: Never been through there.

TB: Well, there's Shalaam and different places. That used to be all artesian in there. The artesian cores from the pressure of water. When we drilled this well you'd go through a layer of what they call cement gravel. It looked just like somebody'd put a sidewalk down there. And then you'd have rock and sand for another 10 or 20 feet, then you'd have another layer of this thing. Well, the water starts there on the mountain, gets in between the layers of cement and gravel and it can't get out, so it builds up pressure. [If] you poke a hole down there the water comes out pretty

quickly, but the pressure gets lower and lower and after a while you don't have any pressure and the water stops flowing. Then we started pumping them, too; and that made them worse as far as the artesian was concerned.

RM: Were there any springs along here till you got north of the Pahrump Ranch?

TB: As I recall, one of the biggest springs was on the Manse and [one] on the Pahrump Ranch. You know where they're building that new building across from the bank?

RM: Yes?

TB: The spring was just across over there maybe a couple of blocks or so.

RM: Is there a line in the valley? What if you went farther west?

TB: Well, there's water out there, and the fact is, the water table - since everybody's quit pumping - is coming up. Because there are leaks in this dike along here, and that helps build it up. But the state engineer will not let you drill a well on the other side of that highway out there.

RM: You can't drill - not even for a house?

TB: They won't give you a permit; no.

RM: Why is that?

TB: Because they figure that there's only a limited amount of water up there and we are going to eventually pump it dry.

RM: Do you agree with that?

TB: I don't know. I really don't know what to say. I'm from California, and over there's dog-eat-dog. If you can put in a deeper well and a bigger pump and pump the other guy dry, you can do it. More power to you. When they started running out of water, what did they do? The state came in, made the canal - Central Valley Project, and the Friant Kern Canal. The federal government came in, you know. I don't know. Maybe it's better that way. Maybe if everybody runs out of water, then they get the state or the federal government to come in and get it in. I've been on both sides, and I just roll with the punches.

RM: What did your wife think about coming here?

TB: We came over here several times. The old Ash Meadows Lodge was a beautiful place when we came over. There were no cat houses around there then and they had a beautiful swimming pool and the food was excellent, and I guess a lot of people from Los Angeles brought their girlfriends up there - the movie stars and so forth. It was a nice place. Out in the desert . . . you'd just drive for miles and see nothing, and all of a sudden you come to this nice place. We came up here 2 or 3 times and stayed there for a week at a time. We looked all around - went to Death

Valley, and came over here and looked at Pahrump Valley.

RM: Before you bought the ranch?

TB: Oh, yes. After that trip with Dad and with Howard.

RM: So you didn't buy land here right away after that trip.

TB: No. When we finally ended up here in '52, the population of Las Vegas, as I recall, was about 30,000. And just a few years before [that] it was only 15 [thousand] or so. My dad was the one who really encouraged this thing. You'd be surprised; he had foresight. He said, "Ted, you know, I don't approve of it, and you probably don't approve of it either. But I'll tell you, people like to gamble, and they're going to gamble. And they're gambling in Las Vegas, and that place is going to grow by leaps and bounds, and you can't help but get a spillover from that." And that's about what's happened.

RM: What did your wife think you moving up here?

TB: She was a country girl and she knew the hardships on a farm. But I don't think any of us realized how hard it was going to be. I would say since World War II, when we came over here, farming has been going downhill. It's been getting worse, and worse, and worse for one reason and another.

RM: What are the main reasons it's getting worse?

TB: One of the reasons is inflation, but I really feel that the main [reason] is that [there's] no organization in the farm deal; no get-together. The big oil companies - they can say what they want - they have big board meetings, and they can start setting prices. It's the same way with the banks; they do the same thing, largely through the federal reserve system. And I really feel that. .

Inflation would've been all right . . . Let's put it this way: in the early '50s you could buy a Van Huesen shirt or an Arrow shirt for about \$3.50. Now they're a minimum of \$15, \$16; mostly \$25, probably. We're talking about an increase in inflation of about 5 times: \$3 to \$15. Cotton at that time was 35 and 40 cents a pound. So let's be conservative - let's say it was 30 cents a pound. That would mean we'd be getting \$1.50 a pound for cotton. And now we're getting 61 [cents]. Inflation wouldn't have been bad, but this thing has so spun out of control now. Back in those days, if you raised the price of cotton 30 or 40 cents a pound, it would make a terrific difference in the price of the shirt. There's only 1/4 pound in a 100 percent cotton shirt, so all you'd have to do is raise the price of that shirt 15 cents. Not 5 times \$3, or \$15, but 15 cents, and pass that directly on to the farmer, one way or another, and instead of getting 60 cents, he'd be getting \$1.20 a pound. And then we could buy Cadillacs to irrigate with, you know. But you can't make it on 60 cents. The government is supporting the cotton farmer right now at over 30 cents a pound.

RM: So if the government went out, they'd really go down, wouldn't they?

TB: That's it. And Reagan wants to take it out. Of course, let's get into politics a little bit. Albert

Gore talked right here in Las Vegas on Ascension Day - Wednesday or Thursday - and on the following Sunday he was on "Meet The Press." One of the interviewers said to him, "Senator Gore, we understand that you are opposed to this new program that the government's come up with, where they want to let the farmers vote so they can restrict their production. They're overproduced and have gone broke, and you are against this program. The government will still watch it so that they won't get the price of these products too high, but they'll be able to make a living - survive. That'll bring in more taxes and more income to the government and everything. People will be paying taxes, and small businesses in the country will be flourishing. It'll just be good for everybody. And we understand that you're opposed to this new proposed program."

Senator Gore replied, "That is the stupidest bill I've ever seen. That'll start the inflation going all over again and the interest rates will go up, and we'll have this r* a1 all over again and have to go through this terrible inflation."

And I thought to myself: 'In 1979, when Iacocca took over the Chrysler Corporation, a car that sold for \$3000 now sells for \$15,000.' He didn't say anything about that. It's gone up 5 times since 1979.

Let's take me, for example, on my hay. 1980 was the best year - under Jimmy Carter - that I've ever had in the farming business. I don't think it had much to do with Jimmy Carter; I think it was just circumstances. It happened that Hurricane Harris came in in Texas and took out 90 percent of the crop, and they grow 60 or 70 percent of all the cotton grown in the United States. That made the price go up to 94 cents a pound - that's what we got - and I got over \$100 a ton for my hay, [which I sell] to the Japanese through cubes. So all in all, it was the best year I ever had. OK. What is it today? It was \$100 a ton in 1980, and now it's \$85 a ton.

In the meantime we were sold this bill of goods which I knew wouldn't work, because I'd learned in Pomona when I took business administration that devaluing the dollar doesn't solve anything. Sooner or later, the foreign countries work it around . . . you're getting taken anyway. In the meantime, the United States devaluated the dollar in relation to the yen 50 percent, where I sell my hay, so if I was getting \$100 a ton then, it should be \$150 per ton now. Instead of that, I'm only getting \$85 per ton. So that seems to be all right - with Gore. mean, I don't understand . .

RM: Yes, I don't either.

What were some of the problems that you faced when you came to Pahrump?

TB: I told my wife, "OK, there's no power in here and there's no telephone." We had to drive to Shoshone to make a phone call. That was probably the worst, the communications problem. And over these gravel roads to Las Vegas and . . . No lights; no power. I told my wife, "OK, Marie, diesel fuel is now 7 cents a gallon by the truckload lot. And out there by that big pump . . ." (we pumped by diesel - no electric motors) "we'll put in a 10,000 gallon tank. We'll put a 50-KW diesel generator out there - a Caterpillar generator - running 24 hours a day pumping out of that same tank. When we fill that tank up we'll be filling it for the farm but the light bill will be coming off the farm because we're running out of the same tank."

And that's what we did. When we built this home . . . well, look in there - I've got an electric stove, electric everything . . .

RM: So you had electric everything when you built the house. How soon did you build the house after you came in?

TB: We started with that little house down below here in '52. We had a small generator down there but we built this about '58, I think.

RM: Was it expensive to generate power? At 7 cents a gallon, how many gallons a day did that diesel use?

TB: Well, let me put it this way: I was on the power board with Hank Records and several other members.

RM: Yes. I talked to Hank about [bringing power to the valleys].

TB: We always got along well. Anyway, with 7 cents a gallon and oil and the upkeep - overhauling the engines and etc. - it figured out to be about 1.9 cents a kilowatt.

RM: That's cheap, wasn't it?

TB: Well, it's OK. 1.9 cents a kilowatt. And that's what they set the rate at for the REA. They also came up with a deal, since the farmers were actually paying for most of the system, that after [the growing season] this would drop in half. So around January 1, it would go from 1.9 down to .95 mills. Now the power rate is up near almost 3 cents. I used to pay an \$8000 power bill for the whole year, and now I'm paying over \$30,000 for the ranch and the house and everything.

RM: That's mostly pumping, isn't it?

TB: Oh, yes. Maybe \$100 a month average for the house.

RM: Did you have a lot of trouble with your vehicles on the terrible roads that were here then?

TB: I'll say - [it was] terrible on them. You'd have to buy a car about every 2 years. It would just tear than apart.

RM: How about flat tires?

TB: Oh, you kept good tires . . . tires were pretty darn good. Going to Las Vegas, I used to drive 3000 miles a month after they got the highways in. In 2 years you had 70-some thousand miles on the vehicle [so it was] time to get rid of it anyway. Now I drive maybe half that - or less. A thousand miles a month. Because we've got stores out here where we do a lot of the shopping.

RM: Did you have to put in wells here, then?

TB: Oh, yes. I had a licensed well-driller drill all my wells. All commercial well-drillers must be licensed in the state of Nevada.

RM: How deep did you have to go?

TB: Well, we found out that in my particular area there's very little water below 650 feet, but you only lift water . . . well, when we started out we were lifting it 100 feet; now we're lifting it 200 feet. But we stabilized [at] about 200 feet. That's because most everybody's quit pumping; quit farming.

RM: But below 600 there's not much water?

TB: Well, we went down on a test on this well out here to 1000 feet and we didn't pick up anything. But we don't know what's down there 3000 feet, for instance. But for all practical purposes, especially on a farm, that's out of the question anyway.

For years, when they were paving the road into Las Vegas this way, they used to kid me all the time: You know, we came back from Las Vegas over Spring Mountain and as we came over the top of that mountain there, we looked down into Pahrump Valley, and there were only 2 lights burning. One was at Elmer Bowman's dairy and the other was yours." That thing [was] running 24 hours a day - day and night, you know. I think that we probably were the only two that were running 24 hours a day. So if you come over at 8:00 p.m. in the evening you'd see quite a few lights. But if you came in at 1:00 a.m., [you'd only see] 2 lights.

RM: When they built the road over Spring Mountain, did they pave it initially, or was it a dirt road first?

TB: It was graveled. They did it in sections. The first part that was finished was up the other side from Blue Diamond; Blue Diamond was just an oiled road. And then they put in a real, full-fledged blacktop road from Blue Diamond Road up to Warner Springs. At Spring Mountain They had the bar up there, and Warner was in the Nevada Legislature at the time. That's how they swung that deal.

RM: A guy named Warner owned the bar up there?

TB: He was interesting.

RM: Bob Revert was assemblyman too, wasn't he, at that time? Was he instrumental in that highway? I think he was on the transportation committee.

TB: I don't know. The one I knew mostly, who dealt with us down here, was Art - his brother. He was the spokesman for the Union 76 [Oil Company].

RM: So you got your fuel out of Beatty?

TB: In the early stages. But [later] the guys were delivering it here in tanker lots for 7 cents . . . He'd probably charge 14 cents.

RM: Yes. He probably couldn't meet those prices.

TB: Right. He'd have had to haul it up there and back.

RM: When did they put the dirt road over Spring Mountain?

TB: There was always a little kind of a cow trail up there but it wasn't really all that good. You can see it now as you start down and go around that - see that kind of a little cut in the mountain . . . you can see on the right-hand side where the old road went. There was a road going up there to those mines; where the boy scout camp is now. This used to be the old Santa Fe Trail and they had a wagon trail up that place.

RM: But it couldn't have been a very good road, otherwise why did you go clear around by Mercury.

TB: No, it wasn't. But then they did put in a graded road up there. But they didn't pave it at first.

RM: Did people use that, then, instead of going up to 95?

TB: You bet. When they were building that road - when you could get to it- we'd go that way - it was a much shorter distance.

RM: When did they build that?

TB: I couldn't tell you that.

RM: Was it long after you came here?

TB: When we bought here, we knew this was all going to be completed. Maybe the money hadn't been appropriated, but it was agreed that this is what they were going to do. We'd have never moved here otherwise. Tim Hafen can probably give you all that information.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: Ted, we were just talking about some of the problems that farmers face, and how your views have changed over the years. Could you go into that a little bit?

TB: Ever since World War II, in my opinion, farming - as far as the farmer goes - has been going downhill. The fact that the farmer has become more efficient than he's ever been before is the only reason that he has been able to survive the way prices continually stay the same while everything else is inflating. His costs keep going up, and the only way he's been able to stay in business [is by] becoming more efficient.

I would say that, as far as efficiency goes, we're pretty much at the end of the line now. Congress has in certain ways tried to help. When this thing started to really get bad under the last 2 administrations, they passed some [legislation] where if you had a going concern, and you hadn't squandered your money, but because of conditions beyond your control you were going to have to refinance the farm, you could go to Farmers Home Administration and borrow the money at a very reasonable rate. That reasonable rate was 5 percent, and if it was an economic emergency loan it was 9 percent, which was still pretty good compared to the rest of the banks, who were charging anywhere from 12 to 18 percent.

As I said, the only reason the farmer was able to stay in business . . . Iacocca of Chrysler fame wrote a book and in this book he tells how [in] 1950 the farmer produced enough for himself and 5 others. But now, he says, he produces enough for himself and 50 others. That's how the farmer has survived until this time, but he can't do much better than that. In other words, you can only do so much with equipment. And because of the policies this administration has put forward, there's very little research going on in new equipment for farming. As a result, the farmer has not been able to get any tools to become more efficient. That's part of the problem.

I like to say that when the Carter Administration put the embargo on wheat with Russia that started wheat going down. They were geared to supply all this wheat to Russia, and all of a sudden they didn't have a market for it. Now we have a surplus on the market, so the price goes down. At the time this all took place the price of wheat was between \$5 and \$6 a hundred, or, about \$6.50 or \$7 a bushel. OK, all of a sudden, you know, supply and demand . . . and the farmer's mostly on a supply and demand basis (I would say they're one of the few that are left on it; everybody else is on a cost plus basis.)

Because of that, the price started going down and has finally leveled off, as I saw on the television last night; wheat is about \$2.85 [to] \$3 a bushel. And that's about half of what it was in the '50s.

For same reason, most administrations - Republican and Democrat alike - have always kind of looked after the farmer. Because that's the basis of our whole economy: the farm. Because the farmer has produced so much Abundance, that at times, like in World War II, we were practically feeding the whole world; and had plenty for everybody.

RM: Had has this situation affected farming in the Pahrump Valley?

TB: In the first place, I don't think there's one blade of wheat growing, now, in the Pahrump Valley.

RM: Did there used to be wheat?

TB: Oh, yes. It was planted as a rotation. You planted alfalfa and you can't grow alfalfa forever, so you followed that with a wheat crop in the fall, or oats, or some type of grain. You harvested that grain for sale, and then turned around and planted into cotton. The grain cleaned up the fields from weeds and so forth that had got in there from the alfalfa. The cotton would grow real well following alfalfa, because alfalfa builds up the soil, but following alfalfa for cotton, alone, there is actually too much fertility in there, and the plant gets so big, and it doesn't mature up and so forth. Planting a crop of grain in there will take some of the nitrogen out and make it just right for cotton.

RM: How did the rotation work?

TB: At that time you had to re-plant alfalfa. Alfalfa would not stay in there because of root rot and nematodes and other diseases of the plant . . . you'd have to rotate to hay every 3 years. As the cost of the seed of different varieties started getting expensive the college of agriculture at Nevada and [universities everywhere] went ahead developing new strains of alfalfa which are resistant to all these diseases. One of the varieties the University of Nevada at Reno came up with, which I still grow today, is Lahontan - named after Lahontan Lake in northern Nevada. It does exceptionally well here, and that hay will last, in Pahrump, as long as 10 or 15 years without replanting.

That's also how we survive; it now costs \$300 an acre just to plant a crop of hay by the time you get it up and do the harvesting. Back in the old days everything was cheaper; it only used to cost, maybe, \$30 an acre.

RM: What can you gross on an acre of hay now?

TB: Well, the Farmers Home Administration tells me that I've got one of the highest averages in the state of Nevada, [among] all their clients and so on. Mine is about 7 tons to the acre. Curiously enough, you hear all these big production figures in California, and there may be some farmers doing it; there may be certain areas that are doing it, like down in Imperial Valley - places like that - they talk about 10 and 12 tons to the acre. But the average of the San Joaquin Valley, which is the heart of growing in the United States, and is considered the most fertile valley in the whole United States . . . their average is 7 tons, too.

RM: Do you have to fertilize?

TB: Oh, yes. On alfalfa the biggest thing is phosphate. The only time you'd use nitrogen [would be] if you planted alfalfa following 3 or 4 years of cotton. You'd probably have to fertilize with nitrogen the very first crop to get the little seedlings started. After that, it's phosphate. It takes about 400 pounds of 0-20-0 to the acre per year, so you're putting on about 80 pounds of phosphate to the acre per year if you want to keep production up.

RM: Was the farm already being farmed when you got here?

TB: No. It was nothing. If you wanted to take a picture of it, it looked like next door; big sand

dunes, and the whole lot.

RM: So you had to even level it?

TB: Right. This was all sandy, like across the road over there. Greasewood growing on it, and sagebrush . .

RM: How did you level it?

TB: The government has the Soil Conservation Service and they did the surveying. At the time when I came in we had what we called the Mexican nationals in here. They were brought in during the World War II and they were still being brought in. [They were called braceros.] We had a fellow who came in with the braceros, and I liked him so well - and I could see that he had a lot of potential - so my wife and I went to work and got papers for him, eventually. It wasn't an easy task, I'll tell you that. It took letters upon letters and letters . . . Even then, back in the '50s, there was a deal on to keep those people out of the country.

The way we were able to get him in, legally, was that the Immigration and Naturalization Act - in section 12 - said that if you could not find anybody who would work on your ranch at the going wages, and nobody wanted that job, then you could make applications for a Mexican citizen. There were no longer any braceros; they had stopped that. We went to work on that basis, and eventually wore down the people involved. In order to find out if anybody wanted this job, at a certain wage and so forth, you had to go through the federal/state unemployment security department. They took this job and published it in 12 western states. And there was not one single answer to any of those published ads. So then we were eligible to start this process. That's what we did, and even that the bureaucrats fought all the way.

This Mexican fellow went to work for me. And the Soil Conservation people came out here and staked it out. Their normal procedure would be . . . because the land is so rough, they would put a stake every 300 feet and shoot the grade. And what you do is kind of knock off the high spots - fill them in - between the 300 foot stakes. Well, Manuel Gardea [accent on the e] (incidentally, Manuel still lives in the valley and has a family; he brought his wife in and she got her papers) . . . Manuel, along with [his other] traits, had a good eye. They came out here and staked my land at 300 feet - this upper 80 acres here - and I had bought a Caterpillar tractor - a D-7 - with a scraper. He leveled that on the 300-foot grade stakes. The Soil Conservation came back to put in [stakes] every 100 feet to get the land leveled within 1/10th of an inch. And [the man] said, "You don't need any more leveling; this land is good the way it is."

RM: Where did you get the scraper?

TB: It was a construction scraper. I bought it in Bakersfield, California.

RM: So you initially leveled 80 acres, and what was your first crop? TB: The other part was fairly level, and all we had to do was take a scraper and knock off a few high spots, and you could go right to work. But we found out that to start this land off, the first year, you had to grow wheat or something like that, followed by alfalfa for 3 years.

RM: Why wheat first?

TB: Because it's tolerant to alkali. And we have a high pH . . . the alkali here is black alkali. When we came over here, the Soil Conservation Service said that you had to put on gypsum. Well, gypsum is high in calcium and there's some sulphur in it. Now, in most of California that's a very good way to go. But I had the soil analyzed here and the calcium in the soil should be no more than 400 or 500 parts per million, and the calcium in the soil here in Pahrump would run 8,000 parts per million. So now were putting on gypsum, which is calcium sulphate, so we're just adding insult to injury. So I said, "Well, look. Why not just put on soil sulphur, and the soil sulphur combines with the calcium already in the soil, making calcium sulfate, and that's soluble, which black alkali is not, and that will leach out. And it'll reduce the calcium at the same time, at the same time reducing the pH."

And they said, "Well, let's set up a trial."

So we took the highest pH area on the farm, which was down on the heavier soil - the medium-type soil (this is mostly light soil up here). And we ran a check with no soil sulphur, 200 pounds, 400 pounds, 600 pounds, 800 pounds, 1,000 pounds and 2,000 pounds. And the 200 pound did as good - and reduced the pH as well as all the rest of the check. So we learned it took about 200 pounds if you really want to bring it in fast. So to [begin with], you grow the wheat as the first crop. As the second, plant alfalfa with some soil sulphur, grow that for 3 years and you can plant anything you want.

RM: So whenever you opened new ground, you planted wheat first, followed by your 3 years of alfalfa?

TB: Yes; after that you can grow anything you want.

RM: What did you do then?

TB: By that time we were in the cotton business and we'd rotate alfalfa and cotton. Alfalfa, as I said, would only last for about 3 years. So if you had 240 acres, why, 80 acres [were in] hay every year [and] all the rest - 160 acres - in cotton. By the end of the 3 years you're in the rotation.

RM: Did the hay die after 3 years?

TB: Well, the stand would start getting thinner and thinner and the weeds would come in, because it didn't shade . . . after 3 years, the hay became lousy. If you had 80 acres, and the hay lasted for 3 years, you'd go for 3 years. And then you'd take out the hay, plant cotton in that, and plant another 80 acres. So you were rotating not every year, but every 3 years.

RM: I see. So you'd grow the hay 3 years and the cotton 3 years.

TB: That's what it boiled down to. But you'd always have 160 acres of cotton. On the year that you rotated, you'd have 80 acres of good cotton, because you just followed the alfalfa, but you'd be going into the 3rd year on the other 80 acres, you see.

RM: Did you ever switch to any other crops besides those two?

TB: No. To be frank with you, I don't think we've ever found anything in here that was better than cotton and alfalfa. And now cotton is dead because we can't compete anymore. And the whole farm I have now is . . . with the new variety, Lahontan, some of this hay's been in here 10 years.

RM: When did you start cubing your hay?

TB: The one that first started cubing alfalfa hay here was the Pahrump Ranch, under Walt Williams, who was one of the owners. They gradually quit it when they sold it to Preferred Equities. In order to keep their water rights they leased out for a few years, but eventually - in 4 or 5 or 6 years - very little farming was done on the Pahrump Ranch. And now there's none. The Pahrump Ranch under Williams was the first to start cubing.

RM: Did you bale your hay initially?

TB: Yes, we did.

RM: Where did you sell it, at first?

TB: We sold a little here, and the rest was taken to Las Vegas. Las Vegas has always been a good market. It's a western-type town with lots of horses. I've forgot what the population is, but it's staggering. But because of the improved roads [and] improved trucks we have a lot of competition now from surrounding states like Utah and Arizona. Ninety percent of my crop now goes export.

RM: And that's exported to Japan, isn't it?

TB: And we're getting the squeeze on that, now. Under this administration . . . Blame than for everything, but the president signed a law which . . . The government was supporting the dairy people, and it was getting out of control; mostly because of a law that the congress passed. They're doing it right today - they haven't changed. They say, "OK, you're overproduced in cotton," say. "And in order to get the cotton price up, you're going to have to quit growing so much cotton. You've got to get to the supply in line with the demand."

So they come out to Ted Blosser, and they say, "OK, Mr. Blosser, you've got 160 acres of cotton here. You're going to have to cut your production 10 percent so next year instead of 160 acres you can only plant 10 percent less, or 16 acres less than 160 acres."

So what does Ted Blosser do? He takes this out and you can't grow anything that year on it. (You can grow on it, but you can't harvest it.) And you've got to keep the weeds out at it - you've got to disc it and everything. So what does Ted Blosser do? He takes the water that he would normally have for the 160 acres, and puts it on roughly 144 acres, and pours on more fertilizer, and gets as much crop off of the 144 acres as he got off the 160. So they haven't cut anything.

The version I've been preaching for 30 years [is that] you've got to cut the units. In other words, say, "OK, Ted Blosser, you've got 160 acres here - you produce 2 bales - that's 320 bales. Next year you're going to produce 10 percent less than that and that's it; we don't care has you

take it out - that's all you're going to be able to produce and sell. If your production was 2 bales to the acre, you're going to have to take out 16 acres and you're not going to be able to grow anything on that. We don't care which one. But on the other hand, you're not going to produce any more than 320 bales less the 32 bales." But they won't do that.

And another thing . . . congress seems to revolt. They say, "Well, here's old Joe Blow over here, has got 5000 acres of cotton. We're not going to help him. We're not going to bring him into this program."

RM: Yes. [laughs]

TB: "We're not going to subsidize this big grower over here." Well, it's ridiculous. Because that big grower, then, fills in the gap for everything that all the little guys like me have cut. And that's what they've been doing, until it just got completely out of hand to a point where the whole market collapsed down to nothing because of too much supply.

RM: Tell me more about growing cotton in Pahrump.

TB: We talked a little bit about it when we talked yesterday. One of the biggest problems to begin with was that there was no gin here so we had to bale the cotton up and haul it. That was kind of a nightmare state of affairs, but we made a lot more money then than we did in the later years.

RM: When did the gin come in?

TB: You'll have to get that from Tim Hafen; he'll know exactly what day . . . I don't believe it was until the '60s.

RM: Do you sell your crop to the gin, or how does that work?

TB: Well, no. Some of them did. Walt Williams was one of the big instigators of getting the gin in here. He got acquainted with a company that was an exporter of cottonseed oil out of Wilmington, California. They had gins in California and Arizona and I guess he persuaded them to put a gin in up here. There was no power here at that time.

RM: They had to generate the power for the gin?

TB: Yes, they had a big butane engine that ran the gin. They had a smaller generator for the lights and small motors and things like that, but the basic gin and all of the gins stands were turned by the big butane engine. Maybe that wasn't quite as bad as it sounds, because we were buying butane for 7 cents a gallon. Now it would be prohibitive, at 90 cents.

RM: When you ran your pumps and everything were you running diesel electric?

TB: Just plain diesel. The majority of them were Caterpillar diesels. RM: What kind of durability did you get on your engines and pumps? TB: When I was in the service on Emeru Island, they had three 75,000 Caterpillar diesels. Two of those Caterpillar diesels at a time ran 24 hours a

day, 7 days a week. That is the same engine - the 6-cylinder overhead valves diesel engine - made by Caterpillar - that ran in the 2.-V series Caterpillar; the D-8 tractor. Those engines would run 7000 hours - running steady like that - before they'd ever touch them. That shows you the durability of those engines. They were a slow speed engine - turned 900 rpm - and they had 2 big 55-gallon drums of oil off to one side and they had a deal so they could flush the oil on the engines; never stopped and changed the oil.

RM: Oh; they changed it while it was running?

TB: Changed it while it was running. They were especially equipped; the suction of the oil from the pan in the engine itself would suck in fresh oil - start circulating that fresh oil - while they were draining the crankcase and getting ready to switch back to that oil in the crankcase. And of course, in the service somebody's sitting there, watching those engines, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

RM: What did you do when you rebuilt [an engine on the farm]?

TB: The big Pahrump Ranch had a dozen or so. They had their own mechanic and their own shop and they did their own work. Most of the rest of us were pretty good mechanics. Maybe we did it ourselves - I did all mine myself. All the Blossers have always inherited this mechanical ability. And Manuel turned out to be a good mechanic and he could help me along.

RM: You had to be a good mechanic here because you were so far away from service and everything, didn't you?

TB: Yes. I talked to a very popular person here in Pahrump a few months ago, and she said to me, "You know, I think the '50s were the best years."

And I told her, "If you believe that, there's no use in my discussing anything because I'm sure you're referring to Eisenhower years, and he had 4 recessions in the 8 years. I was in the farming business and it was so bad that I had to go to work at the Test Site.

CHAPTER SIX

TB: As I said, all the Blossers have inherited this mechanical ability, and my son is almost a genius as a mechanic. I tell everybody that I taught him everything I knew, and he's learned considerably more. That's why he helps me on the airplanes.

RM: Where does he live?

TB: He's working in Las Vegas in construction for a large contractor. He did work at the Test Site and became General Foreman after a few months, but he couldn't stand the politics up there.

RM: How did you start working at the Test Site?

TB: As I started to say, I'd overhauled all these engines and I was a pretty fair mechanic, and I decided that since I hadn't been paid for it all the time I'd been on the farm, I [would] go to work, and I joined the Operating Engineers. The reason I was probably able to get in the Operating Engineers was the fact that I sold hay to various people and one of them was the superintendent at the Test Site. That was Okie Spears, now on the board of directors of the Valley Electric power company.

We became good friends, and he had a good friend . . . Mr. Redmond, who was a welder at the Test Site. Any time I'd want something welded good, I always had Harold Redmond come over to weld it. He died of cancer several years ago, but he was an expert welder. And then I had another fellow I sold to, and he came out to buy some hay one day; he lived in his Vegas. We were down there working on the Caterpillar tractor, and he came over to see me about getting some hay, and he said, "What are you doing there?"

I said, "Oh, working on this 'Cat'

He was a mechanic and he said, 'Why don't you make an application through the Operating Engineers, and come to work at the Test Site? You read about to go broke on this farm out here, and it seems to me like you keep all this equipment going. If you can do it here, I think you can do it up at the Test Site.' His name was O.B. Gaines.

He said, "You know, I can't get you the job for you. But if you want to come down here and make the application, I'll tell our fearless leader that you're coming in, and [to] 'give you consideration. Just look at him. If you don't think he can cut the stuff, why fine.' But it'll get you in the front door, where anybody else may just say, 'Well, we've got enough mechanics and we don't need any more now.'" After the interview I was accepted into the Operating Engineers' Local 12.

I worked there about 14 years, starting in the late '50s, but I had 17 accumulated retirement credits. Most of the time I worked in the heavy-duty shop or the light-duty shop either in Mercury or at Area 12.

RM: Oh. My dad worked out at Area 12 for years.

TB: Yes.

RM: Then if it hadn't been for the Test Site, you wouldn't have been able to farm?

TB: I wouldn't have been able to survive this. But in addition to that, as I mentioned previously, my wife was a graduate in education from San Jose State at San Jose, California. And so she went to teaching school.

RM: Where did she teach?

TB: Right here in Pahrump, in the grammar school. What it all boiled down to is, I subsidized this farm to the tune of \$10,000 to \$12,000 a year working at the Test Site, and she put the food on the table.

RM: Is that right; so the farm was not a paying proposition.

TB: Never has really been. That's what I say - it just keeps getting worse. The only thing was, land was inflating in here at the rate of about 10 percent a year, so even though I'd be breaking even or losing a little bit of money, I was actually making money as far as assets were concerned. And as your assets went up, you could borrow more money, and keep borrowing more money. That kept going on, pretty much, until voodoo Reaganomics came into play. And then we went into this runaway deflation, you see.

RM: Did the land values drop?

TB: I would say the land values have dropped in here no matter how you cut it. Of course, you can hardly sell it as a farm. The thing that helped out in here as far as land values go was subdividing. In order to keep surviving, even though they were big, Williams and Cruz had to liquidate some of the land. By the time Preferred Equities came in here and got interested in buying the Pahrump Ranch for subdividing, they had it down to About 10,000 acres. And Preferred Equities paid 3 million dollars; they paid \$300 an acre. And everybody - with tongue in cheek - kind of laughed About the 3 million dollars for that deal. Because maybe 8 or 10 years before that Williams and Cruz only paid about \$400,000 for the whole shooting match - 12,000 acres.

RM: So they came out of there with a good profit.

TB: Well, they'd lost a lot of money too. The rumor was that they'd lost about 1 million bucks. But they still came out a million and a half or 2 million, maybe, to the good.

RM: So basically until Preferred Equities came in, farming was not a . . .

TB: Well, it was the biggest thing in here. [The valley] had - at the maximum peak - about 3000 acres of farming cotton and an equal amount, or more, of hay.

RM: But was anybody making money?

TB: No. I don't think anybody's made any money in the farming business since World War II [unless] they inherited their farm, free and clear of all encumbrances. Anybody who had to go

out and borrow money, or pay interest on that money, I don't think have made a dime.

As I said, Jimmy Carter's administration started finishing it off with the deal with Russia. And Ronald Reagan and his administration finished it off with his domestic and foreign policies. I told the fellow back in Washington, D.C., who handles all the Farmers Home Administration farm deals, "Mr. Hertzler, it looks to me like you guys have been told, some place along the line, from some place - either in the White House and the administration or the secretary of agriculture or the Farmers Home Administration - that the philosophy of this administration is to get the government out of the lending business; especially the farmers. 'If you birds keep making these loans, we'll never get out of it. So don't make any loans unless you just absolutely have to.' Is that what you've been told?"

His answer was, "Well, it's harder to get a loan now than ever."

And it should've been easier. Here the farmers are in dire straits and the congress sets policies . . . My attorney and I flew back to Washington, D.C. and we sat right there with the representative from Chic Hecht's office and the representative from Paul Laxaults office . . . they were in on all the conversations and they were in on setting up the meeting. They know it from the ground floor up. I've got documents back there 3/4 of an inch thick. It reads like a novel.

RM: You mean, because they wouldn't give you a loan?

TB: Yes. The basic thing that I wanted to do was to pay off my loan to the Bakersfield Production Credit. I was being charged about 16 percent interest. My attorney, and half a dozen other attorneys who looked at it, said that I was entitled to this loan. My cash flow was terrible because of this cutoff, and to Bakersfield Production Credit, but I still had a viable farm; I still had a good producing farm; and if I couldn't make it, nobody else could make it.

How we ended up back in Washington was, in the Farmer's Hare Administration, you put an application in to the local office here in Las Vegas. From there it goes to Fallon. And they were all on the same frequency. They'd all been told the same thing: "Don't make any loans." They come up with the awfulest excuses that you have ever seen. Illegal. I mean, you could show than right in the book where it says I'm entitled to the loan. My attorney, Kirk Harrison of Jones, Close and Brown, was handling it for us - a very nice young fellow.

He was working mostly under the direction of Mr. Close. Mr. Close is now the attorney for the Valley Electric power company - and a very good attorney. They were convinced that I was entitled to this loan.

We'd gone through all these appeals here, and then to [the district office at] Fallon, and from there it goes . . . at this time, to Salt Lake City, which was the main office. And everyone gives the same story. And that story was - I can repeat it in my sleep - "Based on past performance, you cannot generate sufficient income to service all your debts, pay all your bills, and have a reasonable standard of living."

And of course, right off the bat when they gave me that, I said, "Look. If I could pay all my bills, service all my debts, and have a reasonable standard of living, I would not need to be here asking for a loan." The fact is, that the interest rates are so high over there . . . And, of course, over the years I've turned in what this ranch has done. [I've been] honest with them.

And they would say, "Well, this year you lost so many dollars, and this year you lost so many dollars, and this year you broke even, and this year you made a few dollars," and so forth. And so they say that "based on past history, you cannot generate sufficient income."

And I would say, in the first place, if I could do that, I wouldn't need to be here. But

number one, I'm paying too much interest to Bakersfield Production Credit, and if I get this loan, and pay that off, I'll reduce my interest from 15 and 16 percent down to between 5 and 9 percent. That would amount to X number of dollars - say \$8000 - and if I did no better than what I'm doing now, I could make a go of it. I could service all my debts, pay all my bills, and have a reasonable standard of living."

Number two, I don't see anything [in their rules . . .] I've asked for a farm ownership loan and an operating loan to pay this debt off. They sent me all their rules and regulations - their little black book. And I can read. I told them, "I can find nothing in that little black book of yours that says that I've got to do this.

"Now, under this segment [titled] 'Construction and Repair,' it says exactly what you're saying. So you have taken my application for a farm ownership loan and an operating loan, and used the rules and regulations for construction and repair. Now, that wording over here in 'Construction and Repair' makes sense to me."

I'll tell you why it makes sense; my attorney said the same thing. Over here, I've got a farm - Ted Blosser's got a farm out here, and he's about breaking even and he's making a living or just barely getting by. I care in there and say, "Look, I want to build a new home for my ranch-hand out here."

"Well," they say, "it's construction and repair. You've got to have sufficient income to pay all of your bills, service all your debts, and have a reasonable standard of living . . . you don't." And that makes a little sense. Because you can continue to get by without the new ranch house. But now, I'm about ready to be foreclosed upon, and I've got the assets. The value of the highest and best use of this ranch - the value of this farm - is 2.5 million dollars as a subdivision. It's all subdivided; proved by the county and the state.

"Well, we can't use the highest and best use; we've got to appraise it as a farm."

I said, "You mean to tell me . . . if I had 20 oil wells (that's when oil prices were high) sitting out here, you would say to me that those oil wells weren't worth anything, I bet. You'd have to appraise this thing as a farm. Is that what you're telling me?"

"Well, not exactly; not exactly."

They were told, "Don't make any loans."

RM: Ted, were your frustrations typical of other farmers in the valley? I've talked to other farmers in the Amargosa Valley and their story is very much the same. Just a constant fight with the government, and so on.

TB: Well, I'm a fighter. There's nothing I would like better - especially if I had a chance - than to take on the bureaucrats. Because I find that most of them are very incompetent. Not all of them. Farmer's Home Administration has a couple of girls working right here, at their local office in Las Vegas, who could go down to the First Interstate Bank and get a job - they'd be glad to have them. They are the best manager and secretary they've ever had in there.

RM: How much farming are you doing now?

TB: I'm still farming the same 240 acres; I never changed that. It's all in alfalfa - cotton's completely out.

I want to get the final line in on what [happened] back in Washington.

We're sitting there and Kirk Harrison - the young fellow who's there with me - is

explaining to Mr. Hertzler why he thinks I'm entitled to this loan. He gets about 3/4 of the way through, and he's telling Hertzler that I'm entitled to this deal.

And Hertzler says, -wait a minute, Mr. Harrison." Out of a clear sky. "I'm sure you know all the rules and regulations - you know the CFR," (the Code of Federal Regulations - which is what the congress passes, and then all these rules and regulations are made up from them) "and I'm sure you know all those by heart, as much time as we've spent back and forth. But I'm telling you that the Farmers Home Administration has a policy. And the policy is, if you don't have the cash flow, you don't get the loan."

And my God almighty - those 2 representatives from the senator's offices jumped off their chairs, and they started shouting at this guy

RM: Is that right.

TB: It's the damndest thing to say. "You may know all the laws, and the law says it's supposed to be done this [way], but we've got a policy. We've got our own policy; we're not going to make these laws anyway." Oh, they were upset about that.

So Kirk - not to be outdone . . . He's smooth; they're trained to hold their cool, you know. He said, "Well, wait a minute. Let's settle down here a little bit and just think about this." He turned to me and said - to kind of get sidetracked - "Ted, have you got anything to say over that last statement Mr. Hertzler said?"

I said, "Yes, I have."

He said, "What's that?"

I said, "Well, if I had the cash flow, you and I wouldn't need to be back here. The senators' representatives wouldn't need to be here, either. I wouldn't be bothering Mr. Hertzler. But this is the most ridiculous thing I ever heard of. What it says in the loan, as far as I'm concerned, is, 'If you have the security.' And my place has been appraised at over 2 million dollars. I've got the security. What I don't have is the cash flow, and I can't service all my debts and have a standard of living that good, I need this lower interest rate."

And old Kirk picked that up right away. He said, "Yes. Mr. Hertzler, right here in your own letter back to Mr. Blosser, you [use] that same wording, but let's take this deal here. Mr. Blosser, by reducing his interest rate and everything else staying equal, would've made profit in every one of these years.

Hertzler saw his trap, so he said, "Well, maybe we'd better reconsider this thing, call my staff in; we'll go back over it again."

Of course that satisfied everybody but it didn't satisfy me. The minute we got out the door, Mr. Harrison said, "What do you think?"

I said, "I'll tell you what he's going to do. We're going to get the same answer that we've been getting for the last year. He's going to write a letter saying, 'We're convinced that you cannot do it.' And he'll give us the same old song and dance."

"Well, let's see what happens.-

Sure enough, 10 days later, here comes a letter - same old thing. The whole thing over again. The odd part about this was that congress set this up for them to help the farmers years ago. I got a loan from them in the early '50s.

That's another thing. I had a record of repayment. I had a record of repayment, and now I could see that I was going to miss some payments because of this cutoff with Bakersfield Production Credit. And I just didn't want to be in a place where I couldn't pay them back. That's

why I started this all over again. I've paid Farmers Home Administration back I didn't owe them anything other than what I had on the books no delinquencies or anything.

The way this used to work was, someplace along the line, if they turned it down . . . You applied to the local office [and would] go up through Fallon. The same guy was still there. He had been there a long time, but he used to be in Berkeley, California. Marie and I even went to Berkeley, California to talk to him. They turned it down there and then I appealed to Senator Bible's office. I told Marie, "I'm going to fly back to Washington, D.C. and get Senator Bible [to] set up an appointment with me with the chief administrator. Howard T. Burch was his name; I've remembered his name all these years.

Senator. Bible was a different brood of cat, really. He tried to help his constituents. He set up an appointment [for] a certain day . . . That was one of the greatest thrills of my life, when I climbed onto a 707 here in Las Vegas and flew to Chicago and switched planes in Chicago to Baltimore. (I didn't have a through flight. Later on they did; I don't know if they do now or not. There may be one airline that has a straight flight to Washington, D.C.)

When I came back I wanted to go down and visit my brother and sister-in-law in Englewood, California (southern California). At that time, they were working on Washington International and also the other one, so you had to land at Baltimore Friendship, which had just been modernized. And your ticket included a bus ride from Baltimore into Washington. Caning back I got a direct flight from Baltimore to Los Angeles. I got on the plane at 4:00 in the afternoon and arrived in Los Angeles at 4:30 the same afternoon. It was just unbelievable; that was one of the big thrills of my lifetime.

Anyway, Alan Bible made an appointment with Howard T. Burch and I arrived back there on the morning I was supposed to. He introduced me to a young fellow who was working in his office and going to Georgetown University to become an attorney. His name was Joseph Pavlikowski; he is now a district judge in Las Vegas. Bible introduced me to Mr. Pavlikowski, and he said, "I have a little conversation I want Joe to carry to Stuart Udall, the Secretary of the Interior. You stop on the way over there, and then you go up and see Howard Burch."

I don't know where it is now, but the secretary of the interior's office was in the agriculture building. That building covers about a square block, I guess. [If] you get lost someplace, you get somebody to show you around.

(When we went back there with Kirk Harrison, he'd served as a page in the senate when he was earning money to get his law degree. He knew Washington and he'd take us through those tunnels . . . They're all protected back there. They're going to let us be bombed off the earth, but they'll be in those tunnels if anything happens.)

We walked into Howard T. Burch's office and he had 6 folders there of all the conversations that had been going over the years, trying to get this loan. He said, "Well, Mr. Pavlikowski, I've got bad news for you and Mr. Blosser. I've looked these things over, and Mr. Blosser's applying for a maximum loan - \$50,000." (That's what it was then. There's practically no limit on it now if you have the security.) "And," he said, "if Jamie Whitten of the House Appropriations Committee would get hold of this, that committee would stop it. They wouldn't appropriate any more money for the Farmers Hare Administration."

And Joe Pavlikowski said, "Well, Mr. Burch, you know, Senator Bible is chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, and if you're not going to take care of our good farmers out there in Nevada, you sure aren't going to get any money."

RM: [laughs]

TB: "Well! Maybe we had better look this thing over." And we walked out of there with that loan. And that's the way it worked then. You could always find somebody along the line who would overrule everybody and you'd get the loan. But now you can't do that.

So now we go back to Hertzler. Hertzler's going to take this thing. And, naturally, "Dear John, You can't have it."

And so I wrote to [the man] like Howard T. Burch was; the head of the Farmers Home Administration. He's a Reagan appointee, a retiree from the Bank of America. Here we have a commercial banker running a government program - you know what that means - there's where it probably all starts. He didn't even have the courtesy to answer my letter. He turned that letter over to Hertzler to answer; the guy who had been turning this thing down - the guy we went back there to see.

Even Senator Chic Hecht was furious over that. And he wrote back a letter and the best that this guy could say was that he had to take the advice of his staff. I don't object to that, but his name should have been on that letter. He should have gone in with his staff and let them explain the whole thing to him - maybe they did, but I don't think they did, and then he'd write the letter to say, "This is why we can't do it." Maybe he'd give me the same old story, you know; probably would've. But I thought that was . .

RM: You never did get your loan?

TB: Never did get the loan.

CHAPTER SEVEN

RM: We were talking [while the tape recorder was off] about how Cal-Vada came in and bought the Pahrump Ranch. What effect did that have on the valley?

TB: Well, as I was saying, the story is that they bought it for \$300 an acre, or 3 million dollars on a time basis. Everybody was kind of poo-hooing the deal because here they'd spent 3 million for the place, and 10 years before, or whatever it was, [Williams and Cruz had] bought it for \$400,000. And the very first year they sold something like 12 million dollars worth of land off the place.

They knew how to sell land. The manager of the place then was Jack Soules, who died 2 or 3 years ago. He believed that if they'd treat the community right, why, [the community would] back them. If they got in a big tight with the community, they may not do so well. So Jack Soules and the community were [on] good terms. You could go over to Jack' [it was] like talking to you. I'd go over and say, "Hello, Jack. How are you today?"

"I'm OK. Sit down; let's talk this thing over."

We were on good terms - good friends. Everybody was that way; anybody could talk to Jack Soules. I said to him one day, "Jack, how in the devil do you guys work this deal? If you want to, you can sell a million dollars worth of land a month, or \$100,000. You just turn this thing on and off like a spigot."

He said, "I'll tell you, Ted. It's just like you growing alfalfa. You know how to grow alfalfa, we know how to sell land." And that was the whole thing in a nutshell.

I always laugh about that. He didn't tell me anything, but at the same time he was able to satisfy me. And that's the way he was.

RM: Did you start selling land, then?

TB: Yes. We were sitting here and not making any money, my wife and I working our heads off.

RM: You were still working at Mercury?

TB: No. In the meantime, I'd quit that, and I was just on the farm.

RM: Was she still teaching?

TB: She was working at Mercury.

RM: Oh; she worked . . .

TB: As I said, the way we survived was, I worked at the Test Site and she put the food on the table. That's how we kept the land. We saw Preferred Equities doing as well as they were doing, and it was a boom in here - actually a boom. The people from New York [who] had a daughter in Phoenix, and who would care up here every Christmas, [owned] the property right next to us - 320 acres - the old Sanstead property. It got to the point where they'd care by and stop and we'd visit. He came by about that same time and he said, "My brother died and I don't have any use

for the property, and I don't think the land's going to get too much further advanced in here. But I'll make you an offer - more or less - that you can't refuse. If you want to buy it, it seems to me like it would be the best place for you; it's right next to you and everything.

And I guess he did; because we bought the property. We had a place over on Monterey Bay at Santa Cruz, California. It was one of those impossible dreams, as far as I can see. We'd buy a place over on the coast, and we were going retire over there someday, and rent it out to schoolteachers or somebody in the meantime, and they'd more or less pay for the place.

It started off to be a wonderful situation. I had a man who worked for a real estate [office] and he was in charge of rentals. If you listed the property with him and somebody can in and wanted to rent a house, he'd get a resume: where they lived before, what were the circumstances . Anyway, [there was a] lady [who] was a divorcee and had 2 children. He found out that this woman was an immaculate housekeeper and always paid the rent on time where they'd been before. They just wanted a little bigger place to live, closer to the beach and everything. (This is just a block off the beach on Monterey Bay; a wonderful location.)

We went ahead and let that, and it went well for 5 years, and then of course the kids were growing up and having parties and friends come in, so they wanted to get a little bigger place yet. They gave notice and in the meantime the fellow who ran the place for the company that did the rentals had died, and they put somebody else in [that position], and he put a man and his wife in there [who] did more damage 6 months than this lady and her 2 children had done in 5 years.

And we had it - enough was enough. We'd just painted it, and we went back, painted all the inside, fixed up everything, and sold it. [It was the] best investment we ever made - paid \$29,000 for the place, and sold it for \$75,000, in about 6 years. If we'd kept it another 6 months we probably could have got another \$20,000. They passed that law that you couldn't build any more hares within so many feet of the California coast. We were inside of that, and that real estate just skyrocketed.

We never told the children this, but we made a deal between ourselves that if we ever had any money, we were each going to give the children \$5000 when they became 21 years of age. And they could do what they wanted with it - no strings attached. We had enough profit [to] give them each \$5000.

And Patty took her \$5000 and went to college at the university here at Las Vegas with a degree in teaching . And the first year she made \$9000, which I say was a good investment. Later on - a couple, 3 years ago - she got divorced from her husband and went back to teaching; she has a livelihood - supports herself and her son.

And we bought [the Sanstead place] from the people from New York and we started subdividing it. At first, before we bought the Sanstead property, we were in the process of subdividing the ranch. But after we bought the Sanstead property, I said to my wife, "Well, we'd better stay in the farming business; it's all the income we've got. You've got your job, but we'd better subdivide that down there.

We talked around with different ones who had gone through this, and it was getting worse every year - as far as getting it done. More bureaucrats to answer to, and more rigamarole to go through. So I told her, "Let's do the whole works."

So we kept on with the ranch and subdivided that, too. But we started selling down there first. We have 560 acres and it's all been subdivided into 80-acre [units]. This ranch starts at the bottom - we were going to start at the bottom of the ranch to begin with and come up this way - so Unit Number One is the tail end of the ranch, and the next 80 acres is Number Two, and this is Number Three here - around here - this 80 acres. And we started down there with Four, Five,

Six and Seven. We have seven 80-acre units and we sold all but 2 lots on the first one, and we sold approximately half of the second unit. Each lot is an acre and a quarter. The reason we didn't develop the whole thing was that . . . [we] sat right here at this table and talked to the Nye County Assessor. We agreed with him that a subdivision became a subdivision when HUD approves it. So we decided, right then and there, to just break out one unit at a time - 80 acres - for HUD approval. It had already been approved by the county and the state. And that's the way we've been operating.

RM: How have the sales been over the years?

TB: They went good until Ronald Reagan was elected - till voodoo economics came in - and then the bottom dropped out of the real estate business. We just kind of churned the wheels - sold a few lots for a couple of years. It took about 2 years for the thing to hit the bottom, with Reaganomics. So for about 4 years we didn't do much; I guess that's 6 years.

And 2 years ago - however this figures out - I got a live-wire; Milton Roumm of Secure Realty]. All he's done all of his life is sell lots. He's a real estate broker out of Las Vegas - he's licensed to sell real estate - but his forte is to sell undeveloped land. He knows how to do it and since that time, things have been going good. Not like the boom years prior to Reaganomics . . . we probably sell an average of one a week. He saved the day as far as I'm concerned. It was just a few years ago that the farm was supporting the development of the subdivision. Now the subdivision is supporting the farm.

RM: Is that the case in the valley in most cases, do you think? That farming is not that profitable?

TB: Well, one of the largest farmers in the valley is into subdivision too. He told me no more than 6 months ago [that] if it hadn't been for the subdivision they'd have been long gone. So I would say that's it.

RM: So subdividing has saved the valley.

TB: It's saved the valley; right. It's saved the farmers who have gone into it.

RM: And the farmers were the valley, weren't they?

TB: They were the valley; right. The farmers were the ones who got the power in here, the telephones in here, and got the thing rolling. If it hadn't been for them, I don't know what would've happened in here. When I came here, there weren't over a dozen families in this valley.

Subdividing started with Preferred Equities (Cal-Vada). Before that time, blocks were being sold. Like I bought the first 160 acres from a speculator from California who paid maybe \$50 - \$25, \$30 an acre.

RM: Could you talk a little bit about the people who were in here when you came in here?

TB: Elmer Bowman and his family, I believe, moved in here shortly after World War II.

RM: I think he came in 1946.

TB: Elmer Bowman was actually the stronghold [who] ran the community at that time. And then maybe a couple of years after, Tim Hafen came in with his family. And then shortly after that - a year, maybe two years - Bob Ruud came in here. He later became county commissioner; he was one of the most popular commissioners we ever had. He was very well liked. And - someplace before that - I don't remember the sequence - the Dorothy Dorothys [came in]. They were another one of the kingpins in here. I would say they came in probably about the time Tim Hafen came, or just shortly after Elmer Bowman, or about the same time.

RM: Where did Dorothy Dorothys come from?

TB: I don't remember that. Dale Dorothy was a ham operator, and so was my brother. Every once in a while he'd talk to my brother and he'd come down and tell me what my brother said to tell me and so forth.

RM: Were there any others here when you got here?

TB: There was the Dollar Ranch, which is Country Place Number Two, now, owned by Ken Redelesperger, the state senator. That was a pretty big farm at one time.

RM: Who was there?

TB: I don't know. Two or 3 people have owned it off and on during the years. One of the Simkins boys, who was married to . . . Zulu Simkins always called it the "Two Bit Ranch." It was called the Dollar Ranch and he called it the Two Bit Ranch, because it two-bitted everybody that had it to death.

RM: [laughs]

TB: Allen Simkins was his name. Allen died of cancer. A fine man; fine fellow.

RM: Were there any other people here when you got here?

TB: I'm probably leaving out some. Then later on came Hollis Harris, who started out working for Mr. Carberry. Carberry was from around the Las Banos, California, area - Five Points. He never farmed it; he just bought it for his kids. Don Carberry was one of the sons. They grew cotton and finally sold out to Hollis Harris.

RM: Were there Indians in the valley when you got here?

TB: Long Jim and his family lived here in the wintertime. He owned that place up here on the mountain. In the summertime he'd go up here where it's cool.

RM: And his place is right on the foothills to the east of your place.

TB: I guess they call that the Spring Mountain Range. It's just north and west of Mt. Charleston.

RM: Did you know him at all?

TB: Not too well. He had 2 daughters and my wife taught them at school. One of them married an old-timer here - Charlie Lynch. He's about my age, I guess. They live up there now.

RM: Were there many Mexicans in the valley?

TB: The only ones were the people like the Gardeas. And most others were illegal aliens.

RM: Were they permanent residents, or did they come and go with the seasons?

TB: Oh, I don't know. They've always had kind of a telephone connection some way that they know the Pahrump Valley isn't bothered very much with immigration and so forth, so they come in here. Some come in here and go back to Mexico and tell their friends about it and they come in.

RM: Did most of the ranchers use Mexican labor?

TB: Mostly illegal labor.

RM: Were they good workers?

TB: Oh, very good. They didn't complain about the wages and they worked hard. They're good, good people. Most of them from Mexico are honest. They didn't steal from you.

RM: Did they bring their families with them?

TB: I would say the majority did, yes. Most of them who came in here are, under this new amnesty program, legal in here now.

RM: Are there a lot of Mexicans in the Pahrump Valley?

TB: Oh, yes.

RM: Where do they live?

TB: They're pretty thrifty, you know. They have their own homes, or they live . . . Tim Hafen supplies a home for them, and I supply a home for my man and his family.

RM: Does one man or his family tend to stay with one rancher for a long period of time, or do you get [a] turnover?

TB: A certain number do. And then of course . . . one here for me and Hafen would have 2 or 3 steady, and then the rest of them are seasonal people.

RM: You mentioned that you'd worked at the Test Site. Were there a lot of people in the valley working at the Test Site through the years?

TB: There weren't too many from the valley working until they put Highway 160 in. Before they put the highway in, you had to go over the old gravel road. Then they made the foundation for the highway and you went over that. Finally they got the road paved.

RM: So when the highway went in that made access to the Test Site?

TB: Also, that helped the boom - people living here and working on the Test Site.

RM: Traditionally, have a lot of people worked at the Test Site, or is it just a few?

TB: I really don't know. I know that it's gotten big enough that the government furnishes transportation now with a bus from Pahrump. As I understand, it's \$2 a day round-trip. You can't put the gas in for that.

RM: Back in the days when you were working at the Test Site, did you stay at the Test Site or did you commute?

TB: When I was working at [Area] 12, I did, because it was too far to drive back; you're talking another 45 minutes. When I worked at Mercury I came back every night. It's only 30 miles to the gates from here.

RM: I didn't realize it was that close.

TB: Now if you go back to 12, you've got another 30 or 40 miles. I would stay up [at Area 12] . . . it depended on the shift. If I was working on the day shift, I'd leave here early Monday morning and get up there for the day's shift. If I worked swing shift I'd leave at 3:00 in the afternoon. Then [I'd] come home Wednesday and do the same thing the following morning, then spend Thursday and Friday up there and come home Friday night. Well, we survived the thing. We were fairly young, and you do what you have to do.

RM: Were there many churches in the valley in the early days?

TB: None, except the LDS church had a place to gather down on the Bowman ranch. Then, of course, the real first church to come in here is the present Mormon Church; they were first ones.

RM: Are there a lot of Mormons in the valley?

TB: Yes. A lot of Catholics, too.

RM: Could you tell me a little bit about the history of aviation in the valley?

TB: I grew up when Lindbergh flew the Atlantic and I soloed when I was in high school. After Lindbergh flew the Atlantic, I started off in the back yard making what they call a wind wagon.

It had an engine in it, a propeller and a tail like this airplane here, but no wings. We'd go up and down the road with that thing . . . It had no brakes, but, like the old airplanes, they had a tail skid on the back, 2 wheels, and you had the rudder peddles in there and a stick. You'd go down the road and steer that thing with the rudder; that air coming and the motor running, and you'd steer it that way. You could push the stick forward and the elevator would come down and raise the tail up in the air. You'd get the tail in the air and you'd steer that thing down the road with the rudder - tail in the air.

RM: How fast would you go?

TB: Oh, you'd go about 45 miles an hour, tops.

RM: Was it dangerous?

TB: Well, I don't know. Nobody ever got killed in the thing. It probably was dangerous; I don't suppose my parents liked it very well. They didn't object to it.

RM: You were just a kid then?

TB: Oh, yes. I went to Kahweah Grammar School in the San Joaquin Valley About 5 or 6 miles northeast of Exeter; one mile from where we lived. And you know kids; they look around the country and coming home they deviate and go over here and care home with their friends. Just about 1/2 mile south of where the school was down a little dirt road between a couple of farms, there was a junk pile. I looked that thing over and there was a Model-T Ford engine sitting in there, a Model-T Ford frame, a differential and a front axle and some wheels. Of course, no tires or anything like that on it. I found out that that belonged to John Van Cleeve, who was on the board of the school district. Of course my dad and mother knew him, and so I told my dad if he wasn't going to do anything with it, I'd like to get some of that stuff out of there and tinker with it and maybe I could make myself a Model-T Ford.

John Van Cleeve was a pretty wealthy fellow. My dad told him about this and he said, You just tell Ted he can go over there and take anything he wants. And if he's over there getting something and somebody cares up and says anything about it, you just tell than to see me." So I made a Model-T Ford out of parts I picked out of that junk pile.

I was always fooling with something mechanical like that. And then I got into that wind wagon deal. Then a little later on, while I was in high school, around 1930 some time, I really got interested in flying. We had some good friends who lived down the road - Irwin and Johnnie Schultz. Irwin wasn't so much inclined, but Johnnie Schultz was just like my brother and me - mechanically inclined; always tinkering with automobiles or something.

About that time my dad bought my brother a 1931 Model-A. Ford roadster. If you've ever seen one of the original ones, they had genuine cowhide leather upholstery - just beautiful deals. He was 4 years older than I was, and not to be outdone . . . by now it was 1932.

In 1932 my friend Howard Weakley - the same fellow we went up to Fish Lake Valley with - bought himself a brand new 1932 Chevrolet roadster - the one that had the big doors on the hood instead of the louvers. That was the first time they came out with doors. General Motors had them; Buicks had them; Cadillacs had them; they all had them. Different sizes, but they all had that - little doors on there instead of the louvers. I didn't want my dad to spend \$625. My

brother would take his car to the George Swanson Garage in Exeter to be worked on. Actually, he'd do most of the work himself, but [if] they'd have to do something special to it he'd take it in there. I got acquainted with George Swanson and that time he was probably 45 or 50 years old.

He said, "Ted, you're always in here working around here and not getting paid. Why don't you come down here and work for us on the weekend? You don't care about working on Sunday and these guys - these mechanics - don't want to work on Sunday. You come in here, and [if] I got something for you to do I'll let you do it. You can do it just as good as they can and I'll pay you their wages. Whatever they're getting, you'll get."

I jumped at the chance. So I went to work on the weekends for George Swanson. One of the mechanics in there had picked up a repossessed '31 Chevrolet roadster. Yellow. I never will forget it - yellow roadster. My dad came down to see me at noon, or something, he came down to see how I was getting along. I showed him this '31 roadster. He said, "How much do they want for it?"

I said, "Two hundred and seventy-five dollars."

And Dad says, "Do you want that car?"

I said, "Sure." Well, you know. "Dad," I said, "I don't want you to spend \$600 for a new one," and this thing only had about 5000 miles on it.

Dad said, "Oh, it looks like a good deal to me. George," he said, "I want it."

"Well," he said, "I got a bill against it for \$275. If you want it for \$275, I'll get the title for it."

Dad said, "OK, I'll write out a check. George Swanson, here it is." And he bought that thing right there. "Now George, I'm not going to take that car until you get me the legal certificate. If you can't get that certificate, I'll either get that \$275 back or I'll bring my car in here, and I'll get the work done on it." He just laughed about that, you know.

George was an honest businessman, and in about 2 weeks he got the title.

CHAPTER EIGHT

TB: To make a long story short, we bought that Chevrolet and Elbert and I used to race that Model-A Ford against my '31 Chevrolet. The Chevrolet was a 6-cylinder and the Ford Model A was 4 cylinders, and there's about 20 horsepower difference. The Chevrolet had about 60 HP and the Ford had about 40 HP. But they were very much the same speed. My brother had his with a high-compression head they sold to policemen and highway patrol[men] and different people like that, and he had dual carburetors on it. That boosted the horsepower up to [where] they were almost identical. We used to race and whoever got in the front could stay in the front, and the guy who'd get behind could never pass. The minute you'd get out here in the wind you couldn't hack it.

We used to have a place up in Camp Conifer. You came off the county road and you had to come like this to come around - it was very steep. There were no stores or anything up there; we had gas lights and things like that. In those days you didn't have air conditioning in the homes - there were not even the desert coolers. Families would go to a place like Sequoia National Park, and we'd go up to Camp Conifer. We'd spend the whole summer up there and Dad would practice dentistry during the week and on Friday night he'd come up there for the weekend.

Anybody who would be coming up there would bring up a load of groceries. The Model-A Ford or my '31 Chevrolet [would be] full of groceries in the back, and we'd generally bring up one of our friends, like Howard Weakley or somebody. Elbert would get a run at that hill and when he'd get right at the top that Model A would be going took-a, took-a, took-a, took-a, took-a, took-a. Finally it would start picking up speed: took-a, took-a, took-a, took-a - just barely making it. Unless he got a run at it, he couldn't make it. And he was in low gear. It wasn't in any second, or higher or anything; it was that steep. If he didn't make it, he'd have to back clear back down and take another shot.

[laughs] That Chevrolet of mine would pull it down, but it would never get down like that. That Ford had a high torque at low speeds, you see. Whereas mine was more a higher speed motor - that Chevrolet 6. As long as you kept the revs up, you could make it.

RM: When did the first planes come into the valley?

TB: I don't know about the first planes, but Walt Williams of the Pahrump Ranch built the airstrip that used to be down at the corner right across from the bank. Actually, the end of it was almost in the back yard of Cal-Vada Inn. You walked out of Cal-Vada, walked over a block, and you could park your plane right there.

RM: So it was at the Pahrump Ranch.

TB: It was at the Pahrump Ranch; I'll show you a picture of it.

RM: And you couldn't get in the army air corps, which is what you wanted in World War II, right?

TB: Yes; because of my eyesight. So then I quit flying. After I came to Pahrump, John Glenn went into orbit in the capsule. I said to myself, 'If John Glenn can pilot that thing around the

earth,' (he was about my age at that time) 'almost in space, I can fly an airplane. So I joined a club in Las Vegas and we had a Piper Tripacer. I got my license in the Tripacer. Tim Hafen's brother was in the school system in Las Vegas - he was a teacher. And another fellow, by the name of Rochet, and myself were all in this club and we ended up with that Tripacer. All the markers kept dropping out, so the 3 of us finally ended up . . . We wanted a high performance airplane. We were all getting up there [to] 150, 200 hours, and we wanted something to go faster, cleaner and look nicer. We always said the Tripacer took off at 80, flew at 80 and landed at 80. [laughter]

I talked to one of my friends in California who was quite a pilot had been in the navy flying off carriers and such. He said ,if you want a high performance airplane I'd look into a Bonanza."

We looked into a Bonanza and the 3 of us, Rochet and Tim Hafen's brother and myself, bought an E-Bonanza. They started out with a 35 model Bonanza, and went to 35-A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, J.

RM: What did you have to pay for one back then?

TB: We paid about \$9,000 for one then. This one [in this picture] was the J-model, which was the '54 model. This is the best performing Bonanza ever built for the horsepower. This had the first fuel-injected engine ever put in a private airplane. They had them in World War II - radial motors - but not the horizontal opposed engines.

RM: So the first airstrip in Pahrump was on the [Pahrump Ranch].

TB: Well, there were some little drug-out places. But this was really the first acceptable airport, I'd say.

RM: Why don't you describe this picture?

TB: On the front of the picture you see Walt Williams standing by his Impala Chevrolet. It looks to me like it's about a '63 or '64 so that gives you an idea about the time. Looking down the runway, you'll see the Nevada Ginning Company, which would be off to the right. You're looking more or less north. Right across from the gin is where the bank is now. I don't know what this is over here - there are some buildings over there.

RM: Is that gin still there?

TB: The barn is still there. I use it to store my cubes in. It's right across the bank there - and they have the scale.

RM: Now, describe who Williams is, again.

TB: Walt Williams was Williams of Williams and Cruz, that purchased the Pahrump Ranch.

RM: Who owned the ranch when you were here?

TB: C. B. Dickey of Arvin, California.

RM: What was he doing with it?

TB: He was farming it.

RM: He was farming it. Was he a farmer, or was he just an investor?

TB: He was in the farming business. He was connected with Cotton Oil Company over in California some way; I can't think what it was.

Williams and Cruz bought the Pahrump Ranch from Dickey. C. B. Dickey was up here and we were eating at one of the small cafeterias one day, sitting at a table talking to him - about 4 or 5 of us - and he said, "Why don't you fellows get together and buy that ranch from me? I'll sell it to you on a low downpayment and we'll make easy payments for you. If you have a bad year, why, you won't have to pay me anything for it. You young fellows are the ones that are going to have to make this thing go. You're going to have to have a lot of energy; it's going to take a lot of hard work and so forth."

We said, "How much do you want down on it?"

And he said, "\$40,000."

Now, we're talking 12,000 acres - \$40,000 down - of which - there must've been at least 1,500 acres in cotton, and enough water to grow it. I don't remember who all was in it, except Arlen Frehner was in on it; myself, and there were 2 others, and I just can't recall who they were. We didn't think too much about it, and about 2 or 3 days later, we discussed the thing, and we decided to discuss it with our dads, to see if they'd put up the money and the 4 of us would go ahead and buy this thing, and each of us put in \$10,000.

I talked to my father, who was a pretty successful dentist, and he said he'd put up the \$10,000 for me. We finally got the \$40,000 together and made an appointment with Dickey to see him on Monday morning at 10:00 at his office in Arvin, California. We walked in there and he said, "Well, I'm sorry, fellows, but you're just 2 or 3 days late. Last Friday I sold it to Williams and Cruz."

RM: Now, where did they come from?

TB: They came out of Texas. They came out of the cotton deal down there - Pecos, Texas. Actually, Cruz was in the oil business some way. Walt had the farming ability, and Cruz probably had the money.

RM: Did they both live on the property, or did just Williams?

TB: No, Walt never lived on the property either. He and his wife Anne lived in Las Vegas.

RM: They must've been doing pretty well to build a pretty fancy air strip. That's not cheap.

TB: Well, you know how it was. The price of land was going up. And, as I said, they were liquidating the land. They started out with 12,000 and by the time they sold it to Preferred, they were down . .

RM: Who were they selling it to?

TB: As I recall, they gave [the land for the old grammar school] to the school district, and pieces like that. And I think they gave the land for the gym, or sold it to them.

RM: How long was this landing strip used?

TB: Until 4 or 5 years ago. Preferred Equities finally took it out and built this strip over here, which is north and east of me. That airport has lights on it and all blacktop instead of being just oiled.

RM: Do a lot of people use it?

TB: We were talking about that yesterday - there are about 12 planes parked there.

RM: Are there any plans for a bigger airport in town?

TB: Oh, yes. It's being surveyed and looked into by the FAA. They have a fund in Washington [where] they get a tax for every airline ticket that's billed. It was called for the Airport Development Act, and then they changed it to something else. They've got about 7 billion dollars in that trust fund right now. Every aviation gallon of gas is taxable. [Returning to the picture], this must be part of the Pahrump Ranch across here. I can't identify anything. That's the cube barn.

RM: When did they stop growing cotton here?

TB: Leon Hughes' dad started it.

RM: When did he start it - back in the '40s?

TB: I guess so.

RM: When did they stop it?

TB: I would say about 5 years ago. We stopped growing cotton in 1980. I was taking my wife to Houston, Texas M.D. Anderson Hospital for cancer treatment and that's when they had Hurricane Harris in [Texas] and the cotton went to 94 cents. That was my 1980 crop. We had about 90 percent of the crop still in storage, and we sold when it went to 95 cents, I told my wife, "We'd better sell." I called up Cal Cotton from Houston, Texas and told them to sell every bale we got. And before they could sell it, it had gone to 96 1/2 cents, and that was the peak. I got in there good.

RM: And then you didn't plant the next year?

TB: No. We went into hay. We talked it over. I said, "At 96 cents a pound they'll plant the stuff

on the rooftops." That's what they did, and the price dropped to 60 cents a pound - about a break-even price. I get a kick out of that. I said to King Cooper, the fellow at the Lancaster office of the Production Credit Association, "How much longer are we going to keep growing this cotton for the cost of production and not make any money?"

He [said], "Just so long as some farmer out there will grow it and sell it for that." And I think that's the answer. And it's never changed. For the last hundred years it's been that way. And they keep doing it. My dad said they'll keep doing it till they're all down and broke and they walk off of these farms with the shirt on their back.

RM: Yes. Yes; if that.

Are there any people in the Pahrump Valley that you'd like to talk about?

TB: One thing that should be mentioned is that the Brady brothers were half a mile north of me. They're some of the old-timers. Glenn died here a couple of years ago. Wes is still alive and they sold out to Preferred Equities. They were 2 of the best farmers. I think they had 320 acres in there. They didn't farm all of it, either. Some of it's in the gravel or something. Another one who should be mentioned is Perry Bowman and all the children. Perry Bowman was one of the sons of Elmer Bowman. They built a new home about the same time my wife and I built this one. They raised all their children; one of them now is a schoolteacher; used to teach when my wife was still a teacher. Fine family. I don't know if he is now or not, but for many years he was the head of the LDS church here. Honest, trustworthy. He probably has been, when you get right down to it, the most economically successful farmer in the valley.

RM: Why is that?

TB: First of all, he's a very good farmer; a hard worker. And started out at the right time, when things were cheap. And he didn't owe any money. He had a place at Logandale, California. He sold that out, came over here and with the money he bought a ranch. Another thing - he bought a ranch that was already going. Part of - from his dad - already going. So he had income coming in; he didn't have to develop something before he'd get any money off of it, like the rest of us did.

RM: It's hard to bootstrap your way up, isn't it?

TB: Oh, yes; as it turned out. I would never go through it again. I have a grandson who graduated from Las Vegas. The Summa Corporation gives an award to an outstanding high school student that graduates in accounting and computers - whatever it is, all these main topics. He was given this from Summa Corporation for his outstanding performance in computers. And right off the bat - out of high school - he got a job for \$36,000. That about 5 or 6 years ago, I guess; times goes so fast. Now he's making \$47,000. And he is quitting his job - he's a programmer - and he's coming back to Las Vegas and he's going into business and making programs for people - mostly in computer games. He asked me what I thought about it, and I said, "Well, I'm in no position to advise you on anything. Anybody who would go into the farming business, [when] it turned out like it has, I don't think has any authority to tell anybody what they should do." And that's the way I feel about it. If I'd gone into the farming business and the farming business had turned out to where I was a wealthy individual - independent - today, then I would say, "Well, I think you're

making a mistake." Or, "Maybe you're doing the right thing, 'cause you'll never make any . . ."

My brother always felt that, working for somebody else, you could make a living, and probably [be] comfortable, but you'd never have too much, because if they could make money off your services, they would be getting the most of it.

But the way things have turned out, I don't think that's true anymore. Maybe it'll switch back. But what we've got today are the paper shufflers, the desk jockeys; they're making all the money. The guy who's producing . . . I don't care what it is, the farm deal, the oil deal . . . And the wealth all comes from the soil. Whether it's on the farm, the food, or . . . or the mines, or the wells, or what it is. They're not getting a fair shake.

And Reaganomics has encouraged . . . Voodoo Reaganomics is the wording that Johanas Steele in the Las Vegas Sun has coined. When vice president George Bush was running against Ronald Reagan in 1980 or '81, he called it voodoo economics, 'cause Reagan was going to balance the budget, build up the defense, and they pencilled it out and it just didn't turn out right. And they called it voodoo economics. Well, Johanas Steele has coined voodoo Reaganomics. But certain people have done exceptionally well.

RM: Yes. But I feel they've sold a lot of our future down the river.

TB: Oh, there's no question.

RM: They've laid it all off onto the younger generation.

TB: On "Washington Week in Review" they had one of the old-time reporters. He was telling about how disastrous this thing was. And one of the panelists said, I don't understand what you're talking about.

Things are booming, people are making money," and he named off a few things that were happening; it all sounded good.

This fellow said, "There's just no question about it; you're right. But at a terrible price."

He said, "What do you mean, a terrible price?"

"Well, in the first 4 years of this administration they ran up a debt greater than all the preceding 39 presidents put together. They're making things move now, but they're selling our future." And it's a terrible price to pay.

RM: Yes. What they've done is, sold the farm. These guys on these programs are all stooges, you know. They're all parroting the same line. What we've got, Ted, is a case of the king's clothes. Remember that story? Everybody said, "Oh, the king's beautiful clothes" and all that. And the little boy said, "Hey, he doesn't have anything on." [laughter] It's the same thing. Can you think of anything else you want to say? Have I left out anything?

TB: I'd like to say that the future of Pahrump, on the whole and except for farming, looks very bright. In my opinion Pahrump Valley will be a suburb of Las Vegas. I think the transportation will probably improve - there'll be flights daily going back and forth between Las Vegas and Pahrump. They'll probably have some kind of a monorail bringing people in.

One thing that Pahrump has that they can't deny is water. And good water. It's not like the water that comes out of the lake in Las Vegas, you know, or out of the ground there - most of it. In order to get this subdivision approved, we had to have water tests and it had to be approved by

the health department. And at that time they used the standard of the United States government for drinking water. You can't have lots of different types of minerals. [They took] 12 different samples and sent them in and every single sample passed that U.S. Public Health Service without putting anything in it. No chlorine, nothing in it. And the people just rave about the water. We know that; we've been drinking it for 30 years here. There are some spots in the valley where the water isn't as good but on the whole, the water's good here. I don't think there's a lot of water left here for big usage, like these farms and so, but I think it [would] support a couple of hundred thousand - maybe 300,000 people.

RM: Do you think it'll be that big someday?

TB: Oh, eventually it will; no question about it.

RM: Ted, you wanted to say a few words about your wife.

TB: Yes, I do. My wife and I grew up together in Exeter, California. We both lived on the farm, and went to grammar school together. We started actually getting serious about each other in high school, and later - in 1941 - we were married. And at the time I was working for Coast Counties Gas and Electric. I went into the service, came back from the service, and went into the ranching business at Exeter, California with my father and brother. And in the meantime we started raising a family. In fact, my eldest daughter was about 4 months old when I went overseas.

You'd have to know Marie to know what a fine person she was. For all the years that we were married, until she died in February of 1981, I never heard one person say a word against her. I believe you can talk to anybody in this valley that knew her and they'll tell you what a fine person she was.

She was qualified to teach and when things really got tough she went to teaching school. And with me going to work at the Test Site, between the 2 of us we saved this place. What we've got today, you've got to give her credit for at least half, and maybe more. She was good with the children. From the time they were born until they were raised - all of her life . . . Those children have turned out to be fine citizens. We don't have any problems with drugs and drinking or things like that. So I think that she should be paid a tribute. If there's anything in this thing for me, why, she should deserve half the credit.

RM: That's great. It sounds like you were really lucky to find a woman like that. I don't think everybody has that kind of luck.

TB: I used to tell her, "You know, I've made a lot of mistakes in my life, but when I married you, that was one I didn't make."

RM: That's great, Ted.

TB: Yes. And we had an understanding between us. There was never any doubt that if we were separated for a day or so, I'd call her on the phone, tell her where I was. She'd do the same with me, you know. We knew what each was doing all the time. Absolute trust.

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