

An Interview with
Robert M. "Bobby" Bottom

An Oral History produced by
Robert D. McCracken

Nye County Town History Project
Nye County, Nevada
Tonopah
2009



Robert M. "Bobby" Bottom
2009

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PREFACE

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

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

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

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

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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

Appreciation goes to Chairman Joe S. Garcia, Jr., Robert N. "Bobby" Revert, and Patricia S. Mankins, the Nye County commissioners who initiated this project in 1987. Subsequently, Commissioners Richard L. Carver, Dave Hannigan, and Barbara J. Raper provided support. In this current round of interviews, Nye County Commissioners Andrew Borasky, Roberta "Midge" Carver, Joni Eastley, Gary Hollis, and Peter Liakopoulos provided unyielding support. Stephen T. Bradhurst, Jr., planning consultant for Nye County, gave unwavering support and advocacy of the program within Nye County in its first years. More recently, Darrell Lacy, Director, Nye County Nuclear Waste Repository Project Office, gave his unwavering support. The United States Department of Energy, through Mr. Lacy's office, provided funds for this round of interviews. Thanks are extended to Commissioner Eastley, Gary Hollis, and Mr. Lacy for their input regarding the conduct of this research and for serving as a sounding board when methodological problems were worked out. These interviews would never have become a reality without the enthusiastic support of the Nye County commissioners and Mr. Lacy. Jean Charney served as editor and administrative assistant throughout the project; her services have been indispensable. Kimberley Dickey provided considerable assistance in transcribing many of the oral histories; Jean Charney, Julie Lancaster, and Darlene Morse also transcribed a number of interviews. Proofreading, editing, and indexing were provided at various times by Marilyn Anderson, Joni Eastley, Julie Lancaster, Teri Jurgens Lefever, and Darlene Morse. Joni Eastley proofed all the manuscripts and often double-checked, as best as possible, the spelling of people's names and the names of their children and other relatives. Jeanne Sharp Howerton provided digital services and consultation. Long-time Pahrump resident Harry Ford, founder and director of the Pahrump Valley Museum, served as a consultant throughout the project; his participation was essential. Much deserved thanks are extended to all these persons.

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—Robert D. McCracken
2009

INTRODUCTION

Historians generally consider the year 1890 as the close of the American frontier. By then, most of the western United States had been settled, ranches and farms developed, communities established, and roads and railroads constructed. The mining boomtowns, based on the lure of overnight riches from newly developed lodes, were but a memory. Although Nevada was granted statehood in 1864, examination of any map of the state from the late 1800s shows that while most of the state was mapped and its geographical features named, a vast region—stretching from Belmont south to the Las Vegas meadows, comprising most of Nye County—remained largely unsettled and unmapped. In 1890, most of southcentral Nevada remained very much a frontier, and it continued to be so for at least another twenty years.

The spectacular mining booms at Tonopah (1900), Goldfield (1902), Rhyolite (1904), Manhattan (1905), and Round Mountain (1906) represent the last major flowering of what might be called the Old West in the United States. Consequently, 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, much of it essentially untouched by humans.

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. The Rhyolite Herald, longest surviving of Rhyolite/Bullfrog's three newspapers, lasted from 1905 to 1912. The Beatty Bullfrog Miner was in business from 1905 to 1906. Amargosa Valley has never had a newspaper. Pahrump's first newspaper did not appear until 1971. All these communities received only spotty coverage in the newspapers of other communities once their own newspapers folded, although Beatty was served by the Beatty Bulletin, published as part of the Goldfield News between 1947 and 1956. Consequently, most information on the history of southcentral Nevada after 1920 resides in the memories of individuals who are still living.

Aware of Nye County's close ties to our nation's frontier past, and recognizing that few written sources on local history are available, especially after about 1920, the Nye County Commissioners initiated the Nye County Town History Project (NCTHP) in 1987. The NCTHP represents an effort to systematically collect and preserve information on the history of Nye County. The centerpiece of the NCTHP is a large set of interviews conducted with individuals who had knowledge of local history. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and then edited lightly to preserve the language and speech patterns of those interviewed. All oral history interviews have been printed on acid-free paper and bound and archived in Nye County

libraries, Special Collections in the Lied Library at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas, and at other archival sites located throughout Nevada. The interviews vary in length and detail, but together they form a never-before-available composite picture of each community's life and development. The collection of interviews for each community can be compared to a bouquet: Each flower in the bouquet is unique—some are large, others are small—yet each adds to the total image. In sum, the interviews provide a composite view of community and county history, revealing the flow of life and events for a part of Nevada that has heretofore been largely neglected by historians.

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

On the basis of the oral histories as well as existing written sources, histories have been prepared for the major communities in Nye County. These histories have also been archived. The town history project is one component of a Nye County program to determine the socioeconomic impact of a federal proposal to build and operate a nuclear waste repository in 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 the repository. If the repository is constructed, it will remain a source of interest for a long time and future generations will likely want to know more about the people who once resided at the site. And in the event that government policy changes and a high-level nuclear waste repository is not constructed in Nye County, material compiled by the NCTHP will remain for the use and enjoyment of all.

—R.D.M.

Interview with Bobby Bottom and Robert McCracken at Mr. Bottom's office in Manhattan, Nevada, October 24, 2008.

CHAPTER ONE

RM: Bobby, why don't we start by you telling me your name as it reads on your birth certificate?

BB: It says Robert M. Bottom; M. is for Merle; I tell people it's for "middle name."

RM: And when and where were you born?

BB: I was born in Tonopah in November in 1941. My birth certificate says the 28th; we've always celebrated on the 29th; I was kind of born around midnight. I've been in a lot of trouble over that because none of my IDs match my birth certificate.

RM: And what was your father's name?

BB: His name was Merle. He was born in Tipton, Missouri, in 1908. I think he met my mother in Tonopah. He was working there at the time and my mother, Dorothy, worked out at the Tonopah Air Base in the NCO Club as a cocktail waitress.

RM: What brought your father to Tonopah?

BB: He was in the gambling business. He went to Vegas and lived there and got into gambling. He lived in Fallon for quite a while—there's a Bottom Road in Fallon, which was the old homestead of the family; they had big farms out there. My mother hung around Fallon quite a bit, too, so I'm not real sure where they met.

RM: Was he earning his living as a gambler in Fallon?

BB: I really don't know a whole lot about the Bottom side of the family because I was young when my mother and he separated.

RM: Did he stay on in Tonopah then or did he go away?

BB: No, he was in Tonopah for quite a while. When I was born, I believe he was working as a dealer at the Ace Club. My mother worked at the army air base there. I was born in the old miner's hospital in Tonopah, which was behind the Catholic Church; it's a residence now.

RM: What brought her to Tonopah?

BB: I have no idea.

RM: Did she come there with her family?

BB: There was a bunch of them; she had sisters. There were 13 kids in her family and some of them moved to Tonopah for work. She was born in Outlook, Montana, which is right on the Canadian border, in 1919. Her family had a big farm up there. She was a Wirtz. I guess her grandparents were from farther back East, but most of the family originated in Montana.

When I was born, I know they gave both my mother and me up for dead. I was born breech and I guess I did a lot of damage to both of us; one leg was wrapped up around my neck and I was strangled.

RM: Oh, my God!

BB: The doctor at the time said there was no chance of either one of us living. My dad told me he had asked, "Could they even save the wife?" and the doctor said neither one of us had a chance. The doctor put us in a room and told the nurses, "Don't even go in there, don't bother them, don't try to take care of them, just let them go in peace."

Some old nurse there used to sneak in and she kept us alive for weeks. She was giving me eye-droppers of whiskey, dropping whiskey in me, and I would kick and scream and it would make me start breathing hard. I actually kicked my leg out straight.

And my mother, to the day she died, if you even mentioned the word "pineapple," she'd dry-heave. She said that's all they gave her. All she could she remember was this old nurse was pouring pineapple juice down her. The doctor would check in every day to see if we were still alive and couldn't believe that we were. They read us last rites. I had the opportunity to meet all my pallbearers; they actually named me after one of my pallbearers - Bob Marker was his name. He was a partner in the Tonopah Club. I just buried my last pallbearer last year. It was Eddie Clark, Midge Carver's dad.

RM: How did they assemble the pallbearers?

BB: There were friends of the family. My dad made all the funeral arrangements for us because the doctor said any minute. This went on for weeks. See how I turned out? [Laughter] When you're raised on whiskey!

RM: Were you your mother's first child?

BB: Yes, and I have a half-sister, Tina Limon. My mother married George Boscovich in 1950 and they had a daughter. George Boscovich enjoyed the mining but he was a bar owner there. He had the Mizpah Bar for a while, then he moved to the Town Hall. He ended up with the Ace Club; that was his last bar.

Like I said, my mother was working at the Tonopah Army Air Base and I don't know where my dad went or what happened to him at that time. Midge Carver's grandmother, Eddie Clark's mother, used to baby-sit me, and his aunt would also baby-sit me. My mother and my aunt lived downstairs and rented a room from them and they watched me when my mother

was working. There was another gal who roomed with them, Barbara Graham; she also babysat me.

I don't know if you remember Barbara Graham. I think Susan Hayward played her in a movie. She was the first woman to be executed in the California gas chamber. I don't remember much about her. I can just remember she was a pretty girl.

RM: I think the movie was I Want to Live.

BB: I talked to my mother about her when I was growing up and she said that it was a set-up, that she was innocent. She got in with the wrong people. She was so good-looking and she got picked up by some bad guys, Mafioso-type guys, and they took her to Vegas. I was told that they murdered somebody and pinned it on her. I've seen the movie, but don't remember much about it.

RM: Was she from Tonopah?

BB: I don't know where she was from but she worked with my mother and my aunt at the air base.

RM: What did your mother do after the war when they closed the air base?

BB: My dad was working in Vegas and she moved to Vegas. I was in Vegas probably between four and six years old. We lived out at Whitney, which is now East Vegas, of course, with an uncle. There used to be seven miles of desert between Vegas and Whitney; there was a little town there. My uncle had a gas station and a bar and he sold bait to people who were going fishing. Then we moved to Vegas and we rented from Rex Bell's mother; we lived next door to her.

RM: Rex Bell was the D.A., wasn't he?

BB: I'm not sure, but he was some kind of a wheel there.

RM: When did you move back to Tonopah?

BB: I think I was six years old. I moved back to Tonopah and started first grade. I went to kindergarten in Las Vegas and moved back to Tonopah the next year, and they made me lay over a year because of an age difference thing. I went through the Tonopah schools. RM: What stands out in your mind attending school in Tonopah?

BB: Oh, I remember them well. [Laughter] I hated school, always did. I did pretty good when I was in grade school. I kind of behaved and most of my report cards were straight As. And I used to like art; a gal and I used to share the art exhibit every year. I'd win blue, and the next year red; blue and red, that's the way it was. Then I got into high school and I found out that there

was a little more to life than studying. I really screwed that up good. I quit school when I was a senior. I got so far in debt and I drank so much.

RM: You were drinking in high school?

BB: Oh, yes. I'd drink almost a bottle of vodka a day in high school and nobody hardly knew it. I partied a lot and raised hell. I was kind of a jerk, I guess. I quit school because I got so far in debt, and I got two jobs and worked seven days a week and got totally out of debt and I swore it would never happen again, which it hasn't. I went back to school the next year to graduate and I finished it off.

I still drank a lot and had problems taking orders from anybody. The teachers would say, "Put away your books," when they were giving a test. I would get up and go downtown. I told them, "I don't do tests." I probably could have aced them, but they kind of knew that. When it came to graduation time, they all got together and said, "What are we going to do with Bob? We don't want him back next year," so they gave me a diploma.

RM: I've talked to other people who grew up in Tonopah and they talk about a lot of freedom. Talk about childhood and growing up in a mining camp. How does it differ from childhood today, or from growing up in a place like Vegas?

BB: People don't realize this and a lot of people think I'm lying, but it's a fact. I've talked to some of the guys I grew up and went to school with in Tonopah like Joe Maslach—we didn't know what drugs were. When someone would talk about marijuana, we didn't know what it was. People said they couldn't believe it because they were my same age and went to other places and drugs were plentiful in those days. We knew what booze was and we raised hell with that—we all drank like fish. But there were never any drugs that I knew of in those days. Now it's a grade school thing.

RM: Did you have a lot of personal freedom? "We'll see you tonight, Mom"- type thing? BB: Oh, yes. There still wasn't any crime to speak of. We'd go out and play, travel all over town. The town was small and you knew everybody. The kids had all the freedom. Just be home by dark, was usually the rule, and tell where you're going to be and stuff like that. They didn't worry about kidnapping or any of that kind of stuff.

RM: Did you know Bill Thomas growing up?

BB: I was pretty young then but I knew him. I was scared to death of him. You know, he put the fear of Christ in all the kids. [Laughter] Yet he was a good guy, I remember that. He'd talk to everybody. You'd talk to him and say hello or something and my God, you'd just be shivering in your boots because of the power he had.

It was just like being a mortician in those days. Old Man Logan was the mortician when we were growing up. I can remember walking home after the movies in the middle of the night; it was dark as hell, I was scared to death, walking up the dark street at night going home. One night he came walking up and passed us on the road and said, [Deep voice] "Hello, my boys."

And we ran all the way home just scared to death that he was going to cut us up or something. [Laughter] That's the way Bill Logan was. He had everybody's respect and he was a good guy.

RM: And where was the funeral home; was that the one that burned down on Bryan Avenue?

BB: Yes, the same one. Actually, it didn't burn down. Pipes broke and flooded it, creating lots of mold and damage. It had to be torn down.

I lived up the street with a family called the Rodelas. Like I said, my mother worked all the time. She and my dad separated so I spent most of my younger life living with other people. I lived with the Fleetwoods. Wesley Fleetwood ran for sheriff here; he and I grew up together. I lived with the Clark family and the Rodelas. I lived with the Rodela family for many years and grew up with their kids.

RM: Who were some of your good friends at that time growing up?

BB: There were a lot of them. I grew up with Joe Maslach; Joey is a good friend. He's a J.P. now. We used to fight every night after school over who got to pitch the next day, and that's probably why I'm so beat-up today. He's twice my size now but in those days we were both about the same size. There are still a few around who are good close friends.

RM: Who were some of the girls you went to school with?

BB: Oh, Susie Cavanaugh, Donna Funk, Donna Martin, and Patsy Wilson, just to name a few I started school with. There was another guy we ran around with—I don't know what ever happened to him. Jim Luna was his name. There was quite a bunch there. I also grew up with John O'Leary, whose dad was a bank manager; Bill Crowell, whose dad was district attorney, and Allen Douglass and the Metscher boys, just to name a few.

In fact, when Joey and I were in the sixth grade we taught class. Our teacher drank a lot. He'd come to school with a bad hangover and he'd lock the door and sleep and Joey and I taught the class. I was kind of the teacher and Joey was the bouncer, the sergeant at arms. [Laughter] We got caught at the end of the year with only a couple of weeks of school left. They had a big blow-up and the teacher got fired. They brought in the state and had an investigation. They gave us all aptitude tests. They were going to make us go through the sixth grade again but they gave us our aptitude tests and everybody in there had about a freshman-level education so they shined it on and figured we did a better job than the teacher could have done.

The families all got together and gave him a big going-away party and bought him a big gold Elks' ring. Everybody liked him. He taught us all how to shoot. He'd take the boys, me and Joey and a couple of others guys; we'd go out every night after school and he taught us how to shoot .22s. He'd drink beer while we were shooting. He taught us a lot.

RM: What is your first memory of mining? Was there any mining going on in Tonopah when you were growing up?

BB: There was a little bit of mining going around. I remember Louie and Phil Meyers were mining out at Klondike; they were brothers. And my step-dad, George Boscovich, was always interested in mining. He worked in the mines in Tonopah when he was a kid. He was like the rest of the guys—lied about his age so he could work to survive. Like old Norman Coombs—when you were 17 you told them you were 20 or whatever so you could work underground. I got interested in it and I liked the hills anyway.

I probably had my first mining claim when I was 18. It was over by Goldfield out by Alkali and I found some pretty nice silver. I took it to Louie Meyers and he told me, "Yeah, that's good stuff; you better locate it," and I did. I read a lot about mining and I hung around with people like Louie and Phil. Louie taught me a lot. Phil and he were totally different. They fought all the time but they were still blood. They lived apart but next door to each other.

RM: Were they from Tonopah?

BB: Louie was born in Oregon because he always teased me about being a "web-footer." They grew up around here. Their dad had a little ranch out in Stone Cabin Valley which doesn't exist anymore. On some old maps you'll see it—Pine Tree Ranch, I think it is. It's right by where you turn off to go to Longstreet's Canyon. They grew peanuts, all that they could get to grow in the sandy soil. Louie wouldn't eat a peanut till the day he died because that's all they had.

They'd get starving and Louie and his brother would hike on up into McCann Canyon. Harry Stimler had a little mine up there, a little high-grade thing. He was one of the fathers of Goldfield. He was doing a lot of promoting and paying good wages and they had a little high-grade silver thing. It was really great and he was selling stock on it. Louie and Phil would hike quite a few miles to go up in there. Louie told me about the big boardinghouse they had with a big meat locker. He said he'd never seen hams before; there were whole hams hanging. They'd take the kids in under their wings and feed them. The dad would come in on horseback with a switch and beat them all across that valley and make them go home about once a week.

RM: So their old place was on the north side of the highway off Highway 6?

BB: Yes, up by Longstreet's Canyon.

RM: Is that east or west of the Stone Cabin Ranch turnoff?

BB: You go on up the valley. Go by the Clifford ranch and up the valley like you're going to Willow Creek. About halfway up that valley there was a little ranch off on the flat. There was a little spring there and his dad had homesteaded that. Then they moved to the Toiyabes.

Louie probably knew more about the Toiyabes than anybody alive at that time. In fact, a lot of these monuments and markers that you see out here, the canyon markers and the little histories the state put up? They went to Louie for a lot of the information on those. When they were young, they mined with their dad. They were in every canyon and Louie knew every digging in that whole mountain range.

RM: So they got their mining knowledge from him—and they were really skilled?

BB: Yes, they were good hard-rock men.

RM: How did you meet the Meyers?

BB: I really don't remember how; they lived in Tonopah.

RM: But they sort of tutored you, or you apprenticed to them?

BB: Louie did. Phil and I didn't get along at all (of course, Louie and Phil didn't get along at all). Louie kind of tutored me and I took care of him and then we got to prospecting together. He drank quite a bit and partied and he liked the girls, you know. He'd go to the cat houses.

We got some mining claims together and I knew a lot of mining people at the time because I used to do a lot of work for them. I put in a lot of mining claims for these major outfits. I kept Louie's and my properties leased most of the time. We'd find them and locate them and I'd get hold of some of the people I knew and we'd lease them and I was making Louie a living.

RM: How old were you at this time?

BB: I was in my 20s. I'd give Louie a check, a pretty good check—a \$1,000 check. He'd go right to the cat house and get drunk for a week until it was gone. I told him one time, "Louie, you've got to do something with your money besides drink it all up and give it to the girls."

He said, "Well what else is there? I don't have anything else." (His brother had died.) So I said, "I'll tell you what. Go buy yourself something. Buy something for the house or something for yourself and then go to the bar and cat house."

So he called me one day after I gave him a big check and said, "You've got to come to my house," which I did every morning anyway for coffee, "and see what I bought." So I went, and he'd bought this brand new refrigerator, which was neat; he'd had one of these old things with a condenser on top.

I said, "Louie, I'm proud of you..."

He said, "Now can I go to the cat house?" [Laughter]

I said, "Yeah, you can," so I hauled out the old refrigerator and threw it in the dumps. (That was legal in those days, like a whole lot of things were.) Another month went by and I got another payment on another mine and went down and gave him a few hundred bucks and said, "Now remember, get yourself something "

Next day he called me up, "Bob, come look at this!" By God, he bought another refrigerator! He was a character. Chair-acter, he would pronounce it. He went by how it was spelled. I used to argue with him about words and he would say, "It's 'ch' so it's chair-acter."

RM: How did you acquire knowledge of these people who would take leases on the claims you had staked out?

BB: I was kind of a grunt worker for a lot of the people there. I had a shop; I did a lot of mechanics work in Tonopah for years. I'd work on their stuff and then they'd want somebody to locate claims. I'd get to put in the claims and do their location and assessment work. I eventually ended up buying a little loader and I was doing their work for them and started building roads for them, things like that.

I got to know a lot of them. I hung around with some of the geologists. One of them, Peter Joralemon, was a well-known geologist around the world, and we became friends and had properties together. His dad was real popular. He kind of lived off his dad's name because his dad pretty well wrote the books on porphyry copper, so he had a good name I palled around with him and learned a lot about geology through him. I always hung around with people older than me, I don't know why.

RM: And so you learned from him.

BB: Yes, I learned. And with Louie. I just enjoyed it. Louie taught me how to pan and all that stuff; and then he was killed. I don't know how I tangled up with Norm Coombs.

RM: So you were kind of under the tutelage of Louie and when he was killed, then you shifted to Norm?

BB: I don't know how, but I kind of got right in the middle of the mining business and that's probably how I met all these guys. Coombs and I became real good friends right off the bat. I have no idea how Norm and I ever got together and became such good friends and mining partners. I learned an awful lot through Norm, an awful lot. I helped him put up that mill out there, and he'd been doing this before I was born. I've built a couple mills of my own and I've built a couple of mills for companies. I went to the Yukon and put together a placer plant for an outfit one time. I've done consulting for Round Mountain Gold.

RM: How old would you have been? Were you in your 30s by then?

BB: Probably right about there, I would guess. When I partnered with Coombs I was still drinking a lot. I drank a lot till I was 40. I can remember I never had anything. I got married when I was 21 and we just survived. My wife and I both worked and we just survived. I'm not proud of it. I was gone all the time. I'd get home in the middle of the night, things like that.

RM: You mean out looking at properties and prospects?

BB: And bars. Most of the guys I hung around with all drank, too; even Louie. Coombs was a teetotaler by the time I got hooked up with him

RM: Had he been a drinker earlier?

BB: Oh, a bad one. He put up with me for many years drinking. He could read people real good and he knew what a hard-headed Kraut I was. He told me one time, "You could not go one year without a drink because you can't handle it." He was using psychology on me.

Well, we got into one hell of an argument over that. He called me a son of a bitch. I said, "I can do whatever I want." [Laughter]

He said, "You can't do that.- And I shut if off that minute. I went one year without having a drink just to show him. It was the first time in my life I ever had a savings account. I didn't know where the money was coming from. All of a sudden, I had money for groceries. I didn't realize it, but he woke me up and that kind of turned me around. I still drink once in a while, but not every day. I got drunk every night for many, many years.

RM: Was that kind of a hazard of growing up in Tonopah?

BB: There was nothing else for kids there. Bowling alleys came when we were all too old to bowl. Charlie Stewart was an old black guy there who had a little shoeshine parlor. A lot of the kids grew up right there, learned everything in his shoeshine parlor.

RM: Was he selling booze?

BB: No, but he had slot machines. A kid could play the slot machines until he won. Then he had this saying, "I'll tie a knot in your ass." I don't know how this guy did it but he could get you by the cheek and twist it and get a blood blister the size of your fist on your behind before you could get out the door. But that's where all the kids went; we gambled down there. He had a poker table in the back room. But that's all there was there in Tonopah.

CHAPTER TWO

RM: What are some of the mines or areas that you and Louie had claims in or that you were working on at this time?

BB: We had properties all over, mainly in Esmeralda and Nye counties—around the Goldfield area, Montezuma, out in the Toiyabes. We had a claim in Monitor Valley. Of course, he was a tramp miner Coombs was also a tramp miner. He'd traveled all over the country, he'd been to Alaska, but he still found his way back to Tonopah. He had been all over the world and he still came back to Tonopah.

Tonopah was a place like Manhattan is right now. Even at times like this, if you starve to death, you damn well deserve it. There's no reason to starve to death in camps like this. There's enough gold around that you can always survive.

RM: Bobby Revert of Beatty told me that if you wanted to work eight hours a day, you could go out and make \$500 a week by digging gold at various sites that he knows—if you wanted to work. Would you agree with that?

BB: Oh yes, very much. In this camp, you can do better than that.

RM: But you and Bobby are really skilled at finding gold.

BB: A novice could do it if you taught him how to pan. You may not make a lot, but a novice could make that kind of money in an eight-hour day.

RM: How would you know where to pan? I mean, it's a huge country. Where do you focus?

BB: Well, you know it's a gold camp. The old mine dumps and the draws around here—there isn't a draw in this camp where you won't pan gold. It may not be enough to survive on but there is not a draw, a side canyon. anything in this whole camp where you can't go and get one or two little colors of gold.

RM: But then how do you turn that into \$500 a week?

BB: Just keep panning. [Laughter] You could do it on just what the old-timers missed and what they left. You can rework their old workings and make that kind of money, probably.

RM: So they didn't get it all?

BB: No. I've got a little place here in town where I allow people to pan. It's a hillside placer deposit, which is very rare for this area. (Everything here is 30 to 300 feet deep.) In that one, the placer is later placer and it's right on top of the ground. If you wanted to work eight hours and had a little hand dry washer and weren't lazy, if you wanted to muck some dirt and crank, I would imagine you'd make \$50 to \$100 a day.

I know a guy who bought a little gasoline-powered dry washer. He didn't know what he was doing. I showed him how to set it up, gave him a hand for five minutes, showed him about where to dig and how to pan, how to find a spot that looked like it had a few colors in it. He and his wife worked there for four hours, almost beat their brains out. They came back with a five-gallon bucket that had about three inches of dirt in it, their concentrates, and asked me if I'd pan it for them. I panned that and they had about \$75 worth of gold. And they never knew what they were doing.

RM: Really? Let's say that somebody reads this history ten years from now and they say, "Okay, I'm going to give that a try." What would you be whispering in his ear about where to look and how to start?

BB: The bad thing is, everything around here belongs to somebody. You'd have to get permission or buy a claim or something because everything around this country is located. All the dumps around here have been metal-detected to death. They've found awfully good gold in them but it's pretty well been picked clean.

But if you can get permission and tell somebody, "Hey, can I go look around, do a little prospecting on your property? I'll give you 10 percent," or whatever, most people will allow that. You're not going to do any harm. You're not going to have any equipment, you do it all by hand. And you may hit a lick. I've known guys that have found four or five ounces in one day just by accident, just stumbling over it. But then, you may not. You may make a few dollars a day panning. Anybody can pan.

RM: And this is using water to pan, so you have to carry your water.

BB: Yes, you'd have to have water. But you can do it in this camp. Like Revert talking about Beatty—he knows that area the way I know this area and he knows little places. There's gold around here and you're not hurting anybody.

RM: How about going into some of the old holes where you can slab ore off of the walls?

BB: Coombs and I knew of some and we cleaned them up pretty good. We knew one at Divide where we went in and took stuff, did a lot of digging. We packed five-gallon buckets. In fact, I probably packed more tonnage in five-gallon buckets than most people have hauled in trucks.

But nowadays, with metal detectors . . . I've got a partner, Howie Wright, in Manhattan; he's a friend of mine and he's working on my property. I'm doing a little stripping. I'll take the Cat and just strip off a foot. It's an old worked area where they missed some bigger nuggets and some half-breeds. He metal-detects down there about three hours a day and we're paying for my fuel and we're making a living. We're probably making wages, but I'm only figuring on \$100 a day for wages. It's probably paying for my fuel for my Cat and making wages. We'll have days we'll lose money; we won't find a thing. The next day maybe we'll make \$25 apiece. Next day, maybe we'll make \$200 apiece. We've been down there about six weeks and it's averaging out to good wages.

RM: So there are two factors. One, you own the ground so there's no problem with getting permission and all that. And you're not paying a royalty. But you're using a little heavy equipment?

BB: Yes, in this case. I've got a D-9 Cat. This is an old dump where a guy had a plant about 12 or 15 years ago and he only had a three-eighth screen on his trommel, so anything bigger was going out in the tailings. Plus, he got tired of dumping the nugget trap so he welded it closed. Once the trap filled up with nuggets, it wouldn't hold anymore and they all went out on the tailings, too. We haven't done good this year; the biggest thing we found was an ounce. But I have found two and three ounces in this guy's tailing pond. Yet the pile was not good enough to re-run because he scalped it and picked the eyes out of it; most of what we're finding are all half-breed. We did find a 15-ounce nugget in my own rejects this year.

RM: Tell me what "pick the eyes out" means.

BB: Well, if he only got 70 percent recovery, the 30 percent he lost is not worth going after. Most of it's half-breed stuff; it's mostly rock. There's hardly a plant in the world that would stop it anyway, because there was too much rock involved, but a metal detector doesn't recognize that. It finds those pieces you could hardly catch in any kind of sluice box and that's what we're going after. A lot of them are no bigger than match heads.

RM: The piece of gold on the rock?

BB: Yes, but it all adds up.

RM: And then, what do you do?

BB: We just save it all and when we're done I'll throw it in my batch mill and amalgamate it and pour little gold bullion bars.

RM: What would be your advice for somebody who gets a little bit of gold fever?

BB: If you get gold fever the best thing to do is go to the vet and have yourself put to sleep. [Laughter] It'll save you a lot of pain. When Coombs was working at Round Mountain, he said, "Bob, you've never had a letdown in your life like when you're mining high-grade and it runs out."

I said, "What are you talking about?"

He said, "The let-down is so devastating you'll go on a month's drunk. You'll think suicide."

I said, "Oh, bullshit."

Well, it happened to me after Norm was gone. The old-timers told me that they used to hit placer down here. They had seen spots where they were mining gravel and could actually look down and see the gold in the gravel. I thought that was bullshit.

After 25 years of mining here, it happened. I'd hit a pocket with a Cat; and when I'm mining and get down to bedrock, I'll get off and metal detect it once in a while and go over it in case there's a nugget. I got out and picked up a nugget and another one and another one. I was down on my knees digging and I could see the ground and I thought, "That must be mica shining in there. That couldn't be gold," but yet my metal detector was just going crazy. Gold was worth \$300 an ounce then. I had \$160 worth of gold in one little gold pan and I took a couple of them. I couldn't believe it. I'd get a quarter-ounce nugget each time. I had George Moorhead running my plant for me. I went down there and said, "Shut the plant down. You got to see this."

We panned all day long, just had a blast, and then I had mined it all. It took me only about two days to run that whole area through my plant and then it was gone. And I know what Norm meant—something in your brain thought that it was going to last forever. The let-down was horrible. When I ran out of ore I shut my mine down, I quit mining and I pouted for two weeks. "I'm never going to do it again!" I know what he was talking about. It was awful. And that's why you'd save yourself a lot of pain by going to the vet.

RM: That's beautiful. Describe gold fever.

BB: Well, it's bad. I've worked long enough so that when I get excited if I find a nice nugget, I enjoy it for ten minutes. I don't get excited like I used to. When I worked for Round Mountain, I worked a double shift when I was doing some consulting for them; I actually produced almost 1,000 ounces in one day off the table. I've seen so much gold that I don't get so excited anymore because I realize you've got to convert that into the green stuff or nobody will pay any attention to you.

But gold fever—I know guys that just get it to the point you can't trust them. I've worked with a few people that you could trust with your life, like Howie Wright, Gwen Smith, and George Moorhead, but there are people I wouldn't even want to let help me if they paid me to let them work on my plant because these people go crazy when they see gold. They would shoot their mother over a gold nugget. And to me, it's just another form of making a living. I enjoy looking for it but I enjoy nature.

I can't say I really got the fever. You know, I don't know if it really infected me like the way it does lot of people. I had a guy who worked for me one time. I gave him a nice gold nugget but he was not interested; he turned around and gave it away the next day. That's the kind of guy you want working for you. The one who gets excited over it, you've got to watch him.

Gold does things to people, as you know. It makes people steal from their mother. That's kind of why I've always worked pretty much alone; I've got some guys who help me and I trust them with my life, but I would hate to ever suspect any of them. They wouldn't be down there if I ever had a doubt because I wouldn't want to lose a good friendship. There are guys I know would steal from me; they're still my friends but I don't let them work for me. That way, we can stay friends.

RM: Norman told me that you could have a guy who was totally trustworthy and everything, except put him down there in the mine. When he finds gold, it's a different deal. He told me

there was an old saying in the mine that the way that you decide which of the gold ore is yours and which belongs to the company is to throw it up and hit the back of the tunnel with it; that which sticks to the back of the tunnel belongs to the company. [Laughter]

BB: That reminds me of something that happened one time. Coombs and I were going to Orizaba one time to mill some ore. We'd sniped a bunch of ore someplace—I found some in a high-grade streak. I don't know where we got it all because we worked so many areas out there, but we had about 1,000 pounds of stuff, all totaled, that we'd gathered up and had in the back of the pickup. We were taking a woman and her husband to the mill; she was writing a book and had a camera. She was from back East and was kind of an environmentalist nut, and she wanted to see a mine and mill work.

We took them and on the way out we saw an old power pole that had washed down this wash—lightning had hit one time and the power company had replaced it. It had been lying there for years and we were always meaning to get it for firewood. So we told the lady, "We've got to stop as part of our trip today and pick that up."

We cut it up and put it in the back of the pickup and she said, "That's a telephone pole!"

I said, "You're close. It's a power pole."

She said, "Well, what are you going to do with it? The pieces of it?" I said, "We're going to burn it."

She said, "It'll bum?"

And Norm said, "They make them poles out of wood, you know."

"Oh, I never thought of that," she said. Right then we knew we were in trouble. When we were there, we crushed and ran our gold and were panning our concentrates, showing her the gold. She said, "You really think this is right?"

I said, "What's that?"

She said, "You're taking this from God's land."

And I said, "Well, God put it here for us."

And she said, "How do you know that?"

And Norm says, "Not to worry. We give God his share."

And the woman said, "How do you do that?"

He said, "When we're all done, Bob and I throw it up in the air and say, 'You take what you want and we'll keep the rest.'" [Laughter]

And do you know, that woman shut up and she never spoke to us the rest of the day. She went out and sat in the truck and we finished up, loaded up, went back, and dumped her off. She didn't tell us thank you, goodbye, or anything.

Up Mariposa Canyon between here and Round Mountain there's a little spring and there was a little camp in there. An old-timer had a cabin there one time, I think. Somebody came to Coombs and me one time and said, "Man, we found some gold. We're getting pannings at Mariposa." Norm and I thought we knew all the high-grade spots in the country. The guy said, "No, I found some more up there. Man, there's gold everywhere."

We were quite excited—we couldn't believe it. How did we miss this? I even told Norm, "How the hell could you let this happen? You were raised there. Mined there." So we went up and looked at it and you could see where the old-timer had had a little dry washer or a little

wet plant there years ago. The guy who'd come to us showed us some of the rock that he was panning. We just looked at each other; it was Round Mountain ore. We had to break the news to him that he was not going to keep digging there and sinking a shaft right there; it was just the tailings from when the old-timer had been high-grading gold from Round Mountain. There was quite a bunch of it. This guy sniped a few tons, probably a bucket at a time or something.

RM: Was there more than one old high-grader who had cleaned up that ore? Was that the same spring?

BB: That was probably the same one.

RM: So several people came in and staked it out, thinking they'd hit the big bonanza. BB: Oh, yes. You could probably still go up there and get a sample out of there and it'd scare you to death.

One time I was sitting up at Norm's having coffee and your dad, Robert G. McCracken, lived up the street. He came down and had a cup of coffee with us and he was all excited, telling us about this barite he had found out at Ellendale. And there is a barite mine out there, a deeded claim. One of the companies, Glidden or Fuller, had it; they may even still own the patent on it. They used to go up there once a year and take a truckload or two out of it. It was small, with little bitty veins, but it was super high-grade. They used it for a paint base. The barite is what makes paint so heavy.

Anyway, there's a real rough knob you go over just before you get to the highway where you go around the microwave site. Your dad came in and said, "Man, Norm, I found this barite scattered all over the hillside there," he said, "and it's super high-grade," and he showed it to us. Both of us knew about that property because we'd been out there quite a bit. Louie Meyer and I actually had a zinc-silver claim next to that Glidden property. Your dad showed us this and we said, "Man, that's identical to Glidden's ore." He asked if we'd go out there with him some time and look at it because he couldn't find where it came from.

Well, we went out there and looked over that hill and found pieces all over—in the berm and the road and down the side of the hill. You could see where they had been blading that road, and they'd bladed every place we found ore. When a truck went over that one hill, which was real rocky—there was no dirt on it at all—all this stuff was falling off the truck and the blade was wind-rowing it so there was barite scattered all over that hillside from the blade work. We explained that and your dad was really embarrassed. "Oh, my God, who'd a thunk it?" he said.

He thought he'd found something new. He prospected it for a long time but could never find where it came from. That's what we finally determined. It was all broken, all uniform sizes. Every time I go over that hill, I think of your dad and I look for barite. [Laughs]

RM: Is that mine still operating?

BB: I don't know; I haven't been in that area for a long time. They used to go up there about every year or two, and take out one or two truckloads. I don't know where they buy their barites for their paint and factories now.

CHAPTER THREE

RM: Did you ever do any prospecting down around Silver Bow?

BB: Quite a bit.

RM: Tell me about it. We used to live down there one summer.

BB: Louie and I had a little gold-silver combination property down by Golden Arrow that Louie had done a little work on—he and his brother had mined it at one time. I ended up with it when Louie died. I sold that to an outfit many years ago.

And I've got some maps of a lot of the underground stuff around Silver Bow. I went out there looking one time and Louie and I were going through their maps. They went through a little bit of amethyst when they were out there but it didn't amount to nothing. We looked at it to see if there was anything a guy could play with, but there was nothing there that was any good. It was little bitty streaks, about like the Bullfrog Mine outside Beatty—it has a little amethyst in it, too.

I've done a little Cat work for drilling outfits at Silver Bow; I never did much prospecting there. I did quite a bit in Golden Arrow. Louie and I had a few different claims scattered around there at one time.

RM: Did you ever get up into the Kawich Range?

BB: I've been around there a little but I didn't do any prospecting, although I did on the east side up by Eden Creek and in that area. We built some of the drill roads in there for people in later years. Louie and I never really had anything on the east side of the mountain.

RM: There's a nice deposit of silver way up high on the Kawich that my dad and another guy and I tried to take out one time, but we didn't have a prayer.

BB: It's tough now with all the rules and regulations. The only thing Kawich has going for it is that it's BLM, not Forest Service. Nowadays, if it's on Forest Service land, you can forget about it. It does not matter how big it is. Over in Wall Canyon they did all that drilling and they hit a couple of nice ore bodies. The outfit that was doing it even bragged that it might be as big as Round Mountain. They had even talked about a townsite like Hadley at the bottom of the canyon; it was that good. They got attorneys and fought it for years.

Their attorneys finally said, "This is very unusual, but I'm telling you that you are wasting your money with us because the Forest Service is going to appeal. They've appealed everything we've ever done. They'll appeal it long after we're dead." So they had to write it off. The guy spent a ton of money up there.

RM: Where's Wall Canyon?

BB: Right across the valley here, across from Round Mountain. It's just before Jett Canyon. Jett Canyon's straight across from Round Mountain. It's a canyon on this side of the Toiyabes. I know where there's some good gold up there—Louie and I messed with it in a lot of those canyons; I'd been all over those mountains with Louie. God, I know where there's some good gold, but there's no use in getting excited about it.

RM: Mother Nature maybe put another big deposit over in Wall Canyon?

BB: Yes. It was a different type of ore from Round Mountain, a whole different formation. But there was just nothing they could do about it. A writer put a lot of money into it and did a lot of the work—Jerry Doyle. He was a geologist and he did a lot of work on that and they were really excited. They had a lot of majors that were excited about going along with it. But, being on Forest Service, forget it. You've got to be a very, very big major. Have to be Mormon, too, probably.

RM: But BLM is doable?

BB: Yes, they've still got a little bit of sense with them. They're tough and it's nearly impossible, but you can kind of deal with them; it just takes so much time. I just dug some sumps and drill pads in East Manhattan for an outfit on Forest Service ground—all they wanted to do was drill a half-dozen holes, using existing roads, no new roads. All we had to do was put in a sump; then when they drill it, cover it up. It took two years to get a permit—that's the norm, two years. The permitting down here on the gulch for these guys that I sold to took two years.

RM: You mean Manhattan Gulch?

BB: Yes, down here where I've been mining. They've been permitting on that for maybe two years and they've gotten enough permit to do their drilling but not to do their mining yet.

RM: List the hoops that a person would have to go through. Let's say you found something on BLM land. What are some of the obstacles?

BB: The first thing you have to do is go to the BLM to get any motorized equipment on it and to do any work at all. You have to post a bond, you have to get an outside contractor to give an estimate of all the work you're going to do, what it would cost to put it back to its natural condition—reseeding, reclamation, everything included. You have to go by another contractor's price and post that bond. It's a lot of paperwork and takes about two years, normally.

RM: What kind of a bond? And how much would that cost you?

BB: It'll cost you whatever it'll cost you to put it back. Say, if it would cost you \$10,000 to put this road in, it's probably going to cost you twice that much to take it out and reseed it. That's what your bond's going to be, say \$25,000. In this case, I paid cash. I put up a cash bond.

RM: You don't have to put up the full \$25,000, do you?

BB: Yes, you have to either do that or you can put it in the bank, like in a CD or something, under the BLM's name and your name. There's a bonding pool in the state but I don't know if they ever really got it going or if the state would help you out. I doubt it—especially now, the way the state is broke. But you have to have the full amount available.

RM: And then you were telling me about oil and other pollution of the area. What are those obstacles?

BB: That comes under the state. The NDEP, Nevada Department of Environmental Protection, is worse than the BLM or the federal EPA. They've got a bunch of young, hippie-type people working for them that are tree-huggers and they are awful!—at least, the ones I've had to deal with on the Round Mountain Gold Corporation reclamation project in Manhattan.

I know of a case where a BLM guy who I know was looking at a project up in the Battle Mountain area. He was looking at this project along with the NDEP. They had Indians involved because it was near an Indian reservation (the Indians claim everything is theirs now anyway; it's all sacred land to them). The BLM guy overheard the NDEP gal and guy, young people, coaching the Indians on how to sue the mining company to keep them out of here. I mean, that's how they are to work with. There's a lot of common sense lacking in a lot of this. I even wrote a letter mentioning this episode to Jim Gibbons. I didn't even get one of their "generic" answers back!

RM: Right. Okay, so you've found what you think is a hot prospect and you've jumped through all these hoops of the Forest Service. Then what are some of the things that the state will make you do?

BB: The state's reclamation program is every bit what the BLM's is. You have both agencies, the state and the feds, and you have to appease both of them.

RM: Do you have to put up another bond with the state?

BB: No, but you have to please everybody. They'll have state people out here. They'll have BLM and EPA and NDEP people out here. Like this mine here—the late Dick Carver and I finished that up in 2005. It's now 2008 and they've got most of their bond back but I believe they had about a \$2.2 million bond on this mine. Last I heard, they were holding over \$400,000 back because the NDEP will come in here, for instance, look at the pit lake and say, "We want to watch it a few more years, monitor a few more years, because it's all going to turn to cyanide or poison pretty quick."

Little do they know, there are animals that live in and around that water. Birds live in there, and ducks. The mine has to monitor it—they have to take a boat out into the middle and sink a container all the way to the bottom of it, through 100 feet of water, and get samples off the bottom of the water. And it's cleaner than our town drinking water in Manhattan; it always

will be. But they've got to warrant their job somehow so this is how they do it. And everything's growing up there—every place we reseeded has grown. A lot of it is slow because it took millions of years for it to get there to begin with. They want it better than it was before you started.

There's more growing there now than there was before the mine was there. I was involved when they first started mining up there—Dick and I were involved with tearing out half the trees and brush. We put in half the roads many years ago that we ended up taking out. It looks better now than it ever did; it never looked this good before the mining took place.

RM: Are there any other things you have to do for the state besides reclamation?

BB: You have to monitor everything. If you're going to do any mining at all, you have to monitor the air quality and water . . . water, that's a whole new ballgame.

And the land boundaries now are really tough. You used to say, "Here's how many acres I want to disturb," and then you'd make a rough map and turn it in and that was fine. Because of these satellites and GPSes, the government and the state are out there with GPSes and they walk off that line and they're shooting with a satellite; they can tell if you're 12 inches out of line. It's tough. In 20 years, there's not going to be any more mining, believe me.

RM: Even for big companies?

BB: It will be pretty damn tough. It'll all have to be deeded land. And you have to jump through similar hoops on deeded land. You still have the air quality, the water quality, and everything. You just don't have the reclamation, and they're working on that, too, believe it or not. We get these tree-huggers who come out and look at the pits.

We had somebody who worked for the county one time come out here and look at one of these pits, a gal they had just hired—I forget what her job position was. She saw that pit and she came to one of our town board meetings, introduced herself, and said, "I'm out here to help you people. I've been riding around (this is a county employee) with the BLM people pointing out some things I don't like. I saw a mine shaft that wasn't fenced so I turned the people in." And she said, "And this hole you've got down here by the road, we have to do something about that. We have to make those people fill that pit."

RM: The big hole down here?

BB: Yes. I said, "That's on deeded land." She said, "I don't care." She was with risk management or something.

I got up in the meeting and I threw a fit and beat on the desk and walked out. I scared everybody to death. I called the Nye County Commissioners and I raised hell. Dick Carver was alive then and a county commissioner and he told the rest of the commissioners and they pulled her into the office and gave her quite a talking-to and gave her another position and transferred her to Pahrump.

RM: So if a person wanted to start another Round Mountain on non-deeded land, good luck!

BB: Yes. Round Mountain saw this coming years ago. They located that whole thing many years ago, had a mineral surveyor survey it all in, and then applied for patent. They've had patent-pending for many, many years, just praying somewhere down the road they would pull the moratorium or whatever it was and give a deed to all their land. The town itself isn't even deeded; some of the mine was, where some of their tailings stuff is.

RM: Some of the mine was on patented claims.

BB: Yes, the mine was, whereas the town wasn't. A lot of the mine was on deeded land but now the mine's so big they're way off the deeded land.

RM: Is Manhattan on deeded land?

BB: A lot of it is but a lot of it isn't—it's surrounded by BLM and Forest Service land. Manhattan, the town itself, is on BLM land and patents. There's a swath on the map—you can see on maps where there's a swath cut on the Forest Service land where the BLM had sections withdrawn. You go a quarter mile anywhere on either side of it and you're on Forest Service land.

RM: Who else in the area was kind of a Louie Meyers or a Norman Coombs-type guy? Anybody?

BB: Nobody that I can remember that I hung around with or knew very well. There was old man Murnane, John and Danny Murnane's dad. When he was mining out of Divide he lived down the street from me and I used to go down and talk to him. He had a little, little bitty mill in his garage down on Florence Avenue and he was grinding high-grade. He was working little, really rich streaks out at Divide. In fact, Norm and I actually got a lot of the dump material where he was mining. We screened a lot of it and hauled a lot of his dump off and ran it; it was really good ore. Murnane told Norm where high-grade was and I learned it from Norm.

In fact, to this day I know where there's streaks at Divide that would knock your socks off. But it belongs to somebody else. In fact, I found some stuff out there that even the old-timers had missed. I found some stuff they hit in a new road one time. I was doing some prospecting and I saw this high-grade. I recognized the ore 20 feet away. If you stop and look, you can see gold through it. I took out a few five-gallon buckets and covered it up and Norm and I milled it and got quite a bit out of it.

And in the pit when Everett Berg of Falcon Exploration mined Divide . . . he mined the Boss Mine out there by Millers also.

RM: Is there a mine at Millers?

BB: No, it's past Millers. Do you know where Black Rock is? They had a little heap leach operation right off the highway on the right. That was my property and I sold it to Berg. Anyway, they pitted gold there. There's a little pit at Divide right now and he put that in; they hauled the ore out there by Alkali, way out there in the flat, and they had a heap leach set up.

I was in the pit one day long after they were gone. I was walking along the pit and looked down and saw some high-grade silver that knocked my socks off. I couldn't believe it—it was just lying all over—it slid off of these pit walls. There was a piece of it right there in the bushes. It was specimen grade. Silver was worth about \$2.50 to \$3 at that time. I took some in to Norm and said, "What do you think of this?" and he almost died. I had pieces you could roll up like tinfoil, it was that pure.

RM: Was it native silver?

BB: No, it was cerargyrite, horn silver; it's a silver chloride. It will amalgamate. That and native silver are the only silvers that will amalgamate. I went out and filled a bunch of buckets and brought them in to him and told Norm, "Look at this."

He couldn't believe it. He said, "Where the hell did you get this?" I said Divide. He said, "I've never seen ore like this at Divide."

I said, "Come with me." I said, "Bring a bunch of buckets" (I had all my buckets full). We went out there and I think we took out 3,000 pounds that just slid off that we hand-picked. We actually got up on the pit wall and took some high-grade out of place, barred it down. We milled those 3,000 pounds and it was so rich our tailings still ran at 400-ounce and we were getting almost 90 percent recovery.

RM: Oh, my God!

BB: We re-ran our tailings three times until we got tired of packing them back up and running them through again. We got 1200 ounces of silver out of 3,000 pounds. We had so much concentrate that it would have taken us two years to amalgamate it.

There used to be a little refinery in Reno—it just closed down a few years ago—and I knew the guy that ran it. It was owned by Degussa, which was one of the three major refiners. Handy & Harmon, Engelhart, and Degussa were the three biggest ones in the country at that time. They financed this little thing. I knew the guy running it because I had taken stuff to him I found some high-grade carbon one time and got quite a few ounces of gold out of it.

We made a deal with him. We split it three ways because we had so much. He had 500-pound crucibles so he just dumped it all and poured it, and we all got 100-ounce bars. I kept one, Norm had one that I gave his kids. and we sold the rest to the guy at Degussa.

RM: Is there still good ore out there?

BB: Oh, there is. I know where there's gold out there. We're getting a little old now, whether you've noticed or not [laughter], but two guys could go out there and beat a living out of it very easily. I know two or three streaks like that out there.

RM: Norm took me out there one time and he showed me a wall and he said, "That's high-grade right there." I think it was silver.

BB: That's the one I found.

RM: I couldn't believe it.

BB: He couldn't believe it. He'd worked there but that silver was covered up and these guys went right through it.

RM: Was it a vein originally?

BB: Yes. It was going the opposite direction than all the other veins.

RM: Should Divide be open-pitted or would it ever be suitable for that?

BB: I don't think it will ever be suitable. They tried it and couldn't make it. There's an area there where the streaks are similar to Manhattan and they're ten to 20 feet apart and the stuff in between won't carry. It's all deeded land, too. A person could probably rip the hell out of it; a small guy could get a pretty good chunk of change out of this area where there are a number of high-grade streaks. A lot of people don't know what's there.

RM: It's deeded land? Why hasn't somebody developed it?

BB: They don't know where it is.

RM: Oh. Norm took me out there one time, around to the side of a hill, and it was just regular desert on the side of the hill leading up to it. He said, "There's gold right over there—see that rock there?" And I said, "Where?" And he said, "Right there. Right in front of us." We're in the pickup.

I said, "Where is it? I can't see it."

And he said, "Right there, goddamn

I said, "I can't see it."

And he said, "Well, what's the matter with you? You blind?" So he got out and he brought this rock back and said, "See? Look at the gold there."

And I said, "I can barely see it now." But he could see it from 15 feet away!

BB: We picked up a lot of gold out there. On the Murnane working, there was a later working that was a little fraction; it wasn't patented. Danny Murnane had it—his dad had shown it to him, a little high-grade streak. Somebody had drilled a pretty good drill hole right down the streak, trying to salt somebody years ago.

Norm and I were sniping on it, with Danny's permission—we milled quite a bit of it. Anyway, Danny got Roger Nicely out there, old Roger the Dodger. Roger filled it plumb full of powder because it was rich. He filled that hole plumb full of powder and blew that son of a bitch all over the side of the hill. That's probably where Norm took you. Norm and I spent one whole year off and on out there walking that hillside with five-gallon buckets. Norm and I could see it ten feet away: "There's a piece," and we'd go over and get it; you could pick it up and it

would be full of gold. I'll bet we took four or five tons out of there a piece at a time in five-gallon buckets.

RM: Is the hole still there?

BB: There's nothing; he blew it all out. You could hardly get a sample where the vein was. Danny did a lot of work there. They did a lot of drilling and sampling and I had equipment out there and we ripped it for him and everything. But Roger just shot it; it was probably a pocket more than anything—the vein kind of petered out. There's a little gold here and there, like there is everywhere out there.

I'll bet there isn't much left. I've been back since and tried to find a piece to show to somebody, and we didn't miss anything. We spent a year out there. Every once in a while we'd go out on a nice day and carry five-gallon buckets around and fill four or five of them. Then it got down to where we'd fill one or two, and then it got down to where we couldn't find any more. We took quite a bit of gold off that mountain, from the dumps and so forth.

RM: Isn't there a mine on toward Goldfield from Divide? Joe Clifford took me and my dad up there one time; it was a tunnel.

BB: Joe Clifford had one on the top of Divide—basically, you could see Goldfield. It was on the south side of Divide. Clifford had a little high-grade up there. He was working right by the old Seeley workings. In fact, I know where there's some high-grade underground out there, too. But when Berg went out and did all the drilling and mining, he covered up the portal of the tunnel. I know about where the tunnel is; I could probably dig it out. They put a raise to the top of the mountain from that tunnel. There are a lot of underground workings there, but they raised all the way to surface. You could possibly get a rope and go down but it would be a long ways down—a couple hundred feet, I think. I know about where the tunnel was; I could probably find it.

RM: Joe took us in there a long time ago. If you were advising someone that, "Okay, you could survive by mining out here," give me several areas where you would advise him to look.

BB: I could beat out a living at Divide, Manhattan, or Tonopah. Of course, the mining areas are guarded or owned by someone else.

RM: Do you know where there's good ore in Tonopah?

BB: Oh, yes—they're pillars. I sniped on some of the pillars on the surface for many years. I had a key to the gate when Echo Bay owned it. Tonopah had some of the richest ore in the world—argentite and some native silver; I've got some pieces that have native silver from deep. But on the surface, it was horn silver. It was oxidized; it was silver chloride. Tonopah averaged a 100-to-1 ratio—100 ounces of silver to an ounce of gold. On the surface, it was much richer in gold.

I could go up to the pillars right now and break rock and show you horn silver and you'd see visible gold in it—on the surface. I hauled quite a few buckets of stuff out of there. We found little bullshit piles by them, where the old-timers had stacked it.

But these are mainly pillars. You couldn't pull some of the pillars because Tonopah's hollow. If you fall, you fall 1,000 feet. But some of the pillars on the surface were awfully rich.

RM: But they didn't pull them because it would cave in? I don't understand how the pillar on the surface is holding the rock, holding the ground.

BB: Have you ever been up there and seen some of those stopes? They run for hundreds of feet, and you'll notice where you cross them. Those are the pillars I'm talking about. Some of them are richer than hell.

I also found some high-grade underground. I know where there's some high-grade in the Mizpah shaft, down on the 300-foot level. They actually hit a pocket of horn down there, which was very unusual for that depth. There was a spot down there that was really high-grade and we sneaked down there a couple of times.

And I sneaked down what they call the "Glory Hole" at the now "mining park," where the assay office caved in. I've been down there a number of times going through the stopes and I found some high-grade on a wall one time. You could see a little gold right in the horn—I've got chunks where you could see little specks of gold with the naked eye. As I said, that horn silver didn't usually go very deep; it turned into sulfide real fast.

RM: So, the solutions came off and they deposited the gold and the horn silver at the top—it didn't precipitate out until it got to the top?

BB: It oxidized on the surface over millions of years. It turned to horn silver by oxidation.

RM: But why did it have more gold in it?

BB: I don't know. I think it was just free gold on top. You couldn't see it where it was more complex and tied up with the sulfides; I actually think the surface was richer. Tonopah had a gold vein, high-grade gold, by the Silver Queen shaft amongst all that silver. I saw a piece a guy had one time the size of my fist and you could see three ounces of gold in it and very little silver.

RM: Where was the gold vein?

BB: Right by the shaft where Don Potts fell in—right underneath by that big sorting bin by the mining park. I looked around there a lot but I never could find anything. I sorted a dump but they pretty well cleaned it up. And the hill where the old courthouse is called "Gold Hill." There are little stringers on that with very little silver that run pretty good gold. They're not high-grade, there's no 100-to-1 ratio. If there was, it would be 100-to-1 gold against silver because it was major gold with very little silver assay.

RM: When you were kids, did you go down in the mines and explore?

BB: Yes, all over. We could go up behind the old firehouse in Tonopah. I lived up on Mizpah Hill and we'd go down the stope behind the old firehouse and go underground all the way and come out right next to my house through another stope. There used to be ladders everywhere. We used to pack tables and chairs and mattresses. We'd have forts 100 feet deep in some of those stopes or we'd use little stations down there to get out of the weather. RM: Was it dangerous for you kids?

BB: I'm sure it was but we never thought about it.

RM: How did you get down?

BB: There were a lot of ladders. And there were some places like the one right behind where Cody lives where you could actually walk down the stope. It was kind of caved; you could actually walk right into the end of it and manage to find your way down.

RM: And you knew the passages then?

BB: Oh, sure. We'd get lost and get scared to death once in a while, but you could always get out. We hardly ever went anyplace where you would need a light. We were going by surface light most of the time in some of those stopes.

RM: Did you guys ever do all-nighters down in your play area in the mines?

BB: Oh, yes. Our families knew that we were going to spend the night. My step-dad went down with me one time to make sure it was safe. I don't know if I was even a teenager yet.

RM: Was it dusty?

BB: No, the only dust was whatever we would make. Right at the shaft Potts fell into with that loader that time, where it caved in, there used to be a major ladder. We had a hell of a fort there; all us kids hung out in it. We had tables and chairs we lowered down about 100 feet on ropes.

RM: Was that a major play area for you kids, would you say?

BB: It was for some of us. I'd do it and the Metschers would.

RM: Were any of the Metschers the same age as you?

BB: Yes, Philip was in my class. Allan was behind me and Bill was ahead of me. We were all right there; Philip and I grew up together.

RM: Were you and the Metschers interested in mining?

BB: Not in those days. It was a place to play. We were just kids. I mean, our trails to school used to go right across those stopes. I remember we jumped some of those stopes because I lived on Mizpah Hill. I've been up there since and I won't even crawl on my hands and knees to look down the stope [laughter]. and our trails used to go right there, then start again on the other side. We jumped some of those narrower stopes. I went up there quite a few years ago and looked at that and I thought, "My good God!" I would hardly even get up to the edge and look in and we would get out there and run and jump them! We were just "no brain, no pain."

RM: Were there any burros in town when you were growing up?

BB: There were a few hanging around. There used to be an Indian kid named Gordy Roy. He always had some burros and mustangs he took care of Everybody was scared to death of him, but he was a neat guy. He kind of lived in a dugout by the Victor Mine. The horses were pretty good to him; they'd follow him around but they were still wild.

I remember we were up at a mine one time. I had a shop up there; I guess it's the mining park now. Roger Nicely's dad owned all of that at one time and he let me use that shop. When I was 16 years old I was working on cars and Roger let me use this old warehouse for a shop. I had it all fixed up and had a key to the gate of the Desert Queen.

I remember a bunch of us kids were up there one time and we were full of beer and half drunk. Here came Gordy Roy's old mustangs wandering around the hill. I was on the roof fixing a leak or something and all the guys were watching and they said "Hey, Bob, the mustang's right underneath you."

I said "Watch this" and I jumped off the roof like a wild Indian, jumped on this mustang, grabbed him around the neck and I was going to show these guys how I was going to break this mustang. I don't know what the hell I was thinking because I was afraid of horses. This sucker took off toward the end of that mine dump—it must have been 100 feet off that dump. He got to the end and stopped and I didn't. I skidded down and there wasn't a piece of hide left on me. He threw me down that dump. Just stupid stuff; you learn the hard way.

RM: Did you try to tame any of the burros?

BB: No. After that, I never messed with them at all. I just remember there were some around there.

CHAPTER FOUR

RM: Were you ever down in the Victor Mine? It was pretty deep, wasn't it?

BB: No, I never went down the Victor. Yes, it was pretty deep. The deepest mine, the Merger, was off the Victor. It is about 2300 feet. I've got a map of all the mine depths. That mine never actually came to the surface. They never hoisted to the surface because it was such bad ground they couldn't hold it. They took quite a bit of ore out of there. It's down there right next to the Rebel Oil bulk plant. There was a small dump there that was really rich because they had such high-grade. They went down almost 2400 feet with the sump, but all of it was hoisted out of the Victor. A lot of the mines all contracted and hauled out of each other; they had passages and they hauled out the other mines.

RM: Was there lot of ore down in the Merger?

BB: I don't know how much ore was there but it was really rich. I was involved in the dump-sampling program there with Houston Oil; I put all the roads on the dumps and did the backhoe work. We bulk-sampled all those dumps. They milled a lot of it out here in Manhattan. And I've got the books over there. I have all the assay maps. I have all of Tonopah there.

RM: I've heard there was a lot of heat down in Victor. The deeper they went, the hotter it got. The water was hot. Is that right?

BB: Yes. In fact, I have a map somewhere showing a planned company town at the Victor with their own stores, barber shop, etc. They did put in a swimming pool; I remember swimming in it when I was real young.

The hottest mine was the Halifax. In fact, there was drilling done out there where they hit hot water. There's some pretty hot water out by the horse corrals in Tonopah. Louie told me when he was a kid he worked at the Halifax and Mexicans were about the only ones who could handle the heat underground. You could work an hour or so and they had to bring you out. They had drums of cold water and they'd dunk you in one of the drums because you had to get your body temperature back down, then they'd send you back in, in wet clothes to work for another hour. He said you could touch a wall and you could hardly hold your hand on it. And they were pumping hot water steadily. But there's some hot water out there—somebody ought to look into that.

RM: Yes, it seems like it could be a geothermal site.

BB: I was involved in the drill hole for Houston Oil or Tenneco, I'm not sure which. I built a drill pad for them right there at the horse corrals. They hit so much hot water they had to shut the thing down because they couldn't keep their hole; it kept washing out. I don't know how hot it was but I know that it was so hot that Louie told me he and his brother couldn't work in that mine. They couldn't handle it and they finally quit.

RM: They didn't get down that deep, did they?

BB: I don't remember how deep the Halifax was; it's probably on my map.

RM: I wonder if other mines had gone deeper if they'd have hit heat.

BB: I don't know; the Halifax is the only one I ever heard of that was hot. You're over the slope, over the ridge, so that might be a different fault. You're getting out of the valley where the horse corrals are. Maybe they didn't encounter it on the other side of the summit or maybe it's just because of the elevation differences.

We were talking about Norm a while ago and I remembered a couple of stories about him. An old-timer there (it seemed like it was Johnny Babiar but it may not have been) used to go to him when he was down and out and he'd say, "Norm, can you buy me some groceries? I'm kind of having a hard time right now. Would you give me some money for grub?"

And you knew Norm as well as I did. Norm said, "No, I won't give you no money. You'll go up and buy booze or something with it. So, I'll tell you what. I'll take you to the grocery store." And the guy mumbled and grumbled and Norm took him to the grocery store. He picked out all the groceries, grumbling all the way—all these canned goods and stuff. Norm said, "Here, this is good. Get this." Stuff like flour and stuff. "Get some beans." The guy would grumble and he wouldn't hardly even tell Norm thank you because he didn't like the idea of Norm being there to pay for it; he wanted the money to do it himself.

Norm did this for this old guy three or four times. Norm was up there one day shopping by himself and the gal said, "Where's your partner today?"

"Oh, I don't know. I haven't seen him in a couple of weeks. I guess he's doing all right."

She said, "You know, I don't know how you put up with that?"

And he said, "What do you mean?"

She said, "You buy him all those groceries and an hour later he brings them all back for a refund. Takes the money and goes to buy some booze."

Norm never said a word. The guy came to him about a month later and said, "Norm, I'm kind of having problems. Could you go shopping with me again? I'll pay you back" (he never did).

Norm said, "Not a problem." Norm was sharp—you didn't want to mess with him because he could bury you. Norm took him shopping and they bought all these groceries and the gal ran them through the scanner, got them all checked out, and Norm took him out to the car and opened the bags and tore the labels off all the cans.

And the guy said, "What are you doing? How will I know what I'm going to be eating?"

Norm said, "It doesn't matter. It's all food. Whatever you open, it will be like a surprise every night." And the guy never came back [Laughter].

RM: That's a great story.

BB: Another time, Norm had a renter out in Round Mountain in one of his rental houses; his name was Kenny. He was a good guy but he drank too much. He was really bad, in jail half the

time. Lost a job in the mine two or three times and they felt sorry for him and hired him back. Things have changed now; you'd never get back.

But Kenny got in trouble. He picked up this gal and got dabbling with drugs and smoking pot and drinking. He got to where he was late with the rent, and old Norm was kind of riding him, but he was a nice guy and Norm felt sorry for him. Norm's always been dumb to kind animals, you know?

I was there one day and Kenny came in and you could see he'd had a bad night. His pupils were way too big—probably smoked a joint on the way in. Norm shook his head and said, "What, you can't pay me again?"

He said, "I'm only \$10 short this time. I'll pay you next week or next time."

Norm says, "Kenny, what the hell's the matter with you? You look like shit." "I had a rough night."

Norm said, "I can smell the goddamn grass on you. Why don't you stop that shit? You're a hell of a talent. You're wasting yourself. Tell me, why the hell do you take drugs anyway?"

And the guy told Norm, "Because it enhances your personality."

And Norm says, "Well, what if you were an asshole to begin with?" [Laughter]

He was sharp; on the spur of the moment, he could think like that. I'll never forget old Kenny—his mouth dropped open.

RM: That's funny. Did you know Bob Wilson?

BB: Oh, yes. Very well. He was a character—I grew up with characters. I liked Bob. He tried to put in that mine in South Twin for so many years and the Forest Service fought him and the environmentalists would make the Forest Service fight him. The Forest Service are under the thumb of the Sierra Club and all those groups, that's their problem. Every time they do something good for the miner, they get sued. There are probably a thousand lawsuits pending against the Forest Service right now because of Sierra Club and the different environmental agencies. Bob couldn't keep track of what was going on—he was up there trying to get permits and the Sierra Club would put on all this pressure.

So he joined the Sierra Club. They didn't have a clue who he was. They took his money and he got all these bulletins, like: "Tomorrow we're going to have a big rally at the mouth of the Twin Rivers to stop this man." So Bob would cancel whatever he was going to be doing. They'd have a big thing where they were going to block the road because he was supposed to meet with the Forest Service or something so he'd call the Forest Service and cancel out at the last minute. The Sierra Club people would all show up and nobody would be there. Bob was a character. I never saw a Joe McGee-type guy like him in my life. All his equipment was pieced-together junk. You'd look at his old truck and you couldn't even figure out what brand it was. It had a Chevy fender and a Ford hood. . . .

He had a little tungsten mill in Ophir Canyon. He had a Model A with no body on it. The body and front end were gone and the motor, transmission, and rear end were there. He had that thing jacked up on blocks. The rubber tires and rear wheels on the Model A were touching the flywheels on his crusher and that's what turned it. He'd start it and put it in gear and the

wheels would sit there and spin. The tires would start smoking on that thing and pretty soon the flywheels would start turning.

RM: Would describe him as kind of a mechanical genius?

BB: Yes, he was. He came up to the mill one time when we were milling at Orizaba. We had this three-horse little bitty Briggs and Stratton running our table on the shaft; we had a pulley that ran the belt that ran the table. He looked at that and looked at that and I said, "What's the matter?"

He said, "Look how long that shaft is" (it stuck out about an inch past the pulley).

I said, "What's wrong with that?"

He said, "There's room for another pulley."

I said, "Well, we don't need another pulley."

He said, "I'd put a pulley on there, put it on a generator and put some 12-volt lights in here." [Laughter]

If I put an old car generator on it, "Hell, it'd probably pull down the table." He was that kind of guy. He was a character.

RM: Were you ever up to his mine at Twin?

BB: Yes, I've been there.

RM: Was it a good mine?

BB: I don't think it was free gold. It was a sulfide ore; it was a real complex thing and it was caved in. There was some awful high-grade stuff on the dump, but it wasn't free gold. But it's in the mining books; there was supposed to have been some pretty good stuff, a mineable vein with 2.5 ounce gold or something underground.

He was always wanting to get into that but he couldn't take any equipment up there to do anything. Even though he wanted to mine underground, you still have to have compressors and all of that stuff. All he wanted to do was put a road in so he could get the compressors and stuff there up there. He worked on that until the day he died; he didn't give a damn how complex it was.

RM: So he couldn't see the ore in place.

BB: There was still pretty good ore there according to old underground assay maps and old-timers' stories. As I said, the dumps were millable. There was some good stuff even though it was complex, but there was no way to get it out of the canyon, and there was stuff on the surface you could probably do pretty well on. If it had been free gold, I'd have gotten excited, too.

RM: Do people tend to fall in love with their mine or their prospect? You know, like your child—My child is more beautiful than the other kids. Do they see in it what is not really there?

BB: Yes, you do. You kind of jack it up. That's the mining business, you know. "Promoter" is a dirty word, but if you're in the mining business, you are a promoter of some sort if you're trying to sell a property. I was partners with Pete Joralemon, who, like I said, was a mining engineer and a geologist, really a sharp, good guy—he taught classes at Stanford. We drank a lot together. He was a common-sense guy.

But we had a property together and we made a report on it to turn over to a major mining company. By the time we finished with that report, we'd jacked this up a little and jacked that up a little. When it was all done, he said, "Read this over, Bob. What do you think?" I read the report and I looked at him and said, "Jesus Christ, this is too good to sell. [Laughter] We can't sell this. We're rich!"

But I enjoyed mining. John Tyson from KOLO TV News in Reno, ABC, came up. Dick Carver was helping me down at the Manhattan Gulch one time and John Tyson came down to do a little thing on the gulch. on the Last of the Mohicans—the only one-man mine that he knew of. He had nothing but trouble; his camera broke down and we had batteries taped on it with duct tape, a \$40,000-plus camera. He brought the satellite truck down once; it broke down. It took three days to do a 30-minute thing but he finally got it done. (This was around the time that Dick Carver, myself, and a number of other Smoky Valley residents made the cover of Time Magazine concerning the Forest Service closure of the Jefferson Canyon road.)

He gives talks all around and he brings me up in every one of his speeches. He tells them, "I know a guy, an old-timer" (which pisses me off). He did a tape on me and it was on the news. You can hear him laughing in the background—he said, "Bob, do you have any problem down here with claim jumpers?"

And I told him, "Not really. There are two actions you can take against them." He said, "What do you do?"

I said, "Well, there's two actions: you can take legal action or lever action. And I don't like attorneys." [Laughter]

And he tells that story at every speech he gives. Two weeks ago our local water master went to a big water exposition and water rights meeting. He said, "John Tyson mentioned your name again." John tells that story at every one of his talks.

RM: That's a good story. Speaking of being obsessed about a mine, what is it about the human mind where some people see more in their mind than is really there?

BB: I don't know. I've seen some cases where there was absolutely nothing in the mine. But you've got to watch it; sometimes you'll figure a guy was nuts but you go back up on top of the mountain and there's a monster vein up there, a high-grade thing running down. You tunnel and crosscut to get to it and in a lot of cases you never do. I know of two different cases where a guy drove like that and didn't hit it—either it cut off or it wasn't there or it faulted or something.

But you talk about why does a guy do this? I'm sure you've heard the about the old blind miner in Goldfield. They're probably all gone now, but when I used to hang around over there years ago there were a whole bunch of stakes in the ground with a wire that ran all the way out of town for a mile or so. I asked a guy, "What is that all about?" The answer was a blind miner

went out there and sunk a shaft. He followed that wire when he walked from town. He claimed he could taste the gold. It's sounds far-fetched, but if you're familiar with Goldfield ore, you can taste it. It is awful. Most Goldfield ore is tied up in a telluride. It's different types of telluride like a famatinite, which is antimonial telluride. It has everything in it—bismuthinite, pyrite, and everything. Their high-grade is the awfulest-looking stuff with bands of gold in it—black and green, some of it. The gold itself is free, but the ore it's in is awful. And when you're sitting on the dump, you can smell the sulfides and stuff.

And if you lick it to clean it to see the gold in it, it's full of alum. So the old blind guy may have had something. You can give me a regular piece of gravel and a piece of Goldfield high-grade and if I put both in my mouth, I could probably tell the Goldfield with my eyes closed.

RM: How can a guy mine blind?

BB: I don't know how he did it. I have heard this same story from two or three different old-timers. I don't think the guy ever hit anything; I don't think he ever had any ore. But you talk about a guy that's dedicated to mining, well, there it is.

What I like about Manhattan here is the fact that we can go out right now and within five minutes, I can find gold right in the middle of town, up by this bank, or in almost any one of these hills.

RM: Could you set up a pan mine on any of these spots?

BB: Probably not. It's just stuff the old-timers missed, mainly at the dumps. That's not economical in some of the draws; there's gold there but it's not economical. Most of the high-grade's all been found. I used to be able to sit on the dumps and find jewelry rock but since they invented metal detectors, people have scoured them and it's really tough.

Right now, my partner is probably down at the gulch metal-detecting. He spent a couple years doing metal-detecting and he's got a little gold. He found a little thing underground here a while back. He got a little reading and it didn't sound like much so we went underground. We stuck the detector back in there and it got a little louder, a little louder, a little louder. We dug, probably, six inches deep into the rock and took out about six ounces of gold. I have a piece of it here; the old-timers missed it. It was super-fine gold, almost impossible to see. But they didn't have metal detectors.

This is it—that's all gold. If you turn it around, you can see it on the other side. It kind of looks like baby poop; my partner calls it "baby poop." That's all gold and we took six ounces out of probably five pounds of it.

RM: It looks like limestone?

BB: Yes, it's limestone with a small quartz vein. It was just a pocket; we pretty well worked it all out. That's how this gold is—it just makes in pockets. God knows how many of these are still lying around. We've been underground a lot of places here and this was a pretty good one; we had a lot of fun. We beat our brains out down there. Packed a ladder underground and I got up on a six-foot ladder with a bar and a chisel and we laughed and I beaned him with a few rocks

and I almost fell down a stope a couple of times. We probably spent an hour and a half getting six ounces. You have days like that and you have days when you look forever and you don't find anything.

RM: When did you move to Manhattan?

BB: I was working out here in the '70s when Summa first came in and picked up all these mines. I was doing some contracting work; I had a little loader. I knew the guy in charge of the mine and he put me to work. I worked in other places too, but I worked out here on weekends and whatever, just helping him out. And he would help me out, too. I worked out here probably through the '70s and '80s for the mines. Summa sold out to Houston Oil and I did some contracting for them, and then they sold it to Tenneco and I did a little work for them. Then they sold to Echo Bay and then it became Round Mountain Gold and I've done work right on up to the end of the reclamation for them. I didn't buy a place out here until after I was finished driving back and forth every damn day.

When the job was over, then I bought a place. In fact, the mine manager, Bill Dickey, and I went together and picked up two little cabins—he took one and I took one. Then they shipped him to South America so I ended up buying him out and fixing them both up. I bought the house here in the '80s.

RM: Did the house have a history?

BB: No, an old-timer had it; the Swanson family. Old Jack Swanson worked the mines here; in fact, he put me on some high-grade placer down here. But I still lived in Tonopah; I still have a place there.

In the early '90s, I got working pretty steady on this placer down here. We had a halfway decent winter and I decided to stay and work during the winter instead of driving back and forth. My wife used to come out on weekends and I stayed here that one winter and almost froze to death because the house had only one-inch walls, it was just one-inch board and batting. When the wind blew, the wall moved. I could see through the cracks.

I decided to remodel the house while my wife was in Tonopah. I didn't even tell her what I was doing and I wouldn't let her come out until it was finished. I logged it and remodeled the whole thing with the help of a guy who was working with me mining—his name was Gary Robb. She came out and I haven't been able to get rid of her since. [Laughter] She just fell in love with the place.

RM: How would you describe life in Manhattan?

BB: It's good. It's like any other small town—everybody knows everybody's business and sometimes that's bad. You make enemies. We've got some dick-heads here now but that's my fault; I'm the one who brought them in here and sold property to them. I picked up a lot of property when I was working here; I worked with people and then ended up horse-trading with them and wound up with a little bit of ground. I developed some of the ground and put houses on it, developed and sold lots with full utilities.

I enjoy it. I mean, your worst enemy here is the guy you get in a fight with. You don't even talk to him. And that's tough because a small town with only two bars, sometimes you're feuding with one of the bartenders so you don't go in there for a while. You might get mad and won't talk to somebody but yet if you fall down, break your leg or get hurt, that person's the first one there to pick you up and help you. Hatred's only skin deep, so to speak. It's a good place. People will help each other but there are some people here, like you'd have in any place, that you have problems with.

Our biggest problem is a lot of the newcomers are from California or someplace and they come in here and, "Well, this ain't how we did it in California. I want sidewalks and streetlights and curbs and gutters."

I say, "Hey, pack it up." [Laughter]

RM: Do you want to say a little bit about your wife and when you married her and so on? BB: Her maiden name is Sharon Templeton. We got married in '63 so that's 45 years. We have a son in his 40s. His name is Bob. He's not really a junior, either. Some people call him Junior, but he's got a different middle name.

RM: And where does he live?

BB: He lives in Tonopah. He's the camp supervisor out here at the conservation camp. They're talking about closing it down in July.

RM: That's what I heard. That's too bad.

BB: Yes, it's bad. It's a dirty shame. It's the prison system that wants to close it down. There are two entities out there in these camps. It's run partially by the state prison; they're in charge of the inmates. And then the Nevada Division of Forestry have the setup and they take the prisoners and work them and teach them to fight fires. They go out on fires.

And in my son's case, they make money—they contract to the county, to the state, to the highway department, to the mines I've gotten them over \$100,000 worth of grants myself in the last three years on firebreaks with government money and the Nevada Fire Safe Council. My son always turns in more money than his budget and it goes into the state's general fund; it doesn't go into the prison system. The Nevada Division of Forestry isn't the one that's hurting; it's the Nevada State Prison System that's hurting and has to take the 14 percent cut. So we're fighting like hell. We've got all the commissioners fighting. I've been to meetings in Reno and so forth—I just went to a big fire summit up there with people from all over the Western states. We're going to flood the governor with phone calls. We've got a lot of people working on it.

It's looking a little better right at the moment because even though it's still on paper that they're going to close it, 18 of the supervisors will be going down the tube and I think two of them are camp supervisors and the other 16 are crew supervisors, the workers that take the crews out on the fires. Out of the 18 of them, 14 of them have been there for so many years that, according to state law, if they shut the operation down and lay them off, they have to buy

out their retirement. They're looking at about \$700,000 because they've been there for so many years so they're taking a second look. Hopefully, they can keep going.

RM: Did your wife grow up in Tonopah?

BB: She traveled all over. She was born in Marshall, Missouri. Her mother, Edna, left her dad long ago and married another guy, Russel Mahoney, a musician. He played with some of the major bands. You know the song "You got the money, honey. I got the time," that Lefty Frizzell made? Lefty stole it from him. He wrote it and sang it with Lefty. But he was kind of a tramp musician, like a lot of musicians are. He worked in mining camps and they ended up in Tonopah and she went to school in Tonopah. I met her there. I was 21 when we got married.

RM: You worked at the Kelly garage?

BB: Yes, I worked for Steve Balliet for a few years there in the early '60s and then he sold out to a couple of Californians. One guy I liked but I didn't want to work for one of them because I didn't like him. They offered me quite a bit because I did have a good reputation as a mechanic and I had all the contacts; I knew everybody. They wanted me to stay and they paid me ten times more than I was worth. I just stayed for one year to break them in. Balliet paid me under the table. He said, "I'll pay you also if you stick it out for one year with these guys because they've got to have you or I'll get it back." So I stayed there and worked for those guys a few years.

RM: I bet you worked on my car there—that's where I always took it.

BB: I probably did. I remember working on your dad's car. Then later I leased the garage. The guys split the partnership. Like I said, one guy was a dick-head and one was nice. I had so much business—I had all the state stuff and things like the power company and the phone company. I had the car dealerships around the state; there was a Ford garage in Tonopah but I could do Dodge warranty work and Chevrolet warranty work because I knew some of the dealers where I bought parts.

I got so busy I had to have help so I took on a partner, Lamont Jensen. When he came in at first, he just went to work for me and then we became full partners. Partnerships can be a bad deal but I had probably the best partner anybody could have—he was so good, so nice, so honest. When I would screw up, I'd throw tantrums. Even when I was wrong he would say I was right. He is a great guy; he's back in Tonopah again.

But I'd been there so long I'd gotten bitter, working for the public. I gave all my friends discounts and did the work for half of them for nothing and they're the ones who stiffed me. The general person didn't; it was always my friends who stiffed me, people I grew up with. I finally got to the point where either I got out or I had to kill somebody and go to prison. So I turned around and took half of the money we had. I gave him half the money and most all of the tools we'd bought. (I kept my hand tools and gave him everything else.) I just walked out the door. He didn't make it for too awful long; I don't remember how he got out of it or what happened.

I bought a little loader and started doing a lot of work and got in the mining business real heavy then. Even while I was in the Kelly Garage I was making more money in mining. RM: It seems like that you've had an advantage in the mining business because you're also mechanically skilled. You can fix things

BB: Yes, you have to be able to do a little bit of everything in this country if you want to survive. And I can.

RM: My dad could fix a little one-cylinder engine or something like that but he couldn't repair a lot of the equipment. How was Norman for fixing things?

BB: Well, by the time I got out to Orizaba to help him with the mill, he finally asked for help because he didn't know how to weld (he never liked to ask for help). That mill was all put together with sheet metal where you should have had good iron chutes. It was all sheet metal with bent-over nails, clinched nails, and screws. Because he couldn't weld, everything was bolted together. He made things out of wood and tin because he was good with wood and tin.

My plant down there is just built out of pieces and parts. A lot of that stuff came out of grocery stores in Tonopah. My feed belt came out of a grocery store in Tonopah and my action on my sluice box is part of a bowling alleys pin-setter. I built it out of scratch and it works better than any factory one I've ever seen. I've had to do a lot of repairs because I learn the hard way.

But I can do most anything; I'm a pretty good electrician. I do all my own electrical work on all these houses I build. I do my own welding, my own mechanics, my own plumbing, my own electrical work. When I went to the Yukon to put together that plant for that outfit, those people up there, thought I was somebody special. They said, "Well, we got to get an electrician."

And I said, "I can do that," and I did all the electrical.

They said, "Well, we got to hire some welders."

I said, "I'll do that."

Then the loader would break down. "We got to get a mechanic."

I said, "I'll fix that."

They couldn't believe it because everybody up there was an artist at what they did. We had loader operators that were unbelievable—I have to think that our crew was the best in the world. We had loader operators, we had scraper operators, a kid that could pick up a dime without getting any dirt in the bucket at 40 miles an hour in a scraper. He was building roads with the scraper that I wouldn't think you could build with a Cat. But the scraper operator didn't know how to start the loader. We had a Cat skinner that was an artist that didn't know how to shift a four-speed truck because his pickup was an automatic. Everybody up there specialized; it was amazing. These guys were artists but they couldn't get off of one piece of equipment and go over to run another one because they didn't have a clue even how to start it.

RM: Could we say that the miners of Central Nevada, the ones that really hung in there, were not specialized?

BB: Not really. Norm was pretty well specialized; he just wasn't good at mechanics and couldn't weld, but he built that whole mill out of used stuff He never bought anything; he was very

frugal. Even the nails—when he'd tear down a building, he saved every nail and he straightened every nail. He had five-gallon buckets of nails at his place, all used, and he used them over again. These old-timers clenched every nail. He spent days and days working to save a piece of wood, straighten the nails and reuse it and built that mill.

He did it the way the old-timers did: the nails are on two-inched centers and all clenched. You look at that ceiling up there, it's a wonder it didn't cave in for the weight of the nails. But yet, he was smart as a tack. He built his feed chute out of pieces of tin and 2x4s and his feeder was a bicycle sprocket and a bicycle chain that he rigged up a deal that he made his own eccentric. His feeder was the neatest thing you ever saw. But he couldn't weld—he would have Bob Wilson or Skook Berg or me weld something for him.

RM: My dad learned welding and pretty soon, out at Reveille, he wanted to weld everything.

BB: Well, look at Bob Wilson. He built a plant and made tungsten concentrates and stuff And he had generators hooked to everything. There'd be little 12-volt generators running a light bulb here and a light bulb there. Everything was jury-rigged, dangerous and scary, but it worked. And nobody worked for him so he didn't have to worry about any safety things—he knew when to duck and when to jump.

Only the big mines can afford to hire somebody special to do different things. Like my little plant—it wouldn't be there if I'd had to hire a plumber to do the plumbing or a welder or an engineer, or hire an electrician to do all my wiring. I did it all myself I pull my own wells when they break down, put my own pumps back in the ground.

RM: Is it a general principle that the miners who survived or are still around did have those skills?

BB: Yes. There's only one other guy around like me that I know of, a close friend of mine, Charlie Brady. He's so nice; people take advantage of him because he can't hear. They mess with him Somebody would go down there and help him and rob him blind. But he's one of the greatest guys I've ever known. He's got a little placer thing down in Lida. He's older than I am, I think. He lives by himself out there. My equipment's rough but it works; his is worse but it works.

RM: And he knows how to fix it.

BB: Yes. I saw an old truck there one time, no fenders and everything, and I thought, -Jeez, I wonder how long that thing's been abandoned." He went over and fired it up and took off in it. [Laughter] But he's poor-boying it. He's not making a living at it; he's on Social Security, but he's making a little gold. He's pretty sharp. He built some riprap rock walls ten to 12 feet high for his gravity plant and the rocks are stacked like the finest rock mason you've ever seen, like some of the old mill foundations. I asked him, "Was this an old mill here?"

"No, I did that." And he's got a little welder. He's got no power so he runs a generator and does his own welding and everything

RM: So there's you, Bobby Revert in Beatty, and this guy in Lida who are actually still finding gold on an ongoing basis. Is there anybody else?

BB: I don't know anybody else. Some of the guys with metal detectors, but almost anybody can do that.

CHAPTER FIVE

RM: How does the small producer here dispose of his gold?

BB: There are normally gold buyers. There used to be a lot of them. When Norm and I were running a mill, we wouldn't make much—an ounce here, ounce there, two ounces here. We had four or five buyers coming through the country every once in a while and they'd buy anything we had. Those people are gone. You can sell some very special specimen stuff now to certain people but it's hard anymore, other than to ship it to a refiner.

RM: Doesn't it scare you to ship your gold? They might claim they got five ounces and you sent them ten.

BB: That's right—they screw you to death. They get first count. You can contest them but what do you do? You might make \$100 but have to hire a \$1,000-lawyer, and they're too far away for lever action!

RM: What kind of a discount do they give you for the raw gold?

BB: They just charge normally. It doesn't matter if it's raw gold or bullion. I used to ship raw gold to them, but that was kind of tough because it wasn't 100 percent clean. I'd send them 100 ounces and they would say there were still three ounces of black sand in there whereas I knew better. But you can't argue. So the best thing to do it is melt it, which most people can't do. I melt mine right down into dore bullion.

RM: The dore is a bullion that comes off of the mercury?

BB: Dore is not refined. That is your gold after you melt it and pour into pure gold. It's dore because it's not refined into 99.9. Mine is like 730 fine and the rest is silver (73 percent gold and 27 percent silver).

RM: The buyer checks to determine the fineness of it and pays you on that basis? How does he check that—by weight or by assay?

BB: By assay.

RM: And that costs money, doesn't it?

BB: Yes, but I've got a couple of buyers who trust me; they know I'm honest. They go by what I say—if I tell them this is the fineness and I can prove it because I used to ship to Engelhart and I had the fineness reports, or I'll give them a little piece and they can test it and then they pay me.

RM: Can you make 99.9?

BB: Oh, you could if you wanted. I just pour it in a dore My placer actually will average about 730 fine and the rest is silver. A lot of your gold will have different base metal, like silvers, coppers. Mine is silver. If it's 75 percent gold, for instance, it would be 25 percent silver.

RM: And then they pay you on that discount.

BB: What I usually do is just charge them for the gold and give them the silver. Here is some of the stuff I poured. That's dore. There's a piece. And here's the rough stuff There's the clean nugget. You get paid special for the nuggets.

RM: What do the nuggets go for per ounce?

BB: It depends. If they're really good, jewelry grade, you can get two to three times the price of gold. [Showing a specimen] Crystalline gold. But it traveled two miles down the canyon, it rolled and tumbled.

RM: But it's like it's a layer on this rock.

BB: Yes, it's been smeared on the rock and some of it's right in the rock. Most all your big stuff is half-breed. There was a vein right there.

RM: That is beautiful.

BB: It came right out of the vein. And here's one—I found it years ago; it was in my reject pile.

RM: Now, how many ounces of actual gold are in this piece of rock?

BB: I think that thing weighed about three ounces. You could argue with people about how much gold is in a piece of rock, but I tell them to go out and find a piece of gravel the same size and weigh it; it won't weigh much. If this thing weighs three ounces, probably three quarters of it is gold, just going by the weight of it.

RM: So was this a piece of rock where gold was all in layers?

BB: Yes, it just rolled all the way down. It could have been just a mass of veins. I got this one out of my rejects. A metal detector found this one; you see very little gold but I knew by the weight that it would be all gold on the inside. I sawed it and you can see crystals. You can see the dendritic gold—it's just a mass of gold crystals on the inside.

RM: Could you polish this?

BB: Manhattan gold doesn't polish real good; the rock will polish beautiful and the gold will still be in there but the rock shows up more than the gold; the rock outshines the gold. Now, that's

500-fine. That's some of Bobby Revert's dore. Put that against mine and you can see the difference in fineness.

RM: It looks like it's got more silver in it.

BB: It does; it's 500-fine and mine is 730-fine.

RM: How many ounces would be in this?

BB: I don't remember; I could weigh it. I remember what that one weighed. I think this one was five ounces. I've got all different sizes and shapes of bars—it depends on how I pour them. A lot of these I just melt down with a torch and cupels. Some I pour, some I just melt with a torch, like that one.

RM: Then you will send it to a company?

BB: Yes, I will send it to a refiner and they'll buy it or whatever.

RM: It sounds like you're one of the last people to actually produce and sell gold. Bobby Revert does it almost as a hobby and it sounds like your friend at Lida isn't producing that much.

BB: I've got so much going on I don't have the time. This year, I was too busy building the houses up here. I actually went down and mined for about three weeks off and on, a few hours here, a few hours there, a half a day here. I stripped too big of an area. I thought it might all be ore and after I got down to it, two-thirds of it was worked out. The old-timers got it all from underground. I didn't have half the ore I was expecting so I just took out what little bit I had and ran it and I only had enough to run 15 days. I got these bars in 15 days.

RM: So they had sunk a shaft and drifted in on it and when you got down to it, you found the drift. What a disappointment.

BB: Yes, but that's normal. The year before, I was in the same area. Two years ago was the first time I had ever mined and not hit old workings so I was hoping that it was all going to be ore, but those old guys beat me to it.

RM: What percentage of bedrock down there do you think they covered?

BB: Oh, my good God. Underground? You had the underground and then you had the dredge that took most everything. What we're working are the benches that the dredge didn't get to. We're working all the virgin ground where the dredge didn't go; but that didn't mean the old-timers didn't tunnel under it.

RM: So the benches are above where the dredge was working?

BB: Some were on the same level. The dredge made one pass up the gulch. They were swinging it back and forth, trying to get everything, when World War II broke out. They took all the able-bodied men off the dredge and left all the people down there who were unable to fight for one reason or another to keep the dredge going and they wouldn't allow them to swing it anymore. They made them go straight up the gulch so we had benches on both sides that were untouched, all virgin ground. They wouldn't let them swing the dredge because it was electric and they were afraid they'd hit the dead men cables or hit the power line because it ran underwater. They had a tender who watched it constantly.

The dredge's plan was to make three passes at bare minimum. They were going to go up, then go down one side, come up the other and possibly go down the gut again. You see, the big old buckets concentrated. The bottom five feet of the country that they ran is probably richer now than it was when they came in.

RM: How did they concentrate it?

BB: It was just those big old buckets, rolling under water like that. They're overflowing all the time, churning up the stuff So all the gold alongside the buckets is concentrated.

RM: But they just came up one side and never went down the other side?

BB: No, they ate up so much bedrock on their way up that they couldn't hold their pond anymore. They were losing way too much water; they couldn't keep the boat afloat. So that was the end of it. They dismantled it and took it to Battle Mountain. They ran Battle Mountain a little while, I think, and then they dismantled it again and took it to South America.

RM: Have you had anything to do with turquoise?

BB: I dabbled in turquoise one time a little bit, did a little digging on a property I had. I kind of got burned out on it. If I wasn't mining gold, that's what I'd go after because it's a poor man's, a simple man's, gold mine—you've got the finished product, something that's marketable, almost at the end of the day.

I bought an old two-story house from Lee Hand in Tonopah; he lived across the street from me. Any major turquoise book will mention Lee Hand. He was at one time considered the "Father of Turquoise." He owned almost every turquoise mine in the state of Nevada. He was a promoter and a miner. I've got his cutting outfit right now in Tonopah.

Anyway, I bought his old house after he had died and the whole back yard was solid turquoise. He'd cut it and if he'd break a stone he'd throw it out the window. I made a lot of money off just picking up his broken pieces. I happened to get into it during a phase when it was really worth a lot of money; I would cut and polish it.

I had a lot and I started working with a guy in Tonopah who was digging a little—I was doing the cutting and he was doing the digging. And I had another friend who was putting it in jewelry, a silversmith, a guy who worked for me and did that on the side. This other guy and I had lot of turquoise all cut and polished, \$10,000 worth when that was a year's wages.

He and his wife got into a fight; she comes from a weird family. She's a pretty good gal but her family's no good. He got kicked out of the house and his little shop was out back; he had a little old trailer house, a camp trailer, where we were doing all the cutting and everything.

I said, "I'm going to go down there and get our turquoise." By the time I got down there, her brothers had already stolen everything. That burned me up. I told the guy, "I'm going to go after them and I'm going to shoot these guys."

He would have nothing to do with that. "No, Bobby, I'll get it back. I'll get it back." Well, he never did get it back, plus he got killed later in a car wreck. But his family stole everything we had and that kind of ruined me. I just kind of got out of it.

But it was fun, because you could go out there and dig, be out in the hills. You could bring it home and I'd cut it and polish it. What we had were all raw cut stones. We had a buyer in Fernley; he was going to pay us for those stones, and pay us a good price, cash money. It all went to naught.

RM: What mine was it coming from?

BB: It came from all over. We went out sorted the dumps of worked-out mines; at that time, a lot of them weren't even located. And a good part of it came from the back yard of that property I bought. Also, I had bought an old garage in Tonopah one time from somebody, an old shop, and it had a bucket or two of old dirty turquoise in it. I had enough turquoise to last me a lifetime if I could have cut it all. I still have a couple little coffee cans with some low-grade stuff in it.

RM: That happened to me and my dad one time. He gave quite a bunch of turquoise to a guy over in Kingman, \$1,000 worth or so. The guy didn't give the turquoise back. I was furious.

BB: That happens. To this day, these guys are still around and they know what I think. I also had a five-gallon bucket with some turquoise nuggets in it, stuff we had dug. They were small, but they were top-grade little nuggets. They all had to be screened, picked out and washed. And there was quite a few bucks in that thing and a friend of mine I went to school with but hadn't seen in years came and he said, "Bob, I've got a guy that would pay a fortune. Let me take that bucket and clean it up and give me 20 percent."

I said, "Fair enough." That was it. Never saw him since. This was 40 years ago.

I was in the bottle business one time. I had some fabulous bottles. I had an old house across the street that I used for storage, that same old turquoise house. In one corner I had all my money bottles. I had every bottle that ever came to Tonopah—Coke bottles, purple and cobalt blue seltzer bottles from the Tonopah Bottling Company, Tonopah whiskey bottles. I had all the purple bottles, a lot of them embossed. And a friend of mine . . . he and another guy took those bottles. Both those guys are dead now.

One of their wives walked in and caught him sleeping with some other gal. The other gal got up running but he didn't wake up; he took a .22 right between his eyes. The bullet hit his skull and went around and came out by his ear. All it did was knock him out and he lived through it. But he died later on! He drank himself to death and the other guy drank himself to death also—so they say!

I'm sure it was them. They were the only ones who knew where these bottles were. They knew the business and they knew which ones to take. That got me out of the bottle business. It just staled me on it; made me sick. I gave away all the rest—"Here, you enjoy them."

RM: How do you see the future of guys who are trying to do what you are doing in mining?

BB: There is no future for it. It will be over within another 20 years. In another ten years there'll be no more of this. The small guy won't have a prayer at all. I have to jump through nearly the same hoops as Round Mountain Gold, for instance—the permitting, the paperwork, etc. They send out someone to watch you. They'll come out once in a while to do an inspection to make sure you aren't overstepping your boundaries and are reclaiming like you say you're going to.

RM: So, you have to reclaim? You're not on private land?

BB: No, where I'm mining right now isn't. My plant's on private land. I had to move my plant to private land to get out from under that problem. I have to put everything back the way it was, reclaim it, reseed it. I had to post a bond.

RM: In an area that's been dug up a hundred years.

BB: Yes, but it doesn't matter. It's like the guy I sold this to—one of the reasons I got out was because anything over 40 years old they consider "historic." They told him he had to put it all back—the old dredge piles. They photographed every inch of them. He had to put them all back just the way they are. He bought a radial stacker so that he can stack them the way the dredge did when he's done, but he's working on a deal. They may waive that requirement because according to the law, something would have to have a significant value, and those piles don't.

RM: Yes, what's the value of a dredge pile?

BB: Right. They're all over in California and elsewhere. He may get by that but in any case he has to post a bond on that. His bond is going to be millions of dollars.

But more about history, every year it gets tougher and tougher. And then, like I say, what happens now when you put in a plan of operation like I did, the BLN will come out and inspect it. You have to file with the state too; and then, of course, automatically they have to notify the Great Basin Nine Watch and the Sierra Club. All of them, Nature Conservancy, they have to notify. All these people have to be notified and they get to come on it and go over it, too. You know, they could shut you down in a heartbeat. They'll throw a brick into it. They got million-dollar lawyers who work for nothing. And they've got millions of dollars from donations from their members to put you out of business. So we're dead meat.

It's like what's happened to all these little satellite ranches like the Francisco Ranch up on the other side of Cloverdale Ranch; and Broad Canyon down there, right across from Carvers. Broad Canyon is a big, beautiful canyon where the waters all come down by Carvers.

There were big, old ranches up there. They put the land up for bid when it comes up for taxes or something, and the Nature Conservancy comes.

The Francisco Ranch was a beautiful little ranch. The Nature Conservancy was at the auction. A lot of my good friends got together and were going to pool all our money to buy it. It was a beautiful thing right up in the mountains, good for deer hunting, trees all over, water runs through it. It was an estate thing—the Bird family that had the grocery store in Tonopah were the last ones to own it. They had fixed it all up beautiful. They were going to auction it off and the Nature Conservancy had a man there. Someone said, "\$50,000" and another guy said, "\$100,000." Nature Conservancy said, "\$1,000,000," or something like that. Everyone just threw up their hands and went home. So the Nature Conservancy buys it, then they turn around and deed it back to the Forest Service and they tear everything out of there; tear it down.

RM: The old ranch house?

BB: Sometimes they'll leave something just for the Forest Service. When they turn around and deed it back to the Forest Service, they get a full write-off for the donation, plus the government even donates to them to begin with. They get a full write-off for the donation and because it belongs to the government, now it comes off the tax rolls. There's a hundred of them around here and you can't do anything; you can't get them. They go right back into being their pristine area, so to speak. They go back right to being so-called public land so they come off the tax roll. Every time this happens, the county loses the tax base on it. And this happens all the time. Broad Canyon was one of the prettiest canyons out here with a pretty big ranch up there.

RM: And then there's no longer any cattle being run or anything?

BB: In some cases, they will actually get one of the big monster ranches, and they donate most of them back but then they turn around somehow and raise cattle on it themselves. And they're cashing in on it, which is illegal. They've done it all over; in Texas. They'll pick up stuff like that and turn around and pump oil off of them and say it belongs to the public and that's bullshit. It's a scam. Typical government. It would take a revolution to turn this country around. This whole world has gone to shit and this country is leading the way. It's not going to change. It would take a revolution.

RM: And then who knows where revolution leads? It's unpredictable.

BB: Yes; nobody wins.

RM: How things have changed since we were kids!

BB: Yes, it's awful. I was just telling somebody yesterday how I used to have a little diggings. I'd take my little loader out and go after that vein and take my compressor and drill-blast it and muck it in and develop it. No permitting. I didn't rape the land. I didn't hurt nothing. Didn't make a mess. I cleaned up. I did more reclamation than I did any damage. If there were a bunch

of old open holes there that were no good, or dangerous, old location holes, I filled them all in, covered it all up, made it all look nice. I've done more reclamation in my life than I've done harm, not counting this mine, trying to clean things up. Because I like trees; I like to keep it clean.

This drilling program I told you about in East Manhattan? They had to move a drill hole. The Forest Service went out to inspect it and I went out to look at it the next day and here's all these T-posts in a row alongside the road. I said, "What are those? I thought that's where we're going to go in and drill."

And he said, "Come here. I'll show you." There were three old rusty cans lying in the brush. The Forest Service fenced that off and told them not to drill there. When you drill in a particular area, there's a reason. They said, "Just move it over there." Yeah, right!

He said, "But the structure comes through here." And there's no more than three rusty cans lying there. I might have thrown them there myself when I was drinking beer 40 years ago.

RM: That's right. In '58, my dad and I were working this mine up in the Kawich. There wasn't a road to it and we had to walk a long ways up the hill carrying timber so we had Jim Larson come out with his 'dozer and he put a road in there up the steep mountain. He put it in there in an hour and a half, two hours.

BB: No more.

RM: Right; those days don't exist.

BB: We did the same thing in Ophir Canyon when we put that road up on the side of the mountain to get up to that tungsten I found that time. It'd never been touched. I found it one night when I camped up there and was just prospecting. I took a week off from my work and my wife and I took a little camp trailer, one of those dinky ones that just had a bed. We camped by a creek; didn't need any permit. I was up there and I found some float and followed that son of a bitch out and I came up on a block on the side of that wall and the son of a bitch was just unbelievable. I made a little bit of money off that.

RM: Did you sell the claim?

BB: I sold it. But we put a road to that and that was awful. Drilling and blasting—I mean, all on a bluff. No more. In fact, I even abandoned a property years ago just because of the rules and regulations, when I saw what was happening. If you even touch something old now . . . like right now, if you wanted to go up and clean up that road because a big boulder had rolled over it or something, if you touch that road, then that road is yours and you have to reclaim it and put it back to its original state. If you go to clean up any of the old stuff . . . I've touched up some of these old roads and when you're done, they want them reclaimed. And I've said, "But that road has been in there for a hundred years. Everybody used it." Too bad; you'd better reclaim it.

RM: So, you had to reclaim it?

BB: No, I got out of there. Like I said. I abandoned that property years ago because I could see all this happening. I got out of the business and turned it over to a partner I had in Tonopah; sold him my half of one of my 'dozers and gave him one of my trucks and lowboys, made him a deal on that when it started getting bad.

All he did for two years was reclamation and he told me, "Bob, I haven't put in a new road in two years because of the rules and regulations." All of a sudden, everything we'd done years and years before was all reclaimed and there was no more work. We were busy for years building roads and so on for the mining companies. He went to the Test Site to work.

RM: How do you see the future of Nye County—say, the area from Tonopah-Goldfield north?

BB: It doesn't look good to me. Tonopah is really having bad times. It's not just the miner; it's the rancher, too. They don't want your cows on public land anymore. They're fighting the poor old rancher. I'm sure you've heard that cow farts are ruining the atmosphere? The only chance a rancher or a farmer has to make it now is to subdivide his property and sell it off to the city folks, and that's what's happening all over the country.

They don't want ranching, they don't want farming, they don't want mining. Like Gore and those people said, "We just get all that stuff from overseas." They forget what made this country strong. What made this country strong years ago was that we were self-supporting. We didn't have to go to somebody else. It's just like the oil situation—we've got to kiss their butts to keep alive. But that's what they want. They want us all on welfare, I think. They want us all under their thumb. No more of this country supporting itself.

RM: The West is a totally different place now.

BB: Yes. And we're still way ahead of everyplace else. And bad as it is in Nevada right now, it's the best place in the world to mine. If this is the best, what in the hell is the rest of the world like?

I had a chance to go to Russia. They picked about 12 people, all mining people. How I got picked, God knows. They were all major mining engineers; I knew two of them. I got a letter from the government with a deal, all paid for, for a trip to Siberia. They flew you to Moscow. You would spend a couple days in Moscow then go to a dredge in Siberia, be up there for a week and then spend a few more days back in Moscow and then come home.

It was a government-funded thing to teach the people in Siberia because they're still working in the dark ages. They had an old dredge running that was just like the one in Manhattan. They wanted people like me and the other mining people to go up there and help them out, teach them technology and take the bugs out of some of the stuff, because they didn't know where to go; they were running into mountains and other problems.

I couldn't go. My wife was sick; she's been fighting cancer. And it was in August, and August is a deadly month for me. I have to file all the mining claims, all my insurances—everything happened to me in August. I just couldn't go and I knew what a mistake I'd make but I had no choice. I've still got the papers; I look at them once in a while. It's been years ago.

Anyway, I shined it on, told them I couldn't make it, and they got someone to replace me. A few years after that I ran into one of the guys who went. He said, "Bob, you would not

have believed it. Where that dredge is running up there, you're watching the discharge belt, and there's more skulls and bones going off that son of a bitch than there were rocks."

RM: Oh, my God. What was it, a graveyard?

BB: Yes, where they buried . . . you know, they shipped all those people to Siberia. He said they went through areas like that. He said it was scarier than hell and they shined it on and paid no attention.

He said there was gold everywhere. but they weren't getting but about a 40 percent recovery. I would have given my left nut to go; that would have been a neat trip.

CHAPTER SIX

RM: Can you think of anything else to tell me? How well do you remember Bobbie Duncan and Toni Buffam?

BB: Very well. Bobbie Duncan was like a godmother to me; she was real close; I grew up knowing her. I had the first work permit to get out of Tonopah High School early in the day. The cathouse never had power or water up there. I used to get out of school early. She had one of those old military jeeps with a military water trailer. I would get out of school at 2:00 and boy, I went through hell to get a permit to go to work at the cathouse. I'd haul water almost daily. I'd take the back roads—nothing was licensed. I'd cross around and go behind the Belmont Mill and come in behind the water company, the firehouse, and fill the water tanker, take it back up on the hillside and they had a water line to a 500-gallon tank, I'd fill that tank and it went into the building. She had an old Witte generator and I would service that every day and I'd have to crank that old son of a bitch up and start it before dark. RM: That was before they refurbished it.

BB: Yes, there was no water.

RM: That place had good vibes in those days.

BB: Oh, yes, and Bobbie was very dear to me. She was a good friend of the family's. She had an old pink Cadillac that she'd give us to take to the drag races. We'd race and get trophies for her. She cooked Christmas and Thanksgiving dinners at my mother's house. She was a good cook. She used to give the town money anytime it needed anything. If the school couldn't buy uniforms for the cheerleaders, Bobbie would say, "Not a problem." She was like that to the whole town. She was a good person.

When I first got married, we had hard times and it was tough and there were times I would get in a bind. And before I got married, I hung out up there. I'd get in trouble and say, "Bobbie, I'm in trouble again. Can you loan me some money?"

"You little bastard. How much you need today?" (Laughter)

"Bobbie, could you give me a couple hundred dollars?"

She'd say, "Yeah." But I always paid her back. She bailed me out of things like that a hundred times.

One time I went up there and told her, "Bobbie, I'm really in a mess this time," and I grinned at her.

She said, "What did you do now?"

I said, "I can't tell you. It's really bad. You're going to hate me." (Laughter)

"Oh, Jesus Christ. I'm not going to give you any money unless you tell me. I have a right. It's my money."

I said, "Sharon and I are going to Reno and get married."

She said, "How much money do you want to borrow?"

I said, "\$500."

She said, "Not a problem." Had big tears in her eyes. She went back and brought me \$500 and an envelope. And that envelope had another \$500.

RM: Oh, my God; what a sweetheart.

BB: She was sweet. But one time she had a girl she was breaking in who was tending the bar for her; she was a pretty nice gal but she couldn't drink. They came to Christmas dinner; I'll never forget it. We're having Christmas dinner and after dinner, everybody had a few drinks. I wasn't drinking; I wasn't old enough then. This new gal got a little loud, a little mouthy and Bobbie told her to settle down and the gal said, "Oh, you shut your fuckin' mouth," or something. And Bobbie cold-cocked her, knocked our Christmas tree down. I'll never forget that night.

Bobbie apologized and she was so embarrassed, she felt so bad. She cried and everything. She knocked the girl cold. Scared us to death; we thought she was dead. Bobbie took the gal home that night, sobered her up, and took her to the bus.

RM: Did you know Toni Buffam? What do you recall about her?

BB: What I remember best about Toni was when she had the roller skating rink in Tonopah where the convention center is when we were kids. We used to all go in there, and she was tough. She'd grab you by the seat of the pants and haul your ass out and throw you right out the door if you got into trouble. We were teenagers. I'm trying to think of the name of it.

RM: How old were you then?

BB: I was a teenager. Tokyo Toni, they called her. She had a little snack bar and everything. She built it for the kids—it was like a USO. I don't know where she got the money but she put that together for the kids. It wasn't a long-lived thing; it seems like it was there for a year or so.

RM: She ran the union hall and bless her heart, she would always get me a job in the summer and that's how I made it to school.

BB: She did me, too. She was in that little building behind Coleman's. I went in there and got a union card. She got me a job out at the Test Site when they first started; I worked for Lembke Construction.

RM: I tried to get both Bobbie and Toni to do oral history interviews but they wouldn't do it.

BB: Either one of them would have been dandies. I'll tell you a story here. When I worked for Bobbie, I hauled the water up one day—and there was a rattlesnake that lived under that water tank. I knew he was there but he never bothered me. I just shined it on one day and forgot all about this snake and I don't know what happened, but I pissed him off. That sucker turned around and hit me in the leg and I looked down and he locked onto me. He was stuck on my leg and I couldn't get him off.

I ran down the side of that mountain screaming like hell. The place wasn't open yet; the girls were in the back yard sunbathing. They saw me running; they were all in their bikinis and they came running out of there. I'm dragging this rattlesnake and they got a shovel and beat the shit out of this son of a bitching snake and got him off my leg. His teeth were hooked in my pants. I was sick to my stomach. I could hardly walk because they beat the shit out of me with the shovel.

Anyway, they got it off and helped me into the house and I'm getting weak. I said, "Oh, my god, I'm getting sick; I feel terrible. I'm starting to get sick. The son of a bitch is going to kill me, poison me." Bobbie was not there—she'd gone downtown to go the grocery store or something and they didn't have a telephone.

They got me in there and laid me on the bed and said, "Holy shit, we can't call a doctor, we can't do nothing, we can't get you nowhere. Bobbie will be right back." They took my boots and my pants off, all these nice-looking girls, and all they saw on my leg was a bruise from the shovel. That son of a bitch didn't bite me. I was already getting sick. "Oh, I'm dying!"

And pretty soon, "He didn't even bite you!"

I says, "You sure?" [Laughter] Boy. I was hoping he had.

"He didn't even bite you!" they said. I hid from them after that. I'd haul water and they'd say "Hi, Bob!"

RM: How many girls were working there then?

BB: I never saw her with less than two; two to four or five, most of the time. Then she built the new place there and added to it.

RM: My dad did the work on that new place. I actually helped him one summer.

BB: She put that little waiting room off to one side. I'd get drunk and the cops would be chasing me and I'd go up there and hide, park my car behind the building. She let me spend the night in there. I'd be drunker than hell and I slept it off in there many a time. Bobbie always hid me from the cops.

RM: So you and she were good pals.

BB: Oh, real good friends. My wife and I went up there every Christmas and had drinks with her. Like I said, she was kind of like a godmother to me.

RM: Do you have any other recollections?

BB: Once, Buddy Perchetti and I moved the Cottontail Ranch at the junction of Highway 95 and the road that goes over to Lida. We were working for Beverly Harrell; she got kicked off the BLM land there.

RM: Where exactly was that?

BB: Just down the road a quarter of a mile. As you pass it, when you're heading to Vegas, you'll see a bunch of burned stuff there—that's where it used to be.

RM: Oh, that was BLM land and then right next to it was private land.

BB: Yes, that was private land at the junction. Anyway, we moved that thing up there and a lot of exciting things were happening; Beverly was running for state assembly. We spent a lot of time there; it took us months to do all this stuff. My wife asked me, "You ever see the girls?"

And I said, "Not very often."

She said, "What do they wear?"

I said, "Oh, they wear the long, old-fashioned dresses with the big bows on them and all that stuff." While I was telling her, they flashed on TV about this madam running for state assembly and here's Buddy and I and the rest of us out lined up in the back yard with our arms around all these girls in trick suits and bikinis. My father-in-law even called from Missouri.

Beverly prided herself in being Jewish. In fact, she and Leroy David, a good friend, got into an argument one time about which one was the smartest Jew. Who was the best? And it was funny, we were all laughing.

But Beverly owed me \$100 for doing some little thing. I had to move something for her that wasn't in the contract and she told me if I'd do it for her, since I had my equipment down there, she'd give me \$100. So I did it. That night after work, we were in the bar at the Cottontail having a drink and Beverly came out to see what time we were going to be there the next day and to make plans. I said, "Beverly, I moved that for you. You owe me \$100." She looked at me and smiled.

She said, "Well, you just saw the argument with me and Leroy a while ago."

I said, "Yes."

She said, "Yes, well I'm the smartest Jew because you didn't get it in writing. So I'm not paying you."

I was pissed and half-full of beer by then and I said, "Where the hell was you when my Uncle Adolph had the ovens hot?" She had just opened me a can of 7-ounce Coors; she hit me right in the chest with it. I had beer all over me.

Her old man at that time—I don't think it was her husband—was supposedly an ex-hit man. He'd been in trouble and done his time. He was kind of scary—really a nice guy, but people respected him. We could go to him when we got in trouble once in awhile with Beverly. But anyway, she hit me with that can and she stormed back and said, "I'm going to get my old man. You're dead meat."

Everybody got up and left. They said, "Bob, let's go. He's going to come out here and blow you away." I was drunk and I decided no, I'm not afraid of that son of a bitch. And everybody said, "Come on, Bob. Let's get out of here." They all left except Buddy—he kind of hid behind the door and peeked in because he wanted to be a witness to what happened. I was holding my ground and here he came around that corner and he was stomping his feet and everything. I didn't know Buddy was there and I figured, "Oh, my God. There'll be no witnesses."

And her old man said, "Bob."

I said, "Yeah."

"I hear you're having another problem with Beverly."

I said, "Yeah, we had a little spat."

He shook his head and looked behind him and said, "Good. Give her hell." I almost melted right off the barstool. [Laughter] I looked like chocolate candy dribbling off there. I thought oh my God, I survived another day. But we had some good times back there.

RM: Did you ever get on down the road to Fran's place—the brothel north of Beatty?

BB: I was in there just a couple of times years ago. When I worked for Balliet at the Kelly garage he and Louie Rivero and a couple of others were going to go together and buy that place. We used to work on their cars all the time because every Tuesday or something they'd bring the girls up to get their health inspection and she'd bring her car and we'd service it for her.

I worked with old Clarence Hubbel, a one-armed guy. He was a neat guy. One time, this girl came in there with Fran with a pair of black pants on and I could not believe it; it looked like they were painted on her. She couldn't even walk, they were so tight. Old Hubbel looked at her and said, "My God, lady, if you bent over, you'd cut yourself right in half." [Laughter]

Speaking of Hubbel, after work we'd all drink a bottle of brandy. He had a hook on the one arm; he had cut his arm off in a sawmill. It was one of those working hooks; he had straps all over his chest and he could open and close it.

We got all drunk one time. We were going down to the Mizpah and have a drink and Hubbel was giving us some lip, bugging us and teasing us. So we held him down and I welded him to the welding table. We went down to the Mizpah, and we're sitting there and we hear this door crash open, and we look around and here's Hubbel. No shirt on, all ripped off. He had to rip his shirt off to get to the straps and he came in with his one arm and boy, he was pissed. I had to go up and cut that hook off of that table and grind all the welding off. It was stainless steel, too.

One time when Beverly was running for State Assembly, the New York Times was following her around while she was out campaigning. It was just a day or two after we had our big fight down there at the Cottontail. It was my bowling night and I was bowling with my team, and here came Beverly with these newspaper people and they had cameras and everything. The place was packed.

She was looking around and trying to show off for the camera and she spotted me sitting over there. "Oh, and here's a good friend of mine right here," she said and brought the news people over and she jumped right in my lap and put her arm around me and here we'd just had this terrible fight! I'm looking at her and she says to me, "You better smile, you little son of a bitch." [Laughter] So I cracked a phony smile and she got up and said, "That was one of my good friends who's helping me move."

RM: About what year do you think that was?

BB: I don't even remember, but I can tell you because when the job was over, she paid Perchetti by writing the check on a Cottontail T-shirt. The bank manager in Tonopah at that time, Jack Norton (he just died last year), took that check and gave Buddy the money out of her account. He kept the check, the T-shirt. This was many years ago and maybe the date's on it.

RM: How did you get the T-shirt?

BB: Jack Norton's wife just sent it to me. He lived in Las Vegas. She said, "I was going through his private stuff in his safe and I found this T-shirt." I'm going to put it in a picture frame and hang it at Tommy knockers.

RM: Okay, it says, "Beverly Harrell, Cottontail Ranch, Lida Junction, Nevada, 89013. Check #1761 994-59, October 9, 1974. Pay to the order of Perchetti Roofing, \$1400.00." And then it's written out: "One Thousand Four Hundred 00/100. Beverly Harrell, FNB. First National Bank of Nevada." That's a classic!

BB: But he cashed this thing as a check. You know, in those days they had no computers.

RM: Did you do any additions to that building? You said part of it burned.

BB: Yes, we did a lot of work.

RM: How did it happen to burn? Was that a skullduggery thing?

BB: I think so. Insurance, probably. I remember she had this black gal who tended bar for her—Velma was her name. Really a neat gal; big and mean. She'd rule with an iron fist but she had a heart; she was a good person. We had to move the back bar one time and we dragged it out and it didn't have a back on it—it was just nailed to the wall. There were locked doors on the front, but when we took it off the wall we took things out of it from the back and Velma's purse fell out. It fell open and a whole bunch of money fell out. I picked that money up and I counted it and there was something like \$487. I put it back in and we fixed the wall and put the bar back.

After work we're in there having a drink and I said, "Velma, don't you think it's about time you bought a drink?"

She said, "Bobby, I don't have any money."

I said, "The hell you don't. You've got your purse locked in that thing right there." "Yeah, but there's no money in it."

I said, "There's \$487 in it." Velma turned as white as me and you. She grabbed me by the throat, reached over the bar, and held me while she reached out the key and unlocked that thing and looked in it, dragged her purse out, and went through it. I was laughing like hell.

She counted it and it was all there. "How in the hell did you know that? How do you know?"

I said, "I've got X-ray vision eyes." [Laughter] After that, I don't know what she did with her purse; I'll bet she carried it with her. She bought us a drink, too.

RM: Those are great stories!

BB: I could go on forever but some of them would get me in prison. I'll tell you another story about working on the Cottontail Ranch. though. We had this kid working for us, Billy Scogley.

We're down there in the summer and it gets hot on that roof. We're outside. We've been roofing, putting a new roof on it and everything—we had to build a common roof over a bunch of old trailers that were all moved together.

He was dying of thirst and there was a hose coming out of the wall. He went over and picked up the hose and water was running out it. He was drinking and said, "Jesus Christ, this water is hot. I can't hardly drink it." He swallowed a little bit of it and said, "Man, that's too hot to drink," and put it back.

We looked at it and Buddy said, "Jesus Christ, they're draining the Jacuzzi." [Laughter] Buddy and I laughed. It's a wonder that guy didn't get pregnant! That'll spoil your lunch.

Oh, we had a good time down there. There's a lot of stories—but to tell them, I have to be on my deathbed and be guaranteed I ain't gonna live overnight. [Laughter] There were some awful things down there.

RM: Do you have any stories like that from the Buckeye?

BB: No, I had to behave up there. There was no screwing around because Bobbie and I were close friends; we didn't pull any shenanigans up there. Except . . . there was a major shaft there—the Buckeye Shaft. It used to be an open hole and over the years she poured concrete over it and put on a drum. It's still there. She put a 55-gallon drum lid in the middle of the shaft for venting. We got drunk up there one time and grabbed somebody by the feet and held him in that.

RM: Oh, man! If I'm not mistaken, I used to piss in that.

BB: Yes. [Laughter] No public bathrooms in the cathouse. I can't think of anything else about the Buckeye. After Bobbie died, she willed it to Barbara Raper. Barbara used to be married to Ernie Longden and then she married Clyde Raper. She sold it to Chi Chi, who has it now. When she sold it, she told Chi Chi she wanted the ore bucket and ore cart that used to sit out front.

One day Barbara called me from Pahrump and told me, "Bob, would you go up there when you get time and pick up that ore bucket and ore car?" And Bill Himes, Bobbie's boyfriend, had an old station wagon. She said, "Would you take Bill's car and the ore bucket and ore car up to your shop yard and park it and I'll come get it sometime."

I said, "Yeah," so I went up and picked it up with my loader. I saw the window shade open once; someone was peeking out. I was thinking, "I'm going to get shot here any time," but I was already there and nobody was with me so I went ahead and loaded the ore car and ore bucket in my loader bucket, took off, and went up to my shop.

I probably wasn't at the shop but 15 minutes, and here came a cop car up the street. (Gary Downs was the deputy; he's dead now. He arrested a kid and the kid hit him and killed him.) I was sitting there alongside my loader; I had just dragged the ore cart and bucket out of it. I'm leaning against the ore bucket and my tire tracks come right in the gate. He rolled down the window and says, "Bob, did you see anybody go up the Buckeye and pick up an ore car and an ore bucket?"

I said, "Nope."

And he just smiled and said, "I didn't think you did."

I said, "Wait a minute. It's all right. This belonged to Barbara and she told me to go on and get it." He knew that because Chi Chi had said it belonged to Barbara and somebody stole it. He laughed and went up and told her the story. Have you ever met Chi Chi?

RM: No, I haven't.

BB: She's a character. She's not there too often but she's a dandy. My son lived up in my shop yard in Tonopah across from the Buckeye, across from the bowling alley. He was living there by himself and he had a satellite dish, one of the old big ones. We'd just put the satellite dish in; it was right in the front yard. He was sitting in his front room in his shorts all alone watching TV one night. The door opened and Chi Chi walked in. He'd never seen her before in his life. She walked in and sat down right alongside of him and he's in his shorts. He said, "Can I help you?"

She said, "Oh, no, it's all right. I'm Chi Chi. I own the Buckeye over there. I just saw your new satellite dish. I'm thinking of getting one and I want to see how they work. How do you like it?"

He said, "Can I go put some pants on?" (Laughter)

RM: What was she going to do with that property?

BB: I don't know. They passed an ordinance that you've got to be so many feet away from a main highway or road and she wasn't aware of it. She fought it in court, she tried everything, but she could never get a license to open it as a brothel. I don't know what she's doing.

RM: It looks to me like it's useful. I wonder what it's worth?

BB: It's a lot of property. She moved in the two back houses, painted them all up. She had big plans. But if you could get the property for almost nothing, it would be a good piece of property. She has water and power and everything.

RM: I'd like to have it for sentimental reasons. My dad built the bar and all that.

BB: I got bit by a rattlesnake. [Laughter]

RM: Were you ever in Bobbie's bathroom? Do you remember the arch shape? That was my idea and my brother Mike made the fixtures. My dad laid the tile and everything for her.

BB: Yes, that's a big heart-shaped bathtub. She had that real neat fireplace. Did he build that?

RM: Yes, he built that.

BB: That was all made out of fluorescent rock—calcites and tungsten. She had a black light there.

BB: Did you know Bill Himes, her old man?

RM: I think I did.

BB: He was a neat guy. That business is tough, of course; I was one of his only friends, along with Kenny Siri. We used to take him deer hunting and everything. He was a neat guy. I remember one time he was mowing the lawn; they had a little bitty lawn alongside the Buckeye. They bought an electric lawn mower even though the lawn wasn't as big as this room. And he got it going and it self-propelled. He fired it up and it ran right in the corner so he reached down and picked it up like this and the discharger didn't have a bag on it. BRRRRRR! He heard this stuff hit the wall. He looked around and said, "What the hell was that?" and he saw his fingers lying there. He looked at his hand and that son of a bitch took all of his fingers off one hand. He said he didn't even feel it and for a split second he thought he hit a body. And then he looked down . . . no fingers.

He had a hard time. I was up there quite often checking on him and helping him. He got lot of infection in it. The shock kind of set in days later and he went through a bad time, thinking about it. But when it happened, he said it didn't even hurt.

RM: I like the new joint there but I always thought that the old one had better vibes. The bar was the best bar in the world because she'd open those windows and you'd look out to the west.

BB: It seemed like she even changed the music or something. Everything was different, like you said. Not the same thing.

RM: She was making a mint on that jukebox.

BB: Yes, between the jukebox and selling the girls tea—"Buy a tea for the girls." "Get 'er a shot of whiskey."

RM: There were only about four or five seats at the old bar, wasn't there?

BB: The old bar was short. The new one was pretty long, though.

RM: And the rooms—you could listen to what was going on next door. My dad went in there one time, you know, and a local guy who was a character, and known for odd things, went in. My dad told a girl, "I want to buy my way into the room next door." [Laughter] BB: I told you how Louie Meyers used to blow all his money. He had some nice specimens of gold. He'd fall in love with every girl he bought and he'd give them his gold specimens. They really cleaned his whistle. They took advantage of him. We talked about Steve Balliet earlier. His dad, Letson, sank the Buckeye shaft.

I got a call one time in the middle of the night from Gene Moser in Mina; he had the bar there. Gene called and said, "Bob, Louie has been over here at the Lucky Strike for three days. He's out of money. They threw him out of there and now he's up here, I've got a tab for him. He can't drive and I've got to get rid of him. He's causing trouble. (When he got drunk, he wanted

to fight.) He said, "Bobby. would you come get him? He told me to call you and you'll come get him."

I called Buddy Perchetti in the middle of the night and told him, "Would you go with me and drive Louie's Scout back? We'll go over there and get Louie and I'll drive him home in my car."

Bud says, "Yeah, I'll go over with you." We go over there; and now we're cold sober. We walk into the bar and here's Louie with his cue stick backed in the corner. Two great big huge Indians were playing pool with him and he accused them of cheating. These Indians both were wearing hunting knives, like Bowie knives. They got Louie backed in the corner and were just kind of looking at him and he said, "These guys are cheating."

Buddy and I walked in the door cold turkey and Gene was behind the bar trying to tell him, "Settle down, Louie."

Louie looked at us, "Okay, you goddamn Indians, my boys are here now. You're in trouble. My boys will take care of you." We looked at each other and thought, holy shit, these guys were bigger than a door, with hunting knives. We bought the two Indians a drink, scarfed Louie up, and brought him home. He said, "What, we escaped again?"

I had to pay his tab and buy the Indians a drink so we could get out of there alive. He was a character, old Louie, goddamn. He had a saying when he was drunk, "Well, knock me in a creek." You'd try and talk and he'd say, "Well, knock me in a creek, if it isn't Bob." RM: When did he die?

BB: I forget what year that kid killed him. Shellenbarger shot both Louie and his partner, Frankie Mays. I used to go down and have coffee with Louie almost every morning. I went down there and he didn't open the door and his Scout was gone, and he would never go anyplace without telling me. I made him tell me if he went prospecting or anywhere. The Scout was gone so I beat on the door.

I have a system. When I padlock something, I put it on in a certain way. I have a padlock on my gas tank. If I let somebody get gas and they put it on backwards, it upsets me. I can pick up things in the dark because I know where they're supposed to be. Well, I went down and I couldn't get in and the door was padlocked and his Scout was gone and I could hear his dog inside. He would not go anywhere without his dog. I looked at the padlock and it was on the door backwards. I thought, "Something's wrong." I beat on the door, then I called the cops and told them, "We've got to get in there. Something happened." I said, "Something's wrong. The padlock's backwards, the car's gone and his dog's in there."

They said, "That's not uncommon."

I said, "It is in this case. It's not uncommon; it's impossible. We've got to break in." They said, "We can't break in. We can't do it."

I said, "Get out of the way," and I kicked the door in. They were going to arrest me—and then you could smell it. A human body stinks overnight. I said, "Louie's in here dead someplace; I can smell him." We found him with a bullet hole in his head.

I thought Frankie had shot him. I said, "He and Frankie were drunk last night. They might have gotten into a fight." I went up to Frankie's house; I took a cop with me. Frankie wasn't there but I could smell death in his house. I said, "He's in here. I can smell it. He's dead, too."

They thought I was crazy but they went all through the house and couldn't find him. They said, "There's no body in there, Bob." They left and they were doing their thing down below at Louie's house, photographing the blood on the walls.

I said, "I'm going back up to that house. Frankie's in there."

They said, "Bob, he's not in there. We just tore the house apart."

I said, "He's in there. You guys just can't find him." I went in there and I found him in five minutes with my nose. He was a little bitty guy, he weighed 90 pounds. The kid rolled him up in a ball, wrapped him in a blanket and had him shoved under a little bitty single bed like a cot. He was in the corner and he didn't take up that much room but I moved the cot and found him.

RM: What was Frankie's relationship to Louie?

BB: Just friends. Louie kind of took him under his wing. He was an old guy, Louie's age; he helped Louie out. Somebody killed both of them. They were drunk. Frankie ran and they chased him up to his house and shot him there.

RM: And who did this?

BB: Mike Shellenbarger. He was a kid in Tonopah. Louie was buying him booze and stuff. He was a haywire kid. They thought Louie was a rich old-timer and had gold hidden all over the place and ransacked the house. Louie didn't have any money. I know what he had because I was giving him the money. The kid went in there and drank with Louie, he bought him the booze. They wanted more money and, "Where are you hiding your money? And where are you hiding your gold?"

Louie said, "I don't have any gold." Louie got belligerent, I'm sure, and the kid just took Louie's gun and shot him. And then Frankie ran; they were all together in the house. Then they stole Louie's car and took off.

RM: Did they catch him?

BB: Yes, they caught him. He got a few years in prison. Bill Beko got him out early, I think. He lived with Beko when he got out of prison. He eventually took off back East, stole a car—kidnapped someone, I heard—got caught, and went back to prison. Nice guy!

This reminds me of a couple of other bodies I discovered. Antone Johnson was one of the original people who discovered the Reliance vein in Manhattan. He lived across the street from us in Tonopah. He was getting quite old and senile. In fact, on one occasion, we had some unexpected company show up after dark to spend the night with us. Across the street from us and next door to Antone was an old empty two-story house I used for storage. It had no power and therefore no lights. I knew exactly where to find a bedroll for our company so I didn't need a flashlight.

I was in this pitch black room in the house feeling around for the bedroll when someone grabbed me. Without even thinking, I swung and hit the person, knocking him down. I ran back across the street, grabbed a gun and flashlight, and went back into the two-story house. Lying on the floor, stark naked and bloodied up, was poor old Antone, not only bleeding from the

face where I had hit him but badly cut from breaking a window to get in. We took him next door to his home and cleaned him up and put him to bed. He had gotten disoriented and thought he had locked himself out of his house when in fact he was in the wrong house.

Al Bradshaw was kind of looking after him at that time and my wife would cook meals and take them to him. As he started getting worse I went to Beko and told him to try to find Antone's brother back East, or at least have him booked into Nye County indigent care. Nothing happened. Within a month, I hadn't seen Antone for a couple of days and went to check on him. His door was locked and I could see him lying on the floor. I kicked in the door and found him dead. Al Bradshaw made funeral arrangements and we buried him.

I had a good friend here in Manhattan, Walt Daniels. He was retired from the US Marine Corps and had managed a bar in Virginia City. He got tired of all the tourists and hoopla in Virginia City so he moved here. We got to be good friends. I would stop at his house every morning at 5:00 a.m. and enjoy coffee with him. If I didn't show up every morning, he would call the house to see why.

He had strange eating habits. He would only eat meat and potatoes, and those had to be fried in about an inch of bacon grease; no fruits and no vegetables. He said if it's green, it shouldn't be eaten. We talked him into eating some corn one time. He did it to be nice and then he said, "This will never happen again!" I tried to explain to him that he was just greasing himself up and probably had his arteries half clogged up. He was hard headed.

One morning I went to coffee and his door was locked and he wouldn't answer. Once again, I broke in and found he had died in bed that night. I must have sat on his bed with him for an hour, bawling him out for all the meat and spuds he had greased himself up with, before I even made all the necessary phone calls. Walt would generate two large coffee cans full of bacon grease to be discarded every week. He was a good, true, honest friend whom I still miss an awful lot!

APPENDIX

Bob Bottom gave Robert McCracken tours of Manhattan, Nevada, on August 26, 1995, and April 14, 2007. These tours are appended here, beginning with the August 1995 tour.

RM: Bob, how did you get involved in the placer game?

BB: I don't really know. I always was messing with gold. I liked mining; I was always prospecting, even when I was younger. I've had mining claims my whole life and I've made a real good living on mining for probably the last 30 years or so. It was the biggest part of my income until rules and regulations and expenses just about put me out of the business. RM: What are some of the areas you've mined in, in central Nevada?

BB: I've mined in Ophir Canyon and I've done a lot of digging all over Nye and Esmeralda counties—just on little high-grade things. But I confine a lot of my stuff right here to Manhattan; I've been digging around this area for probably 15 years now.

RM: Tell me about placering in Manhattan Gulch.

BB: The placering's pretty good in here. It's pretty tough when you have to try to get gold and water both in the same district. Of course, we are in a desert here, and water's always been a problem. That was a problem with the dredge—they originally intended on making a minimum of three passes and probably four, and they only made one. They ate up so much bedrock that they couldn't hold their ponds anymore and couldn't float the boat, so they pulled out. That's why there are so many good benches left, so much ground left that's been untouched.

RM: I was under the impression the dredge got most of the gold, but you're saying that isn't true?

BB: No, they only made one pass. I doubt if they got as much as 25 percent of the gold that's probably in this gulch here. They didn't do real well as far as recovery; dredges never did recover much. The dredge here was designed to run around 600, 650 yards an hour, and there were times they were actually running up to 1,200 yards an hour through the thing. I've talked to some of the people who worked the dredge and they said that trommel would be just plumb full. They didn't recover that much at all. They overloaded it; they crammed it. They only had a five-eighths screen on the dredge trommel. I wouldn't doubt that 50 percent of the weight of my gold wouldn't go through a 5/8 screen. I've got nuggets larger than that.

RM: And the dredge actually concentrated the gold in a layer?

BB: Yes, they concentrated under those big buckets. They were working under muddy water so they didn't know what was going on down there, and the gold actually would drop alongside the buckets and concentrate on the bottom. We've drilled a lot of these tailings through here,

and it's nothing to get a one-tenth-ounce gold assay out of the bottom five feet of the dredge tails, just from what it concentrated.

RM: What would be the depth, driving down the wash?

BB: It varies. Where the dredge came through, they tried to stay in the deeper channel—that's probably 60 to 80 feet in a lot of places. Down below where they started, it was over 100 feet down to bedrock. It got shallower as they came up. This is my little plant.

RM: Was this place just a lot of old shafts?

BB: Yes, they figure they had as many as 200 people working down here in the old days before the dredge came in with little shafts scattered all over. They would sink a shaft and then drift until they'd hit some of the riffles and work them out. They tried never to exceed 300 feet with any of their drifts because when they would, it would be too costly for them to haul that stuff underground, so they'd just come out and sink another shaft or raise to the surface.

RM: What is the length of the gold-bearing gravels down the gulch?

BB: It probably goes clear across the highway. The dredge probably worked around six miles. It gets too deep beyond that, but gold probably goes all the way out to the bottom of Smoky Valley. This is a pit that belonged to the guys I had this leased to down here; they're all tied up in court.

RM: Fighting with each other? Is that pretty common?

BB: In the mining business it is. Gold makes people crazy.

RM: How do you know where to dig here?

BB: You do a lot of sampling. You can do it by drilling, but I've also gone down some of these old shafts and crawled around underground and sampled the old workings. The old-timers could only take so much underground without having the tunnels cave in, so they left an awful lot of stuff. I've gone down there and done a lot of sampling, and found some material that they just missed entirely. I can reach some of the stuff with a backhoe. With a small operation like mine, I can't afford to go much deeper than 25 feet so I look for the shallower stuff and I try to stick to the benches rather than try to get out in the deep channels.

RM: The dredge didn't get the benches, did it?

BB: No, they tried to stay in the deep channel coming up, and then they were going to come down one side and go back up another side. There's a little bit of water right here. This pond was full of water and these guys silted it in. This has been here since the dredge—this is one of the old original dredge ponds.

(Look at that nice little buck antelope. he's not going to stop for anything. There are six of them in here, and last year there were 15. There are six in that bunch and that one buck, down here getting a drink.)

Anyway, there's another little hole down here with water where I'm going to be doing some digging. I've got my loader down there now; I've sampled it. My plant used to be way down here when all these ponds were still real full. I pumped out of this one, put a pipeline down, and then I pumped out of that one and finally, in this eight years of drought, I ran completely out of water. I've drilled a well since then.

RM: Would the well pick up the water on bedrock, or going below that?

BB: Below. We went 400 feet, actually. We started picking up water right around bedrock—around 30 feet or so. There are no aquifers out here in this country, up in the hills. There are a number of wet faults and we just keep drilling and finally pick up enough of the faults until we can get enough water. That's why we had to go 400 feet to get some decent water. We go by the number of wet faults—if you just take one of them, you can dry it up real fast; they're just pockets of water.

RM: Do you drill your own wells?

BB: No, we had this one drilled. You have to be licensed to get a water well drilled. It's quite complicated anymore—the division of water resources is state-owned. All the water here is state-owned and the federal government is trying to take it; they want control of the water. The state puts you through quite a hassle to maintain the water.

RM: You were saying you thought the reported amount of gold that the dredge got was about a third of what they actually recovered?

BB: I've heard they recovered up to maybe twice what they reported, but I wouldn't doubt if it was a third. I know some of the old stories and I know some of the old-timers who did probably as well as the dredge did. They used to fight over who got to watch and maintain the stacking belts because of the big nuggets that would come off of it. Because they only had a five-eighths screen on it, all the big nuggets went back out in the tailings. I know one guy who had mason jars full of nuggets.

RM: This is your operation, here?

BB: Yes, this is one of them. I'm in bedrock right there, do you see?

RM: Yes, there's an old tunnel there.

BB: I actually hit three of them in that bench.

RM: And we're looking at a bank about 20 feet high.

BB: Yes. You can see that part of it's already been stripped. That's why I'm just going to take out this one little section. This was all the lower level. We took all this out of here, and it was real good ore, but there are no big nuggets; all the bigger nuggets were farther on up. RM: They were too heavy to wash down, is that it?

BB: Yes.

RM: What do you mean by good ore?

BB: I try to keep my ore around .05.

RM: So you'd have to handle 20 tons to get an ounce?

BB: Yes. I only run my plant six hours a day, because it takes me about two hours to clean up and everything, so I run 60 yards a day. I have to have a minimum of three ounces a day because my cost is almost three ounces a day. Anything over that is a good day, because I make wages. But I'm even satisfied if I'm just changing the green for the yellow. I don't mind running three ounces a day because you can get some nice nuggets once in a while, and you can take gold that's worth only about \$290 an ounce because of the fineness and you put it into \$500-an-ounce stuff by making jewelry.

RM: Do you sell most of your gold in jewelry?

BB: I do a little of that, I make some up and just sell it to friends and things like that; I don't really go commercial. And I did ship a little to one of the major refiners in the country.

RM: That's interesting. You said that you could see what gold-bearing gravel looks like here. That is, you can kind of tell when you're getting good gravel.

BB: When you're digging, you can tell when you're getting down to it. Around here, there's a clay layer that lies right on top of the pay gravel. When you get down to that clay, normally there's going to be gravel under it. When you get down to the gravel, you can tell by the size of the boulders what area of the channel you're going to be in, and you can pretty much guess that there'll be ore there. And I pan constantly; I do my ore control with a gold pan. By panning, I can come within nickels or dimes of what I'm going to recover that day.

RM: You mentioned that James, the guy who ran the dredge, was actually high-grading?

BB: Yes. He got caught finally. I heard they caught him during his second trip to Mexico. He spent time in prison for it.

RM: Why did he take the gold to Mexico?

BB: In those days you couldn't own too much gold, so that was his only way out.

RM: Why didn't he fence it or something like that?

BB: I don't know. He probably had too much. [Laughter] With that dredge running 600 yards an hour, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, they must have had a 50-gallon drum of cons (concentrates) a day.

RM: And he couldn't make a front for himself, like saying the gold was from his own operation?

BB: No, this was too big of a deal. It hit every paper in the world—it was well known that they were running a dredge in the middle of the desert with little water.

RM: Where were the mining camps of Palo Alto and Central?

BB: That's Palo Alto Hill right there; we'll go on down.

RM: How did they discover the gold there?

BB: They were mining in Manhattan, and of course it was a dry camp at that time—none of the workings were deep enough to hit water. They came on down the gulch because there was a likely place to put in a well, and they formed a little camp called Central City; they were mining in Manhattan. They did hit water there because there was a water table right on bedrock. They hit a little gold there too, then they got to prospecting around and discovered Manhattan Gulch. Eventually the dredge came through and ate up what was left of Central City.

RM: Did Jim Larson ever show you where he worked in Manhattan during the Depression?

BB: Bruce Larson was out here a while back. He came down and we rode around a little bit and he showed me where they'd done a little bit of digging back by where I had my well. The Larsons had their own diggings just up this canyon where their dad or grandfather dug. They were up there digging on some hard rock. That family was raised here, and they did a little bit of mining in East Manhattan and all over, as I understand it.

RM: Is there gold in the tailings from the dredge?

BB: Yes, but you'd have to be able to handle about 400 or 500 yards an hour to run the top of the tailings. Once you got to the bottom, there'd be real good ore. It's something that's worth going after, but to run that amount, you would have to have a lot of water. That's why the thing lay here dormant for so long. They drilled wells; that's how they developed the water for the dredge, plus the mines of Manhattan were pumping water; there was a little stream running right down through Main Street. They were taking advantage of that, and they piped water across the valley from Peavine. Seyler Lake was actually a reservoir for their pumping station.

RM: And we can look out across there and see a big bank now. Is that the edge of the channel?

BB: Yes, that's where the dredge came through; that was one of their walls. There's quite a bit of gold still underneath all that.

RM: So a person could drift out under that?

BB: Yes, if you drive down through there, there are little tunnels in it. There are places down here where you'll find big canyons like that, with walls on both sides and no tailings. The dredge hit ribs and places where it couldn't go up into some of the little draws; they were cut off from some of the channels. The dredge had scrapers that ran ahead of it and they mined out a lot of areas like that, then they would bring the material over and dump it in front of the dredge.

There are places down here that actually look like hills—I'll point them out as we go. You'd think they were natural mountains, because they've already reclaimed themselves. If you didn't know it, you would think they were part of the terrain, but they're the old scraper tails.

RM: Were the scrapers also stripping the top layer of the gulch off, ahead of the dredge?

BB: Yes, they were. They were running everything with the dredge as they were coming up, but the scrapers were so far ahead of the dredge, they scraped off a lot of overburden. They also had equipment way ahead of the dredge that stripped all the brush. All of this brush you're looking at now was gone.

After they got rid of the brush, the scrapers stripped it down until they got into real good pay dirt and then they hauled it in front of the dredge. What we're driving on now is part of the scraper tailings. There are little hard-rock things all the way up and down on both sides, and every one of them has gold in it. All this gold didn't come from the main camp of Manhattan. It actually got seeded from every little draw here; there are little gold mines all the way down.

RM: Yes, you were saying that the Manhattan district is a lot of little veins and no big ore body.

BB: They mined it for ore bodies, but there never was anything that you would really call a disseminated ore body. A lot of the quartz stringers and small veins were close enough together so they could take it in a tonnage situation.

RM: How large is the mineralization zone in Manhattan? It's pretty good sized.

BB: Yes, I don't know how many miles it would have to be—four or five square miles.

RM: Is that an old tunnel over there?

BB: Yes. That's way above bedrock. There's a gravel, a false bedrock, they would call it—a patch of coarse gravel in there, and you'll find little lenses of gravel lying in there that have a little gold in them. They weren't real good, but they did have the gold.

RM: They could make a little something?

BB: Yes. Now here, we're on scraper tailings.

RM: Those scrapers were moving a lot, weren't they?

BB: Yes, they moved a lot. They were old scrapers drawn by old 'dozers—the old cable tools. Sometimes you find some pretty good places, where the scrapers actually got too deep and were digging the pay out before somebody got down there and did some panning.

But all these, like this hill here, are scraper tailings. Half those low rolling hills over there are scraper tailings.

RM: So the land does reclaim itself?

BB: Yes, it reclaims itself 100 percent.

RM: You were telling me about some of the environmental restrictions and problems that you have to deal with. Could you discuss that a little bit?

BB: Yes. It's tough. When you get a permit they give you pictures. I've got a drawer full of pictures of plants and things you're supposed to watch for. If you see them, stay away. Even old cans, like that old tin can, there—you're not even supposed to dig anywhere near that tin can. Anything over 40 years old they consider an artifact or historical.

It's basically a matter getting all your permits. And you're supposed to monitor your water constantly to make sure you're keeping it clean. Placer is the cleanest thing there is—you can drink the water coming out of my sluice box. But you have to watch out for any endangered species of a plant, animal, or anything. You have to reclaim everything and put it back just the way it was before.

RM: And you were saying that even if you're digging on something that was disturbed 70 years ago, when you sink a shovel into it... .

BB: It's yours, you just bought it and you have to reclaim it. Like where I'm digging right now—there was a pit that has been there since the days of the dredge. Yet, because I'm digging on it now, when I'm finished I have to put it back to pre-dredge condition. God knows what it was like pre-dredge; all we can do is guesstimate.

RM: Is this an old townsite here?

BB: Yes, there was an old camp in here at one time. I don't know if it had a name, but there were a few little houses and shacks in here. Some of them have disappeared just while I've been here. People have taken them for the lumber and so on.

RM: And then you were telling me about mining roads.

BB: As long as you're using a road and doing a little maintenance on it, even minimal maintenance, like keeping it to the point where you can use it, you're all right. Once you're finished with that, if you touch that road with a piece of equipment to fill in a washout or do anything like that, it's just like the rest of the stuff—you bought it. That's your road, and when you're finished, they want you to reclaim it, to get rid of the road completely.

RM: Even if the road was 90 years old?

BB: It doesn't matter how old the road was. If you're maintaining that road and using it to get to your mine, when you're finished, you're supposed to take it completely out and reclaim the land because they don't want the road there anymore. They just don't want anybody out here anymore, that's all there is to it.

Quite a few years ago, Esmeralda County got wind that the BLM was going to close off a lot of their roads because they didn't consider them high traffic, even though I can mention cases where they go right to patented property that belonged to people. The BLM was going to call them roadless because they were not maintained so the county took them over and they take a blade out there once a year and make a pass on it just to keep it open, because taxpayers are paying for property up at the end of that road.

RM: And the net effect of all of this is that slowly, there won't be roads.

BB: Yes. And that's what they want. That's just what they tried to do with Jefferson [Canyon]. That road's gone over the top of that mountain for years and years and years, but when it washed out it got to where they wouldn't let anybody fix it. They didn't want it fixed. And there's good mining property up there. There's deeded land up there and they didn't want anybody up there. That's how the county got into a lawsuit with them. They wanted to maintain the road, keep it open—that road's been there 100 years.

RM: Are we still on your ground here?

BB: No, we're off my ground; now we're on Russell ground, as they call this. They own the lower half of the property and I have the upper half.

RM: How many owners does the gulch have?

BB: There's a guy who has three claims out in the middle of it all, but there are just a few owners involved in the whole thing. The part I have was actually bought from the people who had the lower half years ago—Maude Goehring. She bought out a bunch of the original owners, and some of the people involved are still hanging on to the lower parts.

RM: Did she buy it after the dredge shut down?

BB: Yes. Now, this is all scraper pile. The canyon should be clean down there—these are all scraper piles.

RM: They're huge piles, aren't they?

BB: Oh, yes, those guys moved millions of yards of material. As I said, they had somebody going ahead, stripping all the brush, and then the scrapers came in and stripped the overburden, then they dumped it all over in the middle where the dredge could get to it as it came up. This is one of the scraper roads.

RM: Oh, that was his access, down there.

BB: Yes, that was the road where he came up. They circled and went down, you see. The channel turned right here. There's an old channel that goes down through here. Of course, there's an argument about whether it's the old channel or the new channel—God's probably the only one that would tell for sure—but there's gold in it too. The dredge didn't take it. There are little diggings all down through there and there's gold in it, too.

RM: And you say the pay streak is deep here? Or getting deeper?

BB: Yes, it's 100 feet deep in this area right here, 100 feet to bedrock.

RM: How deep would it be under the highway, would you say?

BB: I would guess it's 200 feet at minimum under the highway, and it probably goes on out for hundreds and hundreds of feet after that. There's been some drilling—where the dredge started down here, there's a shaft there that, I think, was about 115 feet deep.

RM: Is the pay streak better up there, or is it good all the way down?

BB: It's pretty good all the way. It was actually richer on the top part—you got into your bigger nuggets and things up there, and it wasn't quite as deep. Down here, it spread out more; up above, we have anywhere from one foot on up to six feet of pay. Down here the pay gravels could get up to 30 feet thick, and it's all finer gold. It'd be a little harder to recover; it's smaller particles and so on. The gold would be a little purer down here. Up there at the mine it starts at about 640 fine, and by the time you get to my area, it's averaging 750. Down here it gets up to probably 760, 780.

RM: Why is it richer down here?

BB: The natural acids and things in the soil and the water action and everything cleaned the gold a little bit better.

RM: Is this an old shaft?

BB: Yes, this is one of the old shafts. There's hardly a dump here, and most of them won't even have a dump. The shafts were sunk by the dredge company ahead of the dredge for sampling purposes. They came and hauled them and ran them; they ran the whole dump for testing. They went down pretty deep and took some pretty good ore out of it. It's called the Nelson shaft.

RM: And it's down at the end of the tailings, right?

BB: Yes, it's about where the dredge started. This was some more of their workings. As you can see, there's no dump. You'd think that wasn't deep, but if you go up there it'll be 100 feet deep or better. That's the way all these are. And this old cabin up here, this old tin thing you see ahead of us, is where the old-timers had that shaft and were working when the dredge came through and flooded them out. It floated them right on out. That was when the dredge first started. They dug a big pit down here and assembled it right in the pit.

RM: How did the guys who were digging by hand here in the Depression do financially?

BB: They did okay. This is not like the Eastern states. A lot of people out here in this country didn't really realize there was a depression on. That's our problem right now—we're still trying to be self-supporting. We don't try to depend on everybody out here, and a lot of these people didn't know any different. They'd take their gold and go over and trade it to a rancher for a cow or something. It's just like the way the dredge ran right on through the Depression. The only bank in the country that didn't close during the Depression was the Bank of Ely. All the sheepmen and shepherders and so forth kept that thing open. People didn't even know there was a depression in this country. If you wanted to work, you'd eat.

RM: Where was the shaft then?

BB: It was right in here. You find pieces of concrete and junk.

RM: these banks really stand well, don't they?

BB: Yes, this is hard ground. the old-timers drilled and blasted a lot on this gravel. I've been in workings here where the rooms are probably 30 feet in diameter. It gives you an awful feeling, being in them, but they held good. Down here in the bottom they had underground cemented gravel that was really hard; we don't run into that up here. But when I mined underground here for that one year, we just mined with picks and shovels, we didn't drill and blast, and that gravel was so hard that we mined the bedrock. It's just a schist; we actually dug out the bedrock with picks and shovels, then dropped the gravel into it. Another reason we did that is that some of your best pay ore is in the top 12 inches of bedrock.

RM: Because it has worked its way down?

BB: Yes, the bedrock is all fractured. It's just schist, and it's so fractured the gold will go right down in the cracks. I actually went into an old-timer's tunnel with a metal detector where they had taken two feet of bedrock, and I found an ounce-and-a-quarter nugget a foot deeper into the bedrock, down a crack. I don't know if any geologist would want to argue with me or not, but I can tell from the difference in the bedrock here when I'm mining if it's going to get rich or not.

And I can find places where I actually think some of that old schist had decomposed because of the water; as I said, the wet channel runs through here. It's dried up since; that's why some of the areas I'm mining now I couldn't mine 10 years ago - they had been under water. This drought did help in that sense. I can see where some of those places were, and I think that old schist actually just turned to mud, then it dried and sort of went back together. I've got some real unusual stuff. It really gets rich when it's like that.

RM: And if you go back 11,000 years ago, this area was a lot wetter than it is now.

BB: Yes. There's a wet channel that runs right underneath all this anyway, even now. Some of the stuff I'm mining on the benches now is material the old-timers couldn't handle because it was underwater.

RM: If it gets wet again here, will that mess you up?

BB: Yes, but it's not too bad; it usually doesn't make that much water. Twelve years ago we got a 6-1/2-ounce nugget out of a spot where I was working. I was contracting the mining for an outfit that was out here doing it. I went to town for a couple of days and came back and found that they had my equipment working under three feet of water because it was so rich. I stopped them right then; I pulled my equipment out, and wouldn't let them do that anymore. We just went around that wet channel and now that it has dried out I've cleaned it out and done real well.

RM: Are there any old tunnels we can go into?

BB: Yes, there's one right up here a little ways.

RM: They didn't lose many men here in accidents, did they?

BB: No, just two that I know of. Two guys got caved on here years ago, and they left them. I know the area they were in. They figured the dredge probably got them, because the area that they were supposed to have been caved on is no longer under dredge tails. They were brothers. I know one of them had a gold watch, and I've always watched for a gold watch.

RM: I've got one account from newspapers of the time of an explosion that killed two guys, but I don't think the Manhattan mines lost that many. Larson told me the guys who worked in the shafts were pretty sharp, and they knew what they were doing.

BB: Well, I only knew of those two. Norman Coombs would remember their names—we talk about them once in a while. I've gotten senile in the last two or three minutes here. [Laughter] That dredge was all electric, you know. It's a wonder that somebody didn't get fried on it, but I never heard of that happening to anybody.

RM: Yes, and with all that water. You also mentioned yesterday that they kept the dredge open in World War II and they got some of the older men who were hard-rock miners.

BB: They had planned on making three to four passes here. They came up the gut and right back there where my plant was is where the dredge was when the war broke out. That's why there's so much virgin ground up here.

When they got the old reprobates and the guys who couldn't go to war to run the dredge, they wouldn't allow them to swing the dredge back and forth; they made them go in a straight line because it was electric and they were afraid they'd hit the cables.

I could show you the exact area up here where the war broke out. And you can see where the boat went straight ahead, because there are some pretty good spots on both sides of them.

RM: And why was it they just went straight up the gulch?

BB: It was quite an art, putting in a dead man—you see, the boat wasn't self-propelled. They moved that boat with winches and dead men and stuff, and they weren't that educated in it, and they didn't think the war was going to last that long, so they just told them to go straight ahead. If they did try to swing the boat at all, they were afraid the guys on it would mess up and hit the electrical cable. It went underwater and came on up to the boat, and you had to have a tender on it to know right where it was every second. Because if that digging ladder ever hit it, that'd be the end of that.

RM: So consequently they just made one pass straight up the channel and left all this ore on the sides, right?

BB: Yes, they left all the material on the sides. It was pretty tough, digging underwater like that. There's probably a lot of virgin ground right underneath the tailings that they didn't get, just because the bedrock is so uneven; it's not like it was on a level plane. They would hit ribs—there are places I could show you where they went through 10, 15 feet of bedrock ribs trying to get through it. And they actually did; it actually chewed it up.

RM: And then other times they were above it?

BB: Yes, and other times they may have gone over the rib and just completely missed what was on the other side of it.

RM: A good dredge operator can read that, can't he?

BB: Yes, you can watch the muck coming up. You've got all your different silt layers, sand layers, clay layers, and when you get to the real pay, you get into the big boulders and the gravel, where they figure the bigger gold was, in a lot of cases. You had to have tenders on that too, because there'd be times there when they'd pull up a boulder so big on one of the buckets that if they were to drop it into the dredge, it'd go right through the bottom of it and just destroy all the equipment.

There's a story that they hit a big one up towards town, right below the mine—a great big boulder. You could see bands of gold in, and they moved the dredge over and laid it on the bank. I heard stories that the dredge master said, "I don't want to see that thing there in the morning." I guess a bunch of the old guys came out that night, and the next day there wasn't even a chip left. They carved that boulder to get the little stringers out of it.

Now we'll go down in the canyon up here. There's a road—we'll drop right down in there.

RM: We're on the south side of the canyon now, aren't we? Is there any ore under here?

BB: There are spots where there is, but all their shafts were sunk out of here, plus they drilled it, too. The dredge had a drill rig. They did some drilling out here, and there are places where it was too deep. They may have thought it would be 100 feet deep out here, and they'd come out and it was 200 feet deep. There are a lot of cases where they didn't even hit bedrock with their drills. There are deeper channels outside of the canyons.

RM: Why wouldn't there be gold in them?

BB: There could be, but they did sink a couple shafts and found nothing. It's tough, because placer is impossible. I've dug along on bedrock up there and had absolutely nothing, and 10 feet later you've got solid metal. The only way to really sample placer and do it right would be to drill holes on 12-inch centers, because it's not uniform. It's not like a vein; it's going to fall in natural riffles.

RM: Describe how you think the gold was laid down. Was it huge torrents of water coming down here with the gulch acting as a giant sluice?

BB: That's pretty close, yes. Different eras came through here—a lot of this high bench stuff I'm running is from the ancient channels. Later, waters came down and washed deeper channels. That big nugget I got was on a real high bench; there were only eight feet of backs on it. I figured there might be more in there, so we took 1,000 yards of that material and barely broke even—there was just hardly anything in it. What I believe happened there is that probably the later waters came down and moved everything off of that bench but it couldn't move that big nugget. I've found similar cases that would prove that theory, too, where the ancient channels are not as good as the later ones.

RM: And it was all coming out of this deposit up in this area?

BB: Yes, it's all Manhattan stuff. Most of it probably came off of Big Four Hill.

RM: How do you know that?

BB: You can tell by the characteristics of the gold. When I get gold nuggets, I can tell what mine a lot of that gold came from. You can tell just by the character of the gold, the fineness of gold, and mainly the rock that the gold's in—the gang rock.

RM: What are some characteristics of Big Four Hill gold?

BB: Most Big Four was a schist. It's all in adularia.

RM: What's that?

BB: It looks a lot like quartz. It can be mistaken for quartz, so you could probably call it quartz and nobody'd argue with you. And the gold there is typical of Manhattan; the gold here is all crystals and wires and leaves and stuff. Even the big nuggets we get here, if you really glass them with a high-powered glass, you'll see that they're not a solid slug of gold like you see in California. They're actually a whole mass of wires and leaves and flakes that got rolled together and compressed. You get some beautiful jewelry-grade stuff. I've had wires up to an inch long that I get out of the placer constantly. I've had leaves that will show all the little veins and crystals in it.

RM: Did Big Four produce most of the gold here?

BB: Mainly, yes. We have the White Caps and all those up there, but the White Caps didn't have free gold, whereas the Amalgamated and the Manhattan Con (Consolidated) had free gold. But it was a whiter gold. There are just too many of them to mention.

In this gulch, actually, there are little draws all the way with little hard-rock mines that actually put gold into the gulch. You can pretty much tell by the gold where it came from, by how rounded it is, how far it's traveled. You have to get the bigger gold to know where it came from. But anything of any size is a half-breed—it has gang rock in with it—and you can tell by the gang rock where it comes from. I've actually found nuggets here that came right out in the old bull quartz and rose quartz. This area never produced any of that, which shows it's either something that's still buried or else it's something that was there that completely eroded away.

RM: I see. You were going to talk about the barite here.

BB: Yes, the barites in the placers of Manhattan are a real good indicator. There are no producing barite mines in Manhattan, but there were probably little veins all over at one time. You can get a little barite smell in assays up there, but the gravels are really full of barite placers. In fact they're actually a problem, because when you get in real good ore, it is so full of barite, the barite will actually clog up the sluice box. I've had times when the sluice box actually filled all the riffles with barite and I had to stop and clean it out.

RM: Is the barite heavy?

BB: Yes, it's really heavy. And it's a real good indicator, because if you don't have barite here, you don't have gold. And when you're sampling and panning, if you're starting to see barite nuggets in your pans, it makes the old heart start beating, because you know there's going to be gold in that pan. Being so heavy, it'll concentrate.

RM: And if you're not getting it, you know that it's probably going to be barren?

BB: Yes. Sometimes you can get a little bit of gold, but the rich stuff is with the barites. The dredge never came through the area we're in now—we've got walls on both sides of us. Here's a scraper road. There are more ribs, and those are dredge tails.

RM: But it didn't come up here?

BB: No, it came up over there. Those are the stackers, but the dredge probably got to the other side. There are little tunnels in here, too. The old-timers checked this out—it's not very good. You can get a color of gold now and then.

RM: If I dropped you down here and said, "Okay, let's find a new place to dig," what would be the steps that you would go through?

BB: You look for logical places, like behind the hard ribs that came through. The gravel will always make on the inside corner after it goes around the rib. The inside corners are usually pretty good because the gold gets hung up there. And if you find old diggings you can pan their dumps, because nobody gets 100 percent recovery. You pan some of the old-timers' dumps, and if you don't get a color of gold in those dumps, there's nothing there. I've found piles that the old-timers had left that made good ore.

Also down here you can find these old shafts, and if you see screened material there, you know that they had a little plant. I've also rescreened some of that stuff, because when you get to bedrock here, you'll get a moisture content, and those guys were pulling that out and screening it while it was still a little moist. I've found some piles like that that had already been screened. Now that they've laid out in the sun, I can rescreen them and take the fines, and the fines will just knock your socks off sometimes. They didn't do a good job of screening it because of the moisture.

See this rib right here, this little hump? The scraper went on over that and picked it up, but a scraper can't pick it all up, so you can go look in those little cracks and crevices and you'll see the gravel in it. Now, that'll pan. I've taken samples of that and they show there's gold everywhere in this gulch. It's just trying to find an area that's good enough to pay.

I've got a bunch of barite nuggets up here that I've panned that I pick out and give to people, to show them what it is. I had kids from Round Mountain School come over one time—two busloads of sixth graders—to watch the plant run. I've had quite a few people come over just to watch it. A lot of them are Round Mountain Mine people because they don't get to see

this kind of stuff. They work in the biggest heap-leach operation in the world and they never get to see the gold.

That was a separate channel there. They came through there with the scraper. The dredge went up over there. There's a rib right there, and they couldn't get through it.

RM: Oh, that hill is a rib?

BB: Yes, that's just a rib. There's pay gravel on it, but with the higher rib they'd have had to fill the new pond full enough to take it. They no doubt sampled it, and they probably decided it wasn't worth taking out, and they were going to get it on the way back. There are numerous things like that here. That's why there's so much gold left.

RM: How many small guys are running an operation here besides you?

BB: I don't know of any others, but there are no doubt some around. I think there are guys out fiddling around with dry washers and metal detectors. Northern Nevada's full of little placer things. The Lovelock country usually has a little operation going. But I don't know if there are actually any one-or two- or three-man operations, like I have. Most of those guys lease them to people like I've got this leased to, where they've got 15, 20 workers.

RM: Was the dredge very profitable, even with all of the high-grading that went on?

BB: Yes, they still made pretty good money.

RM: I've always wondered why Lou Gordon didn't take harsh measures to deal with the high-grading at Round Mountain.

BB: Most of the owners knew what was going on; most everybody realizes that with the wages in those days they didn't mind somebody taking a little bit if they had a family.

RM: But in Goldfield, they called out the National Guard, basically.

BB: That was bad. I actually saw some high-grading here in Manhattan just a few years ago that put the guy out of business—that's what's bad. It was a little stock operation. They were really trying to make it, and one of their trusted employees stole enough gold that even though he thinks it was a minor amount, if they'd had that much more money, the stockholders would have come up with more money the next year and let him go back in operation.

RM: This is a rib, here, isn't it?

BB: Yes. See all the bedrock ribs in here? That's why the dredge couldn't get in here. They couldn't handle this, so this is all mined with scrapers.

RM: But you say the scrapers can't get it all?

BB: No, there's still good gold in here. I've sampled this.

RM: How would you dig this right here? (We're looking at a bank about 10 feet high.) BB: You would strip it off the top. I dug right there. Look at the boulder that came out with the gravel. When you get down there you hit gravel—you can see where bedrock is. You can see the big boulder pile. If a person dug into that, I'll bet they'd find that it's really rich. It's behind this outcrop, and like I was telling you earlier, the gold makes behind it. It will deposit some in front, but the bulk of the gold will actually get behind it and wash in it. Do you see the gravel hanging on the face? I sampled it right here—see the hole?

RM: Yes.

BB: Now you can see the gravel down in that hole. See where it becomes gravel? Now, that's got good gold.

RM: And again, you're in front of that rib?

BB: Yes, you're in front. There's probably just a gravel thing that may have come in sideways here. But you see the gravel? See where I started getting in the gravel, and the pile on the right?

RM: Yes, there it is.

BB: That's your indicator. If you dig like that, in a lot of cases, you won't have the gravel. If you don't have the gravel, don't bother to sample it.

RM: You're constantly falling into old diggings, aren't you, with your equipment? BB: As we're working, we're constantly falling in old diggings. The only good thing is that you usually have only about six or eight feet to fall at the most, so it doesn't hurt you, but it makes you go home and change your pants. There are times we've had to get another piece of equipment to pull it out, even.

You can see that gravel up there—there's a little bit in it. They were actually a little bit high right there. In a lot of cases, what you see is not really an indicator that they were high; it's been caving over the years.

RM: But the shaft could have been back here?

BB: Yes, the shaft could have been anyplace in this draw. They would drop into a draw like this with a shaft, then they'd cross-cut and try to hit a natural riffle or try to hit the channel. Actually, what we're looking at now is not a rib. See how high the bedrock is on the other side? That's how much bedrock they took out of here, probably because it had so much gold down in it. And you can see what they're on—that rib runs up. See that bedrock real high and under that tunnel? That's bedrock way up there.

RM: Oh, so they cut right through it?

BB: That's why they dug there. See the coarse boulders in the gravel? That's a logical place. Because boulders settled in there, so quite possibly the gold did, too.

RM: Yes. That was a part of an old shaft? The dredge would have dredged that.

BB: They used scrapers, probably, to cut right across that. There are probably shafts in here.

RM: And again, it's arched, isn't it?

BB: Yes, they're all arched. They have to arch them in the gravel. Even when I'm ripping with or pushing with a Cat, it's so uneven, you can't go like this to follow it, so you've got to just take it all and make a flat blade so you can catch all the riffles.

RM: So you're taking the high points?

BB: Yes, you've got to chop them off; that's why you see things like this. Maybe the bedrock was way low up there and way low right down here, and they had no choice; they can't go like this.

RM: This is sure a nice pickup.

BB: Yes, I usually drive that old Dodge; I've got 200,000 miles on it. I use it for my beater, but this has got air conditioning; I'm getting fat and lazy. [Laughter] Here's your water line. They pump all the way up to that plant.

RM: Is their plant up there?

BB: No, their plant's that big one we came by. They pump this all the way up there. Right across over there I had a property I just drove down. It had a little tunnel, a small diggings. There's high-grade there, just a small streak, but you can see the gold. And you can see the fine gold scattered through the rock.

RM: So it was feeding in from the sides. too?

BB: Yes, it actually got fed all the way down. You get a variety of gold when you're placering. You'll get some stuff that's damn near 800 fine and then you'll get some that's 500. It just came from all over.

RM: How far down is the fault that made the valley here? I know that a large fault split the Round Mountain deposit.

BB: Well, Round Mountain is all in volcanics, and the stuff here is all sediments. There's gold in the volcanics here also, like Bald Mountain and all that. East Manhattan has sediments with quartz veins in the limestone that are super rich. And there are little intrusives through there of the volcanic stuff, with gold values in them. You can see values in it—free gold.

RM: Are the volcanics on top of the sediments here?

BB: Yes, that pushed on up through all this stuff—the sediments. You can find some sediments in this area, some of this stuff just standing straight on edge. Some of this shale will be standing straight up and down. There's a real interesting fold in the limestone down there—the old draw we didn't go down. It really looks neat; you can see where the volcanic action really crunched it. It's almost picturesque.

They also pump water out of there. There's a winze in their shaft, and they pump water to their little plant. That was silver. It does have some gold value, but it was a lead silver. The digging on the hill here was called the William Patrick. It's deeded land, and it was predominantly silver; no gold at all. And there's little a tungsten, a little scheelite. RM: Do you think there are other deposits around here that people haven't found? BB: I think there are; there's probably some stuff here that's buried. You can find little placers in places where there shouldn't be any—there's no lode above it. There are two ways to look at it: Either it's still there buried someplace or it was there and it's all eroded away. RM: Are we on your ground again now?

BB: Yes, we're on my ground now. We'll drive on up here. This is what they call Georgie Hill. All the little draws all the way around that little hill, clean from the top on down, have gold placer in them. The old-timers dry-washed every little draw completely around that hill.

RM: So there was a vein on top that eroded away?

BB: Probably—that's what I think. There's a guy in town who thinks the gravels were that deep at one time and that they came down and had that covered up. But I don't think so, because it's a real poor gold, it's a different-looking gold. And it hasn't traveled because it is in crystal form. It's real fine crystals and wires that haven't traveled at all.

RM: Wire doesn't travel well, does it?

BB: No. A lot of the stuff you'll find here, the wires and things, may have traveled a long ways, and may have been in the rock and rotted out of the rock.

RM: Have we come to your outfit now?

BB: Yes. That pit over there produced some real high-grade. The dredge couldn't get into it because it was completely surrounded by a rib so they went around it. I have less hassles with the feds because this is on private land.

RM: Oh, the rest of it that you have claimed is federal land?

BB: Yes, this out here is all claims. That's my water storage tank—my well is where that power pole is.

RM: Is it a pretty good well?

BB: It's not too bad. These guys sort of ruined it; they fired it up three times one year while the pipeline was frozen, and I think they hurt the pump. I think now it's making about 50 gallons a minute.

RM: How deep did you say it is?

BB: We went 400. That's why I put the storage tank there. I used to be able to run off this smaller storage tank, and that well wasn't making enough when I started running 60s—I ran 10 yards an hour. With that bigger tank I can run all day and never run out of water. If the well shut down I could still make it a day on just storage.

RM: How much water do you use?

BB: I use 75 gallons a minute. This is my stockpile area.

RM: You say you built this out of scrap?

BB: Yes, just scrap pieces I picked up here and there. I got the bin for cleaning it out of a guy's yard. The belt came out of the old Bird's Market in Tonopah—they used it to haul the groceries upstairs for storage. The trommel was abandoned up in Ophir Canyon from a mining outfit I had tungsten property leased to. The lower half of the rocker is real old; it was built, I believe, by Skook Berg years ago. I bought that and then I built the other part of it and I just stuck them both together.

RM: So this actually rocks? It's not a sluice box per se, is it? A sluice doesn't really rock, does it?

BB: No, you could call it a rocker. You could call it a long tom because of the length.

RM: The long toms rocked, didn't they?

BB: Yes. But this thing has a real violent action; that's why I have such a big screen. It actually keeps my riffles clear. These riffles came out of the dredge.

RM: The same riffles?

BB: Yes, only they were probably three or four feet wide. We cut them up and had to rebuild them—put new lips on them. They're Hungarian riffles. They're rubber. I've worn them

completely off once and had to rebuild them, put on new lips. Sharp bedrock would just eat up this rubber. It drops on that and the big nuggets stop right in the top three feet. There's very little on down there.

RM: Very little in the lower 10 feet?

BB: Yes.

RM: And this whole things rocks from where it's fed in, doesn't it? What does it do? Does it run out over here?

BB: Yes, the reason I have a tailing setup like this is because some guys were bringing their big trucks through here, so I had to bury this pipe. It runs into my tail pond here and I muck this out about once a year. When it gets filled up, the water'll decant off into that other pond and I can recirculate it. I don't really have to because it will drop right into the ground and go back into the well.

RM: How big is your trommel screen?

BB: I run a one-inch screen on mine. My rejects go off here. I push it out there—about a six-inch layer—once a day. That's one day's run, right there.

RM: And how many yards is that?

BB: That's 60 yards that I run just to get this little pile that probably isn't eight yards. I have a grizzly I carry around.

RM: Oh, so you screen right there?

BB: Yes, I screen three-inch minus. That way I'm not hauling waste down here. I push this stuff out there and then I go over it with a metal detector. I've found up to 3-1/2-ounce nuggets in the trommel rejects.

RM: Do you go over it after you've spread it out?

BB: Yes. It takes me about five minutes to spread it out; and for another five minutes, while the plant's running, I'll go over it with a metal detector.

RM: What an interesting operation.

BB: It's real nice. One guy can actually run it. You run your butt off, but one guy can do it. I usually have an extra guy. I've got a seat on the bin; you can see up there. He sits there just in case I mess up and happen to pick up a big boulder someplace. And we get some damp muck sometimes and it won't slide in the bin, it'll pull a hole down in the bin. He sits there and makes

sure it keeps going. While I'm out mucking tailings and so on, he watches the whole operation, and if there's an emergency he can shut off the whole plant.

This is all electric. I ran it with generators for years and that was really tough. My biggest bottleneck and my biggest headache was the generator. Now I have commercial power. You don't see it because I buried everything But now I can come down here, and if I want to fire up at 6:00 in the morning, it takes five minutes to get going.

RM: Is it hard to keep everything running, mechanically?

BB: You'll have a problem now and then, but no, this thing runs real sweet.

RM: How about your loader and truck and so on?

BB: It's all in pretty good shape. It's my own equipment so I treat it like it's a baby.

RM: And it feeds this water from that tank into this one?

BB: Yes. I keep this one shut off in case something should happen. I'm not even using it right now, I'm bypassing it. I have a big valve in there. We were talking about how I made the plant of hand-me-downs. I traded an old claw-foot bathtub for that reject belt.

RM: How long have you had it like this?

BB: I had it down below when I was taking advantage of the ponds, but that eight-year drought dried up everything and I ran out of water. And down there it was on BLM land, and we had no power to it.

RM: The water just sinks right back in the gulch, doesn't it?

BB: Yes, it'll drop right back. Theoretically, it probably goes right back into the well. I'm probably running the recirculating just by accident.

RM: How many yards can you get on your truck?

BB: I haul 14. It'll actually haul more, but 14's enough weight for it.

RM: And how many yards a day did you say you process?

BB: Sixty.

RM: So, about four trucks?

BB: Yes. I'd run my butt off I'd run up and start this gasoline motor and gas it up and then haul a load over, then gas this one, then the generator would go out. This commercial power is real

nice, and now, after all these years, I've got all the bugs out. This thing can sit here all winter long, then I come down in the spring and punch a button and the whole thing's running and I'm standing waiting for something to fly apart and it won't.

RM: What year is this Ford?

BB: That old Ford is a '67, I think. When I put that up, I did it all in about an hour. Those guys came over, and they couldn't believe it. How could I build them that fast? You've just got to think. [Laughs] And they spent about three grand, and it took them about two weeks.

RM: You've achieved the dream of most of the old prospectors and miners who ever came into these hills. This is what they wanted.

BB: What makes me sick. Louie Meyers was a mining partner of mine for years, he and my stepdad, George Boscovich. This was their dream also, and they never lived to see this. It's a nice little setup, and it's neater than hell. I just wish this whole gulch was patented so I wouldn't have half the hassles. And it would make it so much cheaper to run.

RM: There's no way you could patent it now?

BB: It's nearly impossible, they've got it so tied up. Right here, in the area we're in right now, is where the dredge was when the war broke out. I have the old dredge maps that show the progress of the dredge and all the dates, values, and yardage of where they were on it; it's all on the topo map. They were right here when the war broke out, and we're on virgin ground now. Over there, all that is virgin ground—that's where they're mining I mined it for a few years. The dredge came through here and they weren't allowed to swing it, so all this is virgin.

RM: So there's gold under here?

BB: Yes, we're driving over gold now. It's something the dredge didn't get because they weren't allowed to swing it.

RM: And it's not that deep?

BB: No, there's a bench here; this is only about 15, 20 feet deep. It's about 35 feet deep over there. Actually, they claim they had five feet of gravel that ran an ounce, five feet thick. I didn't believe the old-timer who told me, and I went prospecting and I found where he had a little pile under a brush—a washtub full—and took it up and ran it through my gold hound, and calculated, and it calculated an ounce, dead on. I'm the only one who knows where it is right now.

RM: Why are you not working that?

BB: It's 35 feet deep and I don't know if I can afford to work that deep. I probably could if it's that good, but what's scary about it is, what if they worked it all out?

RM: You mean, it's all tunneled under there?

BB: Yes, but I don't think it is. They were drifting on it while the dredge was coming, and they got caught, and they were run out of it at gunpoint because they were sniping it.

RM: And this is one of their holes?

BB: This is the Depression-era stuff The guys down here that I have this property leased to mined from that bank right to about in here. They mined this out, and it wasn't good enough for them. They have to run so much yardage, and they lost their butts on it. I came back and wanted to sample what was left. I took one bucketful out of their wall and dumped it on the ground, took two pannings out of it, and it wasn't very good. A friend of mine was with me and he asked me to show him how the metal detector worked. I said, "We can't do it here." He said, "Show me anyway."

I got out and I said, "Okay, damn it," turned it on, and I zapped this thing. I thought, "Well, something broke off of my loader, probably a tooth," dug in there, and it was a six-ounce nugget.

Well, I couldn't believe it, so I took three or four more pannings, and I mined 1,000 yards of that material and I was right the first time; it was no good. It just had that one nugget. There was gold there; I was breaking even every day. But they had to leave this. Everything you're looking at here is pillar. That's breaking into a working.

RM: This is what a pillar looks like, down here?

BB: You can see how they rip-rapped their rock; that's what they did to their big rocks. Instead of hauling it all outside, they put it in their last working. It's hard to see without a light, but that's a hole that goes back. This is a pillar; this whole thing is nothing but pillars. They mined out this whole thing for 200 yards that way. I took that out because it was really rich.

RM: So they were working in high-grade here?

BB: Yes, this is pretty high-grade, and it was shallow; it was easy to get. This whole thing is a honeycomb. Look at this rock work. They went out that way until they ran out of ore. That way, they didn't have to haul their waste out.

RM: Were they working out of a shaft here or did they drift in on it?

BB: No, there was a tunnel down here, just around the corner; they drifted in and did all this as a tunnel. They could lay in something like this in the dead of winter and work and take it home and just wash it in their dishpan if they wanted.

RM: It was hard work, wasn't it?

BB: It was tough, because this is hard—you try to get a sample out of that with a pick.

RM: Did they blast this?

BB: A lot of this stuff they did drill and blast, yes. But you can see how well it holds. I have never seen a stick of timber in here. And they kept this small because there are no monstrous boulders here, and pea gravel is deadlier than the other stuff for falling. I have actually seen workings here that are 30 feet in diameter.

RM: It's been holding all these years.

BB: Yes. It gives you a funny feeling, though, because you reach over and try to get a sample off bedrock and it starts raining dirt.

RM: I like that sound underground—that muffled sound.

BB: My sampling virtually costs me nothing because I sample as I go. I do all my ore control, everything. I've won bets that I can come within nickels and dimes of the actual recovery that day.

RM: Probably that's part of the secret of your success.

BB: It probably helps a little bit, just to know what you're doing.

RM: Yes, because you're not doing a lot of dead work.

BB: Yes. I hired out with a Canadian group down here one time and they had a mining engineering outfit out of Montana taking samples, melting them down, weighing them, and everything. I took the same exact sample, did the exact same thing with a gold pan, and gave them my results before they got theirs back. The worst I was ever off was 25 cents.

RM: That's what's called knowing your ore, isn't it?

BB: I've run tens of thousands of yards of this stuff, and I've probably panned a hundred yards.

RM: What made that riffle there?

BB: It's just flash flooding. Now, you can read the ground to get a pretty good idea of what was happening. This right here is bedrock. It dipped down and made a swale right there. Now you come over here, and you can see, the gravel's gone? Like I say, there's no gravel all the way through here. It flooded through here.

RM: Oh, and it poured out?

BB: Yes, and right in here it started up and there's a little lens of gravel in there. Now, this I can't mess with. I can't afford to go after it.

RM: Right, because you'd have to strip it?

BB: Yes. A small guy, digging by hand, could look for something like that.

RM: Their workings don't go over this far, do they? Does it go over this way at all?

BB: Yes, but every one of their tunnels will end . . . go through here and come out about a hundred yards away. They probably took that stuff out. Did you ever get to meet George Rong?

RM: No, I didn't. I think I've heard his name.

BB: He was one of the old-timers on the Manhattan dredge; he was a neat old guy. He'd tell me, "Bob, if anything happens to me, come get this one area, because this is where I dry-wash, and it's still going to be pretty good." I hauled a truckload out of there. It was pretty good stuff This is where I got the big nugget, right here. In fact, it was gravel there. See, that's bedrock, and the gravel's only about a foot thick. There's gold in it, but this just wouldn't pay.

RM: Do you think that nugget got caught there?

BB: Yes, I think it was just too big for the water to move. I think this is the ancient channel.

RM: Are we on a bank here?

BB: This is a high bench. We're parked right on bedrock. In fact, I took a foot or so of bedrock out of here. A friend of mine dug this hole the other day and took it home and built himself a little sluice box, and he got about 20 bucks worth of gold out of there and the rest of this whole thing didn't pay. And what a gravy thing—there was nothing to the stripping. I could strip it all in one day. The old-timers dry washed all these little draws in here, too.

There was big gold back up in that hill, there. That's called Black Mammoth. There's turquoise on the back side and gold on the front side of it. This is my pit, the one I just recently ran out of good ore in. I've been mining this one for two years—I took some awful high-grade out of this.

RM: Again, it's up on a bench, isn't it?

BB: Yes, it's high bench.

RM: Is this the end of the dredge's run?

BB: No, the dredge went to Echo Bay's pit.

RM: And you worked here for two years?

BB: Yes, all this has been mined out. I've already backfilled it all. I just try to move my hole around so when I reclaim it I don't have so much muck to move. When I stripped over there, I filled in this part. Right now we're probably about five feet above bedrock. And that's bedrock, right down there. That pile there is a pile of ore I pushed up. It's not real good; I don't even think I'll take it. There's a hill behind it. That hill starts to go up there, so there's no gold.

RM: It's bedrock going up, yes.

BB: It raises.

RM: How far this way did you go?

BB: No farther than what you're looking at. That gravel's all going out. Here's bedrock, and there's no gravel there. There was a little lens—there are little lenses in here that are real good riffles.

See where those big boulders are on that corner? There's a little pocket of gravel in there that is really rich, but I just can't afford to mine it with a Cat. A guy could come down here with a pick and a shovel. . . .

RM: And you've got your own 'dozer?

BB: Yes, that's mine.

RM: Does that cut through it pretty well?

BB: Oh, yes, it'll walk right through it. In fact, you have to rip it all the way down until you get into the gravel and then you don't rip any more. So when you get down here, you try to keep a halfway clean face because if you rip it, it'll break up like that.

RM: Oh, and it'll drop down?

BB: Yes. So then you've got to take that much more bedrock.

RM: How much of the top did you take?

BB: I didn't. I tried running this just for fun because this is a rare occasion right here; there's gold in that stuff. The top ten feet will run as much as the bottom 10 feet here, which is about .025, 03, which isn't good enough for me.

RM: What's the minimum that you take?

BB: I try to keep it around .05. That is pretty good ore. Then I had a breakdown the next week, and it cost me \$10,000 to fix the Cat. That's the trouble with mining. People look at my gold and say, "Jesus, you must. . . ." I tell them if gold were \$1,000 an ounce, I might break even. But as long as I'm careful, keeping my operation small, everybody keeps saying, "Why don't you go bigger, why don't you hire somebody to mine for you so, so you can run all the time?" Then you're looking at all the insurances, all the extra headaches, the extra rules and regulations you have to bow under. I'd rather keep it small. I've been laid up for the last month with health problems. I haven't been running real steady, but I didn't have to lay off a crew. I could just flip a switch, turn the plant off, and go home.

RM: Or you can say, "I don't think I'll go to work today."

BB: Yes, that's what's sort of nice. I don't have an abundance of equipment. I don't have spares, I've got just exactly what I need. If one thing goes down, I just shut down, fix it, and go back to work when it's done.

RM: Can you do your own mechanic work?

BB: Yes, I do all my own mechanic work. I had my own shops in Tonopah for years.

RM: Will you point out the Reliance Mine when we go by it? Is it on the left side of the road?

BB: No, there is a new Reliance on the left. I knew one of the guys who discovered the Reliance—Antone Johnson. He was my neighbor in Tonopah. They were working placer and when they were on bedrock, working that placer, they hit the Reliance vein. They took a little pocket out of it, and they were afraid it would go out on them, so they left it for bait and then sold it, and then the new outfit turned around and took another million out. [Laughs]

RM: Would you give me a running tour of the mines along the way as we go up the gulch?

BB: This is Wolftone Point, right here.

RM: Right to the north of the big pit tailings?

BB: Yes; it's actually to the west.

RM: What's the one right over here, the first gallows frame?

BB: This is the Gold Metals. That's been drilled out lately. There's a good vein down there of high-grade ore. It's not pitable but it's good enough to go underground, and there's a promotion going on right now; I think they're going to go after it. There's placer back up in there, too.

RM: Oh, there is? Back to the north?

BB: Yes, there's a little placer back up in there that came off Mustang Hill.

RM: Now where's Mustang?

BB: This is Mustang.

RM: Okay, Mustang is the first hill we come to on the left in town.

BB: There was a stamp mill right there—I don't remember the name of it right now.

RM: And what do you call this pit?

BB: This was the War Eagle Mill, this big one here. This is Echo Bay's west pit. The Reliance was right here.

RM: So the Reliance is gone?

BB: Actually, part of it's still behind us back there—under the dredge tails. They were drifting down that way. The vein ran on down towards the Gold Metals; there was a regular camp there, with housing and everything. It was all behind us.

RM: Oh, it sat right there and then the power station sat right here.

BB: Yes, the power station used to be right out in the middle of the pit. That pit's 300 feet deep and there are 50 or 60 feet of water standing in the bottom of it. The guys up here at the mine had a boat down there the last couple years during the summer, and they played around on it. But this is the old War Eagle. They took the stamps to Tonopah, to the Central Nevada Museum. This had some pretty good gold in this. This is Mustang Hill and this is Big Four Hill.

RM: Okay, Big Four Hill is right east of the pit.

BB: There's a pit right behind it and a pit on the east side of it. But most of the gold came out of Big Four Hill. This is Chipmunk Hill. and there's gold in it, on the back side.

This is hillside placer. That thing you're looking at up there was actually a drag line. They had a big bucket they dropped down here and they dragged this material up there. There's still a trommel up there; there's an ore bin, a trommel, a sluice box, everything. You can see the coarse boulders. They pulled that stuff up and washed the gravels here.

RM: Oh—and what's it called?

BB: I don't know what they call it—this is just the north face of Big Four Hill. But this is hillside gravel. I own this right here, and I've messed with this gravel. I've run some of this.

RM: Is it looking pretty good?

BB: Yes, it's pretty good stuff. It's a poorer gold because it hasn't traveled. It's nice crystals, but it's only about 640 fine. And there's a lot of half-breed in it because it's just right off of the lode. The hillside here will all run pretty good. There are spots here that'll run 60 bucks a yard in gravel.

RM: There certainly were a lot of diggings.

BB: Yes. They had no names, most of them. You can go down the gulch and see tailings everywhere. But there was a mill there.

RM: Yes. Not a famous one?

BB: No. There was another mill on up this canyon, on the hillside.

RM: What do they call the first canyon off to the right?

BB: That's Pipe Springs Road; it goes on over to Pipe Springs. That was the old road to Tonopah, the Pole Line Road.

RM: It went over into Ralston Valley?

BB: Yes, that's the one. And so does the one that goes over the summit here through east Manhattan. That was an original road.

RM: Does this hill have a name?

BB: Not that I know of. This one is the April Fool. It's called April Fool Hill because they named the mining claim the April Fool.

RM: Right, that was where the first discovery was.

BB: Yes, right there. And there's a little gold all over that hill, but it never went down. It's in little high-grade, knife-blade seams. There are a lot of them and they get down about 30 feet and it's gone; it cuts off. It's unlike the rest of the district here.

RM: Why do you think it's different?

BB: It's a little bit different formation, a different era of limestone that's laid on that hill. It's a different limestone altogether. I think it's in what they call Zanzibar limestone. They have different names for this stuff. There are little diggings all over. This hill has a name, the Toro Blanco. There's a little bit of gold on it; there's a little vein right up there in that clearing, and it

threw off some placer. There's a little draw right here that the old-timers dry-washed. But a lot of this camp did that. If there was a gold mine, every little draw, they dry washed it.

RM: Where's Litigation Hill? Was it worth all the litigation?

BB: No, it's the same thing. There's still gold on it. There are little stringers all over that hill. It's similar to the other one there, the April Fool. It's that type of ore.

RM: Oh, it didn't go down?

BB: It's in the same formation; it doesn't go down at all. It's not like the White Caps and the Manhattan Con, that went to pretty good depths I think the White Caps went down 1,300 feet. That's the Amalgamated.

RM: The dump you can see from town?

BB: There was a tram that came down; you can see the wood. They had rail on it and I guess they probably had an ore car. It probably had a big winch on top. That wasn't a big producer, I don't think. I've never found much up there, whereas this hill. . . .

RM: Now, what hill was this?

BB: This is still part of Litigation. They had some pretty good wire gold, nice specimen gold.

RM: Is there still good stuff on the dumps?

BB: I've looked; I have found a few pieces up there, but it's pretty tough. The White Caps didn't have any free gold, and they've hauled away the dump. They used to find nice realgar ore with stibnite and stuff in it, but the ore was complex.

RM: The White Caps was the one with all the arsenic, wasn't it?

BB: That's all the arsenic, yes. They had a big roaster there where they tried cooking the ore. The tailings were pretty rich; there's always been somebody messing with them. In fact, I think they're planning on messing with them again, but it just costs so much to get a recovery out of them. They never could make a big recovery. This little dump we're coming to right now is out of the 1200-foot decline they put in two years ago.

RM: And have they found much in that?

BB: No, they didn't hit anything big. They cut the Manhattan Con workings. They went through there, and of course there's ore in that. But they were driving for a drill hole, which they missed. That's it, right there. That old cabin and the dumps up here had a mill sitting right there. That is the Manhattan Consolidated. In fact, that's part of the tailings you see sitting right

there; they hauled the rest off. There was an old stamp mill here, I don't think it had a name. At one time it probably was handling the ore out of the Con.

RM: It's pretty country, isn't it?

BB: I enjoy it. But this is the Consolidated. Now, this was one of the raises. This was some of the stoping that was done off the top of this.

RM: And they came to surface here? Yes.

BB: There are little diggings all through here.

RM: What ore are we on here?

BB: This is still probably part of the Manhattan Con. Their ore ran to the east here, so this is probably their ground. I can find a little free gold through here; I've panned all this and you'll see a little bit now and then.

I know where there's some good ore on April Fool that the old-timers missed. They didn't even dig anywhere near this vein because it's completely different-looking; it's not typical of April Fool ore. It was just a fluke I found it—I was sitting up in the sun one day when there was snow everywhere else. The rock was wet, and the gold here, if it's in any siliceous material, really shows up when it's wet. I got the glass, and I got to sampling and panning and so on.

RM: Where are we driving now?

BB: We're going up to the White Caps right now. You can see all the White Caps tailings spread all the way down the draw.

RM: The White Caps was the No. 2 producing underground mine and the Reliance was the No. 1, I believe.

BB: Yes, the Reliance was high-grade. They had jewelry-grade rock, and the White Caps didn't. It was all tied up in realgar and antimony; it was a real tough ore to break down. It was a producer, just because of the grade of the ore. It produced well because it was such high-grade, and even though they got such low recovery on it, it still produced that much. They tried everything. They put in a giant roaster up here and roasted it, and that helped the recovery. But that cost; every time you add a little bit more here and a little more there, it ups the cost.

RM: Did you tell me that they cut a 25-foot vein somewhere?

BB: Yes. I've got some old logs.

RM: That's underwater now, right?

BB: Yes, they did underground long-holing and I saw one place where they had 2-1/2 ounces for 26 feet.

RM: But it was deep, right?

BB: Yes, deep and complex. The old-timers who worked in this mine got big sores on them from working in this arsenic.

RM: Yes, Curly Coombs told me about that. This is the roaster, there?

BB: Yes, that's the roaster. This is the White Caps.

RM: Are we going up higher?

BB: Yes. We'll come back this way anyway. These were their shops and so on. That was an assay office. Right up on the ridge here they had a couple of homes. They're gone; there's nothing left but the doors and stuff This was the assay office. That was their furnace.

RM: That's a heck of a roaster, isn't it? Did it work?

BB: Yes, it helped. But it upped the cost, of course.

RM: Was it oil or wood fire?

BB: That I don't know. I imagine it had to be at least oil. If it was wood, for the amount of ore they ran, they probably would have had to strip all the hills here.

RM: Were the hills here stripped at one time?

BB: They did do a lot of cutting in here. You'll find that in a lot of areas.

RM: That's a great old safe in the bank building down there.

BB: Yes. Some little kid locked himself in once, and they had to cut into it to get him out. As far as some of the more barren hills, there would be places around, up Silver Creek and places like that, where they cut a lot of wood to fuel roasters in Belmont. When Belmont was running, they had a lot of big roasters. This mine produced specimen-grade antimony—stibnite crystals. The only mines that would outdo it were probably some of the Chinese ones. They had some fabulous specimens up here.

RM: You were saying that Louie Meyers told you how he found his tungsten?

BB: (Do you see the cabin right up the hill and another one down there? The bosses lived there.) Yes, they were out there prospecting and the tungsten was found by a badger hole. The

badgers dug right in on this soft gouge material that was plumb full of tungsten. And the whole badger hole panned. I guess they just mucked in that whole thing and probably got a bucket and panned it down.

This is Robert McCracken talking to Bob Bottom while touring Manhattan, Nevada, April 14, 2007.

RM: Bob, it's been a long time since our last tour and a lot has happened since then. In particular, tell me about the awards you got for mine reclamation. I believe there were two—the Manhattan Mine Site Recontouring and Revegetation award from the state in 2001 and in 2004 the Hardrock Mineral Environmental Award from the Bureau of Land Management. BB: Five or six years ago, the price of gold went down around \$270. It got so low I couldn't make it down there. Round Mountain Gold got hold of the late Dick Carver and asked if he'd go up and clean up a mess that somebody left at the mill. They were tearing all this down here in Manhattan.

RM: And what mill was that?

BB: It was Echo Bay's big mill. They built it, but they had a private contractor come in to dismantle it, tear it down, and clean it up. Well, he got in there and tore it down and took what he wanted and just left a mess. It looked like bombed-out Germany or something. They had a number of contractors come in and try to clean it up and they'd work a week or two at a time and walk away from it; they said it can't be done—that the guy made such a mess somebody was going to be killed.

Dick Carver came over to look at it and thought it was too much for him, too. So he came down and got me—I was just about ready to close my mine down because I couldn't quite make it at \$270 gold—and asked me if I'd help him. I went up and looked at it and I told him, man, I didn't think it could be done, either. But I said, "We'll try it."

So we nagged at it; it took us nearly a year, but we actually got it cleaned up. We got some landfill permits from the state, made a lot of it disappear right on the spot, and we hauled off a lot of the iron and a lot of salvage and so forth. We did a really nice job on it and the mine was so happy with it they just left us there and told us, "Well, go ahead and recontour it, also." We recontoured the area of the mill and where the offices and warehouses and everything were. And the state came in to inspect it. Of course, we had the BLM, Forest Service, and the state and everybody inspecting constantly.

We ended up winning, in 2000, the Nevada State Recontouring Award. They brought a set of plans and said, "Here's what we'd like to do for the whole property." I looked at the plan and told them, "Well, this can't be done. This is stupid," and I threw away the plans. We went and did it our own way, and in 2004, we ended up winning the 2004 National Reclamation Award for the mine and Gale Norton herself, from the Department of the Interior, gave the award in Vegas at the mine expo. So that was quite an honor.

RM: You told me how much money you saved the mine by doing that.

BB: I've been told that we quite possibly saved them \$15 million from what they figured it might cost them if they did it themselves. I don't know if that's a fact or not but I had heard that.

RM: Now, we're down on the dredge area right now?

BB: Yes, we're less than halfway down through the dredge tailings here, where the dredge came through.

RM: And approximately how wide would you say the channel was?

BB: In this area, it probably averages about 400 or 500 feet in width. When you get out in the valley floor, the channel can be a couple of miles wide.

RM: So this canyon here, gulch, does go down to the valley?

BB: Yes; it crosses the valley. There's actually workings on the other side of the highway. There's good placer there, too. The problem is, the farther out you get, the deeper it gets. When you get out there, it's down 300, 400 feet, where up in here, the average depth was probably up around 60 feet.

RM: How do you know where to work? You've got a big country here; how do you make a decision?

BB: I kind of studied geology, that's probably the main thing, I can just look at it and see about where I think there could be gold.

RM: That would be, like, where the river would bend?

BB: Yes, around the bends and things like that, and you could see where the hard rock intrudes, where it would cut it off where it can't get up a certain draw, and you kind of look from there.

RM: Now, we turned back onto the highway and we've still got dredge to the south, right? Now you've got a round hill in front of us. What is that?

BB: That big one up here? That's the old mine dump from the pits up here. That's some of the stuff we reclaimed. That was actually a mine dump. We recontoured it and reseeded it.

RM: And then there's one on up above it, isn't there?

BB: That one way up there was their big leach pad. They had six million tons on that pad there and we reclaimed that and put topsoil back on it and also reseeded it.

RM: Did all of this come out of this pit up on the south side of the road?

BB: No, there are actually four pits up there.

RM: And what determined where they put those pits? Were they old shafts themselves?

BB: There were old workings scattered all over. They did a lot of drilling and where there was enough of the good ore, the high-grade veins in close proximity, they were able to pit it when the veins were close enough together. This was not a disseminated ore body; these were all high-grade little veins.

RM: We're just passing a pit on the south side of the road into Manhattan. What is this pit called?

BB: That's the West Pit. That is 300 feet deep and there's 100 feet of water in it. There's a pit lake in there that's 100 feet deep.

RM: So it's down to the groundwater level.

BB: Yes, it's below level. The other ones never did get that deep. Right behind this hill, there's a bigger pit.

RM: Okay, the first hill as we come into town.

BB: This is Big Four Hill (Gold Hill).

RM: Okay, this is Big Four Hill as we come into town and there's a gallows frame.

BB: Yes, there was a hillside placer there. And that was actually a drag line—they dragged gravel up off the topsoil and ran it through a trommel up there.

RM: These little workings right here, that's from dragging it uphill? What was this called, where they were dragging? Did it have a name?

BB: I don't think it ever had a name. The old cat house used to be. . . .

RM: Oh, it's right below the school. And there's the school.

BB: That's the school. It's now a library and we're putting a museum in it, also. That was built in 1912, I think. The church here was built in 1874, of course.

RM: And it came from Belmont. Now, what else along here should be noted?

BB: I'm trying to think. I think this was an old grocery store.

RM: The Manhattan Storage Building was an old grocery store.

BB: A grocery store, and a bar at one time.

RM: You don't remember the names, do you?

BB: No. I know the people—the Zunino family owned it.

RM: Okay, now we're at the Miner's Saloon.

BB: Now, we passed Val's Garage, Val Boni's. The Bonis were raised here. Their mother's house is back up there and Pete Boni used to live right here. There used to be a home there.

RM: Now there's a trailer there.

BB: It belongs to Val's niece.

RM: When was Val's Garage operated, would you say?

BB: A long time ago; before I was ever out here.

RM: Any other buildings here that were something else?

BB: I do know there's a history of most of these buildings. The state historical society did a thing on that.

RM: Okay, here's the post office. Is that a new building?

BB: That's a later building. This used to be an old grocery store.

RM: Okay, next door to Francisco's Grocery Store.

BB: Yes, and their garage there—Francisco's Garage.

RM: And then, the fire department—I wonder when they built that?

BB: That's since my time. There was an old jail right there, or so they say—but I believe it was actually a powder magazine.

RM: Oh, right back there? That's the old jail?

BB: That's one of them.

RM: Okay, it's behind the Manhattan Volunteer Fire Department. Now we've come to a fork in the road. What's that street?

BB: That's Erie Street.

RM: And this is Main Street? And now we just passed the Emporium.

BB: Yes, that's the upper bar. That's actually the Manhattan Bar.

RM: Okay. And the Manhattan Motel looks new.

BB: Yes, it's only been here a couple of years. That little Quonset-like thing is something somebody brought in here in later years. And now we're going by the old Country Store. That actually operated during my time. There have been two or three operators in there. They used to have a little grocery store and a gas pump and it's all gone now; it's just storage. This is April Fool Hill right here.

RM: Okay, April Fool Hill's on our left right by the Country Store, right by the bank. And where was it Humphrey made his discovery? It was right here, wasn't it?

BB: It was right here. I believe it was probably in this area right here.

RM: Right in this gulch? And he just found float, right?

BB: Yes, there's an outcrop right here. You can find gold up and down the ribs of limestone in the quartz stringers.

RM: Even today?

BB: Yes. It's been metal-detected to death; there's nothing left of any size. But I can go over there right now with a glass and pick up pieces of gold. This was the Toiyabe Hall—you talk about it in your book. They used to have plays there.

RM: Does it look like it did then?

BB: No, somebody put siding on it. The people that own it now are trying to tear that off. They were going to put it back to its original condition and open a bed and breakfast, but the guy was killed in an accident last year so that probably came to a halt.

RM: Have you been inside it? Can you see where the stage was and all?

BB: No, you can't. People have made homes out of it two or three times since, so that's all gone. Some place in my collection, I have a program from one of their skits. This was the old Cornell house, which they claim was the first building here.

RM: This little one—it would be on the north side of the road.

BB: Yes, that rock thing in the back. I've been told that was the first building in Manhattan.

RM: When you look at pictures of old Manhattan, looking down the gulch, there was kind of a gazebo where they had the bandstand.

BB: That was right on the corner of Erie Street—right there. We drove by where the Reliance was—that's where the west pit is. The Reliance was sitting right there.

RM: Where are the other famous mines?

BB: There are diggings all around the April Fool and on the back side. And some of the bigger mines are on up the canyon.

RM: And what are the characteristic of the gold here?

BB: All the gold in Manhattan is crystal gold. In fact, my nuggets, even though they look round and solid, if you break one or cut it. it's a mass of crystals that's all been rolled up, as it traveled down the gulch, into big balls. This is Litigation Hill here on our right.

RM: Okay, we have turned kind of south off of the main road. What is this road called?

BB: This goes to the White Caps.

RM: And Litigation Hill is on the west; sort of on the southwest. This whole hill is Litigation Hill.

BB: It's Litigation Hill and the one over here is Toro Blanco. There's gold all over it, too.

RM: Now, Litigation Hill was called that because it got all tied up in litigation.

BB: Yes, and it still is. We tried researching it one time to get a quiet title for a guy who has a lot on it and we ran into bottlenecks; we just had to throw our hands up and walk away. We found, in the archives, where it actually changed hands from one mining company to another mining company with different people involved without a deed.

RM: But that didn't happen on the other hills?

BB: No, everything else was pretty good. This was just pretty much of a mess, this Litigation Hill. That's the Amalgamated—that one way up there. You can see where there was a tram coming down.

RM: Was it a stock promotion job?

BB: I think pretty much so. This was the Earl Mine. This had some awful high-grade in it.

RM: Was it a good mine, then? How deep is it?

BB: No, there's a decline there that goes down a few hundred feet. It's little high-grade stringers.

RM: Does the ore in Manhattan tend not to go down?

BB: There's cases where it does. For instance, the White Caps goes down 1,300. They had good ore but the White Caps' problem was its complexity. It was super, super complex ore and the miners would get arsenic sores on them from working in it and there was a lot of water involved.

RM: Why does the White Caps ore go down whereas on the other ones, it doesn't? Do you know?

BB: I don't have any idea. I mean, it's still going down there on Big Four Hill. That pit's 300 feet deep and there's still ore going down.

RM: Now, you pointed out Big Four—where was that?

BB: That was the one that's got the drag line on the side. All the pits are actually on Big Four Hill.

RM: Why are the pits all around Big Four Hill?

BB: That's where most of the high-grade was, and probably the biggest ore bodies. I would estimate that 90 percent of the gold down the gulch, the placer, came off Big Four Hill.

RM: And what does that gold look like?

BB: It's a little bit better gold.

RM: A little more pure?

BB: Yes, a little bit; not much. It'll run about 650, 670, sometimes, and most of the other stuff around here will go 630.

RM: Can you look at it and tell?

BB: Pretty much. This was the Manhattan Consolidated. They just put a decline here just a few years back.

RM: And we're continuing up this road to the White Caps?

BB: Yes. There was another mill here. And there was another mill down here.

RM: Where were they getting the water for these mills?

BB: They got them when they eventually got deep enough in the shaft that they were hitting water. They were pumping and making their own water.

RM: Could the water be used for households or was it contaminated?

BB: No, it was too contaminated. Even right now, we have an arsenic problem with our water because of the new rules and regulations; we're over the arsenic limit.

RM: The town of Manhattan is on well water?

BB: Yes, we've got well water. But there's an arsenic halo that runs around Manhattan that probably has a lot to do with all the gold here. All the water tested in the area had arsenic in it; some had a lot, some had a little.

RM: The ore deposits here are not out of the same process that made Round Mountain, right? It's a different thing.

BB: Yes, a different formation altogether. Most all this stuff is all sedimentary, and a lot of Round Mountain is volcanic. Most all this was a limestone country; there are many different grades of limestone in here—different beds and different types of limestones. Big Four is in a schist; it's more of a schist there.

RM: And none of these rocks are metamorphous?

BB: Yes, there's metamorphic rocks in here. There's a little tungsten and moly in here, too. In fact, just about every mineral known to man has been discovered in Manhattan District. There's barite, fluorspar, arsenic, realgar, orpiment, and antimony. They mined antimony, arsenic, cinnabar, barite. . . .

RM: Were they commercial?

BB: They actually shipped a lot of it. Yes, they took little shipments of barite out of here and fluorspar, in the old days. I know when Norm Coombs was involved in mining . . . they had some stibnite up here in the White Caps and they high-graded a bunch of it and took it out and shipped it and they sent it back; they didn't want it. It wasn't worth anything at that time.

RM: I'll be darned. Where were they shipping that ore, I wonder?

BB: I don't know where they shipped that, probably Texas. This is the White Caps Mine, here. A lot of the dump's been hauled off. They milled a lot of it. These are the tailings.

RM: And the White Caps was 1,300 deep, you said?

BB: Yes, it was about 1,300, I think. I even have some old drill logs on it. There was good ore down there. Now, a lot people argue this fact, but they're wrong: The White Caps actually had no visible gold. It was all disseminated gold that was tied up in the different minerals.

RM: So it was a complex ore?

BB: Very complex. In fact, the dumps run good, the tailings run good, but a number of different operations have tried to get it out. That was a big roaster; it helped recover some, but they still couldn't get a real good recovery out of it because of its complexity. There's arsenic, cinnabar, antimony . . . everything in this ore here.

RM: It looks like kind of a big building up there. Was that the offices?

BB: Yes, that was offices. There were actually two homes up here on the ridge; it was just beautiful. They're all down now. But that was a machine shop there, and the hoist house.

RM: Did the White Caps ever operate since you've been hanging out around here?

BB: No. They've run the dumps and done a lot of promoting here, but that's all.

RM: And right across from the west pit was the. . . .

BB: The War Eagle Mill. They took the stamps out of there, I forget how many stamps, and they're in Tonopah, in the museum. It was probably the biggest mill here but they had little mills all over. They had a mill right here on the White Caps property and they had two mills down here on the Consolidated. There are mills here that I've asked some of the old-timers what they were, going by their foundations, and they don't even remember them. There were a number of mills in Manhattan.

RM: All operating off of mine water?

BB: Yes, all operating off mine water. And most of the mills were stamp mills. In later years, they put in a few ball mills.

RM: And they brought water across the valley for the dredge—from Jett, was it?

BB: From Peavine. That's what Seyler Lake was; it was their pumping station. They had pumping stations all the way across. They had wells they were sinking on the way, too. The dredge people had a group of miners running ahead of them sinking shafts. That's how they were sampling, by sinking shafts. In fact, you've got to be careful—you drive out in that flat and there are open shafts out there with no dumps because they actually hauled every bit of the dump and ran it through the dredge while they were coming up.

RM: Oh—and it paid to do that?

BB: Yes, that's how they got their samples; they actually ran them through the dredge to know if it was worth anything. And they had wells with water in a lot of them, so they pumped them. The dredge ran off of Peavine water and it ran off of wells, plus the mines and mills were running. Actually, water used to run down Main Street from the mines that were pumping and the dredge also used that water. As I said, they eventually ate up enough bedrock where they couldn't keep the boat afloat.

RM: We're coming down the gulch right now from the White Caps.

BB: Yes. Right across from where the old Reliance was, on the old Gold Metals Mining Property, there's a decline going down right now.

RM: How deep is it?

BB: I don't know; they're probably down there a couple thousand feet, I would think.

RM: Two thousand feet on the decline!?

BB: Yes, but not on depth; I don't know what their depth is. I haven't talked to them lately, but they're down there quite a ways. It's big.

RM: Is it Echo Bay?

BB: No, it's a stock outfit from back East—it's called Royal Standard Minerals. They're in the process of building a mill right now.

RM: Do they have ore blocked out?

BB: Yes, they've done a little drilling. There was a little ore body there but it was an underground thing; it wasn't big enough to pit. It was a smaller vein with little high-grade pockets and such, and they're going after it. They've been stockpiling lately. They just recently laid off some of their miners. I think they're muck-bound until they've got their mill running.

RM: It looks like they're investing a lot of money; they must have a lot of ore.

BB: They have spent a lot of money down there.

RM: They're going to be mining on Forest Service land?

BB: Well, they're going to be underground on Forest Service, BLM land.

RM: How can they do that?

BB: It's alright because they still have the Apex laws in effect.

RM: But they're not following ore down, are they?

BB: No, but there's ore right there. There's ore everywhere here. But they're on Apex. They're actually underground; there's no surface disturbance.

RM: Where are they getting miners?

BB: There are still mining contractors around. They had a couple of major companies come in and start the thing. They did quite a bit, got it started, and now they've hired their own miners.

RM: We're heading back down the gulch, now. Tell me anything that comes to mind as we drive along. Okay, we just passed the first building in Manhattan.

BB: Yes, most all the stuff is newer; all the older stuff's been torn out. I've torn down a lot of it myself. I bought into a lot of it and then I tore a lot of it down when Hughes Tools, Summa, first came in here and then when Houston Oil took over from them. They owned a lot of lots in town and had me tear down the old houses and build trailer parks and stuff.

RM: Who owns the bank building and places like that?

BB: That belongs to the county. The Nye County Commissioners actually own the town of Manhattan. Most of the people own their own lots, but a lot of it is deeded land on mining claims and so on.

RM: Okay, we're passing the Emporium. And now we're passing the jail.

BB: That's Francisco's Garage; that was one of the earliest buildings—see the old brick building back there? They added on and added on.

RM: Now we're at the Miners Saloon.

BB: This was called Nob Hill. That's where my house is. They called it Nob Hill in the old days; it's in the old newspapers that way.

RM: Is that because the homes up there were better? Or because it was a knob?

BB: Just a little knob, I think. A lot of the mining company officials built up there to get out of the floodplain because Manhattan does get flooded.

RM: And let's see—where was Erie Street?

BB: That was right next to the Manhattan Bar, where it says "Emporium."

RM: Is that kind of the heart of the original Manhattan?

BB: Pretty much. Yes, that's where you see the pictures of the gazebo; the fire department was there and everything. If you walk right over that hill, where you go over the skyline, you jump right off into a pit. I'll take you around there and show you. This is the remains of the ore bin for the stamps of the War Eagle Mill.

RM: Okay, the War Eagle Mill is right across from the west pit. And where was the Reliance Mill?

BB: The Reliance was sitting right here; right about on this edge of the pit where the gravel is. I've got pictures of the Reliance shaft and the buildings.

RM: So they sunk the pit on Reliance ground, basically.

BB: Yes, that's all on Reliance ground. Up there are the remains of the stamp for the Lemon Mill.

RM: Okay, the Lemon Mill, which is just west of the west pit.

BB: Yes, that was up there. That's Wolfstone Hill. This one here, the Red Mill, is on Mustang Hill.

RM: Okay, this is Mustang on our right across from the Pit?

BB: Yes. That big one there is Black Mammoth.

RM: This is Black Mammoth Mountain as we come on down from the west pit. Because it's black, right? Is that limestone or volcanic?

BB: That's all a form of limestone, too—a lot of argillites and silicified stuff. The ore is different here. On that hill there, it runs in calcite, where most of the camp runs in quartz and adularia. That was in calcite.

RM: Do you find placer in calcite?

BB: Yes, but not very often. It'd have to be a pretty good piece because the calcite pretty well rots away. It's a lot softer and there's not much left of the calcite, whereas the quartz is pretty hard. See those little streaks there—you can see little diggings all over? None of them are over 30 feet deep. That hill was kind of like April Fool—it never went down but the streaks were really rich on the surface.

RM: So what happened was, it was just mixing all the different ores from this mine in the placer.

BB: Yes; and it's like that all the way down the gulch, all the way down past my plant. All the hills on both sides, there are little high-grade stringers of gold and little bitty hard-rock diggings on every one of them. The hill right by my plant is called Georgie Hill—the little one on the right. There are little bitty high-grade stringers on it. The old-timers even dry-washed all the little draws on the side of that hill because you can get little colors out of the draws.

RM: Really! So it came up in every hill here.

BB: Yes, and you can do that going up by my shop; they've been drilling the little side canyons all the way up Pipe Springs Road. You can get a little color out of all the draws. It's far from being placer—there's nothing you can do with it.

That was George Rong's old working. He was mining here in my time. I've been underground working there with him, too. He died a few years ago.

RM: Now, what road have we turned up?

BB: Black Mammoth. The graveyard's there on the right. That's Mount Moriah.

RM: The pointed one over there?

BB: Yes. We're going up by the later mining (other than the new operation over there). This is where we did our reclamation. Summa—Hughes Tool—came in here in the '70s when Howard Hughes was in here doing all of his stuff around Nevada and picked this property up. I worked up here for Summa in those days, then Houston Oil picked it up from Summa and I worked for them. Then Tenneco picked it up from Houston and I worked for Tenneco. But then, Echo Bay picked it up and I worked for them up here, too.

RM: And they were all open-pitting?

BB: Yes, this is all open-pit on this side.

RM: So they were just selling it, one to the other, but the operation was the same operation?

BB: Yes, it was the same operation. And now Round Mountain Gold owns all this property.

RM: Do you have any idea how much gold they took out of these open pit operations all together?

BB: All these pits are wrapped around Big Four Hill—they took a half-million ounces out of it to date. And that's including some of the old records; it would include the old stuff plus Echo Bay.

And that's what they know of. Of course, the later stuff is all on file, all documented. The older stuff, a lot of it probably wasn't.

RM: Did they make money doing this—each of the companies?

BB: Yes, they made money. It wasn't a big high-dollar thing like Round Mountain or some of these newer pits because they were smaller pits and little high-grade veins, but it made money.

RM: So you and Dick were the ones who sculpted all of this area?

BB: Yes, we did all this.

RM: It looks great.

BB: Thanks. Like I said, I was up here when they first started this in the '70s. The old-timers had already been here and done some pitting. There were little head frames all over up here; little shafts and diggings. And right now, it looks better than it did before, because it never looked this good before we started.

RM: It's a huge area; I had no idea it was this big up here.

BB: We reclaimed 280-some acres. The mill was right over there. That flat over there—that was their big mill. They had a big mill there and all their warehouses and offices were all over there.

RM: What were they milling? All of the stuff coming out of the pit?

BB: Yes, they were milling most of it. They originally had a scrubber in here and were scrubbing it, and they had a mill and they weren't getting it all. It wasn't necessarily breaking on the fractures like they had planned. So they went and picked up all their tailings, all their dumps, from the mill and put them up here on a leach pad. They put six million tons up there and there was still a lot of gold in it, but there were so many clays involved that it kind of sealed itself off and they couldn't get any more recovery out of it. So they came up here and pumped it for a couple of years. They purified it and cleaned up all the cyanide and neutralized everything, then we came in and reclaimed it all and reseeded it all.

RM: Basically, this reclamation was a 'dozer operation?

BB.: We had 'dozers, loaders, and trucks and excavators, but it was mainly all 'dozers. We had some scrapers for two weeks just to put the topsoil up here. Here's the east pit.

RM: Man, that's a big pit.

BB: Yes, that was a big pit. But it's not as deep as the other one; they never hit the water table. You're almost looking at the bottom of it there. That was the east pit. When I first started up

here for Summa, that was already a pit, but it was only one-tenth that size. It was called the Riley Pit, and I had a contract to clean it out and build a road back into it. We built a road and cleaned it all out and then went in and did a lot of exploration work and started mining.

RM: And the idea was that the gold was disseminated in these little veins through the rock?

BB: Yes, it's in the fractures here. This is all a schist and many of the fractures in the schist had little micron quartz and adularias stringers in them. Some of them were no bigger than a cigarette paper, but they had free gold in them, some of it visible. I've seen masses of wire gold here on those seams.

RM: And it was caused by the solutions coming up, just depositing it wherever the water left it?

BB: Yes, it deposited it in those fractures. It came up with the adularia and the quartz.

RM: What's adularia?

BB: It looks a lot like quartz. In all reality, 90 percent of people would call it quartz. It's white and everything, but it's got a little different crystal form than the quartz.

RM: Now, you said that when they were milling it, they were crushing it, right? Or were they just doing mine runs?

BB: They were crushing it and they ended up doing mine runs—when they got into lower-grade stuff, they were putting the mine run on the leach pad.

RM: You said that it wouldn't break on the fractures so they couldn't get the gold that way. Ordinarily, it would break on the fractures?

BB: Based on the earlier tests, they thought it would. They thought they could run it through a scrubber. A scrubber was just like a ball mill without a big load of balls. It had coarse stuff coming out—it was just breaking it up a little bit more and you were still getting coarse rock out of it.

RM: Oh, and it wasn't getting those little fractures inside.

BB: Yes, you could pick up pieces of that coarse stuff coming out; it looked like inch gravel. Sometimes you could see those little fractures and actually see the gold in them after it had been through the mill.

RM: And then you said they tried heap-leaching it. But the leaching wouldn't even go all the way in those little fractures because of clay; is that right?

BB: They got a lot of gold out of the leach pad but when they were hauling the ore, they got into some clay seams. I don't think they were keeping the ore clean enough, keeping it away from some of the clays; besides there's clay in with the ore itself. But they got some awful gobs of clay; you could see big gobs of clay on the leach pad. The clays would get in there and they'd seal up that pad to where the solutions wouldn't trickle through; they wouldn't percolate anymore. They drilled holes in it and blasted, thinking they could break it up, fracture it, and loosen that clay to where the solutions would go through. But it got to where it wouldn't even let the solutions circulate.

RM: I have to tell you, I'm impressed with your knowledge.

BB: Well, I've done everything the wrong way. That's how I learned. I did a little consulting for Round Mountain Gold; they've had me come there twice when they've had problems. They built a \$6 million mill that wasn't getting much recovery and I went over there and found their problems and helped them out on that. They had a problem on a recovery on a placer plant they had over there, too, that I helped them out on. I had one of the new bosses ask me, a while back, "What schools did you go to, to learn all that stuff?"

And I told him, "The school of hard knocks." I said, "I learned how to do it by doing it all wrong the first two or three times." I've been doing it for over 40 years, 45 years. I've built a number of mills and a number of placer plants.

RM: What are some mills that you've built?

BB: I was involved in the mill up here when they were building this back in Summa's days. And I worked with Norm when we built the mill out at Orizaba. I built a little mill of my own one time, a little portable mill. I helped build a mill in Tonopah for Echo Bay; that was in the Houston Oil days. And I've built placer plants. I went to the Yukon and put together a placer operation and build a plant for a Canadian outfit.

RM: Is the Orizaba Mill still there?

BB: No, Norm sold that before he died. I didn't want it because of the location, and when he offered it to me, I was very involved with the placer here. The mill was on BLM ground and there were some problems there. I kind of got away from that hard-rocking a little bit because this placer was so much easier. Besides that, Norm was getting older and we'd pretty well cleaned up two or three counties in this area of all the little high-grade piles the old-timers left.

RM: Now, we're on Main Street and there's the fire department; okay.

BB: We're on Nob Hill.

RM: Is Hilltop House anything that should be noted?

BB: No, somebody just built that and put that sign on there. Most of this stuff here is new. That was an old, old miner's cabin that somebody just kept adding and adding and adding and adding on to. It was a one-room cabin and now it's like the Winchester House.

One of the miners in this area used to live right there; his name was Emerson Hyde. He mined high-grade on Big Four Hill. In fact, Coombs and I milled some of his high-grade for him one time and it was unbelievable. I've been back to his workings; I took out about a ton and a half of stuff that was all jewelry rock one time.

RM: Is that Erie Street, there? So the gazebo would have been right there.

BB: Right about where that false-front house is.

RM: That would be on the northwest corner. Do you get big cloudbursts?

BB: We used to have some horrible floods but we've been in a drought for about 15 years. It used to be about every two years, we'd get a pretty good one. I've seen water come down here two feet deep, rolling boulders a foot in diameter. Some of these houses down here—they're vacant houses now—still have mud in them. They got flooded and nobody ever went back.

There was a flood here one time while I was working down in the gulch. I was leasing at the time Dick Heidorn lived here in Manhattan; he was the watchman down there for the people I was leasing from. (He's dead now.) He came down there quite drunk. We were finished for the day, Gary Godfrey and I. We were driving up the street, right about where the graveyard turnoff is, and he was coming back. He stopped and said, "You can't get up town." We asked him why. He said, "It's flooded out. The road's covered with boulders and dirt and rocks—you can't drive up there. I just tried. It's a lost cause." He was drunk so we figured, "Ah, hell, he's nuts."

We didn't make it another quarter of a mile, and he was right. And it didn't even rain down at the gulch. It didn't even rain in Manhattan. It rained up the canyon above there and flooded it out. We went back down and got two pieces of equipment and got side by side, right on the main highway, and went all the way to the upper bar.

And the whole town was in the upper bar. We got in there and everybody got drunk and pretty soon, here came the state highway department. They came up, they parked, they said, "Who the hell 'dozed all of our road out for us down there?" Our equipment was sitting out there. And they stayed and got drunk with us.

We got a little flood last year. Everything has to come right down Main Street because it drains an awful big country back up there. There are some monstrous canyons between here and there.

RM: And originally, it would flow down the placer gulch? Is there placer under Main Street in Manhattan?

BB: Yes, there is. It's not real good; it's been sampled. But there's placer everywhere; there's placer in every little draw. All these hillsides have a little bit of placer on them.

RM: I had a great discussion with Jim Larson, who worked in these little shafts down here in the early days.

BB: The Larsons were raised here, too—in fact, they lived right up this street.

RM: Where would the shaft he worked in be, where they would go down 30 feet or so and then tunnel out?

BB: They were down at the gulch. See the old ruins? This is Pipe Springs Road, called Gold Street. A lot of this junk you see here? That's Larson's. I hauled away about 50 truckloads of the stuff. They were always mechanics, those guys; they built their own cars. These were his lots right here. I just sold them to a guy.

RM: So you had owned this Larson site here.

BB: Yes, Larson sold it to the mine years ago and I bought it from the mine. I bought this whole canyon. This is all my stuff here and I'm building these homes. These are trailers that came out of the Fallon Naval Base. This is some of my stuff

RM: This is all your equipment? Well, you have one thing that most old miners didn't have and that's heavy equipment skills. Now we're in your office, looking at some pictures.

BB: I believe that was the first school; it was up Erie Street. I've got a picture of it somewhere.

RM: How many people are on the town board?

BB: It's actually not a true town board, it's just an advisory council; we have no power at all. There are three people on it.

RM: And you advise the Nye County Commissioners?

BB: Yes. There's the Manhattan Stage Line, in this picture. That's the one that was robbed.

RM: Now, where was this?

BB: This is up Main Street. I think that's April Fool Hill behind it. This is just down behind the bar. There's an old car.

RM: That was a picture of a lot of shops with a drug store and so on.

BB: A jewelry, stationery.

RM: Nevada Rapid Transit Company.

BB: I believe that's what Wells Fargo became because I've got another picture with a car sitting right in front of that. There's a 1906 Manhattan picture. Merchant selling tools. The Horseshoe Club in Manhattan. Look at the people in there. And the old wagons.

RM: Where was the Horseshoe Club?

BB: I don't know. I believe it was probably in that same bunch. Most everything in Manhattan was about from the Toiyabe Hall down to where the lower bar is—that was the main district. That was 1906 Manhattan.

RM: They put up the buildings fast.

BB: Yes, they had big buildings. But like everyplace, they had fires here, too. I believe this was probably . . . Erie Street runs up behind here. I think that's the old gymnasium and that's probably the Toiyabe Hall right there.

RM: Is that the pond? It looks like it was a pretty good-sized pond.

BB: Well, it was a big boat; it took a lot of water to keep that thing afloat. This is the mill up at the White Caps.

RM: Is that that building? The offices?

BB: I don't think it was. I think I've got a picture somewhere that's got all that, though. Some of these aren't very good, they were copies of copies. And some of them were in old magazines. A lot of these came out of some of the books the Metscher boys were sending me—the Central Nevada Historical books. That was the War Eagle. Look at all the tents—they're tent frames. There's the Horseshoe Club, the Northern, the Union Drug Company. Look at the horses they used to pull that wagon.

Here's the dredge. Red Front Saloon in Manhattan.

There's your gazebo.

This is from inside the Toiyabe Hall when Dexter Mining Company owned it. That's the inside; a guy sleeping on his desk. Somebody just copped a sneaker on the guy while he was asleep.

I gave the people who were rebuilding it this picture and they were going to try to take it back to this. That's what they were working on when the guy got killed.

Look at all the horses there in a team; they're bringing a ball mill into Manhattan. Look at the horse on that; 1909. There's the gazebo, again, with a bunch of guys.

Look at Old Main. Harry Neff, Hoffman, Mike Kelly, Tory Lawrence, Harry Fogel. J. W. Coop—that was the Larsons' dad. That was their dad; old Jim Coop.

RM: There's a car being towed.

BB: Over Manhattan Summit.

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